



# White Ware with Green Décor

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The Belitung wreck yielded nearly 200 pieces of white-glazed earthenware with green painted décor. The wares' surface condition varies; while most pieces have a rather coarse and loose-grained body of grayish-white or reddish tone, a number of vessels have a higher degree of vitrification, approaching stoneware in texture (fig. 112). Most of these wares are white-slipped, covered with a low-fired translucent glaze, and finally decorated with either an overglaze of green-colored spotting or a light-green glaze that completely covers the body (fig. 107). The latter category can be referred to as green-glazed wares.

The wreck also contained a small number of plain, low-fired, lead-glazed wares. Although their glaze application and relatively dark green tone distinguishes them from the white wares with green décor, they share important similarities in terms of shape and firing technique. Since it is possible that the two types originate from the same production area, they will be treated together in the following discussion.

The white-glazed wares with green décor from the shipwreck include a wide range of vessel types, such as spouted ewers with handles (*daibazhuhu*), ewers with strap-handles (*chuandaihu*), covered jars (fig. 110), covered boxes (see fig. 113), cups (figs. 52, 119–121), dishes and bowls (figs. 109, 115–116), small bowls (*bo*), basins (fig. 117), and three-legged *yu* waterwells (*sanzuyu*). Some of these categories can be further divided, generating a broad typological profile that encompasses nearly all examples of previously excavated white ware with green décor as well as a variety of shapes hitherto unknown. The relatively atypical decorative designs on these wares—such as molded appliqué, intaglio carving, and modeled décor—are equally significant. To avoid an overly detailed account, not all of the wares will be introduced here. Instead, this essay will focus on those that can be approximately dated through comparison with samples from Chinese archaeological sites, including a discussion of their rare shapes and designs.

## Dating

The spouted ewer with handle (*daibazhuhu*) is a fairly common vessel type for a variety of wares, including white wares with green décor, thus providing reference material for dating similar ewers found on the wreck. The salvaged examples are of two different types. Type 1 has a short tubular spout, which is pinched toward the edge, as well as a double-stranded loop-handle set between the shoulder and neck. The entire body is covered with a green glaze. Type 2 has a similar spout, handle, and trumpetlike neck, but it features a lion-shaped handle between the mouth and shoulder, a dragon's head spout, and vertical double-stranded looped lugs on the shoulder between the handle and spout (figs. 122, 125).

**Fig. 107** Detail, stemcup with a freely modeled turtle and a drinking tube. Cat. 214.

**RIGHT**

**Fig. 108** Rendering of diamond-shaped floral design on fig. 113. This design is rarely seen on Chinese artifacts but is prevalent on Islamic pottery.

A white-glazed *daibazhuhu* ewer with green décor similar in shape to the type 1 ewer was found in a tomb at Xuejiazhuang in Anyang, Henan province.<sup>1</sup> This vessel type has been assigned elsewhere to the Five Dynasties period.<sup>2</sup> However, two pieces unearthed from the same tomb—a white bowl with *bi*-disc foot of typical ninth-century shape and its accompanying white saucer with lobed rim—are identical to a specimen excavated from Ancestor Liu's tomb in Lincheng, Hebei province, which dates to the tenth year of the Dazhong reign (856).<sup>3</sup> It therefore seems more plausible that the original excavation report, which dated the tomb to the Tang dynasty, was indeed correct. Furthermore, white and yellow-glazed *daibazhuhu* ewers similar to the type 1 ewers from the wreck have been excavated from the tomb of Ancestor Liu, as well as from the tomb of Song Jiajin in Shanxi, which dates to the eighth year of the Zhenyuan period (792).<sup>4</sup>

While no white-glazed type 2 ewers can be found among published archaeological finds from China, excavations have yielded a number of white *daibazhuhu* ewers that are similar in form and possess lion-shaped handles but lack the dragon's head on the spout. One such piece was excavated from the late Tang stratum at the Ding kiln remains in Hebei province,<sup>5</sup> while another was unearthed from Tang tomb number 14 in Bailuyuan, Xian.<sup>6</sup> Although this tomb lacks a clear date, it did yield a black-glazed jar with double-lug that is identical to a jar from the nearby tomb of Li Liang, which dates to the seventeenth year of the Zhenyuan period (801).<sup>7</sup> From this we may infer an early ninth-century date for the type 2 *daibazhuhu* ewers on the Belitung wreck, which conveniently coincides with the date of the Yue and Changsha wares found on the ship. Similarly, the recovered green-glazed, white, three-legged *yu* waterwell, the lid of which bears a pearl-shaped knob, matches quite closely the shape of a vessel excavated from the tomb of Cheng Shaofang (dated to 814) in Yanshi, Henan province.<sup>8</sup>

Apart from burial and other sites in northern China, the majority of late Tang white wares with green décor have been unearthed at Yangzhou, in the Jiangnan region. Excavated samples are very similar in shape and décor to vessels from the shipwreck. For example, the excavations conducted in the 1970s at the remnants of Tang-era Yangzhou yielded a saucer with a four-lobed rim and ring-foot<sup>9</sup> that quite closely matches saucers from the Belitung wreck. Furthermore, a subtype of these vessels—featuring a groove on the exterior wall under the mouth-rim, a corresponding protrusion on the inner wall, and a dragon-chasing-pearl design in molded appliqué relief (highly ornamented ware derived from metalwork)—also has been found among both the cargo of the Belitung (fig. 116) and the Tang dynasty remains in Yangzhou.

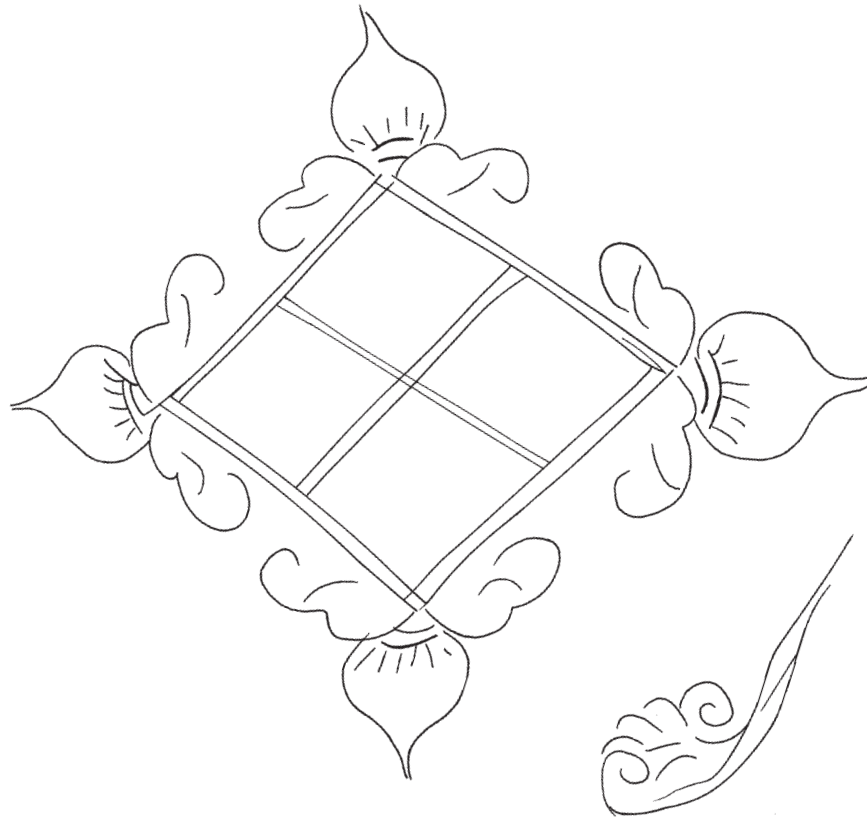
Special attention is due to the more recently discovered large white basin with green décor, wide open mouth, and everted rim<sup>10</sup> excavated from Tang dynasty structural foundations in Yangzhou, as well as the more unusually shaped large, white-glazed, green-spotted dish with wide mouth and flat everted rim.<sup>11</sup> Both share similarities with wares from the Belitung wreck (fig. 117). These finds also have yielded early ninth-century ceramics, such as green-glazed square Yue saucers with incised floral décor, which provide yet further support for the general early ninth-century date of this type of white ware with green décor.

Incidentally, most of the white wares with green décor from the shipwreck were fired by the upright firing technique, which left a set of fine tripod spur marks at the central field of the large everted rim basin. Interestingly, these marks also are seen on the base of the piece.

## Origins

White-glazed earthenware basins with green and brown décor similar to those of the Belitung wreck have been found at the Liuzi canal site in Suixi County, Anhui, as well as in the city of Changzhi, Shanxi.<sup>12</sup> The find at the Liuzi site is particularly noteworthy, as it suggests that the similar wares found at Yangzhou were transported there via canal from the north.

Examples of most types of white ware with green décor unearthed in Yangzhou were found in the wreck. However, the Belitung wares include a considerable number of vessel types and

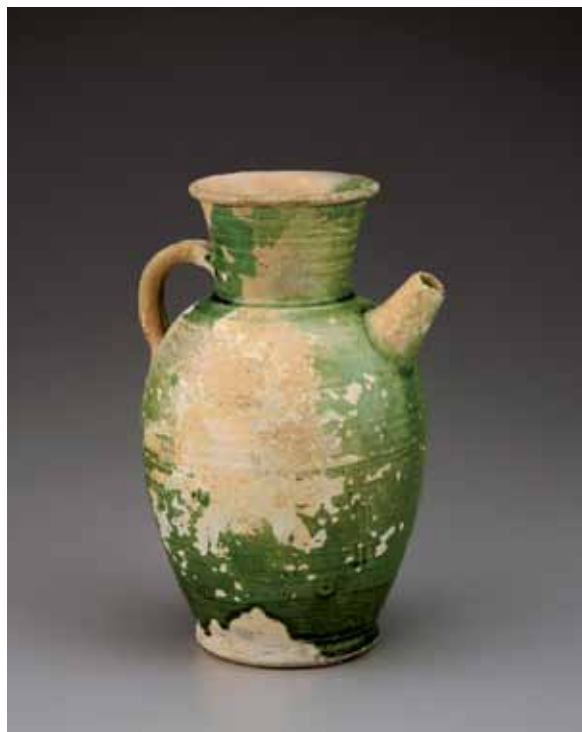


decorative designs that have not been found in Yangzhou. The type of four-lobed saucer associated with Yangzhou is represented in the cargo by a subtype with elaborate intaglio patterns on the central field, which combine floral, foliage, cloud, and butterfly scrolls. A second type has an intaglio design framing geometric patterns within a lozenge-shaped double-border, outside of which are added floral and foliage patterns; this last type of lozenge design also appears on a large white dish with green décor, wide mouth, and flat everted rim.

Décor found on mid- and late Tang lead-glazed earthenware excavated in China consists primarily of molded appliqué and relief designs; intaglio designs are encountered very rarely. Apart from samples found at the Yaozhou kiln remains in Shanxi province,<sup>13</sup> such designs have been discovered only on green-glazed fragments from the tomb of Ancestor Wu in Chaohu, Anhui province, dated to the year 842,<sup>14</sup> and on fish-shaped *sancai* ewers with handles excavated at Yidu, Shandong, and Yangzhou.<sup>15</sup>

However, as we have seen, white wares with green painted décor from the Belitung wreck often are decorated with intaglio designs. The frequent appearance of incised flower designs in the four corners of the lozenge frame conveys a very different overall effect from that of traditional Chinese décor. Moreover, the details of this floral-and-foliage lozenge pattern are greatly varied and freely combined with decorative patterns from other pieces. An example of this is shown on the cover of a very large box, measuring nearly 39 centimeters in diameter, the center of which bears a lotus-flower-bedecked diamond design set off by a cloud scroll (fig. 113).

The most impressive white ware with green décor sporting this lozenge-shape floral design as a central decorative pattern is undoubtedly the huge ewer with strap-handle (*chuandaihu*), which measures more than 1 meter in height (figs. 51, 118). With its globular belly and elongated neck, the main body of the ewer has the shape of a gall-bladder vase. Its neck has an everted mouth-rim with a spout formed by depressions on either side, as well as a triple-stranded handle set between shoulder and rim. A snake head with a gaping mouth and a tongue pointed in the direction of the ewer's mouth is located near the end of the handle, at the point where it connects with the mouth. Underneath the pearl-shaped décor on the lower belly of the vessel is a high, trumpet-shaped foot.



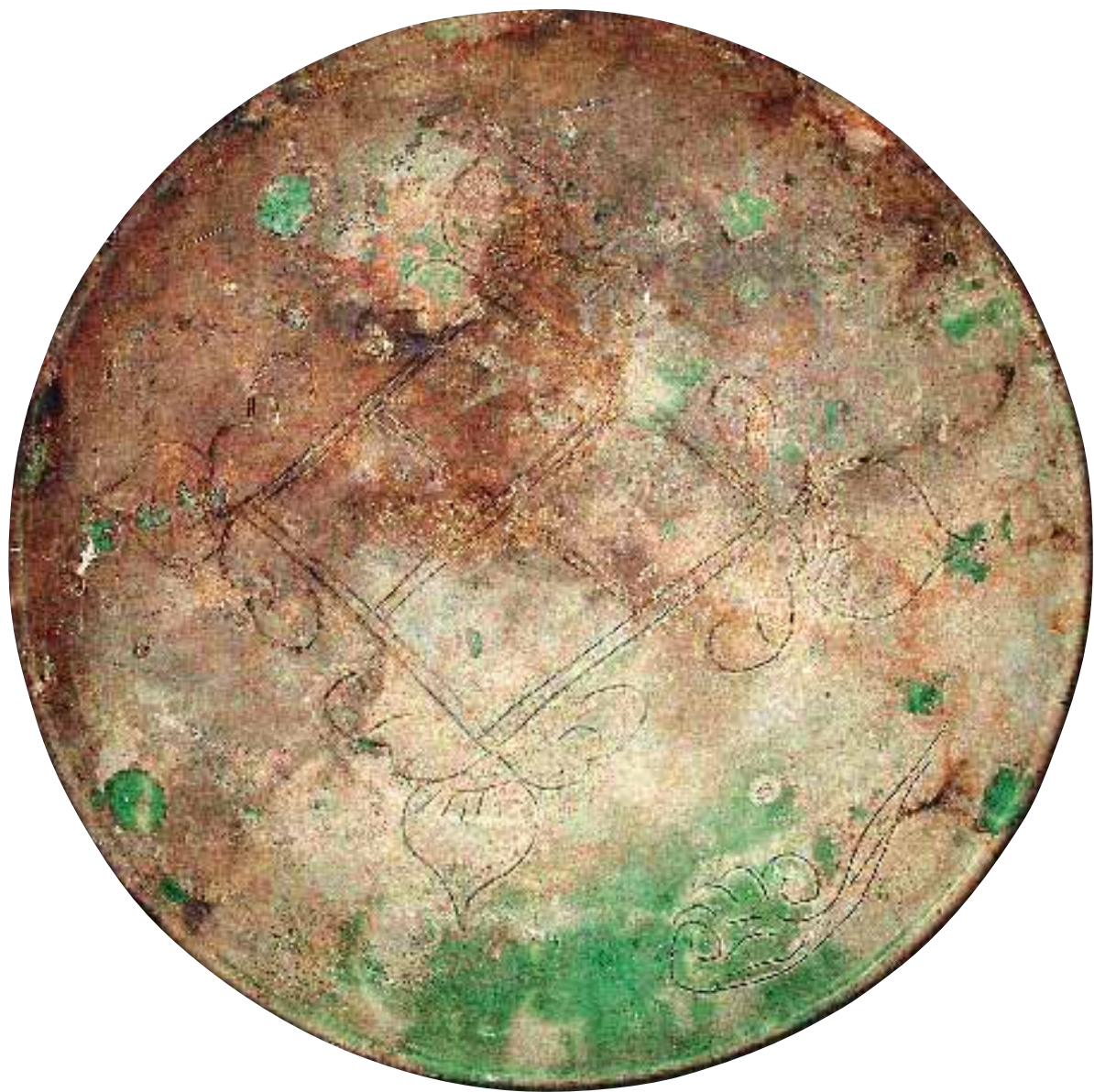
**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT**

**Fig. 109** Saucer, white ware with green décor.

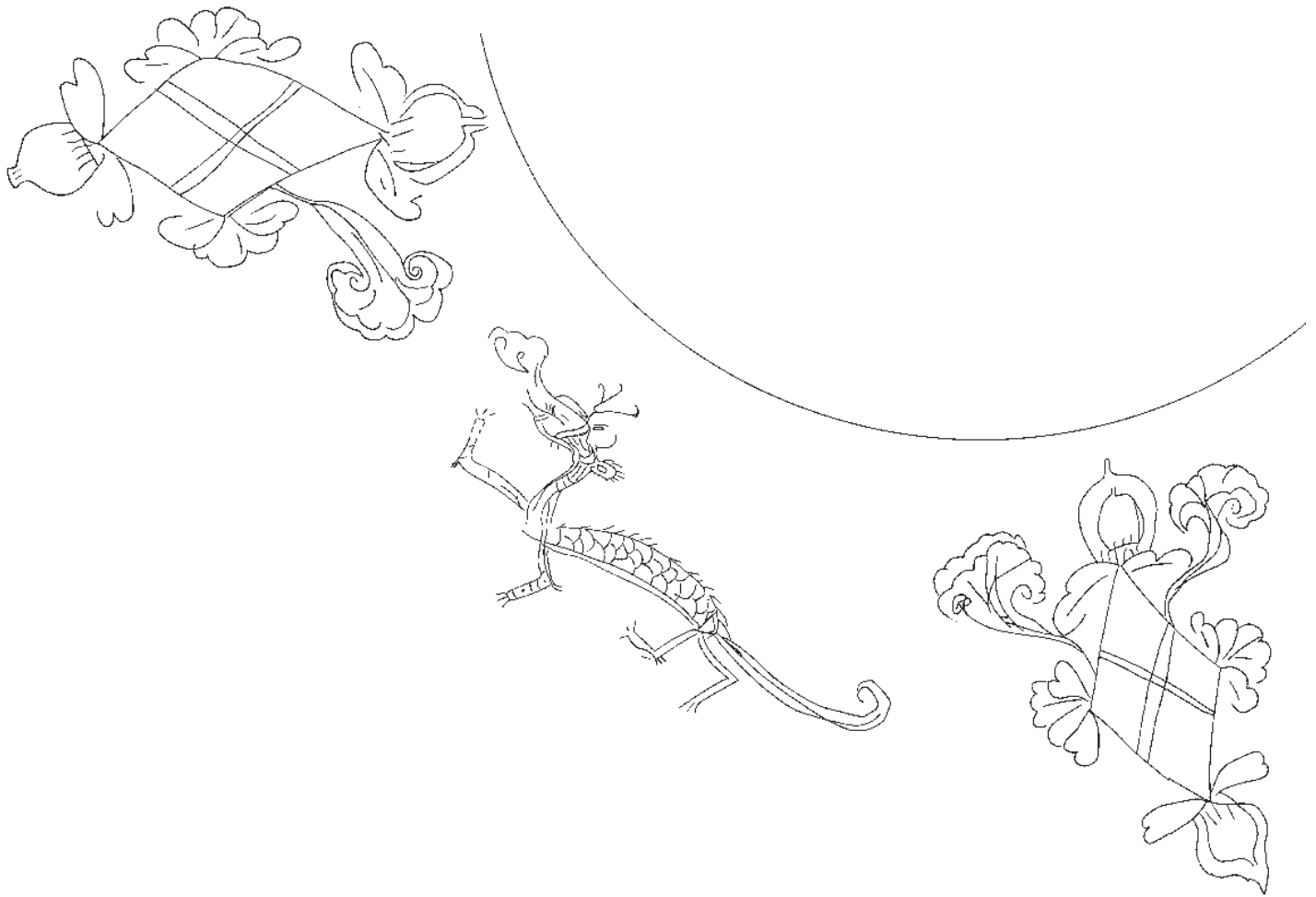
**Fig. 110** Large lidded jar, probably made at the Gongxian kilns in Henan province. Cat. 221.

**Fig. 111** *Zhuhu* ewer, China, Tang dynasty, ca. 825–50, height 19.5 cm.

**Fig. 112** Cup, China, Tang dynasty, ca. 825–50, height 6 cm, diameter 8.2 cm.



**Fig. 113** Box lid featuring the diamond-shaped floral design (see p. 158). China, Tang dynasty, ca. 825-50, white ware with green décor.



**Fig. 114** Drawing with detail of incised decoration—a dragon flanked by the diamond-shaped floral design—on a large ovoid jar from the Belitung wreck. The jar has lost nearly all of its glaze, but traces of green are still discernible, especially within the incised lines.

Also on the wreck was a green-glazed ceramic dragon's head with a mountlike cylinder protruding from its underside. While this head seems to fit the mouth of the large ewer, it is at this point difficult to ascertain whether or not this piece was actually part of a cover that went with the vessel. The whole body shape is noticeably linked to the Hōryū-ji gold- and silver-plated copper water vessel, probably bequeathed in the seventh-century Hakuho era.<sup>16</sup>

Whatever the case, the splendid appearance of the huge ewer is further accentuated by the engraved decoration, covering the body with dense patterns. Cloud scrolls decorate the lobed mouth and shoulder, lotus petals adorn the lower neck and foot, and foliage scrolls embellish the pearl décor on the lower belly. Most striking of all is the diamond-shaped floral and foliage pattern on the central section of the belly, which is framed above and below by a pattern of wavy lines that fills the remaining empty space. Despite the complexity of the motifs, the overall effect is one of symmetry and order.

The fact that this lozenge-shaped floral pattern clearly was favored by potters is further substantiated by the green-glazed jar with wide mouth, rolled lip, and wide shoulders salvaged from the ship. Although this large jar has lost nearly all of its glaze and long-term immersion in water has turned its surface dark brown, remnants of green glaze as well as its general likeness to a lidded white jar with green décor from the same wreck suggest that this also was once a white-glazed piece with green décor. Both sides of the jar bear lozenge-shaped floral and foliage designs, with dragon motifs in between (fig. 114). The shape of the dragon's head is similar to the aforementioned green-glazed dragon's head, while decorative elements such as the pearl-chasing dragon also appear in the molded appliqué design on the center of the white four-petaled bowl with green décor unearthed in Yangzhou.

It is significant to note that, while this lozenge-shaped floral design rarely is seen in Chinese decorative art, it often is encountered on Islamic pottery.<sup>17</sup> The few Chinese pieces decorated with these lozenge patterns were all produced during the ninth century. They include painted Changsha wares<sup>18</sup>; the cover of a cosmetic box from a Tang dynasty tomb in Chenzhou, Hunan<sup>19</sup>; and blue-and-white wares excavated in Yangzhou.<sup>20</sup> Feng Xianming has noted previously that the Yangzhou blue-and-white wares with this design may have been painted by Iranians residing in the port city<sup>21</sup>; insufficient evidence exists to prove this conjecture, intriguing as it is. However, the appearance of this diamond décor on the three blue-and-white specimens from the Belitung wreck (figs. 59, 65, 159), together with the fact that Changsha wares and white wares with green décor were produced for trade purposes, seems to indicate that the design was associated specifically with artifacts manufactured for export. In this respect, we may surmise that the snake-head on the handle of the aforementioned ewer (figs. 51, 118) was similarly added for the export market. On the other hand, the large jar with combined lozenge and dragon design (see fig. 114) is an excellent example of how traditional Chinese designs merged with new decorative patterns.

A large white dish featuring a broad, flat rim, green décor, and a centrally placed, incised, lozenge-shaped floral design (fig. 15) also has been found in the archaeological site of Samarra in Iraq.<sup>22</sup> Samarra, located on the banks of the Tigris some 100 kilometers north of Baghdad, was founded as the capital of the Abbasid Empire in 836 by Caliph al-Mu'tasim. Although the city was still in use at the end of the tenth century, it flourished mainly between 836 and 883, at which point Caliph al-Mu'tamid ordered that the capital be moved back to Baghdad. Initially excavated by German archaeologists in the early twentieth century, the site has yielded a vast number of Islamic and Chinese ceramics. The latter include both green-glazed Yue wares and white wares from the Xing kilns, as well as shards of green-glazed wares, white wares with green-painted décor, and low-fired lead-glazed *sancai* wares with molded floral designs. Even if it is sometimes difficult to clearly distinguish Islamic from Chinese shards, archaeologists have established a reasonably accurate identification system based on a detailed comparison of their ceramic body and glaze. The discovery of a green-glazed fragment—identified as Chinese and bearing an inscription in Kufic script reading “SIN” (China), as well as an Arab inscription that probably identifies the vessel type on certain white wares with green design<sup>23</sup>—lends support to the identification procedure.

Despite differences of opinion concerning a small number of artifacts, specialists generally accept Friedrich Sarre's proposal that white wares with green décor, including those excavated from Samarra and Yangzhou sites, were produced in China. Nevertheless, the question remains as to which particular kiln in China such wares, including those with carved décor, should be assigned. Several hypotheses have been put forward, including Henan province<sup>24</sup>; Gongxian, Henan, or Yaozhou, Shanxi<sup>25</sup>; Henan or Changsha, Hunan<sup>26</sup>; Henan, Shanxi, or even southern kilns<sup>27</sup>; or the Gongxian kilns.<sup>28</sup> While evidence exists to support each of these theories, the Gongxian kiln hypothesis is the most broadly accepted.

### Gongxian Kilns

Scholars who propose the Gongxian kilns as the origin of the white wares with green décor excavated from Samarra, Yangzhou, and other sites base their hypothesis on the following primary points. First, the Gongxian kilns were one of the major producers of *sancai* wares during the High Tang, which have been excavated in Yangzhou and also discovered among export wares in Japan and elsewhere. Second, white wares with green décor unearthed in the Yangzhou area generally are accompanied by late Tang white wares, and analysis of trace elements in the body and glaze of the latter has demonstrated that they originated from Gongxian. Of even greater importance are the results of laboratory tests on white wares with





**LEFT**

**Fig. 115** Four-lobed dish with incised floral spray and insect. Cat. 228.

**Fig. 116** Four-lobed bowl with molded and applied dragon medallion. Cat. 218.

**OPPOSITE**

**Fig. 117** Basin. Cat. 227.

**Fig. 118** Detail of monumental ewer showing incised floral lozenges. See also fig. 51. Cat. 220.



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green décor from Samarra and other sites, which demonstrate that these too were probably produced in Gongxian. (See “Chemical Fingerprinting: Tracing the Origins of the Green-splashed White Ware” by Li Baoping in this volume.)

These assertions are not quite as simple as they may seem. Instrumental neutron activation analysis (INAA) of Tang dynasty *sancai* shards and glazed Islamic wares recovered from such sites as Samarra and Siraf in Iran has led S. J. Fleming and others to propose that the high lead and low iron content of Tang *sancai* wares indicate that they were produced in northern China. Then, based on comparisons with Gongxian kiln shards, these investigators stated that the tested *sancai* shards originate from Gongxian.<sup>29</sup> However, Fleming’s analysis exhibits two fundamental problems. First, the Chinese lead-glazed shards used in these tests came from eighth-century High Tang *sancai* figurines, whose excavation site was unknown. Both their date and questionable provenance make them unsuitable standards for assessing ninth-century Gongxian production. Second, even if they were suitable, the issue of whether or not trace elements in the bodies of *sancai* tomb figurines match those of Gongxian products is entirely unrelated to the question of the provenance of ninth-century white wares with green décor from Samarra and other sites.

By contrast, in the late 1980s Jessica Rawson and her research team used the scanning electron microscope (SEM) method to test white wares with green décor from Fustat, Egypt; Mantai, Sri Lanka; and Samarra. They first divided the samples into Chinese and Islamic categories and then used INAA and statistical cluster analysis to divide the Chinese category of high-lead wares into three subgroups: groups A and B for pieces probably originating from Gongxian and group C for pieces of unknown origin. The two shards from the Mantai site belonged, respectively, to groups A and C, while the samples from Fustat and Samarra were assigned to group A.<sup>30</sup>

It should be noted that, while the standard samples used in these tests included High Tang *sancai* from Gongxian, as well as late Tang white and lead-glazed wares from Shanxi, they did not include shards of late Tang green-painted white ware excavated from kiln remains. Therefore, although the test results did indicate that the Mantai, Fustat, and Samarra white wares with green décor possess characteristics typical of northern Chinese ceramic clays and are texturally similar to Gongxian kiln shards, they did not prove that these wares were produced at Gongxian. High-lead clays are typical of northern Chinese wares, and this alone could explain why the bodies and glaze of most northern wares, regardless of whether they hail from Gongxian, Xing, or other kilns, are very similar.<sup>31</sup>

In this author’s opinion, the large quantity of white ware with green décor from the Belitung shipwreck can be categorized into several groups according to morphology, body, and glaze, which most likely indicates that they came from multiple kilns. For example, the large, thick-bodied white ware basin with green décor and everted rim, featuring the tripod spur mark left at the central field, could possibly be a Gongxian kilns product, based on its similarity to an object excavated from the Huangye kiln site, Gongyi City, in 2003–2004.<sup>32</sup> Still, it is very difficult to identify the origins of many other white wares with green décor in the wreck.

## Xing Kilns

Tang dynasty kilns known to have produced polychrome lead-glazed wares include the Gongxian kilns in Henan province,<sup>33</sup> the Yaozhou kilns in Luoyang<sup>34</sup> and Shanxi provinces,<sup>35</sup> and the Xing kilns in Hebei province.<sup>36</sup> It also appears that the Jingxing kilns of Hebei may have produced similar polychrome lead-glazed wares during the late Tang period.<sup>37</sup> Although none of these sites, except Gongxian, has yielded shards matching the white ware with green décor from the Belitung ship, white ceramics either excavated from the Xing kilns or attributed to the Xing kiln family do match the shapes of some green-glazed white wares, including examples recovered

from the wreck. Examples include the aforementioned *daibazuhu* ewer with lion-shaped handle and dragon's head spout (figs. 122, 125) as well as Xing wares in the Freer Gallery of Art<sup>38</sup> and the Palace Museum in Beijing.<sup>39</sup> In addition, the Xing kiln in Neiqiu yielded a pair of bowls—one with a constricted mouth, the other with an inverted rim—dateable to the mid-Tang and very similar in shape to a white bowl with green décor recovered from the Belitung wreck.<sup>40</sup> This bowl, which features a *bi*-disc foot, straight mouth, and curved sides, is similar to Xing kiln samples not only in terms of shape<sup>41</sup> but also in the execution of the foot. Its faceted outer wall, sharp-edged inner wall, and irregular finishing marks on the base are classic features of the *bi*-disc foot found on white Xing ware.

A further point of connection with the Xing kilns is a green-glazed bowl with petaled mouth recovered from the wreck (fig. 43). Fired on a pronged support, the bowl is marked with the character *ying*, carved on its base. Other well-known examples of vessels with this inscription have been excavated from the Tang dynasty sites of Qinglongsi,<sup>42</sup> Ximingsi,<sup>43</sup> and Daminggong<sup>44</sup> in Shanxi province as well as in the tomb of Sun Shaoju (dated 864) in Yi County, Hebei province.<sup>45</sup> The fact that all of these specimens are white wares, together with the discovery of many shards with the same carved inscription at Xing kiln sites,<sup>46</sup> has led scholars to attribute white wares inscribed with the character *ying* to the Xing kilns.

The tomb of Sun Shaoju also yielded a ewer with a trumpet-shaped mouth and flower appliqué covered by a low-fired lead glaze, as well as a ewer with petaled mouth, slender expanding neck, and round belly.<sup>47</sup> The shape of the latter vessel matches that of the large *chuandaihu* ewer with the floral lozenge décor from the shipwreck, while the appliqué decorative technique found on the former appears on samples of white ware from the Xing kilns.<sup>48</sup> While it should be acknowledged that such a comparison at most may serve as an indirect sourcing aid, it is therefore possible that the late Tang lead-glazed ceramics from the same tomb also might hail from the Xing kilns, as might the white *daibazuhu* ewer with *ying* inscription.

## Made for Export

The many white cups with green décor from the shipwreck form another highly interesting group (figs. 52, 119–121). One type of cup has a wide mouth, straight spreading sides, and narrow waist, with the occasional addition of a footring and a double-stranded handle, on top of which a *ruyi* cloud-shaped loop with molded floral design is set. The décor of the loop and the shape of the handle are both identical to those on the shoulder and belly of a small low-fired *sancai zhuhu* ewer with spout unearthed from Tang period tomb no. 132 in Nanliwang Village, Shanxi.<sup>49</sup> These specimens, therefore, must have been produced at the same kiln.

One of the most interesting cup types found on the wreck has a long-stemmed, trumpet-shaped foot. Two types can be distinguished from this category. Type 1 has a bamboo section style handle, above which there is appliqué décor in the shape of a dragon or fish. Type 2 has a small hole perforated in its center, above which there is appliqué décor in the shape of a turtle, duck, or fish. On the outer wall is applied a hollow tube, one end of which extends slightly higher than the rim, while the other follows the vessel body down to the foot, where it connects with the central perforation, thus serving as a kind of straw. While this type of design is very rare, the Musée Guimet in Paris does have a comparable green-glazed piece with duck-appliqué in the center field.<sup>50</sup> On the other hand, the so-called “water-sucking cup,” a green-glazed piece excavated from the Jiaoyu Xueyuan site in Yangzhou and identified as Tang dynasty Gongxian ware,<sup>51</sup> also might belong to this same vessel type. Since the published report does not provide a photographic reproduction, this possibility remains to be confirmed.

The *Guihai Yuheng Zhi* by Fan Chengda (1126–1191) of the Song dynasty mentions a ceramic vessel known as a “nose-drinking cup” (*biyin bei*). It notes that “along the side of the cup a small tube is set like the mouth of a vase, so that one may draw wine through the tube with one’s nose,





**OPPOSITE, LEFT TO RIGHT**

**Fig. 119** Exterior view of stemcup with fish decoration. The presence of stemcups on the Belitung ship indicates that they likely were made for export. Cat. 212.

**Fig. 120** Exterior view of stemcup with turtle and drinking tube; for interior view, see above. Cat. 214.

**ABOVE**

**Fig. 121** Stemcups with fish, duck, and tortoise decoration. Several feature tubes for drinking wine through the nose, described by one 12th-century source as an “infinitely pleasant” sensation. Cats. 211–217.

and in the summer, water. It is said that it is infinitely pleasant to drink water straight from the nose into the throat.”<sup>52</sup> The close similarity between this description and the design of the cup found in the wreck suggests that “nose-drinking” was quite possibly its original function. Although fragments of similar green-glazed white ware specimens also have been unearthed at Samarra,<sup>53</sup> it may be that their small size or the widespread unfamiliarity with the piece from the Musée Guimet has led to the mistaken identification of these pieces as fragments of vases or *shuizhu* ewers.<sup>54</sup>

The preservation of the nose-drinking cups in the cargo of the Belitung suggests that they were mainly intended for export, which may be why, in China, they have been found only in the port city of Yangzhou. But what is the origin of this ingenious device? According to the investigated kiln data, the Gongxian kilns, while famous for manufacturing Tang *sancai* ware, also produced this kind of cup.<sup>55</sup> The question, then, is whether a green-decorated white nose-drinking cup excavated from the Gongxian kilns site implies that the similar objects found in the shipwreck were produced there. According to Liu Lanhua, who participated in the investigation and the writing of the excavation report, there are differences between the nose-drinking cups from the Gongxian kilns and those from the shipwreck in morphology, body, and glaze. Unlike the Gongxian wares’ dense, bright color, and slightly rounded shape, the Belitung ship’s nose-drinking cups feature transparent white glaze and a pale green color on the thin body.<sup>56</sup> It is not clear whether these differences are due to different quality requirements within the same kiln or if the fine-bodied white ware with green décor found in the wreck is from other unknown kilns. It is worth noting, though, that scientific analysis conducted by Li Baoping indicates that the white wares with green décor salvaged from the shipwreck—including the nose-drinking cups—originate from Gongxian.<sup>57</sup>

## Tribute Wares

Not all of the wreck’s white wares with green décor were produced explicitly for the export market. Some may have been used instead as tribute wares. During the Kaiyuan reign period (713–41), the court maintained two storehouses, Daying and Qionglin, for personal palace use. The former mainly received goods such as money, silks, and damasks, and the latter was used to store gold, silverware, pewter, silk, brocade, utensils, and all sorts of miscellaneous goods. Although these goods were primarily obtained via the regional tribute system, a certain number also were extorted from people by officials wishing to offer additional tribute to the emperor.<sup>58</sup> Two dishes from the shipwreck’s cargo feature inscriptions, carved on their clay bases before they were glazed and fired. One features the characters *jinfeng* (“offered in tribute”) and the other features the character *ying*, referring to the Daying storehouse (figs. 43, 45).

The use of white wares with green décor as items of tribute supports the theory that they were made in the Xing kilns, rather than in Gongxian. While the Tang dynasty gazetteer *Yuanhe Junxianzhi* records that the Gongxian kilns produced white tribute wares during the Kaiyuan period, Song dynasty historian Ouyang Xiu records in the *Xin Tangshu* that it was Julu Prefecture, Xingzhou, that produced ceramics for tribute. Henan prefecture instead produced bowls and cooking pots.<sup>59</sup>

According to Wang Yongxing, the timeframe of a regional tribute recorded in the *Xin Tangshu* corresponds roughly to the fourth year of the Changqing reign period (821–24).<sup>60</sup> Tang dynasty records also repeatedly refer to tribute visits by envoys from Persia and Arabia.<sup>61</sup> From the *Zizhi Tongjian*, in particular, we know that the Iranian embassy of Li Susha arrived by sea in the ninth month of the fourth year of the Changqing reign (824) to offer a special type of timber, agarwood, for the construction of the famous Shenxiang pavilion.<sup>62</sup> It is possible that, like Li Susha, the owner of the Belitung ship transported tribute goods and, as a result, obtained ceramics and other items that originally belonged to the imperial storehouses. These most likely

were received as gifts or through some other form of transaction with imperial commissioners.<sup>63</sup> The fact that wares marked with the characters *ying* or *jinfeng* have been recovered from non-palace sites also indicates that tribute ware could, at times, have served as a commodity. Taking all of this into consideration—as well as the presence of a piece of Changsha ware dated 826 (fig. 12) also found in the Belitung ship—it seems possible that the wreck’s wares with green décor inscribed with these characters came out of imperial storehouses to become tribute wares of the Changqing reign.

On the other hand, the white wares with green décor and green wares excavated from Samarra in Iraq have been discovered only among the remains of the grand palace and the inner palace complex, which underlines the degree to which these wares were treasured.<sup>64</sup> The eleventh-century Iranian historian Bayhaqi (995–1077) records that during the reign of Caliph Harun al-Rashid (786–809), the governor of Khurasan, ‘Ali ibn ‘Isa, once made tribute to the caliph of 2,000 pieces of exquisite porcelain. Bayhaqi further notes that these wares included twenty (the Russian translation mentions 200) previously unseen pieces of “imperial China-ware” (*chini faghfuri*).<sup>65</sup> Although we do not know what these wares looked like, it is clear that ceramics marked with the characters *ying* and *jinfeng* indeed made up a portion of Tang dynasty “imperial household” wares.



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