

MAE NAM NAN RIVER, PHITSANULOK, THAILAND - MING CERAMICS FINDINGS

The Mae Nam Nan River is one of the most important tributaries of the main river of Thailand, the Chao Phraya. One of the early riverside urban areas of the Mae Nam Nan emerging during the era of the Khmer Empire was *Muang Song Kwae* (town of the two rivers) as the site of present day Phitsanulok was then named due to the fact that there were then two rivers running through the town.

Phitsanulok is one of the oldest cities in Thailand, founded over 600 years ago, and which over the years has developed into the modern city of today and the provincial capital of the lower north. On one of the banks of the Mae Nam Nan River is an ancient temple from the Sukhothai period, Wat Phra Sri Rattana Mahathat, which houses a magnificent large bronze Buddha image, Phra Buddha Chinnarat. This is one of the most revered Buddha images in Thailand.

Located 60 kilometers east of the city of Sukhothai, Phitsanulok is the only place in Thailand where houseboats are legal, as they have been an important aspect of regional culture since long before the drafting of modern municipal law. People of Phitsanulok still gather on houseboats and raft houses along both sides of the Nan River in the city, and many adhere to a traditional way of life.

Thai and Chinese ceramics are periodically recovered from the Mae Nam Nan River, often during periods of drought and low water levels. Thai wares recovered include Sisatchanalai wares, Sukhothai ceramics, as well as wares from the Ban Tao Hai Kilns, along with other Phitsanulok area kilns. Chinese ceramics recovered include Ming and Qing blue and white wares, polychrome and monochrome brown wares, as well as Swatow (Zhangzhou) ceramics.

Ceramics Catalogue entry M-460 describes the Ming ceramics findings, which were acquired from a resident of Phitsanulok; the excerpt follows below:

M-460 MAE NAM NAN RIVER, PHITSANULOK, THAILAND - MING FINDINGS

Ming ceramic shards (12) from the Mae Nam Nan riverine recoveries in Phitsanulok, Thailand comprised of Jingdezhen wares (10) and Swatow (Zhangzhou) wares (2). All are decorated in underglaze blue and have abraded glaze from prolonged exposure to the sandy riverbed of the Mae Nam Nan. The Jingdezhen shards are from a large plate, bowls, dishes, and a jarlet. There are underglaze blue base marks on two, another two are from hole-bottom saucers, and three have polychrome enamels along with underglaze blue décor. The Jingdezhen wares are fine grained with cream colored body (a bit coarser and darker in tone on No. 4 and No. 9). The Swatow shards are from two bowls, both with typical waxy textured light bluish-white glaze. Texture of the body of the Swatow wares is compact and dark cream to very light buff in color.

The matrix below lists each of the shards in terms of the form of the intact ceramic, type of shard, general description, and diameter (D) or length (L) in centimeters of each individual shard.

Ming: late 15th century to late 16th/early 17th century.

Provenance: Mae Nam Nan riverine recoveries, Phitsanulok, Thailand - acquired in Thailand (May 2013).

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M-460 (Continued)

REFERENCES

M-460 (1 of 12) - compare with the large 15th century dish, similarly decorated at the foliated rim, illustrated in Rose Kerr, *The World in Blue and White: An Exhibition of Blue and White Ceramics, Dating - Between 1320 and 1820, from Members of the Oriental Ceramic Society*, page 27, Plate 62; and with the large dishes in Franck Goddio, et. al., *Lost at Sea: the Strange Route of the Lena Shoal Junk*, page 123, No. 52, and page 124, No. 56 (similar in size, with analogous motif at the foliated rim, and same type of undercut base).

M-460 (2 of 12) - hole-bottom dishes with similar *vajra* motifs are illustrated in J. M. Addis, "Some Buddhist Motifs as a Clue to Dating", *Manila Trade Pottery Seminar*, pages 10 and 11, plates 1 and 3; Dawn F. Rooney, "The Recessed Base (Hole- Bottom) Saucer," *Arts of Asia*, Volume 12, Number 1, January - February 1982, page 115, Figure 1; T. Yeo and J. Martin, *Chinese Blue & White Ceramics*, page 161, No. 119, Plate 65; and Sotheby Parke Bernet (New York) *Catalogue of Later Chinese Ceramics and South East Asian Wares*, April 10, 1974, lot 37. For bowls with a comparable *vajra* motif see Regina Krahl, *Chinese Ceramics in the Topkapi Saray Museum Istanbul, Volume II - Yuan and Ming Dynasty Porcelains*, page 551, Catalogue No. 683 and No. 684; William Sorsby, *South-East Asian and Early Chinese Export Ceramics*, page 61, No. 91 and No. 92; and Monique Crick, *Chinese Trade Ceramics for South-East Asia*, page 308, No. 193. See also the earlier dish and bowls with *vajra* dated to the Interregnum Period (1436 to 1464) illustrated in Larry Gotuaco, Rita C. Tan and Allison Diem, *Chinese and Vietnamese Blue and White Wares Found in the Philippines*, page 127, Pl. M 17 (dish), page 129, Pl. M 19 (bowl), and page 131, Pl. M 21 (bowl). Refer as well to M-183 for a hole-bottom saucer with a quite similar *vajra*.

M-460 (3 of 12) - may be compared with the very similar hole-bottom dish with everted rim from the South Sulawesi excavations in Indonesia catalogued as M-240, and with the other hole-bottom dishes very similarly decorated in the center: M-006, M-005 and M-182.

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M-460 (Continued)

M-460 (4 of 12) - for the illustration of similar jarlets refer to Columbus Museum of Art, *Shadow of the Dragon - Exhibition Catalogue*, No. 143; and W. Sorsby, *South-east Asian and Early Chinese Export Ceramics*, No. 101 (jarlet with cover). Compare also with the similar jarlet at M-070, and the other similar, but earlier dated, jarlets at M-410 from the Tet shipwreck in Vietnam.

M-460 (6 of 12) - a very similar dish is illustrated in The Oriental Ceramic Society, London, *The World in Blue and White*, page 51, No. 137 (D: 10 cm.); compare also with the very similar, but slightly larger dishes at M-Uncataloged - 02 from the South Sulawesi excavations in Indonesia.

M-460 (7 of 12) - similar bowls are illustrated in Le Thi Thanh Ha, *Gom Su Thoi Minh (The Ming Dynasty's Ceramics)*, page 40, No. 3 and page 41, No. 5; see also the similar bowls at M-394 from the Belanakan No. 2 (Untung Jawa) shipwreck in Indonesia.

M-460 (10 of 12) - compare with the bowl decorated in underglaze blue and overglaze enamels (dated to the late 16th century) illustrated in Sumitr Pitiphat, *Ceramics from the Thai - Burma Border*, page 185, Plate 284.

M-460 (11 of 12) - compare with similar bowls illustrated in Christie's (Melbourne), *The Binh Thuan Shipwreck, Auction Catalogue*, lots 193 to 200. Refer also to the bowl in this series from the same shipwreck illustrated in Le Thi Thanh Ha, *Gom Su Thoi Minh (The Ming Dynasty's Ceramics)*, page 62, No. 34. Other bowls in this series from the Binh Thuan shipwreck in Vietnam are at M-260 (No. 1 of 4), M-288, and M-306.



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M-460 (Continued)

MING SHARDS RECOVERED FROM THE MAE NAM NAN RIVER, PHITSANULOK JINGDEZHEN WARE - M-460 (1 of 12) to M-460 (5 of 12)				
CATALOGUE NUMBER	FORM	SHARD	DESCRIPTION	D/L CM
M-460 (1 of 12)	Large Plate	Rim & Base	Peony blossom scroll around center and in cavetto, circle motif with dense cross-hatching on flattened rim with foliated edge; peony blossom scroll repeated on underside, squiggly cloud-like forms under rim; line borders; glazed base is undercut and without footrim, apricot tinge at edge of glaze.	L: 20.8
M-460 (2 of 12)	Hole- Bottom type Saucer	Rim & Base	Elaborate <i>vajra</i> with scalloped edged circular accents separated by cloud scroll elements, and a double outlined "X" shape motif in the center; leaf or floral sprays in the cavetto; lotus scroll on underside; line borders; glazed base without footrim flat and recessed.	D: 9.9
M-460 (3 of 12)	Hole- Bottom Saucer	Rim & Base	Everted rim and plain cavetto, a song bird on a blossoming branch in the center; a lotus meander, consisting of six blossoms with small leaves and cursively rendered stems, on the underside; line borders; unglazed circular ring with faint traces of kiln grit surrounds slightly convex, recessed, and glazed base without footrim.	D: 13.5
M-460 (4 of 12)	Jarlet	Mouth & Side	Globular shaped and decorated around the body with a lotus scroll comprised of four blossoms with diminutive leaves, a band of scallops at the base of the upright neck; covered with bluish-white glaze with an overall network of fine crazing; the join where the two sections of the jarlet were luted together clearly revealed in the unglazed interior.	D: 6.7
M-460 (5 of 12)	Bowl	Base & Side	Interior adorned with a squinty eyed lion with burly chest and upward sweeping tail, a ball at its feet of the beast; on exterior <i>ruyi</i> -shaped double outlined swirls with what appears to be the figure of another lion with a clearly rendered brocaded ball; line borders; footrim is inward slanting with convex, glazed base.	D: 9.9

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M-460 (Continued)

MING SHARDS RECOVERED FROM THE MAE NAM NAN RIVER, PHITSANULOK JINGDEZHEN WARE - M-460 (6 of 12) to M-460 (10 of 12)				
CATALOGUE NUMBER	FORM	SHARD	DESCRIPTION	D/L CM
M-460 (6 of 12)	Bowl	Rim & Base	A large <i>shou</i> (longevity) character in the central medallion, the steep cavetto and exterior plain; line borders; wedge shaped foot and glazed, convex base.	D: 10.0
M-460 (7 of 12)	Bowl	Base & Side	Interior decorated in the center with a large peony spray with cross-hatched leaves reserved in white on a blue ground, bunches of grapes decorate the interior sides; decorated around the exterior sides with a chrysanthemum scroll; line borders; upright foot with beveled, unglazed footrim; deep-set glazed base is slightly concave and contains an underglaze blue four character Chinese inscription within a double circle; decoration is rendered in a strong tone of blue under the distinctly bluish tinged white glaze.	D: 13.6
M-460 (8 of 12)	Dish	Rim & Base	Polychrome enamel chrysanthemum spray in center, leaf tips in cavetto, and band of underglaze blue "X" forms under rim; on exterior a long, sprawling underglaze blue phoenix; line borders; wedge shaped foot and slightly convex base containing an underglaze blue four character Chinese inscription, <i>Da Ming Nian Zao</i> (made in the great Ming Dynasty), within a double circle.	D: 10.9
M-460 (9 of 12)	Bowl	Rim	Polychrome enamel leaf forms under rim on the interior; underglaze blue birds and further polychrome enamel leaf forms on exterior; line borders.	L: 8.6
M-460 (10 of 12)	Bowl	Rim & Side	On the interior polychrome enamel jewel-like objects with attached crosses and spherical forms, band of underglaze blue "X" forms under rim; the exterior with underglaze blue medallions originally containing polychrome enamel décor; line borders.	L: 8.9

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M-460 (Continued)

MING SHARDS RECOVERED FROM THE MAE NAM NAN RIVER, PHITSANULOK SWATOW WARE - M-460 (11 of 12) to M-460 (12 of 12)				
CATALOGUE NUMBER	FORM	SHARD	DESCRIPTION	D/L CM
M-460 (11 of 12)	Bowl	Base & Side	An erect heron surrounded by waterweeds, rushes, and lotus decorates the central medallion, the cavetto is plain; adorned on the exterior with an aquatic scene containing pairs of ducks, each pair with one duck positioned below the other; the pairs of ducks are separated by large spreading lotus sprays emerging from rushes; line borders; covered with light bluish-white waxy textured glaze; upright footrim with traces of adherent kiln grit, partially glazed base is deep-set and slightly convex.	D: 17.2
M-460 (12 of 12)	Bowl	Rim & Base	In the center a stylized flower with foliate scrolls reserved in white against a blue ground; the cavetto is plain; on the exterior a lotus scroll with densely packed six leaf clusters; line borders; upright foot and the rather deep-set narrow base slightly convex and glazed, considerable adherent kiln grit on the interior of the footrim.	D: 10.0

