Jian Bowls
Recovered in the Philippines



Baldomero M. Olivera Bertrand J. Granberg

Introduction

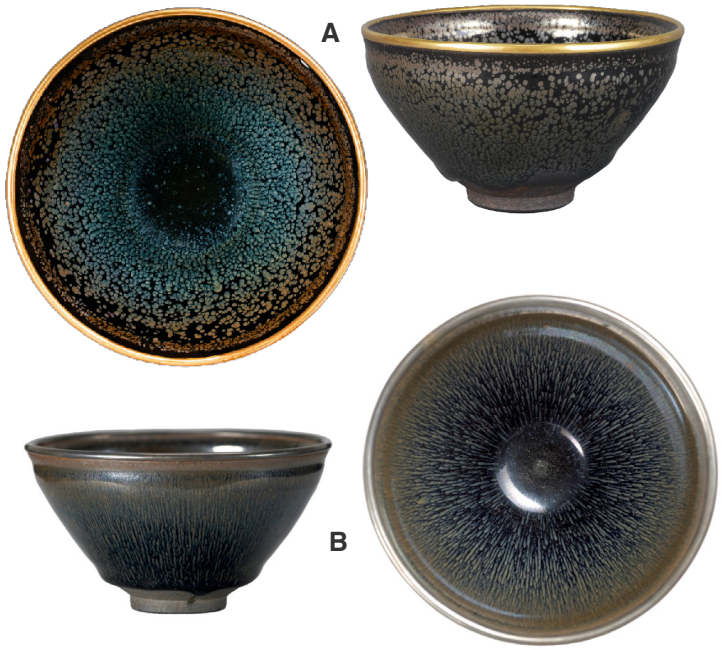
During the Song dynasty, a distinctive group of black-glazed bowls was produced in China for the preparation and consumption of tea. The most important center of production for these bowls was the Jian kiln complex in Fujian Province, although the Jizhou kilns in Jiangxi Province also produced notable black-glazed tea bowls. Extensive archaeological excavations at the Jian kiln site have established that production continued from the Tang dynasty through the 14th century. Prior to the 10th century, however, the kilns primarily produced celadons modeled after those of the Yue kilns in Zhejiang Province. It was not until the 10th century that the Jian kilns began producing the black-glazed bowls for which they would become renowned. This development coincided with growing demand for the high-quality teas cultivated in Fujian Province.

The tea was processed into compressed bricks, which were subsequently boiled and whisked to produce a white, frothy, milk-like beverage. The striking contrast between the white tea and the dark glaze of the bowls became an increasingly popular aesthetic throughout China. The Northern Song imperial court eventually adopted the tea-drinking customs of Fujian Province. A tea plantation was established to supply tea exclusively to the court, and Jian bowls were sent to the capital for tea preparation and consumption. Water was also transported from a particular spring. The combination of this specific tea, water, and Jian bowl became known as the "Three Excellences." A subset of Jian bowls were produced for imperial use, designated with characters inscribed in the unglazed bottom of the vessel.

The Jian kilns were located a considerable distance from the Northern Song capital of Kaifeng, but this was not an improbable commercial connection. Song China possessed extensive river, canal, and road networks through which specialized goods could move over long distances. The movement of Jian ware from Fujian to Kaifeng therefore reflects the broader integration of regional production centers into the economic and cultural networks of Song China. Archaeological evidence from the Jian kilns confirms that bowls were produced specifically for the imperial court, providing physical evidence of this connection.

This booklet documents what is likely the largest single collection of Jian ware assembled to date. Unusual in both its size and provenance, this private collection consists of ceramics recovered from an unexpected source: the southeastern Philippine Archipelago. The presence of these vessels so far from their place of manufacture provides an opportunity to examine Jian ware in a broader context of maritime trade and cultural exchange, while documenting a remarkable body of material that has received relatively little attention in the existing literature.

Figure 1. A. Oil-spotted Jian temmoku bowl from The Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka. Designated as a National Cultural Treasure of Japan. **B.** Black with brown hare's-fur glaze temmoku bowl in Kyoto National Museum collection. *Image credits: https://emuseum.nich.go.jp/detail?content_base_id=100022 and https://knmdb.kyohaku.go.jp/4680.html.*



Cultural and Historical Background

Two cultures are relevant to the Jian ceramics presented here. The first is the culture of Song dynasty China, which is extremely well documented. From the 10th to the 12th century, this was arguably one of the most sophisticated and culturally accomplished societies in the world, where the arts flourished as never before. The second is the culture of the southeastern Philippines, about which comparatively little is known. We do know, however, that the two cultures interacted in the early 11th century.

The official chronicles of the Chinese imperial court document four tribute missions to the Northern Song capital of Kaifeng between 1004 and 1011 CE from a "kingdom by the sea" named Puduan. There is broad consensus that this referred to an Austronesian chiefdom located in northeastern Mindanao, at or near the present-day city of Butuan.

The chronicles report that ambassadors from Puduan presented a variety of tribute gifts to the emperor on these occasions. In the Chinese records, these missions are described as official visits by vassal kingdoms paying their respects to the Son of Heaven. In reality, they were probably hard-boiled commercial exchanges. Ambassadors from foreign kingdoms brought luxury goods highly desired by the imperial court and the elites of Chinese society and, in return, expected to receive goods that they themselves valued.

The tribute mission of 1007 from Puduan is described in the chronicles in unusual detail and provides some insight into what these exchanges entailed:

> *"In the sixth month of the fourth year (1007), King Qiling sent the ambassador Jixuhan and others to present a tribute of tortoiseshell, camphor, clove stalks, mother cloves, and local products. They were given caps, belts, and robes (i.e., Chinese-style elite clothing), ritual vessels, and strings of cash in varying amounts depending on rank."* (Yang 2021 translation)

These Chinese records strongly suggest that Puduan must have been a successful maritime trade entrepôt, capable of delivering cloves—grown only in the Spice Islands—to the Chinese imperial court. There is much evidence that cloves were traded more than one thousand years earlier; these records link Puduan to an important role in this early global maritime trade network, which likely included other Austronesian maritime trading powers such as Champa and Srivijaya.

Austronesian maritime trade was carried out in highly sophisticated ocean-going vessels that had been used for long-distance trade for at least 2,000 years. The Chinese referred to such vessels as Kunlun po and reported that they could carry hundreds of passengers and hundreds of tons of cargo. A vessel of this type could easily have carried a tribute mission directly from the southeastern Philippines to northern China.

There is also archaeological evidence supporting this picture. Austronesian vessels known as balangays, contemporaneous with the Jian bowls, have been excavated around Butuan; one is approximately 40 meters long. Similar vessels are depicted on the walls of Java's great Buddhist temple, Borobudur. A 10th-century shipwreck recovered near Java, known as the Cirebon wreck, also appears to have been a ship of this general type. It is estimated to have been carrying roughly half a million ceramic vessels when it sank.

Jian Bowls: Overview of the Literature and Philippine Collection

Modern scholarship on Jian ware has focused largely on the heirloom bowls brought to Japan by Buddhist monks returning from pilgrimages to Zen temples during the Southern Song dynasty. Known in Japanese as tenmoku (also commonly spelled temmoku), literally "Heaven's Eye," these Chinese black-glazed bowls became highly prized for use in the Japanese tea ceremony and were passed down as precious heirlooms by noble Japanese families for generations. Many of

the surviving examples of these distinctive Chinese ceramics are held in private and public Japanese collections, and some have been officially designated as National Treasures (Figure 1A). The extraordinary value placed on these objects was demonstrated when one such heirloom Jian tea bowl sold at auction for $11 million (Christie's 2016).

Modern scholarship on Jian ware has focused largely on the heirloom bowls brought to Japan during the Southern Song dynasty, generally portraying this period as the height of the Jian kilns' artistic achievement. Recently, this interpretation has been challenged. A landmark exhibition of Chinese black-glazed ceramics organized by Robert Mowry, accompanied by an extensive catalog, reviewed historical references to Jian ware and revealed that substantially more references to Jian tea bowls date to the Northern Song period. Archaeological excavations at the Jian kiln site have further revealed a remarkable variety of sherds, many bearing base inscriptions indicating that they were produced for the Northern Song court. Studies of the Gongyu and Jinzhan inscriptions provide particularly important evidence that these bowls were produced according to palace specifications, with surviving examples dating to the early 12th century, during the Northern Song (Lee 2019, 2021). As the Southern Song court shifted its preference away from Jian ware toward white porcelains, Jian production became increasingly commercialized in both form and volume to meet growing demand as tea drinking spread beyond the social elite. Taken together, this context supports the view that the Northern Song represented a period of exceptional artistic creativity at the Jian kilns.

The collection of Jian bowls recovered in the southeastern Philippines (see identified recovery locations in Figure 2) further supports an artistic high point of Jian ware occurring between the 10th and early 12th centuries. As will be shown, a substantial proportion of these tea bowls appear to have been made specifically for the imperial court.

While the Japanese corpus preserves some of the most celebrated examples of Jian ware and has played a central role in the development of Jian scholarship, the Philippine material offers evidence from a very different context: ceramics that appear to have entered Southeast Asian maritime trade during the period when Jian ware was reaching its greatest artistic diversity. The archaeological, historical, and ceramic evidence suggests that these bowls are significant not only within the history of Chinese ceramics and tea culture, but also within the broader maritime connections that linked Song China with the societies of Southeast Asia.



Figure 2. Locations of Philippine-recovered Jian temmoku bowls. All locations lie within the dashed area termed the Kalaga Putuan Crescent (Olivera 2021; Olivera et al. 2024). Hundreds of pieces of artisanal gold adornments and high-end ceramics dating from the Han through Song and Yuan dynasties have been found within this crescent-shaped zone. Ceramic finds are often by-products of searches for buried gold and frequently enter the Manila-area antique market. Recovery circumstances range from road and other civil construction—such as the well-publicized 1981 Surigao Treasure recovery near Magroyong, approximately 55 km south of Butuan City—to erosion, landslides, and illicit digging, which became more common after the 1981 discovery.

The Emperor's Tea Bowls

The bowls in Figures 3–9 are generally recognized in the ceramic literature as Jian temmoku, with characteristic glaze patterns known as "hare's-fur" and "oil spot." These effects result from the transformation of iron-rich compounds in the glaze during high-temperature firing. The bowls were first coated with a thick, dark temmoku glaze, with an iron-rich slip applied to the mouth rim. Fired upright at temperatures nearing 1300°C, the glaze melted and the iron compounds underwent thermal reduction, releasing oxygen and forming bubbles within the glaze. As these bubbles rose toward the surface, they carried iron-rich material with them. During cooling, iron-oxide crystals formed and grew at the glaze surface, producing the distinctive patterns characteristic of Jian ware. As the presented examples demonstrate, the resulting markings vary considerably in thickness, iridescence, and color—from the black and gray examples (Figure 3), to brown examples in Figures 4 and 5, to the burnt orange in Figures 6 and 7, and a silvery oil spot effect in Figure 8.

These hare's-fur and oil spot bowls were adopted for regular use by the imperial court. The Emperor Huizong, an avid connoisseur of tea, wrote a treatise on tea in which he specifically identified Jian hare's-fur bowls as the most desirable. Jian wares associated with imperial production were inscribed on their bases with the characters *gòngyù* (貢御), meaning "imperial tribute." Very few such bowls have been documented in the ceramic literature, and they are consequently regarded as exceptionally rare. Two widely illustrated examples are in the Harvard University Art Museum and the Smithsonian's Freer Gallery (Mowry reference).

One of the most remarkable features of the Philippine Jian collection is the unusually high proportion of hare's-fur bowls bearing the gòngyù inscription. An example is shown in Figures 5C and 6D. But the collection is significant for another reason: alongside substantial numbers of conventional hare's-fur bowls are an extraordinary range of previously little-known or unknown variations. Some are closely related to hare's-fur, while others depart radically from the familiar black-glazed Jian tradition. One particularly striking example is shown on Figure 9. Instead of the usual black temmoku glaze, these bowls employ a blue glaze combined with a dark slip applied to the mouth rim, producing a brilliant blue hare's-fur effect. Their bases bear a distinctive stylized square seal (see Figure 20F).

The Philippine material also includes Jian tea bowls produced in a variety of shapes. Along with the conventional bowl are examples with strongly conical and trumpet-shaped profiles. This diversity of form, together with the range of glaze effects and decorative treatments, suggests that the Jian potters were experimenting with a broader repertoire than is apparent from the relatively small number of surviving bowls that became Japanese heirlooms.

The presence of imperial inscriptions provides an important clue to the status of at least some of these bowls. The gòngyù inscription clearly associates a bowl with imperial tribute, although it does not necessarily establish that every individual bowl reached the imperial court. The inscription may have indicated the intended destination of the ware, a designation applied at the kiln, or a category of production associated with an imperial order. Some bowls may have been selected and used by the court, while others may have been used for imperial trade or gifts, or kept by the kiln.

The 1011 Puduan tribute mission resulted in its formal recognition as a vassal kingdom of the Chinese empire. This recognition permitted direct trade missions, which, unlike tribute missions, were not normally recorded in the official chronicles because they did not require a formal audience with the emperor. Since tribute missions from Puduan had been sent approximately every two years between 1003 and 1011, it is a reasonable assumption that similarly regular trade missions occurred for the remainder of the Northern Song period.

The imperial stores of ceramics would have provided a ready source of goods for exchange between trade missions and the court. The Chinese court desired the valuable commodities brought by Puduan traders, including cloves and tortoiseshell, which may have been difficult or impossible to obtain through other channels. Such exchanges were potentially lucrative for the court. This provides a plausible scenario for the high proportion of gòngyù-marked Jian bowls found in the vicinity of Butuan.

The provenance of these Philippine-recovered ceramics is generally indirect. The collection was assembled over many decades from Chinese ceramics found in the Philippines and acquired from antique dealers, including material obtained indirectly from treasure hunters (Olivera 2025). The objects therefore lack the documented excavation contexts available from formal archaeological discoveries. Nevertheless, the large number of Jian bowls, with their diverse inscriptions, forms, and glaze treatments, provides an unusual, internally consistent assemblage. Thus, despite the lack of rigorous archaeological data, this large coherent Jian bowl collection from the Philippines provides persuasive (if unconventional) evidence for what the kilns were producing during the Song dynasty.

The circumstances surrounding the fall of Kaifeng in 1126 are particularly relevant to this material. When the Jurchens conquered the capital city, they captured and enslaved much of the imperial court and looted Kaifeng for four months. The imperial collections were destroyed or dispersed, and objects were lost or at best scattered. The Jian bowls presently being recovered in the Philippines had already left China through trade prior to 1126, escaping the Jurchen destruction. Austronesian societies had longstanding practices of burying valuable and prestigious possessions with their owners, removing such objects from circulation and protecting them from the repeated processes of collection, reuse, and loss that affected ceramics remaining in China.

This offers an explanation for the unusual character of the Philippine material. The traditionally ascribed Jian forms are numerous, but alongside them are diverse variations that are little known or entirely absent from the established literature. The collection therefore provides a unique window into the range of Jian ware being produced during the Northern Song, including ceramics associated with the imperial court that did not survive in Chinese collections or as Japanese heirlooms.

The most surprising of the Philippine recoveries are the polychrome bowls illustrated in Figures 12–16, 17B, and 19. Most bear inscriptions on their bases, indicating that they too were associated with imperial production. There appears to be no prior documentation of these bowls in the published literature. Together, they reveal an entirely unknown facet of Jian ceramic artistry. The variety of colored pigments and the sophisticated ways in which they were applied are fundamentally at odds with the conventional view that the Jian kilns produced a relatively narrow range of wares dominated by black-glazed temmoku bowls.

The Philippine collection therefore adds considerably more than additional examples to the familiar corpus of Jian ware. It includes substantial numbers of conventional bowls, but also a remarkable range of forms, glaze effects, colors, and decorative treatments that are little known or entirely unknown in the traditional literature. Taken together, these objects suggest that the artistic repertoire of the Jian kilns was considerably broader than the surviving Japanese heirlooms. The Song chronicles for the Puduan mission of 1007 CE describes how the emperor gave each delegate “ritual vessels”, which are almost certainly ceramic vessels used for ritual purposes. Thus, this mission brought valuable aromatics and marine products to China, such as cloves, camphor, and tortoise shell, and in exchange received imperial goods such as ceramics and silk. They could have returned to Puduan in their large balangay boats with many of tons of ceramics, including the Jian tea bowls that have been recovered around the modern city of Butuan a thousand years later.

Figure 3. Philippine-recovered temmoku bowls with black glazing. *Recovery locations shown in italics.* **A.** Gray hare's-fur glaze. *Jìnzhǎn* (進琖) inscribed on base, *Butuan* (D: 12.7 cm). **B.** Black with a hybrid of dark gray hare's-fur and oil spots. Dà Sòng Míngdào (大宋明道) inscribed on base, *Surigao* (D: 11.5 cm). **C.** Black with a hybrid of gray hare's-fur and oil spots *Zhào Kuāngyìn* (趙匡胤) is inscribed on base, *Butuan* (D: 13.0 cm). **D.** Black with brown hare's-fur pattern. *Fèngyù* (奉御) *inscribed on base, Butuan* (D: 12.7 cm).



Figure 4. Philippine-recovered oil-spotted Jian temmoku bowls with black background glaze.
A. Brown with large bubble spots (D: 9.5 cm). **B.** Diverse brown oil spotting pattern (D: 9.5 cm). **C.** Brown oil spots and drip pattern (D: 9.8 cm). **D.** Less-distinct brown oil pattern (D: 10.1 cm). *Recovery locations not further specified.*

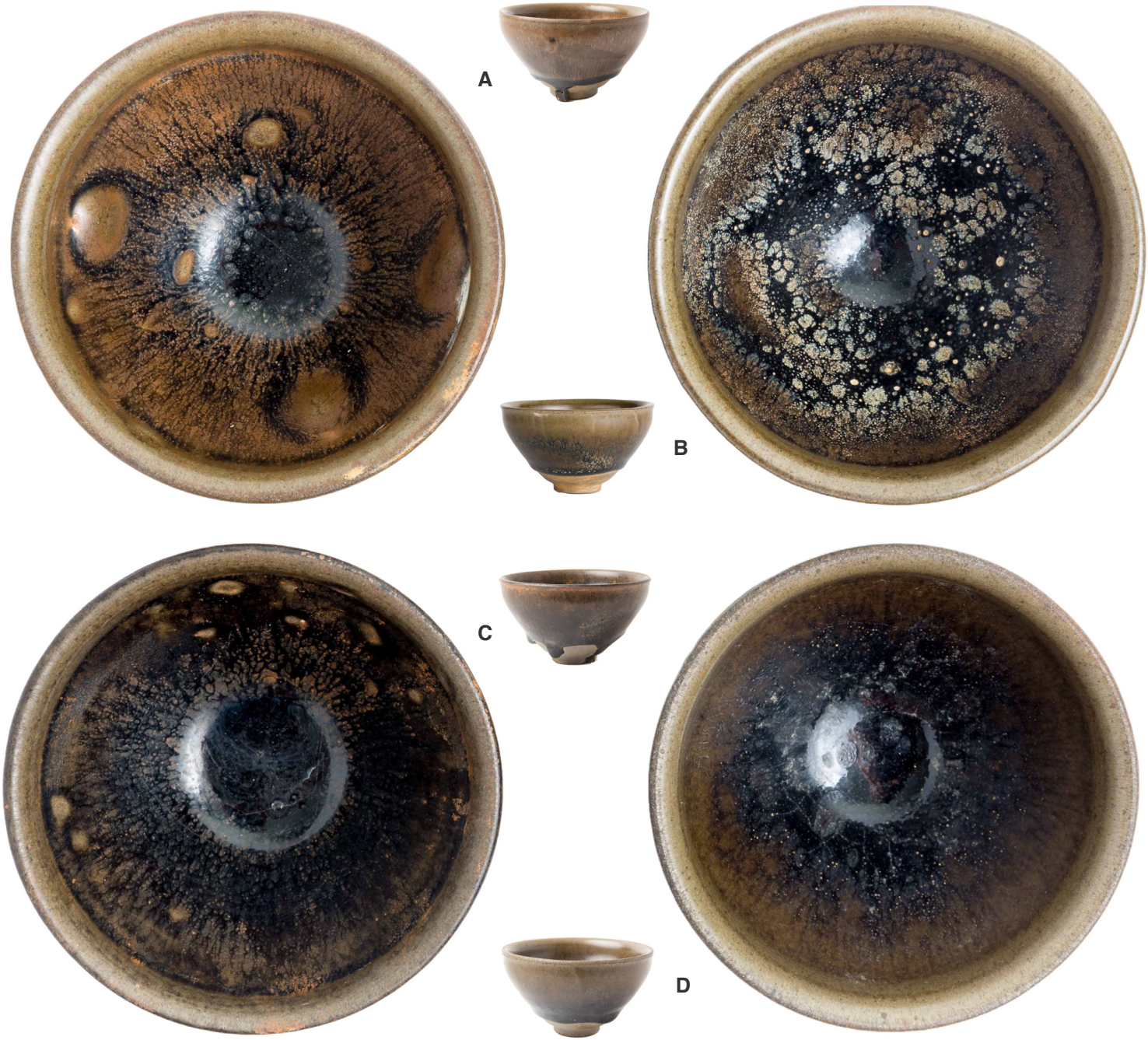


Figure 5. Philippine-recovered Jian temmoku bowls with brown and black hare's-fur glazing patterns. *Recovery locations shown where further specified.* **A.** Typical brown to black striated hare's-fur glaze, *Kapatagan* (D: 0.0 cm). **B.** Brown to black hare's-fur effect with a more spotted striation pattern (D: 12.5 cm). **C.** Darker brown to black with *gòngyù* (貢御) inscribed on base, *Butuan* (D: 12.5 cm). **D.** Glassy brownish orange to black hare's-fur glaze (D: 9.0 cm).

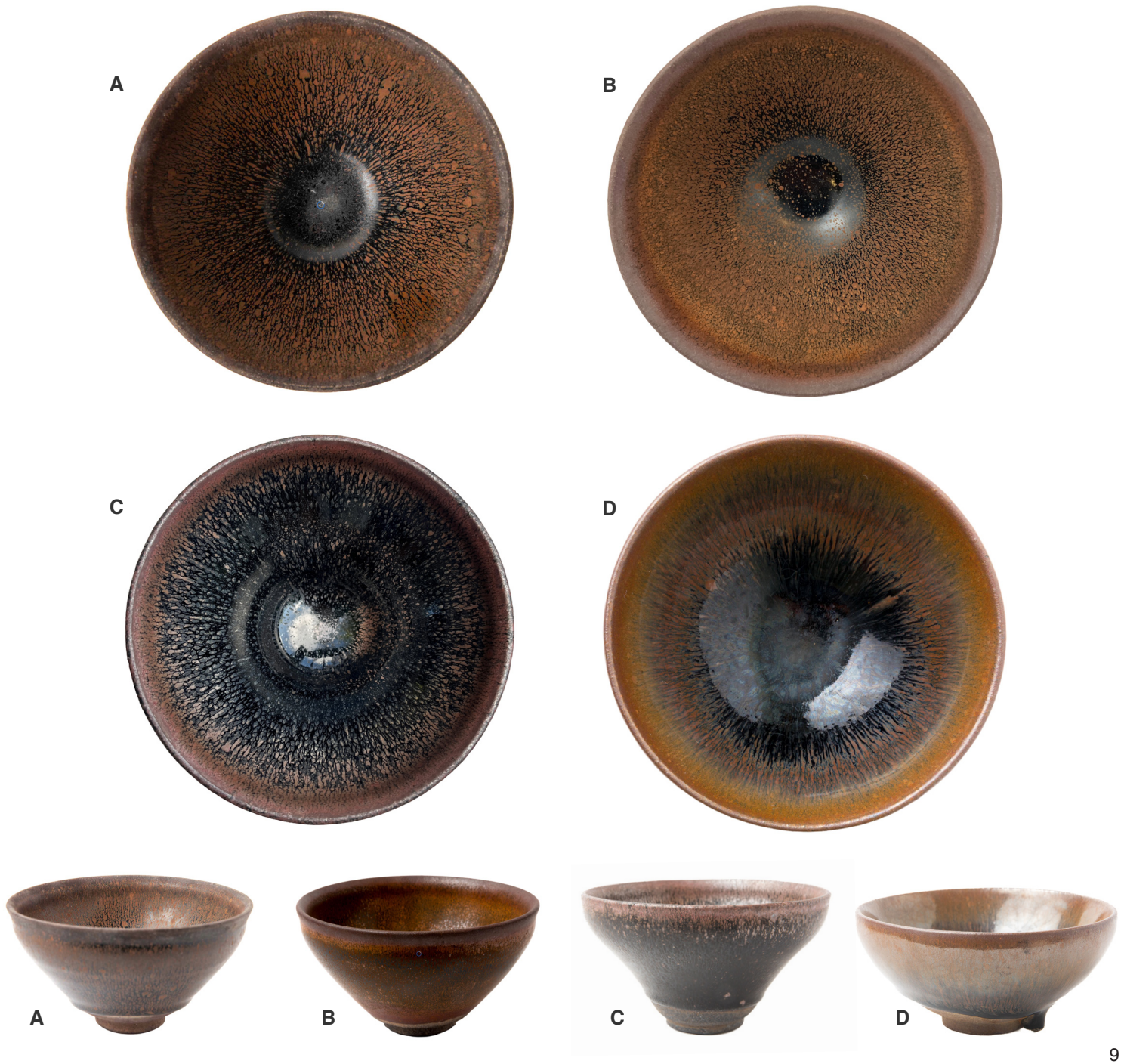


Figure 6. Philippine-recovered Jian temmoku bowls showing a variety of burnt orange hare's-fur effects. *Recovery locations shown where specified.* **A.** Black sunburst effect (D: 0.0 cm). **B.** Concentric effect, with shèng (聖) inscribed on base, *Lanao del Norte* (D: 0.0 cm). **C.** Brownish orange with a large area of black background glaze (D: 13.3 cm). **D.** Typical hare's-fur proportions, (貢御) inscribed on base (D: 12.0 cm).

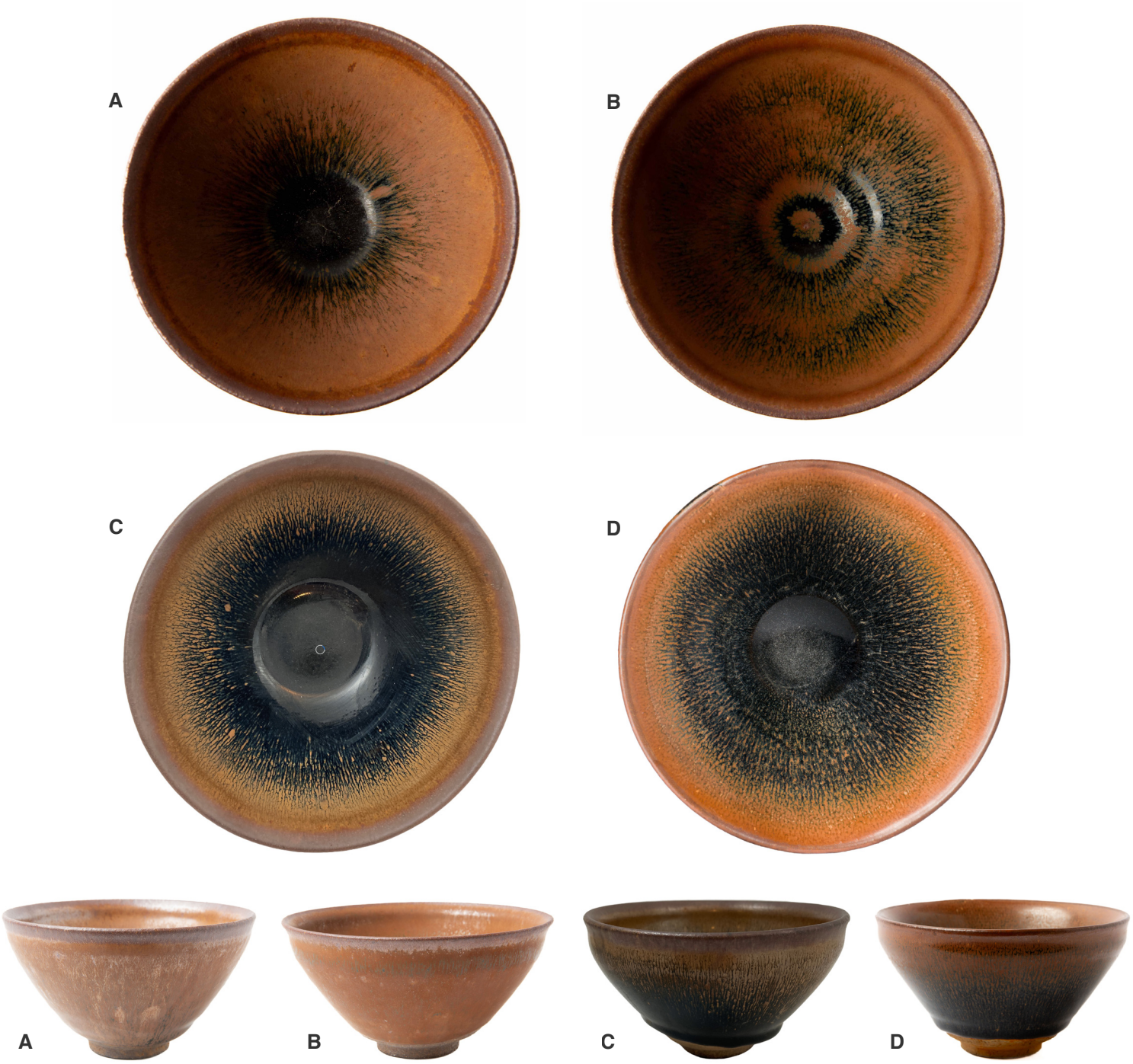


Figure 7. Philippine-recovered conical Jian temmoku bowl with burnt orange and black hare's-fur pattern, *recovery location not further specified* (D: 15.3 cm).



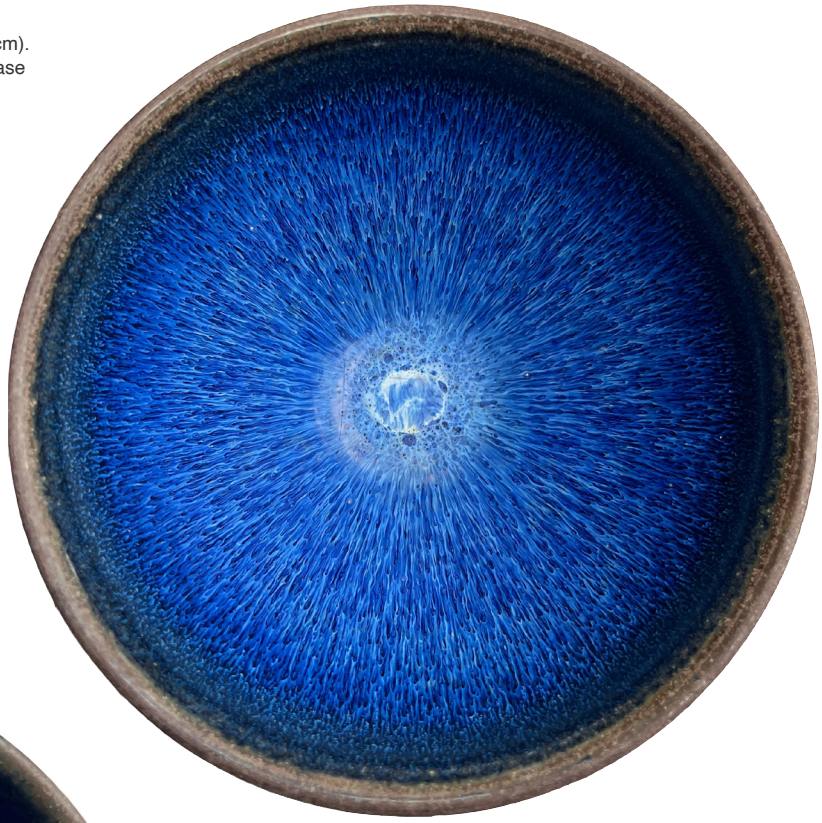
Figure 8. Philippine-recovered Jian temmoku bowl.
A. With a shimmering metallic rim, hare's-fur pattern, and *gòngyù* (貢御) inscribed on base, *Butuan* (D: 13.0 cm). **B.** Black background glaze with brown oil spotting and stylized inscription on base (see Figure 20H), *Butuan* (D: 12.8 cm).

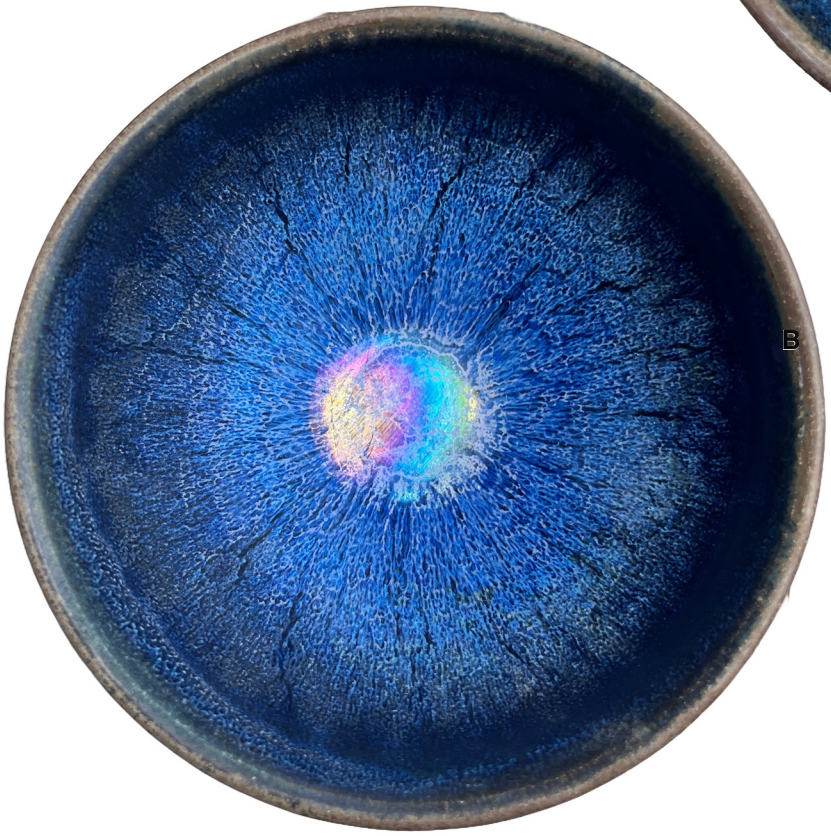


Figure 9. Philippine-recovered Jian temmoku bowls.
A. Blue hare's-fur pattern with stylized inscription on base, *Butuan* (D: 13.1 cm).
B. Blue hare's-fur pattern with iridescent center and stylized inscription on base (see Figure 20I), *Butuan* (D: 13.0 cm).



A





B



Figure 10. Philippine-recovered Jian bowls with metallic exterior glazing.
A. Abstract blue interior pattern (D: 13.0 cm). **B.** Black and blue abstract interior pattern with red exterior glaze accent (D: 12.5 cm). *Recovery locations not further specified.*



A



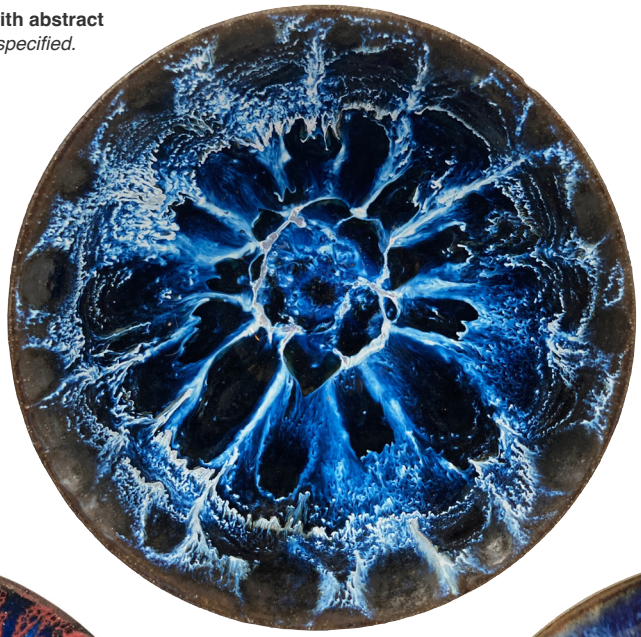


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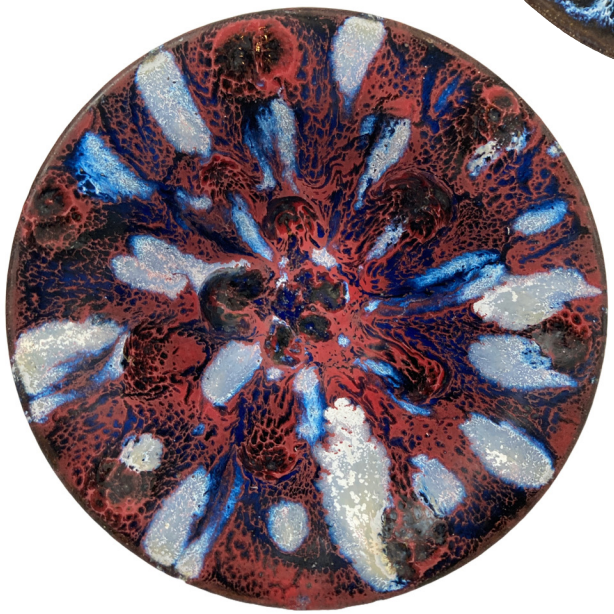


Figure 11. Philippine-recovered Jian bowls with abstract radial patterns. *Recovery locations not further specified.*

A. Blue and white (D: 13.0 cm).
B. Red, white, and blue trumpet-shaped (D: 14.0 cm).
C. Blue, trumpet-shaped (D: 12.5 cm).



A



B



C

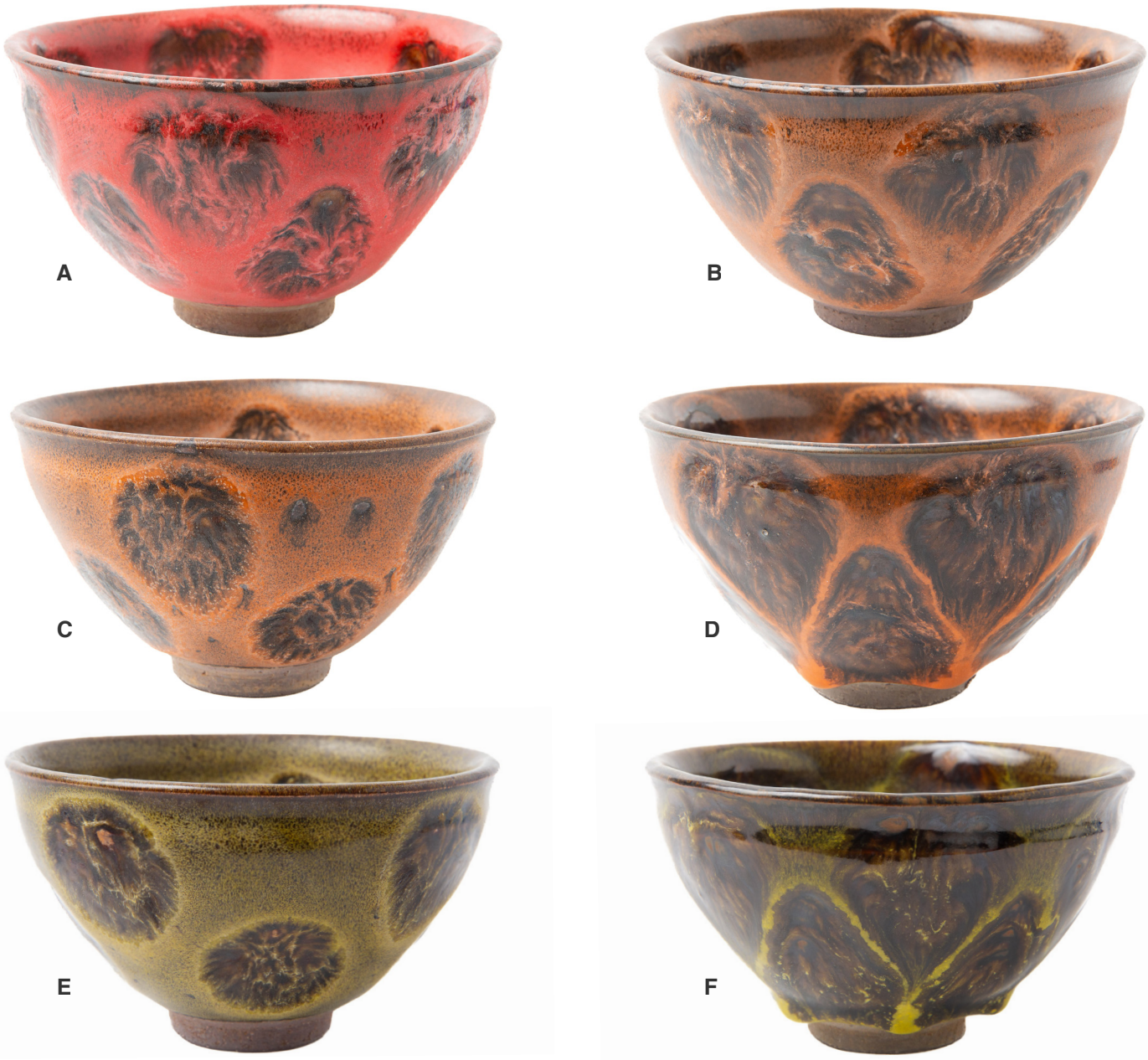


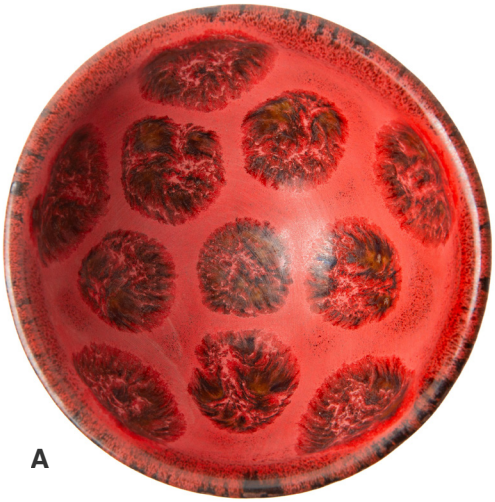




Figures 12 and 13 *(opposite page)*. **Philippine-recovered polychrome Jian bowls with brush-shaped splotches.**
Arranged in five-fold symmetrical pattern. All six bowls have *gòngyù* (貢御) inscribed on their bases.
Recovery locations shown in italics.

A. Red base glaze, *Butuan* (D: 12.5 cm).
B. Orange base glaze, *Butuan* (D: 12.5 cm).
C. Orange base glaze, *Butuan* (D: 12.5 cm).
D. Darker orange base glaze, *Butuan* (D: 12.4 cm).
E. Yellow base glaze, *Tubod* (D: 12.5 cm).
F. Darker yellow base glaze, *Butuan* (D: 12.5 cm).





A



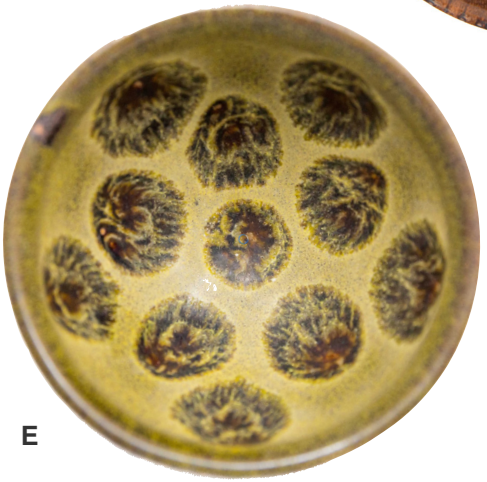
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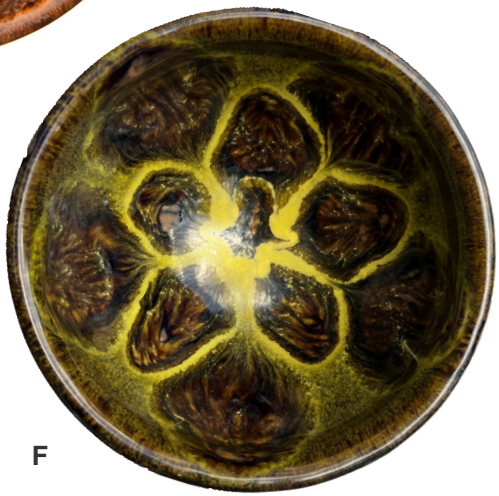
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D



E



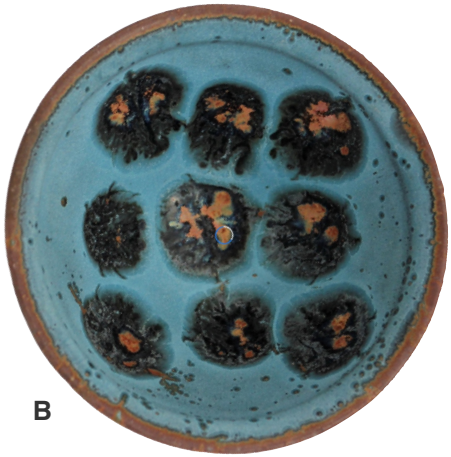
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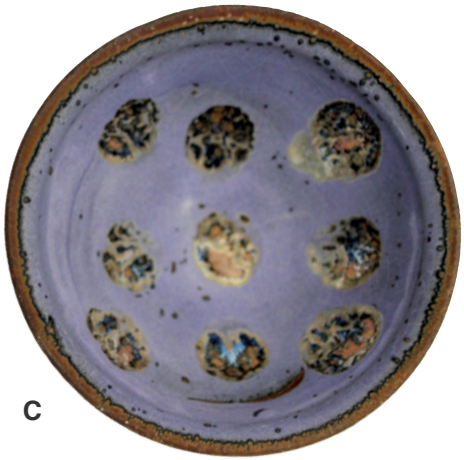
Figures 14 and 15 *(opposite page)***. Philippine-recovered polychrome Jian bowls with nine brush-shaped splotches in three-by-three grid pattern.** All nine bowls have gòngyù (貢御) inscribed on their bases. *Recovery locations where identified, are shown in italics.*

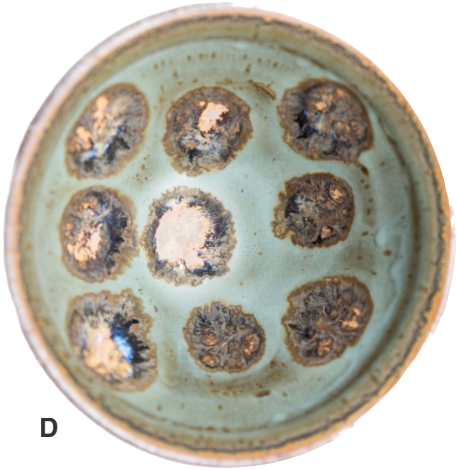
A. Green base glaze, *Butuan* (D: 13.5 cm).
B. Light blue base glaze, *Tubod* (D: 12.6 cm).
C. Light purple base glaze, *Tubod* (D: 12.7 cm.
D. Gray-green base glaze, *Baroy* (D: 12.5 cm).
E. Yellow base glaze, *Tubod* (D: 12.5 cm).
F. Mixed green base glaze (0.0 cm).
G. Green base glaze, *Tubod* (D: 13.2 cm).
H. Light blue base glaze, *???* (D: 0.0 cm).
I. Light purple base glaze, *Baroy* (D: 12.7 cm).

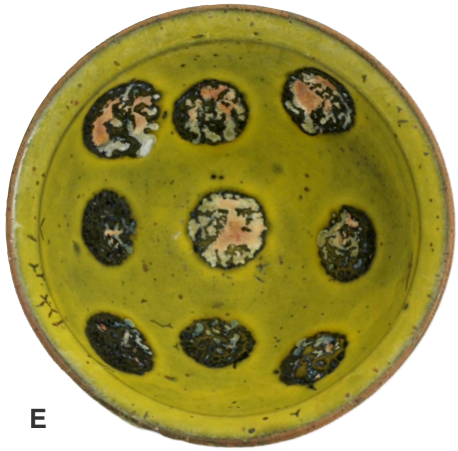



A

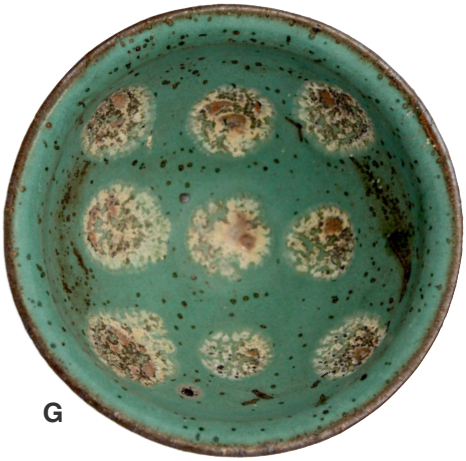

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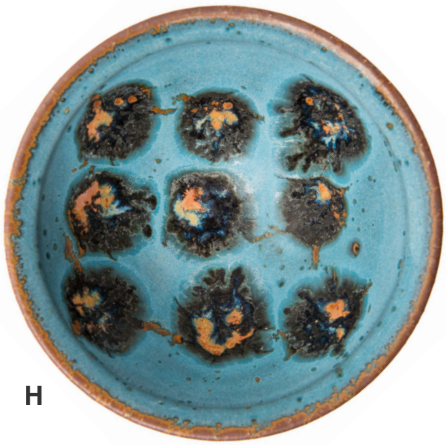

C


D


E


F


G


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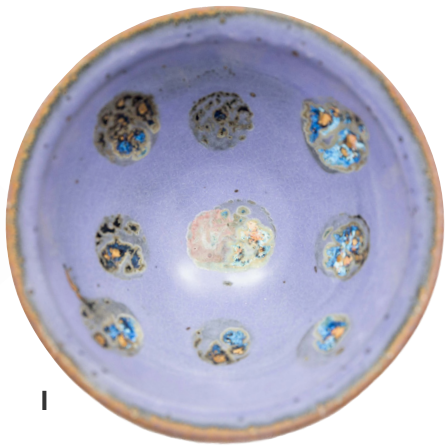

I

Figure 16. Philippine-recovered polychrome Jian bowls. All five bowls have gòngyù (貢御) inscribed on bases. **A.** Mottled yellow with two red shapes at center, *Baroy* (D: 12.3 cm). **B.** Abstract red and yellow pattern on black background glaze, *Butuan* (D: 12.6 cm). **C and E. Red and yellow abstract shapes on black background,** *Baroy and Kapatagan* (Ds: 12.3 and 12.0 cm). **D.** Yellow abstract shapes on black background glaze, *Butuan* (D: 12.3 cm).







A



B



Figure 17. Philippine-recovered Jian bowls.
A. With white and tan splattering (D: 13.0 cm). **B.** With red double fish outline and red and light yellow spots. *Gòngyù* (貢御) incised on base, *recovery location not further specified* (D: 12.4 cm).

Figure 18. Philippine-recovered trumpet-shaped Jian bowls. With black and white partridge-feather pattern. *Recovery locations not further specified.*
A. With *gòngyù* (貢御) incised on base (D: 13.0 cm).
B. With brown rim accents and no base characters (D: 13.0 cm).



A

B

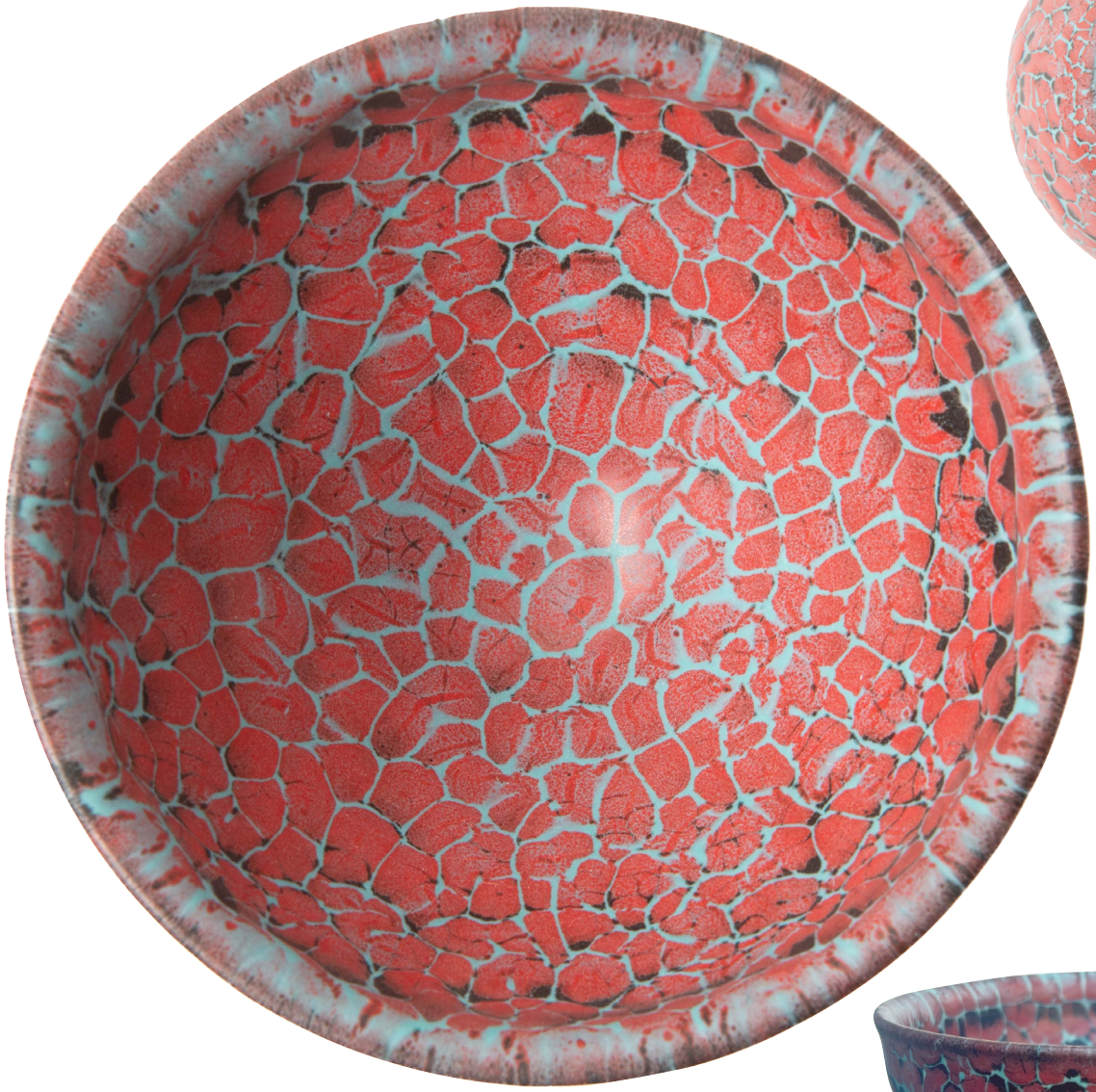






Figure 19. Philippine-recovered polychrome Jian bowl. With red tessellated polygons surrounded by a light blue mud crack-like pattern. Dà Sòng Míngdào (大宋明道) inscribed on base, *Butuan* (D: 13.0 cm).

Discussion

There are several unusual circumstances surrounding the Philippine Jian collection that are worth considering. The broader collection to which these belong was assembled through frequent sampling of the Manila antique market beginning in the late 1960s (Olivera 2025). Despite this sustained effort, however, no Jian bowls were known from the Philippines until the late 1970s. The Santa Ana excavations in the Manila metro area, which produced numerous ceramics from the Song dynasty, yielded neither intact Jian vessels nor Jian sherds. The same is true of excavations in Laguna and Puerto Galera to the south on Luzon, where many examples of standard Song dynasty export wares have been recovered. These sites were clearly connected to the Maritime Silk Road, with ceramic cargoes assembled in the great port cities of southern China. The apparent absence of Jian ware from these commercial assemblages is significant: the Jian kilns do not appear to have participated substantially in the ordinary export trade that supplied Southeast Asian markets and beyond.

The Philippine Jian bowls appear instead to have arrived through a rather different mechanism, analogous in some respects to the way Jian temmoku bowls reached Japan. The Japanese Buddhist pilgrims during the Southern Song period acquired bowls through sources supplying Zen temples with the objects required for their rituals and daily practices. As discussed above, the likely conduit for at least some of the Philippine Jian bowls was the movement of high-end goods associated with maritime trade missions that travelled directly to the Northern Song imperial court. Thus, the two principal bodies of Jian ware that have survived outside China may have originated in very different systems of production and distribution.

This distinction may help explain an otherwise striking difference between the Philippine collection and the familiar Japanese Jian corpus. The Jian bowls produced for Buddhist Zen temples during the Southern Song period would have reflected the requirements and preferences of their ultimate users. Where a bowl was used in a ritual context, continuity would have been desirable. Ritual practices were transmitted from one generation to the next, and the associated objects would likewise have benefited from remaining familiar and recognizable. The relatively narrow range of Jian bowls preserved as Japanese heirlooms—and even those recovered from the Sinan shipwreck of the early 14th century (NMK 2016)—would be consistent with a production tradition that remained relatively conservative once particular forms and glaze effects had become established.

The circumstances surrounding Jian production for the Northern Song imperial court would have been quite different. The personal preferences of the reigning emperor, together with the tastes of courtiers who selected ceramics for court use, would have exerted a strong influence on what was produced. There would have been a competitive incentive for each kiln group to produce something unusual, technically impressive, or visually striking. An ambitious potter or courtier could distinguish himself by introducing a new form, glaze, or decorative technique. The result would have been an environment in which experimentation and novelty were rewarded.

In this respect, producing ceramics for the Northern Song court may have been more analogous to the work of leading designers preparing new collections for a Paris fashion runway than to the production of traditional garments for Buddhist monks. The former rewards innovation and distinction; the latter places greater value on continuity and familiarity. If this distinction is correct, the conventional Jian corpus preserved in Japan may represent only a particular and relatively conservative segment of what the Jian kilns were producing.

The Philippine Jian collection suggests that the accepted understanding of both the range of Jian

production and its chronology requires reconsideration. The partridge-feather bowls illustrated in Figure 18 are particularly significant. They provide intact examples of a form previously known only from a broken fragment recovered at the Jian kiln site. Its trumpet-shaped profile is also notable. This is a relatively uncommon form among known Jian bowls; two other examples are illustrated in Figure 11, both of which have bright polychrome glazes.

Ceramic literature dating to the mid-10th century provides some of the earliest references to the Jian kilns and specifically praises partridge-feather bowls as among their most notable products. The combination of these historical references with the Philippine examples suggests that the Jian kilns had already developed a distinctive and successful production before the Northern Song imperial tradition was fully established. Trumpet-shaped bowls may have been among their important early products, with those decorated in the partridge feather pattern particularly well-regarded. Very shortly thereafter, the kilns were producing the black temmoku glazes for which they would eventually become famous. Zhao Kuangyin (趙匡胤, Figure 20E) is inscribed on the base of the bowl in Figure 3C. This is the birth name of the first Northern Song emperor, Taizu, who reigned from 960–976. If this was produced during Taizu's reign, it provides unusually early evidence for the production of temmoku at Jian.

The Philippine material provides further evidence that the early Northern Song Jian kilns were producing black temmoku and polychrome wares simultaneously. The bowls illustrated in Figures 3B and 19 bear an inscription (Figure 20F) indicating 1032–1033 CE, the period during which Emperor Renzong used the reign name *Mingdao* (明道). These are, chronologically, the latest reign-period inscriptions currently identified among the Philippine-recovered Jian bowls. A much larger number bear the *gòngyù* (貢御) inscription (Figure 20A and B), including substantial numbers of both polychrome and black temmoku vessels. A single bowl has *fèngyù* (奉御) inscribed on its base, with a similar meaning of for imperial service. These may suggest that after the Renzong period the kilns may have increasingly relied on more general "imperial" designations rather than identifying individual vessels by reign period.

Three additional bowls bear the less common inscriptions on their bases. One bowl has jìnzhǎn (進琖, Figure 3A) inscribed on its base which may be translated as "presenting a valuable gift" and one (Figure 6B) has the character shèng (聖), which may be translated as "sacred" or "imperial." There is no obvious distinction between these bowls and those bearing *gòngyù*, suggesting that the inscriptions may have represented different formulations within the same broader system of imperial production or presentation.

A Summary View of Jian Ware

By the late Northern Song, the imperial court increasingly favored hare's-fur temmoku. This preference is particularly well documented by Emperor Huizong's Treatise on Tea, which specifically recommends Jian hare's-fur bowls (Mowry). The prominence of hare's-fur in the late Northern Song court may help explain why it became the dominant Jian product during the Southern Song.

The fall of Kaifeng in 1126 brought an abrupt end to the Jian kilns' role as suppliers to the Northern Song imperial court. Unlike the northern kilns, the Jian kilns themselves were located in southern China and were not destroyed by the Jurchen conquest. Their production therefore continued, but the imperial demand for Jian tribute ware had been fundamentally disrupted. The continued popularity of hare's-fur temmoku, however, provided the kilns with a substantial new market.

The Southern Song period was marked by considerable nostalgia for the lost civilization of Kaifeng, and many aspects of Northern Song court culture were consciously preserved or recreated at the new capital in Hangzhou. Jian hare's-fur bowls, already associated with the refined tea culture of the Northern Song court,

were particularly well suited to this cultural continuity. No longer dependent on Northern imperial tribute orders, the Jian kilns could produce these bowls for a much broader range of customers.

At the same time, tea competitions became increasingly popular throughout China. Jian hare's-fur bowls were particularly appropriate for these competitions because the dark glaze provided a striking contrast with the white, frothy tea. Their use consequently spread well beyond the imperial court and elite households, reaching Buddhist temples and other consumers throughout China. It was from this broader Southern Song market that many of the Jian bowls eventually carried to Japan by Buddhist pilgrims were likely obtained.

This distinction between the two periods provides a possible explanation for the very different pictures of Jian ware preserved by the archaeological and collecting records. The familiar Japanese heirlooms represent a highly successful and relatively standardized Southern Song product that was widely distributed among Buddhist temples and tea practitioners. The Philippine collection, by contrast, contains substantial numbers of conventional hare's-fur bowls but also an unexpectedly diverse range of forms, colors, glaze effects, and experimental treatments, including vessels associated with imperial tribute. If the Philippine material does indeed disproportionately represent the Northern Song court trade, it may preserve a glimpse of an earlier and much more experimental phase of Jian production that is largely absent from pieces in known collections in China and Japan.

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Figure 20. Base characters/seals from selected pieces *(see figures noted in italics)*.
A and B. two variations on 貢御 *gòngyù* - imperial tribute. **C.** 進琖 *jìnzhǎn* - presented gift.
D. 聖 - *shèng* - sacred or imperial. **E.** 趙匡胤 *Zhào Kuāngyìn* - founding Song emperor (960–976).
F. 大宋明道 - *Dà Sòng Míngdào* - second reign mark (1032–1033) of Emperor Renzong.
G. 奉御 *fèngyù* - for imperial service. **H and I.** Stylized characters, not yet determined.



Figure 21. Bases of Philippine-recovered Jian bowls shown on cover.
Clockwise from left: Partidge feather bowl featured in Figure 18B, Oil spotted bowl featured in Figure 4B, Burnt orange and black Jian temmoku bowl, *recovery location not identified* (D: 15.3 cm).



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