

HOLE-BOTTOM SAUCERS

These interesting diminutive dishes were produced in China primarily for export to Southeast Asia, especially Indonesia and the Philippines, and to a lesser extent Cambodia and Thailand. They represent an interesting example of Chinese ceramic production targeted for very specific localized market needs and demands. They are distinguished primarily by their recessed base without footrim and relatively small size. Diameter is typically about 10 centimeters to 12 centimeters, but can range from 9.9 centimeters to 13.7 centimeters. The period of production was primarily late 15th century to mid 16th century.

A representative variety is included in the **Ceramics Catalogue**, with places and date of acquisition indicated along with the description. Examples included are blue and white, monochrome white, celadon, polychrome, and several with fish in biscuit form - all in a variety of motifs. Among the floral motifs are found magnolia blossom, floral spray, molded floral spray, peony spray, ginger plant, *lingzhi* (sacred fungus), lotus, and incised lotus blossom. Fauna examples include song bird, fish in unglazed biscuit, underglaze blue fish, shrimp, phoenix, and conch shell. Also represented are ribboned double *vajra*, cloud collar panels, trellis/diamond diaper band, *Lanca* characters, scholar with *qin* (Chinese stringed musical instrument) and attendant, *Shoulao* (Taoist god of long life and luck), and *shou* (longevity) character. The underside of the blue and white examples is very often adorned with plantain leaves radiating from the unglazed ring immediately surrounding the recessed base; the recessed base of the saucers is glazed, often with varying traces of kiln grit adhering, and without footrim. Bluish-white glaze typically covers the saucers, and the body where exposed at the unglazed areas is generally compact and cream colored.

As an illustration of decorative motifs, the decor of saucer **Catalogue Number M-232** is briefly described as follows: the center decorated

with four large Tibetan Sanskrit *Lanca* characters encircled by a double ring of 12 and 18 repetitive *Lanca* characters of simplified version for *om* (sacred syllable) - and all surrounded by a single line border; the cavetto is undecorated. The underside is decorated with another double ring of the same Tibetan Sanskrit *Lanca* characters as the interior, but consisting of an equal number of characters (29) in each ring.

Included in the **Ceramics Catalogue** are Ming hole-bottom saucers acquired in the following locations:

Indonesia - 13 (Mainly from South Sulawesi excavations)

Thailand - 12 (Primarily from Ayutthaya riverine excavations)

Philippines - 11 (Many from Santa Cruz and Lena Shoal shipwrecks)

Cambodia - 2 (1 of which was actually acquired in Thailand)

Singapore - 2 (Probably reached Singapore via Indonesia)

Hong Kong - 4

New York - 1 (Actually from a Hong Kong collection)

London - 1

Amsterdam - 1 (Brought to the Netherlands from Indonesia)

Total = 47



In the Philippines, for example, hole-bottom saucers are found as burial goods interred with the deceased. This is vividly illustrated from the photographs of the Excavations at Pulung Bakaw (Fox - reference cited). With respect to the production center and origin of the saucers, it has been reported that similar small dishes have been found at the Hutian and Dongjiawu kiln sites in Jingdezhen (Crick - reference cited). Unfortunately, further information on this appears to be lacking.

Ming hole-bottom items in the Collection are catalogued under 39 M (Ming) series numbers (M-005 to M-523) and total 47 items as follows:

M-005, M-006, M-031, M-058, M-062, M-096 (2 of 2), M-097, M-098, M-134, M-165, M-171, M-181, M-182, M-183, M-196, M-220, M-229, M-232, M-238, M-239, M-240, M-241, M-245, M-258, M-262, M-283, M-285 (2 of 2), M-338, M-346, M-374, M-375, M-388, M-391, M-392, M-400, M-407, M-434, M-460 (2 & 3), and M-523 (6 of 6).

Additionally, Thai hole-bottom dishes are catalogued under 3 TH (Thai) series numbers and total 3 items as follows: TH-237, TH-365 and TH-387 (No. 6 of 6). Thai saucer dishes with the “hole-bottom” base are very seldom encountered and would appear to have been produced in very limited numbers. There is also no evidence, neither published nor anecdotal, of their being exported to the Philippines or Indonesia, for example. It may be surmised, therefore, on the basis of the evidence currently available, that the Thai production of this series of saucer dishes was done in emulation of the Chinese originals. That production would appear to have been confined to limited quantities to meet the demands of the local market.

Hole-bottom Saucers Photos - Folder in which all the Hole-bottom Saucers, with the bases illustrated, have been consolidated; also included are copies of the **Ceramics Catalogue Entries** for each item.



For an excellent summary and description of hole-bottom saucers the article by Southeast Asia specialist Dawn Rooney may be referred to: Dawn F. Rooney, “The Recessed Base (Hole Bottom) Saucer: A Type of Chinese Export Ware,” *Arts of Asia*, Volume 12, Number 1, January - February 1982, pages 114 to 118.

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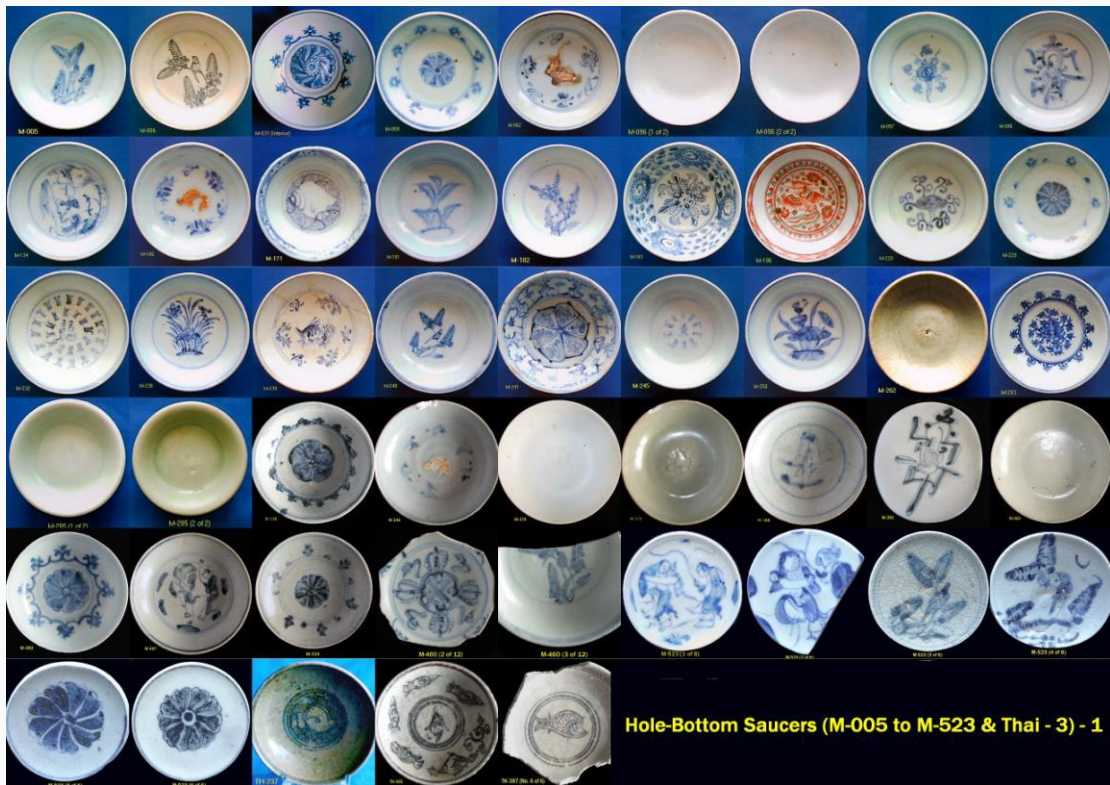
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ALL HOLE-BOTTOM SAUCERS IN CERAMICS CATALOGUE



Hole-Bottom Saucers (M-005 to M-523 & Thai - 3) - 1

ALL HOLE-BOTTOM SAUCERS INCLUDING THE BASE

