

## ANNAMESE WALL TILES

Annamese wall tiles were produced specifically and exclusively for the East Java, Indonesia market centered at Trowulan. The period of manufacture was confined to the 15th century, and although a specific kiln site has not yet been identified they were probably made in Hai Duong Province in the vicinity of Chu Dao in northern Vietnam. Used in mosques, temples, royal palaces and tombs, the tiles are still visible in situ up to the present day at the Great Mosque at Demak - the Masjid Agung (variously reported to contain 56, 60, or 65 tiles), the Menara Kudus Mosque near Demak (one tile over gateway), and the tomb of Sunan Bonang in Tuban (one tile mounted on wall).

The tiles were predominately decorated in underglaze blue, as well as underglaze blue with enamels, polychrome enamels (red, green, yellow), along with limited quantities in molded relief with white glaze. They were produced in a variety of shapes including rectangular, square, oval, circular, trefoil, quatrefoil, octagon, hexagon, cruciform, lobed, and cartouche. The tiles were adorned primarily with floral motifs such as chrysanthemum, lotus, and peony. Crane, phoenix and other birds, as well as animals including *qilin* and other mythical creatures were also used as decorative motifs. Geometric motifs, including cloud forms, were also utilized. Tiles with other décor were also produced including an unusual specimen with a Javanese *kala* monster mask, which is now in a London private collection.

The tiles were of slab construction, with high foot in the form of thick projections along the rim for insertion into the wall, the recessed underside generally lightly glazed, typically with crossbar brackets as braces for support, and containing perforations for inserting fasteners. The average diameter of the tiles was 18 centimeters to 25 centimeters (with a range of 15 centimeters to 30 centimeters).

The tiles are an interesting example of the specialized nature of trade, during the period of the 15th century, with specific orders produced in Vietnam, in rather limited quantities, for a unique market demand in East Java. Examples have not been found in Vietnam or anywhere else. Approximately 300 kilograms of tile fragments were collected during early excavations at Trowulan and

additional amounts at subsequent dates. The tiles, consisting primarily of shards, are found in various private and public collections including the Princeshof Museum in Leeuwarden, the Freer Gallery of Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (one tile - Accession Number 1996.453), AP Rajah Collection at the Asian Civilizations Museum and the National University of Singapore, Machida City Museum in Tokyo, the Art Gallery of South Australia at Adelaide, Museum Pusat Jakarta, and the Trowulan Archeological Museum.

Wall tiles rather similar in some respects were also produced in China in the 14th century at the Cizhou kilns, Hebei Province and have also been found in limited numbers at Trowulan. These also appear to be unique to East Java, have not been found elsewhere, and may possibly represent forerunners of the Vietnamese tiles.

Annamese wall tiles (26 fragments) are represented in the Collection of this writer by the following:

**V-266 (1 of 3)** - wall tile fragment decorated on the face in underglaze blue with a peony spray with spiky leaves overhead enclosed within a triple line border, sides are plain, oval shape; deeply recessed underside lightly glazed, body is compact and putty colored, D: 8.9 centimeters.

**V-271 (25 of 25)** - fragments of underglaze blue decorated tiles (23) along with two (2) underglaze iron-brown decorated fragments (Complete Catalogue Entry reproduced below).

## **References**

Asian Civilizations Museum Singapore, April 2011 - various Annamese wall tiles on exhibit.

Bui Minh Tri and Kerry Nguyen-Long, 2001. *Vietnamese Blue & White Ceramics*. Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House.

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Complete Catalogue Entry for V-271 (25 of 25) reproduced below:

Vietnamese wall tiles (25), fragments of underglaze blue decorated tiles (23) along with two (2) underglaze iron-brown decorated fragments. The tiles represented consist of the following shapes: rectangular, square, cruciform, lobed, polygonal, quatrefoil, oval, circular, polygonal lobed, and octagonal. The tiles are adorned primarily with floral motifs, but fauna and geometric motifs are also represented. Floral motifs include peony blossoms along with sprays and scrolls, lotus leaf and tendrils, various leaf and floral elements, *lingzhi* fungus, leaf sprays, blossom elements in outline form reserved in white on blue ground, peony sprays in outline form reserved in white on a lightly shaded blue ground, chrysanthemum blossoms, and peony blossoms with leaf sprays reserved in cream-white on a dark iron-brown ground. Fauna represented consist of qilin, phoenix (head, tail, wing), qilin or avian (tail), and bird head amid disparate elements. Representation of geometric motifs consist of triangular shaped elements, interlocking volutes, radiating panels with triangular shape filler separated by chain-like elements, molded divider elements filled with classic scroll, key fret border, and diamond shape border elements reserved in cream-white on a dark iron-brown ground.

The tone of underglaze blue of the tiles varies from luminous and brilliant blue (No. 1) to light blue (No. 18) to dark, nearly blackish blue (Nos. 2 and 9). Body of the fragments visible at the unglazed high foot is compact and putty colored. The glaze applied to the recessed underside ranges from only a minute trace of glaze

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**V-271 (Continued)**

(fragment No. 23) to a very liberal application of glaze (fragment No. 15). However, the recessed underside of both the iron-brown decorated specimens (No. 24 and No. 25) is unglazed. The glazed sides of all the fragments are plain, except for the small circular perforation in the side of fragment No. 12. The crossbar brackets designed to act as braces for support are clearly visible on fragments No. 16 and No. 21.

The Annamese wall tiles were especially and exclusively produced for the Majapahit empire with the only known examples having been found in Java, Indonesia. The matrix which follows lists each of the wall tile fragments in terms of the intact tile shape, portions of the shard preserved, a brief description, and diameter (D) or length (L) in centimeters of the individual item.

**Vietnamese: 15th century.**

**Provenance: Trowulan excavations, East Java, Indonesia - acquired in Indonesia (April 2014 - \$175).**

**For additional information on the Trowulan, East Java excavations refer to catalogue entry Y-135.**

**On the basis of a solitary shard it is sometimes not possible to definitively identify the original intact ceramic form. Similarly, the original décor of the intact ceramic form may not be completely and conclusively revealed from a single shard. In these instances**

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**V-271** (Continued)

carefully considered judgments have been arrived at based on detailed examination of the characteristics of the individual shard, as well as comparison with similar material.

**REFERENCES**

**V-271 (1 of 25)** - compare with the tile with a qilin illustrated in Marie-France Dupoizat, *Catalogue of the Chinese Style Ceramics of Majapahit*, page 99, No. 55.

**V-271 (3 of 25)** - compare with the tile with a qilin (especially the tail) illustrated in Marie-France Dupoizat, *Catalogue of the Chinese Style Ceramics of Majapahit*, page 99, No. 56.

**V-271 (4 of 25)** - compare with the tile with a phoenix illustrated in John Guy, *Ceramic Traditions of South-East Asia*, Color Plate 22; and illustrated again in J. Stevenson and J. Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A Separate Tradition*, page 347, No. 313 (described as a crane).

**V-271 (5 of 25)** - for a tile with various commonalities in décor see Marie-France Dupoizat, *Catalogue of the Chinese Style Ceramics of Majapahit*, page 100, No. 63.

**V-271 (6 of 25)** - a tile with similar phoenix head flanked by peonies is illustrated in Marie-France Dupoizat, *Catalogue of the Chinese Style Ceramics of Majapahit*, page 100, No. 63.

**V-271 (7 of 25)** - similar tiles are illustrated in J. Stevenson and J. Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A Separate Tradition*, page 346, No. 311 and No. 312.

**V-271 (8 of 25)** - compare with the tile illustrated in Marie-France Dupoizat, *Catalogue of the Chinese Style Ceramics of Majapahit*, page 100, No. 63.

**V-271 (11 of 25)** - compare with the tiles with a *lingzhi* with similar shape border pattern illustrated in Marie-France Dupoizat, *Catalogue of the Chinese Style Ceramics of Majapahit*, page 99, No. 55 and No. 56. (Continued)



**V-271** (Continued)

**V-271 (13 of 25)** - compare with the tile fragment illustrated in Marie-France Dupoizat, *Catalogue of the Chinese Style Ceramics of Majapahit*, page 102, No. 70 - upper right.

**V-271 (15 of 25)** - a similar tile fragment is illustrated in Cheng Lammers and Abu Ridho, *Annamese Ceramics in the Museum Pusat Jakarta*, page 26, No. 5A0/O - second from lower left.

**V-271 (16 of 25)** - a similar tile fragment is illustrated in Cheng Lammers and Abu Ridho, *Annamese Ceramics in the Museum Pusat Jakarta*, page 26, No. 5A0/O - far right; illustrated again in John Guy, *Oriental Trade Ceramics in South-East Asia: Ninth to Sixteenth Centuries*, page 61, Fig. 12 - far right; and illustrated yet again in Abu Ridho, *Oriental Ceramics: The World's Great Collections*, Vol. 3, Museum Pusat, Jakarta, No. 94 - lower left. See also another very similar fragment in John Miksic, *Southeast Asian Ceramics: New Light on Old Pottery*, page 87, illustration e.

**V-271 (17 of 25)** - compare with the tile fragment illustrated in Cheng Lammers and Abu Ridho, *Annamese Ceramics in the Museum Pusat Jakarta*, page 26, No. 5A0/O - second from lower left.

**V-271 (19 of 25)** - a very similar hexagonal tile is illustrated in C. M. Young, *Vietnamese Ceramics*, page 44, fig. k.

**V-271 (22 of 25)** - compare with the central peony of the tile illustrated in J. Stevenson and J. Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A Separate Tradition*, page 346, No. 312.

**V-271 (24 of 25)** - compare with the keyfret variant on the tile fragment illustrated in Marie-France Dupoizat, *Catalogue of the Chinese Style Ceramics of Majapahit*, page 102, No. 68.

**V-271 (25 of 25)** - see the very similar border on the tile fragment in Marie-France Dupoizat, *Catalogue of the Chinese Style Ceramics of Majapahit*, page 102, No. 69; see also Bui Minh Tri and Kerry Nguyen-Long, *Vietnamese Blue & White Ceramics*, page 178, Fig. K (tile fragment with a similar diamond border pattern, but reserved in brown on a white ground).

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**V-271 (Continued)**

<b>TROWULAN SHARDS - ANNAMENSE WALL TILES</b>			
<b>V-271 (1 of 25) to V-271 (13 of 25) - All Underglaze Blue Décor</b>			
<b>CATALOGUE NUMBER</b>	<b>SHAPE &amp; PORTIONS</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>D/L CM</b>
V-271 (1 of 25)	Rectangular Face & Side	Qilin with head turned to rear, upright tripartite tail with outward projecting streamers - all within a double line border.	L: 8.2
V-271 (2 of 25)	Rectangular Face & Side	Peony spray enclosed within a multi-line border.	L: 8.1
V-271 (3 of 25)	Rectangular Face & Side	Qilin or avian (tail) with circular element enclosed within a triple line border.	L: 6.3
V-271 (4 of 25)	Rectangular Face & Side	Phoenix (tail) with enclosed within a double line border.	L: 4.6
V-271 (5 of 25)	Cruciform or Polygonal Face & Side	Portions of a phoenix wing within double line borders; triangular shaped double line border outlined elements.	L: 6.9
V-271 (6 of 25)	Cruciform or Lobed Face & Side	Alert phoenix with mouth agape amid peony blossoms enclosed within a double line border; above are inverted triangular shaped double line outlined elements.	L: 8.1
V-271 (7 of 25)	Polygonal Face & Side	Lotus leaf and tendrils enclosed within a double line border.	L: 6.5
V-271 (8 of 25)	Cruciform or Quatrefoil Face & Side	Triangular shaped element within a double line outlined border.	L: 5.1
V-271 (9 of 25)	Polygonal Face & Side	Scrolling double outlined leaf or floral elements within a double line border.	L: 5.9
V-271 (10 of 25)	Oval or Lobed Face & Side	Large fragment with peony scroll - blossoms in outline form and leaves heavily shaded - all enclosed within multi-line borders.	D: 17.1
V-271 (11 of 25)	Lobed or Cruciform Face & Side	<i>Lingzhi</i> fungus in outline form enclosed within a triple line border.	L: 11.0
V-271 (12 of 25)	Oval Face & Side	Scrolling outlined leaf or floral elements within a triple line border; small circular perforation in the side.	L: 8.9
V-271 (13 of 25)	Oval Face & Side	Scrolling outlined leaf or floral elements within a triple line border; small circular perforation in the side.	D: 5.7

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**V-271 (Continued)**

<b>TROWULAN SHARDS - ANNAMESE WALL TILES</b>			
<b>V-271 (14 of 25) to V-271 (25 of 25) - Underglaze Blue Décor</b>			
<b>(except No. 24 &amp; No. 25)</b>			
<b>CATALOGUE NUMBER</b>	<b>SHAPE &amp; PORTIONS</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>D/L CM</b>
V-271 (14 of 25)	Polygonal Lobed Face & Side	Leaf sprays in outline form within a multi-line border and a chain-like element.	L: 11.6
V-271 (15 of 25)	Polygonal Lobed Face & Side	Interlocking volutes in outline form, lightly shaded blossoms, some with tightly lobed edge; thick glaze on recessed underside.	D: 8.6
V-271 (16 of 25)	Circular Face	Border of radiating panels with triangular shape filler separated by chain-like elements; outlined leaf forms below within multi-line borders.	D: 8.3
V-271 (17 of 25)	Polygonal Lobed Face	Interlocking volutes in outline form, lightly shaded blossoms.	D: 4.5
V-271 (18 of 25)	Polygonal Lobed Face & Side	Blossom element in outline form reserved in white on blue ground.	D: 4.1
V-271 (19 of 25)	Octagonal Face & Side	Peony spray in outline form reserved in white on a lightly shaded blue ground.	D: 4.9
V-271 (20 of 25)	Lobed Face & Side	Molded divider elements filled with classic scroll within single line borders.	L: 6.5
V-271 (21 of 25)	Square or Rectangular Face	Bird head is outlined amid a profusion of outlined and shaded volutes, swirls, and seemingly indiscriminate elements.	L: 8.5
V-271 (22 of 25)	Indeterminate Face	Peony blossom in outline form, heavily shaded leaf attached.	L: 7.0
V-271 (23 of 25)	Indeterminate Face	Outlined chrysanthemum blossom, recessed underside with only minute trace of glaze.	L: 4.1
V-271 (24 of 25)	Rectangular Face & Side	Key fret border and floral spray in lobed panel - all in dark iron-brown and enclosed within line borders; underside unglazed.	L: 14.9
V-271 (25 of 25)	Rectangular Face & Side	Diamond shape border elements and peony blossoms with leaf sprays - all reserved in cream-white on dark iron-brown ground and enclosed within line borders; underside unglazed.	L: 12.9

### **Catalogue Entry Y-135 (Excerpt)**

**Trowulan** is located approximately 60 kilometers southwest of the busy port city of Surabaya in East Java. This now quiet town and surrounding area once housed the capital of the powerful and influential Hindu-Buddhist Majapahit empire. Reigning throughout the 14th and 15th centuries, it was also arguably the largest ever kingdom in Southeast Asia. Based on the findings of both the remains of ancient buildings and human settlements, as well as individual artifacts, it has been proposed that the capital city of Majapahit in Trowulan covered an area of 9 kilometers by 11 kilometers, or approximately 100 square kilometers. Thousands of artifacts from the Trowulan site have been discovered and preserved. Most of the artifacts recovered by archeologists, and many of those found by the local community, are maintained at the Majapahit Information Centre or the *Pusat Informasi Majapahit* (PIM). The Majapahit artifacts may be classified based upon their material composition as follows: terracotta artifacts, metal and stone, and ceramics.

The ceramic artifacts include plates, bowls, ewers, and vases, either locally made or of foreign origin. The foreign wares consist of Chinese, Vietnamese and Thai ceramics. Of particular note are the large quantities of Longquan celadons and the Yuan blue and white wares found. Vietnamese ceramics recovered have included monochrome beige-cream wares, as well as underglaze blue wares including wall tiles. Thai ceramics excavated include Sukhothai wares with both fish and floral motif, along with Sisatchanalai celadons and early underglaze black decorated wares.

The Trowulan Site was the location of the capital city of the Majapahit empire for more than 200 years, between the late 13th to late 15th century AD. It was therefore at the height of its wealth and power during the mid 14th century. This coincides with the period of the peak of production for Yuan blue and white wares. During this period large quantities of high quality wares were produced. Only as a result of the interest and demand for the Yuan blue and white wares available, along with the resources to acquire the wares, was the acquisition of the wares made possible. This combination of fortuitous circumstances has resulted in a significant number of Yuan blue and white wares being recovered from the Trowulan site.