

Changsha Ceramics Recovered in the Philippines



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Introduction

One of the most remarkable marine archaeological discoveries of modern times is a shipwrecked trading vessel, discovered in 1998 near Belitung Island in the Java Sea, whose cargo consisted of over 50,000 individual Chinese ceramic vessels. Most of the ceramics were products of a single kiln complex in Changsha, Hunan province, and can be dated to the second quarter of the 9th century CE. This shipwreck cargo is an unprecedented archive of exportware from a single kiln in China during the late Tang dynasty.

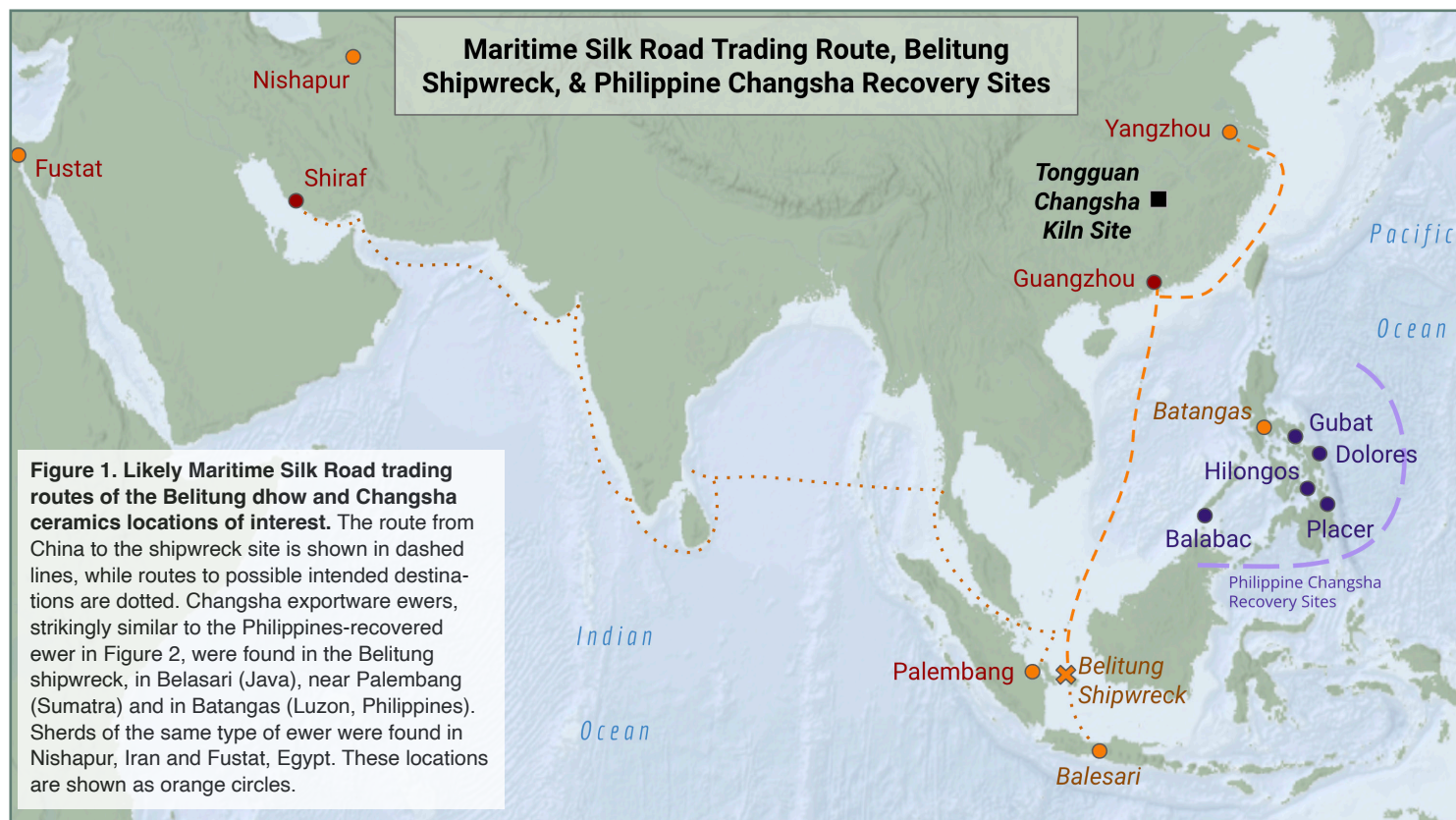
Evidence that Changsha ceramics were widely exported existed long before the Belitung shipwreck discovery. Sherds of Changsha ceramics have been found by archaeologists at sites in the Middle East, notably at Fustat (Cairo) in Egypt and Nishapur in Iran, an important city of the Abbasid empire in the 9th century. A ewer found in northern Java (to the southeast of the shipwreck site) during the Dutch colonial period, is identical to a ewer illustrated in the catalog of ceramics from the Belitung site, leading to speculation that some part of the shipwreck's cargo was intended to be offloaded at a port in Java (see map in Figure 1).

In China itself, ceramics similar to those recovered at the Belitung wreck have been found in the port of Yangzhou. This suggests that this was a point of embarkation, during the Tang dynasty, for ceramics made by the Changsha kilns and shipped along the maritime silk road to Southeast Asia, South Asia, the Middle East and East Africa. In later dynastic periods, trade along the maritime silk road became a major source of revenue for the Chinese court. Based on ceramic cargo found in shipwrecks (Heng, 2019), 8th to 9th century Changsha ceramics, along with celadons from the Yüeh kilns in Zhejiang and whiteware from the Xing kilns in Hubei, appear to be among the earliest documented exportware distributed through this commercial maritime route.

The identification of ceramic products from the Changsha kiln is based on a comparison with similar vessels recovered from the kiln site. A notable collection of Changsha ceramics in Wake Forest University's Lam Museum of Anthropology includes a full range of the ceramics unearthed at the kiln site. Taken together, the Belitung shipwreck and the archaeological evidence from the kiln site provide a picture of how Hunan area kiln products were exported during the Tang dynasty to sites as far away as Egypt, Persia and East Africa.

Changsha ceramics were produced by a huge kiln complex and these were then transported to Yangzhou to be loaded onto the ships of the maritime silk road that sailed to Southeast Asia, and across the Indian Ocean. A major Middle Eastern destination for these ships was the Persian port of Shiraf where the ceramic cargo would be offloaded onto smaller vessels that could navigate the river systems that serve major inland urban centers of the Abbasid empire. Because the Belitung shipwreck is a 15 meter long Arab Dhow, it was likely ultimately destined for Shiraf.

In this article, we show that Changsha ceramics, produced by the same kiln complex as the Belitung cargo, were also imported into the Philippine archipelago. The Philippine collection, which has been assembled for a period of over five decades (see Inset 1), overlaps with ceramics found elsewhere. One key difference is that the ceramics that have been recovered from shipwrecks are exportware from late in the Tang dynasty and are thus restricted to a specific window in time (and style). In contrast, Changsha ceramics found in the Philippines appear to be a broad chronological sampling. Although the vast majority of the Changsha ceramics recovered from the Belitung wreck are bowls, the Philippine recoveries are mostly ewers. Several distinctive features allow an unambiguous assignment of the ewers found in the Philippines to these kilns. Most were either decorated with molded clay appliqué medallions,



or the vessel was painted directly with brown iron oxide and green copper pigments. Additionally, the foot of all ewers and jars is very characteristic: it is a flat pancake-shaped disc, unglazed and clearly delineated from the rest of the vessel. There is no footrim.

In addition to the broader time horizon represented, the Philippine-recovered collection is the largest of intact, generally well preserved Changsha vessels from any site outside China (except for the Belitung's voluminous cargo). The individual vessels in the Philippine collection should be useful in attempts to reconstruct the original ceramics from the vast collections of sherds found at Chinese and other archaeological sites.

Changsha Shipwreck Ceramics: Similar Vessels Recovered in the Philippines

One of the largest and most characteristic vessel types produced by the Changsha kilns consists of ewers with a strap handle, a multi-faceted spout, and two small lug loops on the side. A most distinctive feature of this type is the presence of three caramel brown splashes with appliqués under each of the splashes. Many appliqué motifs show Middle Eastern influences, indicating that these may have been inspired by connections with the Middle East or produced for those markets. The ewer in Figure 2 was acquired over 50 years ago, purchased from a middleman who had brought it from Batangas province, in southwestern Luzon Island, approximately 70 km southwest of Manila, where it had been unearthed.

This site has now been identified as a Tang dynasty era site; it also yielded, notably, a turquoise glazed Middle Eastern jar that was acquired by a well-known Manila collector, Arturo de Santos that was recently illustrated by John Guy (Krahl et al., 2010). In his collection, Mr. de Santos also had a Changsha ewer, from Mindanao, similar to that shown in Figure 2, and illustrated in the catalog of his collection (Peralta, 1982).

In addition to the two Changsha ewers documented from the Philippines, a similar Changsha vessel unearthed from a site in Java during the Dutch colonial period is in the catalog of the Pusat museum (Ridho, 1982). Another similar ewer was found in the Musi River, near the city of Palembang (Kitchener and Kustiarsih, 2019), which was the capital of the Srivijayan kingdom.

The most remarkable find of this type of Changsha ewer is from the Belitung wreck; among the massive cargo of bowls, five different ewers of this specific type were recovered. Two of the Belitung ewers have appliqué medallions identical to those of the Batangas-recovered vessel in Figure 2. A sherd with a medallion identical to one of the Belitung ewers was found in the ruins of Nishapur, excavated by a team from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in the middle of the last century (Ziaii-Bigdeli, 2017). Intact ewers of this type are apparently only rarely found within China; however such a ewer was recovered in a tomb in Zhenjiang, Jiangsu dated to 834 CE (Mino and Tsiang, 1987). An additional example is in the catalog of the Palace Museum, Beijing (TCPL, Figure 139).



Figure 2. The First Vessel of the Collection. A classic 9th century export ewer from the late Tang dynasty, recovered from the Batangas area of Luzon. Each region of the ewer's caramel splashes has a medallion applied under the brown oval-shaped pigment. The medallions under the spout and under one of the loop handles are identical; the third medallion has a different, avian motif. Ewers with similar motifs have been recovered from the Belitung shipwreck; sherds with similar medallions have been found at the original kiln site and at many archaeological sites outside China. (H: 23.5 cm)

Inset 1

Five Decades of Collecting Chinese Ceramics in the Philippines

The first controlled archaeological recovery of Chinese ceramics in the Philippines was documented in two publications: an academic paper by Robert Fox (1959) describing 15th/16th century Ming dynasty export ceramics recovered during his excavations in Calatagan, Batangas province; and a beautifully illustrated book by Cecilia Locsin (1967) describing the excavation funded by her family, at the graveyard of Santa Ana church in metro-Manila. The latter yielded ceramics from the Southern Song to the early Ming periods (13th-14th century). Because the Santa Ana diggings were the first to uncover a comprehensive series of ceramics that covered the transition period from pure white porcelain to underglaze painted blue and white ceramics, these recoveries were the subject of a symposium dedicated to evaluating the ceramics.

The discoveries in the Philippines attracted the attention of international clientele, particularly from Japan, and commercial shops began to deal in antique Chinese ceramics. A group of diggers trained at the Calatagan and Santa Ana archaeological digs began exploring ceramics sites in provinces around Manila and on the island of Mindoro. With the increased interest, several dealers, including Terry Baylosis and Vincent Magbuhos, opened shops in Manila that regularly stocked a variety of antique ceramics.

During this period, I had my first faculty position, in Biochemistry at the University of the Philippines College of Medicine, a few blocks away from these shops in Manila. On my lunch break, I often visited the shops, particularly the smaller, more informal vendors. Recognizing my interest, some of the vendors agreed to arrange a private showing. Soon, a group of friends

began to meet on weekends with various antique dealers who would show us their wares. This became an enjoyable social pastime in the late 1960s and early 1970s. On one of these occasions, a dealer, Mr. Mendoza, presented us with material that had been uncovered in Batangas province, including the Changsha ewer in Figure 2. The ewer was sufficiently unusual that most of the group were skeptical that it was of Chinese origin. I was intrigued, however, and decided to buy it for the modest price of 125 pesos (\$30 at the time). Several friends teased me for buying what they felt was almost certainly a fake.

A few months later, my wife and a cousin visited the Del Rosario gallery in Manila and noticed a catalog of the Brundage collection from the de Young Museum in San Francisco. One of the illustrations in the catalog was of a ewer that was virtually identical to the one I had bought. At that moment, we realized that there were Chinese ceramics from the Tang dynasty in the Philippines. Thus, I came to own a ewer strikingly similar to the celebrated ewers that were among the highlights of the Changsha ceramics recovered more than 25 years later from the 9th century Belitung Arab Dhow shipwreck. I have sought out any Changsha ceramics that have appeared in the Philippine antique market ever since.

The 1970s were a high point of interest for ceramics recovered in the Philippines. With the international financial crisis and political unrest of the 1980s and with a recession in Japan, both domestic and international ceramics clientele lost interest. In addition, the diggings close to Manila around Laguna and Mindoro became less productive. However, a small but steady stream of ceramic discoveries from all over the Philippines continued to come into Manila shops. Although now based in the United States, my scientific work brought me to the Philippines several times a year and I continued to seek out and purchase

Inset 1 (continued)

any unusual new deliveries. A number of Changsha ceramics occasionally appeared, with very modest prices.

The interest in antique ceramics from the Philippines never returned to the 1970s level, but a subtle change in quality and provenance of the goods did occur, likely because of the discovery of the Surigao treasure, a 10 kilogram cache of exquisite gold objects found in Mindanao (Capistrano-Baker, 2015). This discovery led to a highly focused interest in collecting pre-Hispanic Philippine gold adornments. There were ready buyers, both in the major cities near Mindanao, as well as in Manila, and consequently an increase in those looking for gold objects. The Philippine Central Bank acquired a large collection of antique gold objects and the Locsin family, who had previously sponsored the diggings in Santa Ana, now focused their attention on collecting and buying gold objects.

As a by-product of the flurry of gold hunting from burial sites, large numbers of ceramic objects were unearthed from the southeastern Philippines, namely the Northern Mindanao and the Eastern Visayas coasts. Although of little interest to the gold diggers, these objects found their way, through middlemen and collectors, to dealers in the Manila antique market. As a result, a different spectrum of Chinese ceramic vessels began to appear, many of which had a far earlier provenance than those discovered in the 1970s on Luzon and Mindoro. Although Changsha ceramics were never common, novel ceramics from this kiln, different from any previously described, were found from new sites. These discoveries continue to appear in the antique markets to the present day.

A comparison between the Belitung wreck ceramics and those unearthed in the Philippines is illuminating.

The Belitung ceramics were the cargo of a single maritime silk road trading vessel; in contrast, the Changsha ceramic vessels found in the Philippines are an essentially random sampling from over 350 years of production. We have previously documented the existence of an Austronesian maritime kingdom in the Southeastern Philippines called the Kalaga Putuan Crescent (KPC). In contrast to all other Philippine recoveries, the ceramic objects found at sites within the KPC geographic area do not appear to have been traded through the traditional maritime silk road. Instead, they were obtained through direct trade between China and the KPC; each Changsha ceramic vessel found at a KPC site is a sample from a particular time when KPC traders exchanged highly prized goods from Island Southeast Asia (tortoise shell, pearls, spices, fragrant wood, and likely gold) for high end ceramics from China in return.

We have demonstrated elsewhere that this direct maritime trade link was in place as early as the 3rd century CE (Olivera et al., 2024). The sample of Changsha ceramic vessels from the Philippines provides evidence for the influence of China's Old Yüeh kilns of the 3rd and 4th century on Changsha ceramics made during the Six Dynasties and early Tang periods. Thus, the Philippine collection provides a new window into the early products of the Changsha kilns.

There are historical references in the Chinese literature to the Old Yüeh influence on Changsha ceramics, but because the KPC kingdom imported both a continuous series of Old Yüeh ware as well as early Changsha vessels, a clearer connection between these two overlapping ceramic traditions can be more clearly and extensively documented based on the Philippine-recovered material.

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Polychrome Painted Bowls

The main cargo of the Belitung shipwreck were bowls, which vastly outnumbered the ewers. Most bowls were painted with two pigments, a brown iron oxide and a copper green. Similar bowls are relatively rare among the Philippine recoveries; most painted bowls from the Philippines show an animal in its environment. However, there are two which have calligraphy. One of these has three characters stating that it is a tea bowl, a motif identical to that on a Changsha bowl found in the shipwreck (comparison in Figure 3).

The bowl in Plate 1A shows an egret foraging on a shallow stream; the same motif is depicted in a painted ewer now in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (Tung, 2001). That ewer is regarded as one of the highlights of the collection.

Plate 1D and 1E show a bird on a branch overlooking a lotus pond. This motif was also used on a bowl in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, but with a very different painting style. The Philippine bowl uses a bluish green copper pigment quite extensively, while the Museum's bowl is mostly brown iron oxide.

The motif in the bowls in Plate 1B and Plate 1C appears to be fish; the depiction of the fish is very similar to other paintings that depict a mythical creature called a makara, which had its origins in Indian mythology. Both fish are about to swallow a round object, which is part of the iconography of the makara. The round object is a cintamani stone, a flaming jewel representing Buddha and his doctrine.

Figure 4 shows a similar painted bowl recovered from the Belitung shipwreck. Four of the over 50,000 bowls recovered from the shipwreck had a makara motif. The paintings of the makara figures are generally similar, except that the Philippine-recovered makara in Plate 1B has wings and is depicted as flying above the waves.

The major decorative technique in Changsha vessels is the use of these brown and green pigments painted on the vessel with a brush. Diverse styles of painting with these pigments are represented in the Philippine recoveries. The evidence from the Belitung Shipwreck suggests that the painted bowls are roughly contemporaneous with the Batangas ewer; however, in contrast to the shipwreck bowls, the bowls recovered in the Philippines do not appear to have been mass-produced.

The painting on the Philippine bowls is of a higher quality craftsmanship. Since there were circa 50,000 bowls recovered from the Belitung shipwreck, the comparison here indicates that the volume of production of Changsha must have required expedient painting. As a result, the Belitung bowls are almost cartoonish in their execution compared to the two similar bowls from the Philippine archipelago. However, given their close similarity to ceramics on the sunken Belitung dhow, these bowls and the ewer decorated with medallions shown in Figure 2 were very likely imported into the Philippines around the second quarter of the 9th century.



Figure 3. Changsha Bowls with Calligraphy. The Chinese characters indicate the words “tea bowl”. **Left:** Philippine-recovered bowl. (D: 14.7 cm). **Right:** Bowl recovered from the Belitung shipwreck in the collection of the Asian Civilisations Museum of Singapore.

Plate 1.



A



B



C



D



E



F



G



H



I



Figure 4. Changsha Bowl with Makara from Belitung shipwreck.
From the collection of the Asian Civilisations Museum of Singapore.

Plate 1. (opposite) A - I Philippine-recovered Changsha Bowls with Birds, Deer, Makaras, and Calligraphy. (D: 14.5 - 15 cm)

Early Products of the Changsha Kilns

The four vessels shown in Figure 5 and 6 differ in style from the bulk of the known products of the Changsha kilns. As a group, these show a strong influence from the most famous kilns of the Six Dynasties, the Old Yüeh kilns in Zhejiang province that dominated ceramic production from the 3rd to the 6th century. We suggest these four vessels are the oldest of the Changsha ceramics recovered from the Philippines.

The spread of Buddhism in China helped to establish lotus petals as a decorative motif. Lotus covered jars became one of the most widely disseminated ceramic forms in the 5th and 6th centuries and were ultimately produced all over China. The characteristic features of these jars – downward facing lotus petals and four or six square lug handles – are present in the Philippine-recovered jar in Figure 5. This jar exhibits a hybrid of Changsha as well as early Yüeh characteristics.

All three Changsha vessels shown in Figure 6 have a similar straw colored glaze, underglaze decoration with iron oxide brown and copper green pigments, and a disc-shaped, unglazed foot. These vessels are a unique and distinctive style. Their iron oxide staining is more reminiscent of Old Yüeh vessels made between the 4th and 6th century than the brown iron oxide painting of later 8th-9th century Changsha ceramics (shown and described in sections that follow).

Covered jars with 4 loops are a vessel type made throughout China from the Six Dynasties through the Tang dynasty. The Changsha kiln example (Figure 6C) has a painted motif of pearls-on-a-string, somewhat similar to a downward facing lotus petal motif, that persisted in the Changsha repertoire and was used in



Figure 5. Lotus-covered Jar. Similar jars with downward facing lotus petals, dated to the 6th century, were made by many kilns across China. (H: 15.5 cm)

later kiln products. This jar shows early experimental features (i.e., the glaze does not cover the vessel surface evenly, and the dark slip is exposed).

The bent handle and distorted mouth rim of the ewer in 6A are highly unusual. However, the division of the main body of this ewer into 4 lobes became a standard feature of Changsha ware of later periods. The dragon motif of the ewer in Figure 6B seems to have been influenced by Old Yüeh examples of the 4th-5th century (see Figure 7). Both the Changsha and Old Yüeh ewers of this type were decorated with iron oxide stains, but only the Changsha vessel has the copper green stain.

Full-sized Painted Ewers

The ewers shown in Figure 6A and 6B are smaller than most of the other Changsha ewers in the Philippine collection. In addition, the abstract painted design is different in that most Changsha ewers depict figurative

representations of animals, plants, humans and as a distinctive category, Tang poetry. There are a dozen full-sized ewers that have been recovered from Philippine sites. We divide these into two general categories.

Figure 7. Six Dynasties DragonHandled Ewer.
(H: 10.2 cm)



Figure 6. Early Changsha Ewers and Covered Jar. A: (H: 13.6 cm), B: (H: 11.3 cm), C: (H: 20.5 cm)



Tan-Glazed Polychrome Ewers (*Full-size Group 1*)

There are seven examples (Figures 8-9 and Plate 2) that comprise the first group of full-size ewers, most of which have a grayish tan glaze which may be the result of transformations of the original glazes' color over a long burial period. In addition, some of these ewers have a distinctive splayed foot, and most have incised vertical lines, which divide the surface into four lobed sections. The front sector with the spout is invariably where the painting was centered. The painting on the ewers in this first full-size group show evidence of surface corrosion, while the painting of the examples in the second group are remarkably well preserved. The latter all have a lighter, more uniform glaze which may have protected the pigments used for painting from being degraded.

Five vessels in the first subcategory of this group are very similar in style. They all are relatively cylindrical in

shape, with a long neck and everted mouthrim. There are no lug handles. Four of the vessels show an animal or plant spray, and the fifth has poetry. The two ewers depicting birds in Figure 8 (A and B) are quite degraded; the copper green pigment has clearly corroded. The bird motifs on these two vessels are similar. Figure 8C shows a vessel with a poem that is similarly potted, with the incised and painter calligraphy also corroded.

The other two ewers in this subcategory (Figure 9) are less corroded. The quality of the clear crackle atop the tan glaze is excellent, especially in the neck areas of both ewers. The smallest vessel has a lotus spray painted underneath the spout (Figure 9A). The best preserved is the ewer with a leaping deer (Figure 9B).

The final examples of the first group of hand-painted ewers are two very distinctive vessels (shown in Plate 2) with carefully painted anthropomorphic representations. While Changsha ewers with humans on their appliqué



Figure 8. Polychrome Painted Changsha Ewers with Grayish Tan Glaze. A: (H: 19.4 cm), B: (H: 16.4 cm), C: (H: 18.7 cm)



A

Figure 9. Polychrome Painted Changsha Ewers with Grayish Tan Glaze. A: (H: 17.6 cm),
B: (H: 19.3 cm)



B

medallions are relatively common, Changsha ewers with painted human figures are extremely rare. These vessels have a glaze that has an uneven darker grayish and lighter yellowish color (again, the original colors may have changed during burial). The glaze remains shinier than is found in most Changsha ewers; while the brown iron oxide pigment is clearly visible, what were probably originally copper green brushstrokes have largely degraded.

The portrayed human subjects make these two vessels exceptionally interesting. The painting style is unique: the outlines were first incised into the clay before the iron oxide pigment was applied, giving a very crisply rendered portrait of a specific individual. The lighter yellowish colored glaze tends to concentrate

around the incised iron oxide lines, thereby giving them an even sharper emphasis. This is in striking contrast to the other ewers in the first subgroup such as the deer in Figure 9B where the brown iron oxide is applied using thicker brushstrokes that are less sharply defined.

In the first of these vessels (Plate 2A), the painting almost exclusively uses the iron brown pigment with little evidence of any copper green. This is a martial pose, with a highly characteristic Chinese polearm weapon (also known as a glaive). The individual holding the weapon has a judo-like outfit, with a belt that has an elaborate sash in front. Most remarkably, a pig tail attached to the left side of his head has swung outward as he thrusts the long polearm around, making this 9th century painting exceptionally dynamic (in contrast to

Plate 2.



Plate 2.

A: Ewer with Painted Warrior with Pole Arm Weapon. (H: 19.7 cm)

B: Ewer with Painted Seated Figure with Crown. (H: 19.0 cm)



Figure 10. Detailed Views of Ewers in Plate 2. The closeup of warrior is projected to fit into a single view (photos and editing by Clive Walker)

the stasis of the early renaissance European paintings 500 years later), as well as culturally specific. The polearm is an iconic Chinese weapon known either as the reclining moon glaive (yan yue dao) or the spring and autumn great glaive (chun qiu da dao). This ewer is distinct from those described above as it has a much narrower neck and mouth, and a curved shoulder.

In the other vessel (Plate 2B), the individual is seated, and is wearing a crown. He has a mustache and a somewhat scraggly beard, and is holding a sword. His flowing robes are carefully rendered, and there is a floral motif, originally painted in copper green beneath the seated figure. There are two rows of spots on the

vessel's shoulder, the upper with larger iron oxide squarish spots, the bottom row with smaller copper green dots that are more corroded. This ewer is not sectored into lobes, and it has two lug handles.

In both vessels, the faces are very expressive, true portraits of individuals and not generic types (see detailed views in Figure 10). Furthermore, these both appear to be faces of teenagers or young men, a group only rarely represented in Chinese ceramics of any period. In the Northern Song, babies with plants were popular. In the Ming dynasty, groups of young boys became a dominant motif.

The Culmination of Changsha Ceramics

Tan-Glazed Polychrome Ewers (*Full-size Group 2*)

The four ewers in this group (Figure 11 and Plates 3 and 4) represent a mature stage of painting; the control of the glaze and the quality of the painting was remarkable. There are only a small number of vessels in this category, and they are significant as high achievements in the ceramic art of the Tang dynasty.

The vessel in Figure 11, a large ewer with a poem inscribed, represents a somewhat intermediate stage; this has the vertical incisions that define four sectors, and this vessel is larger than the ewers in the first group. The poem expresses regret at the large age difference between two lovers.

A large ewer with two plants painted on the side (Plate 3A) is representative of the mature style. Both the copper green, and the brown iron oxide pigments are vivid and well preserved. The even, almost silky off-white glaze shows a degree of technical mastery beyond the other group of painted vessels.

Another large ewer in this category shows a bird posturing or possibly taking flight (Plate 3B), once again with vivid copper green and brown iron oxide pigments

A final vessel (Plate 4) with this style of painting is a 2-looped jar, which has perhaps the most delicate execution of a combination of brown iron oxide and green copper pigments found in any Changsha vessel that has been unearthed to date. The painting is pristine and its condition is without any sign of degradation at all, in contrast to almost all other examples of paintings on Changsha vessels.

Figure 11. Ewer with Poem in Calligraphy. (H: 22.0 cm)



Plate 3.



Plate 3.

A: Painted Ewer with Two Plants. (H: 21.8 cm)

B: Painted Ewer with Flying Bird Motif. (H: 21.5 cm)

Plate 4.



Plate 4.
Painted Jar with
Bird and Plants.
(H: 28.0 cm)

Ewers with Appliqué Medallions

As discussed above, the most well known Changsha ewers are the large exportware vessels apparently made primarily for the Middle Eastern market, five of which were found in the Belitung shipwreck. However, two other types of ewers which were not known to have been found outside China that are decorated with appliqué medallions have been unearthed in the Philippines

The most closely related Changsha vessel to the iconic Belitung wreck ewers is shown in Figure 12. It has the three brown stained areas with appliqué

decoration applied under each stained area. In this case, three different motifs were used. Under the spout is a double fish appliqué, while the other two areas have anthropomorphic figures. The body of the vessel is divided into four lobes: the front lobe with the spout, the back lobe with the handle, and two side lobes with the loop handles. This ewer is smaller than the shipwreck ewers (and the Batangas ewer in Figure 2), and has a somewhat darker glaze.

Figure 12. Ewer with Three Different Appliqué Medallion Motifs. Recovered near Placer and San Francisco, NE Mindinao. (H: 17.7 cm)



Vessels with a Greenish Glaze

One of the most distinctive sets of Changsha ceramics found in the Philippines are vessels with a pronounced greenish glaze. These include three smaller ewers and one small jar with two loop handles shown together in Figure 13. All these vessels are different from each other, but they share certain features which no other Changsha ceramics display. Not only is the greenish glaze distinctive, but all have four brownish splashes applied around the vessel, with two appliqué motifs under two of the opposing splashes. The two appliqué motifs on each side are identical. In three of the ewers, the spout is faceted, but much narrower and proportionally longer than the spouts of most Changsha ewers. These are unique products of the Changsha kilns that have not been documented previously. One ewer has an unusual lobed mouth and a medallion with two fish and what may be fruit (Figure 13A). Another has a medallion under the brownish splash, with two birds under a palm, surrounded by a fence (Figure 13C). This is one of the standard appliqué motifs used in other Changsha vessels recovered at the kiln site.

Together, the ewers decorated with appliqué medallions represent an unusual class.

Double Fish Wine Bottles

Double fish bottles recovered in the Philippines are distinctive, very idiosyncratic ceramic forms from the Changsha kilns. Plate 5 shows two examples that are potted similarly, but are painted differently. In the first vessel (Plate 5A), the glaze is a dark brown monochrome; the slip that has been applied under the dark glaze is visible above the typical Changsha foot. There are 4 loop handles attached, and 2 molded fins under each loop.

The vessel in Plate 5B looks strikingly different even though it is almost identical in potting. In this double fish bottle, the full pallet of polychrome decoration of the Changsha kilns has been applied to produce a ceramic vessel that is a quintessential product of these kilns. Both of these double fish vases are unique, and similar pieces have not previously been illustrated in the ceramics literature. However, there appears to be archaeological evidence that these were routinely



Figure 13. Vessels with Greenish Glazes. **A:** Ewer with lobed mouth. (H: 12.6 cm), **B:** Ewer with turtle medallion. (H: 12.6 cm), **C:** Ewer with birds and palm tree medallion. (H: 13.2 cm), **D:** Jar with monster medallion. (H: 11.5 cm).

Plate 5.



Plate 5. Changsha Double Fish Wine Bottles.

A: Double Fish Bottle with Brown Glaze. (H: 20.2 cm)

B: Double Fish Bottle with Brown and Green Accents. (H: 21.6 cm)

Figure 14. Xing Double Fish Wine Bottle. Viewed from front and side. (H: 22.2 cm)



produced in Changsha, since a figure of such a bottle is included in the list of diverse ceramic forms made by the kilns in the publication by Lam (1990), describing his collection of Changsha ceramics recovered from the kiln site.

Bottles in the form of two fish are linked to Buddhism, serving as an emblem of harmony and abundance (Krahl, 2017). The iconography was apparently popular during the late Tang dynasty. All of the major kilns of the period, Yüeh, Xing, and Changsha had products in this form; they were used as bottles to carry wine (the loops allowing the insertion of thin straps). These bottles were even celebrated in Tang poetry. A Sancai bottle of this type is in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (catalog #88-1939).

A Xing Ware Linkage

The cargo of the Belitung shipwreck included one double fish bottle, but not from the Changsha kilns. Rather, that piece was a product of the Yüeh kilns. It is notable that no Yüeh ware example has been recovered in the Philippines, but a Xing fish bottle has been found (Figure 14). This vessel has an inscription on its base, “ying”, which has been widely interpreted as indicative of ceramics from this Kiln made for use by the imperial court. Several Xing ceramics with this inscription have been found in KPC sites in the Southeastern Philippines (see Plates 6 and 7) and some of these Xing pieces exhibit a translucence through the base and body that is easily observed when held up to the sun or other bright light source (Plate 6C).

In addition to the Belitung Shipwreck, two double fish bottles were recovered from the Intan shipwreck, which has been dated to the Five Dynasties period. Thus, this

Plate 6.

A



Plate 6.

A: Xing Cup and Cup Stand. (H: 9.1 cm)

B: Base of Cup with Ying Character

C: Xing Ware Translucence. The translucent properties of select Xing ware pieces are easily demonstrated by holding the cup up to a light source such as a mobile phone flashlight, as shown.

Plate 7. (*opposite*).

A: Foliated Xing Dish. (top view, D: 13.4 cm)

B: Base of Foliated Xing Dish with Ying Character

C: Xing Cup and Cup Stand. (H: 9.5 cm)

D: Base of Cup with Guan Character. (photo adjusted to improve contrast)

B



C

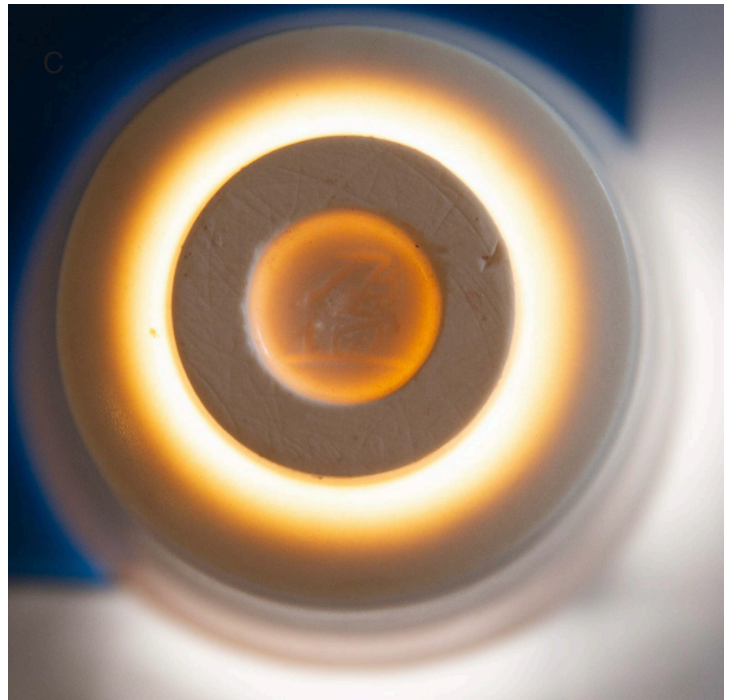


Plate 7.

A



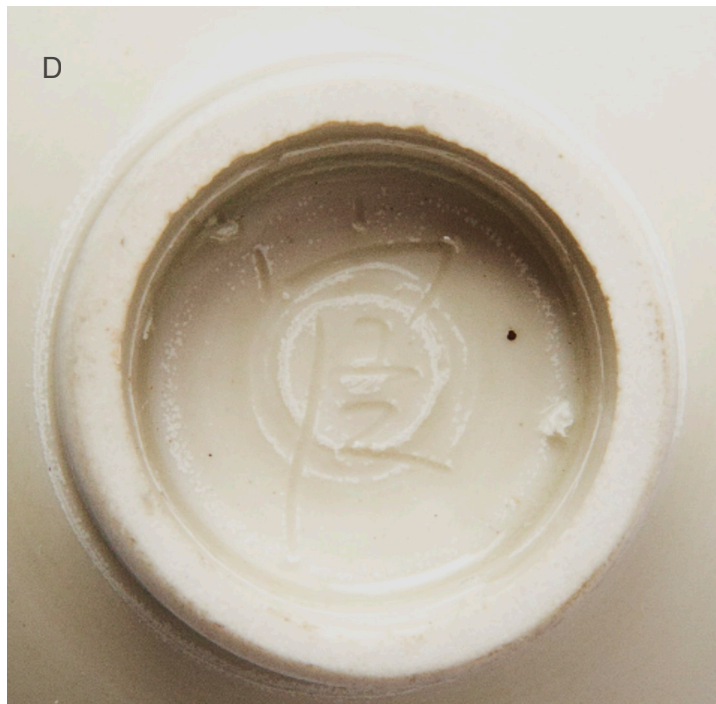
C



B



D



ceramic form was made from the Tang through the Five Dynasties; the three Philippine vessels are among the best preserved examples known from the Changsha and Xing kilns.

Discussion

The provenance of each individual Changsha vessel should ultimately become more precisely defined as archaeological studies at the kiln site proceed. The reconstruction of how each vessel reached the site in the Philippines, where it was unearthed, is necessarily more speculative. Here, we suggest a framework to be tested by future investigation.

There are two general classes of Changsha ceramics that should be differentiated. The first are those vessels that are likely exportware; the ewer in Figure 2 found in Batangas, similar to the Belitung vessels and other similar ewers found outside China, represents this first category. Changsha exportware merchandise departed from ports located at the mouth of the Yangtze River, in South China or in Northern Vietnam (which was then under the control of the Chinese court). Changsha exportware could have arrived at Philippine archipelago sites through the standard maritime silk road network. At the beginning of the Song dynasty, there is textual evidence referring to a kingdom in the Philippines called Ma-yi. Merchants from Ma-yi were recorded as one of the expatriate merchant communities involved in the export trade at the port of Canton (Go, 2005).

We suggest that a second class of Changsha vessels reached the Philippines, obtained through formal tribute or trade missions to the Chinese imperial court. A tribute or trade delegation would arrive with luxury goods desired by the Chinese elite (such as tortoiseshell, pearls and spices). These goods would be presented to the emperor or his courtiers, and in return, delegates of the mission would be given high quality gifts that were specifically made for the court. These types of exchanges were recorded in surviving Northern Song dynasty court

texts, but there is no direct textual evidence available from the Tang dynasty. We have suggested in previous work (Olivera et al.) that there was an Austronesian kingdom in the Southeastern Philippine archipelago, which we have called the Kalaga Putuan Crescent (KPC) that obtained ceramics through direct trade from the 3rd to the 13th centuries.

The kingdom called Ma-yi in the Chinese records is believed to be either on the island of Mindoro, or in the present town of Bay (pronounced Ba-yi), near Laguna Lake (Go, 2005). Because most Austronesian maritime kingdoms were loose political alliances of largely autonomous chiefdoms (Junker, 1999), it seems entirely possible that the polity known to the Chinese as Ma-yi may have encompassed the entire west central Luzon area, including Mindoro, from Batangas to Laguna Lake. Although Tang dynasty sites were first reported by the American anthropologist H. Otley Beyer during the American colonial period, very few Tang dynasty ceramics have been recovered from western Luzon in recent years. Nevertheless, it is clear that Ma-yi traders were present in the Southern Chinese ports that were the embarkation point for ceramic exportware to be distributed through the maritime silk road. Thus, the ewer in Figure 2 was likely imported through this route.

In contrast, there are a number of Changsha vessels recovered in the Philippines that are unlikely to have been made for export markets. Among these are the ceramics which predate the 8th century beginning of the maritime silk road; a number of the Philippine-recovered Changsha vessels almost certainly pre-date this maritime route (see *Reconstructing Chronology*, below) including the small ewers illustrated in Figure 6. Another group of vessels unlikely to have been made for export are those painted with motifs targeted to Chinese consumers; these include the ewers that were painted with poetry, or the anthropomorphic representation of a Chinese martial artist illustrated in

Figure 10. These would appear to be motifs specific for the domestic Chinese market; however, they may have been bought by, or presented to members of a tribute or trade delegation.

More direct evidence for direct exchange with the imperial court is provided by the Xing ceramics which all bear the inscription “ying” (Plates 6B and 7B), which marks vessels made by this kiln that were meant for the court. The recovery of these from several KPC kingdom sites in the Southeastern Philippine archipelago strongly suggests that these were not obtained as exportware through the maritime silk road, but through gifts to members of tribute missions by the Tang imperial court.

Reconstructing Chronology

The Philippine Changsha ceramics likely represent a somewhat random sampling of the products of the Changsha kiln while it was active. We suggest a tentative chronology, which is proposed as a hypothesis to be explored by future research. There is one group of Philippine-recovered ceramics that can be fairly securely dated. Because of their similarities to the ceramic cargo of the Belitung shipwreck, the ewer in Figure 2 and the painted bowls shown in Plate 1 are almost certainly products of the kilns in the 9th century. The literature on recoveries from the Changsha kiln site suggest that the decorative technique of appliqué medallions under a brown glaze had been developed in the middle of the 8th century, and was a major decorative technique during the 9th century (Chong and Murphy 2017).

In contrast, we have presented evidence that the vessels illustrated in Figures 6, 8 and 9 were earlier products of the Changsha kilns, primarily on technical and stylistic grounds. The contrast in technical control from other vessels is immediately apparent, but more compelling is the affinity of the ceramics to the Old Yüeh production during the Six Dynasties period. We suggest that these were likely imported into the Philippine

archipelago in the 6th or 7th century. This early group is characterized by the presence of carving, incisions and sculptural elements, and the absence of any figurative representations in the painted motifs.

With regard to the ewers where animal, plant and anthropomorphic figures are depicted, some of these appear to have been made after the early group of ceramics, but probably before the well-known late 8th and 9th century vessel types, including the types found in the shipwreck. The ewer that shows a stag jumping (Plate 1H) was recovered from Balabac Island in the southwestern Philippines; this was believed to be a settlement that serviced the increasingly active maritime trade between the KPC kingdom and Srivijaya in Indonesia. The ceramics that have been recovered there are from the early Tang dynasty, mostly lead glazed Sancai ceramics that lack the cobalt blue pigment, and are therefore mostly assigned to the 7th to early 8th century. We propose that ewers of this type, that are divided into four sectors and have a tendency to degrade into a grayish color with discolored copper green pigment, may be from an intermediate stage of kiln production, between the 7th and the late 8th century.

Thus, Philippine-recovered Changsha vessels can be assigned into one of three stages: the early production from the 6th and 7th century, a middle period, and a mature stage that includes the period when the shipwreck cargo was produced. In the early stage, there was a strong influence of Old Yüeh styles, but polychrome decoration using iron oxide and copper green pigmented glazes was already in standard use, albeit without any figurative representations in the painting. In the middle period, animal, plant and anthropomorphic motifs were introduced; a standard form of painted ewer with four sectors had been developed for the domestic Chinese market. Beginning in the last half of the 8th century, appliqué medallion decoration was introduced, and a background glaze that was highly sophisticated and a



Figure 15. Closeup of Dragon Handled Changsha Ewer. (see Fig. 6)

much lighter color was developed. This preserved the iron oxide brown and copper green colors on painted ewers. Quantitatively, Changsha kiln production became geared to producing exportware that filled the hulls of the trading vessels plying the maritime silk road, as is so persuasively demonstrated by the Belitung shipwreck's cargo.

Previous discussions of Changsha ceramic chronology have largely treated what we are calling mature stage ceramics, the last phase in our proposed framework. It would appear that the archaeological work to date has primarily recovered what was produced in the 9th century. In part, this could have been because of the much higher volume of production for export of the Changsha kilns during this period. It is also possible, however, that the earlier production was carried out in kilns at a different location from where archaeological work is presently focused.

Implications for Maritime Trade

The presence of an exportware Changsha ewer in Batangas (as well as a Middle Eastern turquoise jar) is evidence for a connection, direct or indirect, to the maritime silk road. It is possible that these ceramics

were obtained in a South China port, such as Canton by expatriate Ma-yi traders stationed there. However, given the robust trade links between Austronesian polities by the 9th century, these ceramics could also have been obtained in a maritime center in the Srivijaya empire, since these ports were clearly highly sophisticated emporia of goods from both China and Indian Ocean origins.

We suggest that most vessels described above were not brought to the Philippines through the maritime silk road, but obtained directly by members of tribute or trade missions at one of the urban centers of Tang dynasty China, such as Luoyang. These vessels represent trading at a much higher level, and the quality of the ceramics obtained in this way would likely be very different from standard export merchandise. For pieces where a recovery location in the Philippines has been identified, all sites are associated with the KPC kingdom, for which persuasive evidence for a direct exchange of goods with the Chinese court, and/or Chinese elites has previously been presented (Olivera et al.). The ceramics that are recovered at these sites are decidedly distinctive from those distributed through the maritime silk road. Although Changsha ceramics were not highly regarded by the Chinese elites, Xing whiteware was; the recovery of Xing vessels with the ying inscription from KPC sites in the Southeastern Philippine archipelago are consistent with these being gifts presented to members of tribute missions by the Tang imperial court, given to reciprocate for the high value products presented to the Emperor as tribute.

The two different maritime routes proposed above are illustrated in the map in Figure 16. This is a visual representation of how two Austronesian kingdoms in the Philippine archipelago, the KPC in the Southeast, and Ma-yi in Mindoro and adjacent areas of West-central Luzon, carried out trade with China during the Tang dynasty through very different maritime links.



Figure 16. Southeast Asian Austronesian Kingdoms and the Changsha Ceramics Trade. This map shows trade linkages between the Chinese mainland and Southeast Asian sites where Changsha-style ceramics have been recovered. These include sites in the Srivijaya, now in Indonesia, and Ma-yi (Mindoro and Western Luzon, Philippines) and Kalaga Putuan Crescent areas (Southeastern Philippines).

Recovery locations for similar Changsha *exportware* ewers – Batangas, Belitung Wreck Site, Palembang (Musi River) and Balesari – are indicated with a small orange star. KPC sites (shown in purple) are the only sites where a diverse variety of higher quality Changsha ceramics have been recovered. The route with purple dots are direct KPC maritime links, while the orange routes carried Maritime Silk Road exportware.

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Changsha Tea Bowl. The characters on this Philippine-recovered bowl relate a saying attributed to Confucius that has been translated as “A man can enlarge the principles which he follows; those principles do not enlarge the man.” (*also shown in Plate 1*)



Small Changsha Bird and Monster
(H: 3.3 and 5.3 cm)

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