



# **SPAFACON2021**

**Papers from the SEAMEO SPAFA International Conference on  
SOUTHEAST ASIAN ARCHAEOLOGY AND FINE ARTS**

**13 - 17 December 2021**

**Editor: Noel Hidalgo Tan**

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# INTRODUCTION

This volume contains the extended abstracts from the papers presented at the SEAMEO SPAFA International Conference on Southeast Asian Archaeology and Fine Arts, which was held online from 13 to 17 December 2021. Also known as the SPAFACON2021, this conference was organised online due to the pandemic. Despite the disruption brought about by Covid-19 to our in-person events, training programmes and field research, it is heartening to see that archaeology and cultural heritage has continued under new modes of communication and collaboration.

This fourth iteration of the SPAFACON is also scheduled a year earlier than our usual triennial cycle to commemorate the 50th anniversary of SEAMEO initiating a centre dedicated towards archaeology and the fine arts. Over the past year, SPAFA has also been highlighting this legacy of international cooperation and capacity-building by sharing our photographic archives on our social media.

I am delighted by the high level of enthusiasm and intellectual curiosity brought by the participants to the conference. During our call for papers we received close to 90 submissions, but owing to the pressures of time and the online format, we were only able to accept 34 papers for the conference. The variety of papers present here, although a small set compared with our usual proceedings, reflects the breadth of the centre's ambit – covering not just archaeology, but also performing arts, visual arts, museum studies, and other aspects of Southeast Asian cultural heritage.

I would like to thank all the participants, without whom this conference would not be possible in its present form, in particular, our Governing Board members who represent every country in Southeast Asia, and to the Ministry of Culture, Thailand and the Ministry of Education, Thailand for their long-standing support of SEAMEO SPAFA and its activities.



Mrs Somlak Charoenpot

Centre Director

SEAMEO SPAFA



## **A preliminary survey of Chinese ceramics in Champa archaeological sites**

### **Khảo sát sơ bộ về đồ gốm sứ Trung Quốc tại các địa điểm khảo cổ học Champa**

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#### **Abstract**

The Champa Kingdom was recognized popularly as a typical maritime polity in pre-modern Southeast Asia. Thanks to its strategic location between the Chinese market and Southeast Asia and South Asia, the Champa coast became a frequent destination of foreign traders and merchant ships for centuries. Ceramics was among the essential commodities in trade between Champa and international traders. This article relies on archaeological records and field surveys at Champa sites in central Vietnam to provide an overview of the distribution of Chinese ceramics in central Vietnam from the 7th to 10th centuries. Based on this primary data set, the author will discuss the trade and diplomatic relations between Champa and China and their implication to Champa's state development.

Vương quốc Champa được ghi nhận như một vương quốc biển điển hình ở Đông Nam Á thời kỳ cổ trung đại. Nhờ vị trí chiến lược giữa thị trường Trung Quốc với các nước Đông Nam Á và Nam Á, bờ biển Champa trở thành điểm đến thường xuyên của các thương nhân và tàu buôn nước ngoài trong nhiều thế kỷ. Gốm sứ là một trong những mặt hàng thiết yếu trong giao thương giữa Champa và các thương nhân quốc tế. Bài viết này dựa trên các dữ liệu khảo cổ học và kết quả khảo sát thực địa tại các địa điểm khảo cổ học Champa ở miền Trung Việt Nam để cung cấp một cái nhìn mang tính tổng thể về sự phân bố của đồ gốm sứ Trung Quốc ở miền Trung Việt Nam từ thế kỷ thứ 7 đến thế kỷ thứ 10. Dựa trên bộ dữ liệu cơ bản này, tác giả sẽ thảo luận về quan hệ bang giao và thương mại giữa Champa với Trung Quốc thời Đường và ý nghĩa của mối quan hệ này đối với sự phát triển nhà nước của Champa.

#### **Keywords**

Champa; Chau Tan shipwreck; Chinese ceramics

Champa; Tàu đắm Châu Tân; Gốm sứ trung quốc

Archaeological studies at Champa archaeological sites have recently discovered a large amount of Chinese ceramic, demonstrating the historical process of cultural interaction and trade between Champa and China. However, no systematic investigations of these findings have been published so far. Chinese ceramic was only mentioned as one of the archaeological objects pertaining to archaeological relics and sites in previous research and excavation reports. The distribution, role, purpose, and value of Chinese ceramic do not appear to have been addressed and researched systematically. The goal of this article, therefore, is to survey the Chinese ceramic collections found at Champa archaeological sites during the Tang period (7<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> centuries)

### **CHINESE TANG DYNASTY CERAMICS FOUND AT TERRESTRIAL SITES IN CHAMPA**

At the ruins of An Xa Tower, Gio Linh district in Quang Tri province, there is a temple and tower relic that has been proved to have Chinese ceramics (Le Duy Son 1993: 280-281; Le Duc Tho, Nguyen Tien Dong, Nguyen Chieu 1995: 402-404). At a survey of an area of 8m<sup>2</sup> at the Con Chua relic in Gio Linh district in 1984, several Six Dynasties and Tang ceramic were recovered (Nguyen Tien Dong, Le Duy Son, Thanh Tung 1995: 397-400); at Duong Le Dong relic in Trieu Phong district, discovered in 1992, four Tang pottery jars buried in clusters, with huge jars in the center (Nguyen Tien Dong, Le Duy Son, Thanh Tung 1995: 397-400).

In the province of Thua Thien Hue, the site of the Hoa Chau fortress is a key political and military hub and Chinese ceramics from the Tang Dynasty were discovered in large numbers at this site. According to the 1997 excavation study, Chinese Yuezhou ware dating from the Sui - Tang period (7<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> centuries) were discovered. Along with Chinese ware, Champa pottery dates from the 9<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> century also found and shares many characteristics with potteries in Bai Lang and Nam Tho Son sites (Pham Nhu Ho 1997; Le Dinh Phuc, Nguyen Van Quang, Nishimura Masanari 2009; Lam Thi My Dung 2000; Nguyen Van Quang 2011).

The Nam Tho Son relic, An Son Pagoda, Hoa Que, and Xuan Duong tower in Da Nang have all been identified as having Chinese ceramic from the Tang Dynasty. Nam Tho Son, in particular, is a significant relic, with remnants of Islamic, Changsa, and Yuezhou potteries from the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries. The site is buried in a dune with a 12m thick sand cover, which was first surveyed and excavated in 2000 in areas of 72.5m<sup>2</sup>. The cultural layer is roughly 40cm deep and contains Cham pottery and Chinese ceramic (Tang and Song potteries), and Islam pottery (8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries) as well as glassware, stone, and

metal artifacts. There was one Chinese coin discovered, dated “Kaiyuan Tongbao” (7<sup>th</sup> century). (Dinh Tuan Ngoc 2001; Intercultural - Historical Center 2002: 781-783) (Figure 1)

At Bai Cho site in Thang Binh district, Quang Nam province, the Cham potteries and a few pieces of Chinese ceramic from the 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> centuries were recorded (Luong Ninh, 2004)

Bàu Đà site in Hội An town was excavated respectively in 1993(10m<sup>2</sup>), 1994 (12m<sup>2</sup>), and 1995 (10m<sup>2</sup>). The excavation in 1993 yielded Chinese and Islamic ceramic along with Champa and Dai Viet ceramics (Tran An, Nguyen Chi Trung, Nguyen Tien Dong, 2004).

At the Hau Xa I site in Hoi An city, excavations were undertaken in 1990 (3m<sup>2</sup>); 1993 (3m<sup>2</sup>), and 1994 (44m<sup>2</sup>). Apart from Islam ceramics, Chinese ceramics from Han, Six Dynasty to Tang Dynasty semi-porcelain wares were unearthed; some fragments of Song Dynasty qingbai were also recovered (Nguyen Duc Minh, Tran Van An, Tran Quoc Vuong, Lam My Dung, Ho Xuan Tinh 1995: 111-114)

At Lăng Bà Cẩm Thanh site also in Hội An city, the excavation in 2003 yielded fragments of Chinese ceramic from Tang dynasty to Song and Ming dynasties. (Hoi An Research Group 2004: 747-751).

Trảng Sỏi Sứ in Hội An city, where is a riverside wharf, a collection of Chinese ceramic from Six Dynasty to Tang and Song dynasty was found, including qingbai ceramics. Two shards of Islamic pottery from the ninth and tenth centuries were also recorded. (Nguyen Chi Trung, Nguyen Duc Minh, Lam My Dung, Nguyen Chieu 1996).

Site at Nghĩa Trang Thôn 2 (Martyrs Cemetery of village no.2) in Dien Ban district, was investigated in 2000, many ancient pottery pieces, tiny fragments, were concentrated in great density. Archaeologists found pottery group of Six Dynasties – Sui and Tang including a few pieces of jars; 1 piece of blue-gray glaze bowl, quite thick, and firm, unevenly coated glaze; and a group of Chinese porcelain in the Ming-Qing dynasties (Fujian and Jingdezhen) (Nguyen Chieu, Lam My Dung, Dinh Thi Hiep 2001: 264-267).

Further to the south, at Xuan Binh Bac site in Phù Mỹ district, Bình Định province, the survey in 2010 by archaeologists of Vietnam National University discovered Cham pottery; Vietnamese and Chinese glazes of many stages: 2 pieces of glaze pottery of the

7<sup>th</sup> -10<sup>th</sup> centuries, four pieces of Song pottery (11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries), eight pieces of ceramic from the Yuan Dynasty (12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup>), a few pieces of Vietnamese blue-and-white ceramic 15<sup>th</sup> -16<sup>th</sup> century (Nguyen Hong Kien, Lam Thi My Dung, Hoang Van Diep, Le Van Lao 2011: 715-717).

## **CHINESE TANG DYNASTY CERAMICS FOUND AT UNDERWATER AND ISLAND SITES**

Cù Lao Chàm, an island outside the mouth of the Thu Bon River in Quang Nam province, has established itself as a critical site in Champa archaeology. Both Chinese and Arab traders reported on their maritime trips that Cù Lao Chàm was a vital spot for seafaring sailors because they could gather fresh water, firewood, and food for their lengthy expeditions. Cù Lao Chàm site was first studied archaeologically in 1992 when a large-scale survey was done by Vietnamese and Japanese scholars. Between 1997 and 2000, local archaeologists collaborated with those from Vietnam National University to conduct extensive surveys and archaeological digs, the greatest of which occurred in 1999. These archaeological discoveries in Cù Lao Chàm have had significant ramifications for the study of Amaravati's commercial history, since they give physical proof and an accumulation of commerce goods from China, Southeast Asia, India, and the Middle East. (Figure.2)

The Bai Lang site in Cu Lao Cham island is supposed to be an ancient harbor where archaeologists have unearthed rough and fine Cham pottery, Tang Dynasty Chinese ceramic (7<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century), Islam pottery, jewelry, glass stones, and copper weights, lead nets, etc in the cultural layer, which is between 0.2m and 1.5m thick. (Lam My Dung, Ho Tan Cuong, Tran Van An 1999; Tran Quoc Vuong, Lam My Dung, Nguyen Chi Trung, Hoang Anh Tuan 2000; Nguyen Thi Hoai Huong, Vo Van Hoang 2006: 828-832)

Also located in Cu Lao Cham island, the Bai Ong site was excavated in 2000 in an area of 21m<sup>2</sup>. The upper cultural layer (average thickness of 40cm) was extensively damaged. A wide range of Chinese ceramics was discovered at the Bai Ong site including blue and white glazed porcelain from the Ming-Qing dynasties, and a group of Tang and Cham pottery from the 9<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> centuries with the same types and materials as those in Bai Lang site. (Intercultural - Historical Center 2000; Cu Lao Cham Mission 2001: 195-200; Vo Hong Viet 2008: 225-226; Ho Xuan Tinh 2006: 7-30).

In the south of Cu Lao Cham island, the Chau Tan shipwreck was discovered in recent years. A huge assemblage of Chinese ceramics were recovered from the wreck and currently being stored in a private museum in Quang Ngai province. Ceramic fragments were

recovered from Changsha, Yue, and Ding/Xing kilns. Changsha ceramics contain bowls, ewers, plates, and dishes decorated with white glaze, brown glaze, and green glaze in a variety of shapes. (Figure 4) Bowls, plates, platters, ewers, boxes, and cups are all examples of Yuezhou ceramics. (Figure 3) White porcelains of the Ding and Xing types include huge plates, dishes, bowls, ewers, cups, and boxes. Additionally, a considerable number of yellow-glazed storage jars in medium and large sizes from Guangdong are documented. Brown glaze basin-shaped pottery with stamped flower designs were almost certainly kiln products from Xicun. (Figure 5) Green-glazed shards from the Middle East were also recovered, though in small quantities (Do Truong Giang 2016 and 2018).

Incised and ink inscriptions on the bases of jars and basins from three shipwrecks off the coast of Binh Châu in Quang Ngai Province. 147 shards with engraved inscriptions were discovered on recovered bowls and jars, according to Professor Aoyama and the Nishimura project team (Noriko Nishino et al 2017). There are 19 in Chinese, 27 in Arabic, and 201 in Indic scripts among the 438 fragments having ink inscriptions, while 191 shards remain undetermined. Interestingly, some Indic inscriptions contain the term ‘Ambrak,’ which refers to a site in modern-day Iran northwest of the historic city of Siraf on the Persian Gulf, which was a well-known port of trade along the Tang period’s maritime trade route (Noriko Nishino et al 2017).

## DISCUSSION

Chinese ceramic accounted for the vast majority of foreign ceramics discovered in Champa between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries. Only a small amount of Islamic pottery has been discovered in Cu Lao Cham and Nam Tho Son sites, two of Champa’s most important commercial centers during this period. In the context of Champa pottery during this period, which was largely unglazed, the advent of glazed Chinese ceramics with exquisite designs, superior quality, and aesthetics was undoubtedly employed by Champa society’s elite groups, including monarchs and officials, religious clergy, and merchants.

Chinese ceramic is found in a wide variety of archaeological sites, from burial sites to residential sites, citadels, and port cities. The commercial areas and port cities, in particular, have the highest concentration of Chinese ceramic. This demonstrates that Chinese pottery appears to have developed into a unique item carried to the Champa ports by Chinese traders and traded for Champa commercial commodities. Among the Chinese ceramics discovered in Champa, the most frequently seen groupings are Changsha pottery, Yuezhou pottery, and Guangdong pottery. This is corroborated further by the discovery of comparable pottery in the Chau Tan shipwreck. Although white glazed ceramics from the Ding and Xing kilns appear to be uncommon at archaeological sites, it is abundant on the

### Chau Tan shipwreck

The Chau Tan shipwreck has yielded numerous important materials for the study of Chinese ceramics in Champa during the Tang Dynasty. This demonstrates that throughout the Tang Dynasty, several merchant ships transported high-class ceramics directly from China's kilns and commercial ports to exchange and trade in Champa, and then continued to deal with countries in the southern seas from there.

Chinese pottery is discovered spread along central Vietnam's coast, where the Champa kingdom previously existed, but is most densely concentrated in the territory of *nagara* Amarāvātī (Quang Nam-Da Nang region), which was also the Champa's primary significant political center throughout the Tang period. In the IX-X centuries, My Son Sanctuary and Dong Duong Holy Land were Champa's two major religious centers (Tran Ky Phuong 2008). Archaeological recoveries reveal that the economic activities of *nagara* Amarāvātī took place mainly on the northern bank of the Thu Bồn river, whose estuary is recorded in Chinese accounts as the economic center of Huan-wang kingdom – or Linyi town (V: Lâm Ấp Phố). The Thu Bồn river, as Trần Quốc Vượng and Trần Kỳ Phương have both suggested, served as the nexus of economic activities of Amarāvātī region by connecting several economic zones stretching from the western mountains to the eastern river estuary (Tran Ky Phuong 2008).

Cù Lao Chàm, an island located off the river mouth of Thu Bồn River in Quảng Nam province, has emerged as an essential site in the archaeology of Champa. The maritime voyages of both Chinese and Arab merchants noted that *Cù Lao Chàm* was an important location for the seafaring sailors because they could obtain fresh water, firewood, and food for their long journeys. The archaeological studies in *Cù Lao Chàm* had important implications for the study of the commercial history of Amarāvātī, as they provide physical evidence and an accumulated volume of trading artifacts that originated from China, Southeast Asia, India, and the Middle East. The substantial evidence of imported ceramics and glassware suggests that *Cù Lao Chàm*, on the one hand, was an outpost and, on the other, an organic part of the 'Great Port of Champa' located at the estuary of the Thu Bồn River for centuries.[5]

The discovery of the Châu Tân shipwreck off the coast of *Quảng Ngãi* province has significant implications for those studying the maritime contacts between historic Champa and the outside world. The most important significance of these recoveries is that they provide physical evidence complementary to the accounts of 9th century Middle East and Chinese authors. The recoveries affirm that the coast of *nagara* Amarāvātī was a favorable



destination for long-distance travelers and merchants during the Tang and Song dynasties. The recovered assemblages of this shipwreck, as briefly introduced, may be seen as one of the most entire representations of cross-cultural exchanges by the ninth century as these involve Middle Eastern traders, Chinese commodities, and Southeast Asian ship technology. As documented in both Middle East and Chinese maritime diaspora itineraries and re-affirmed by the Chau Tan shipwreck, Amaravati's coast appears to be the favored stopover of the South China Sea oceanic vessels of that era.

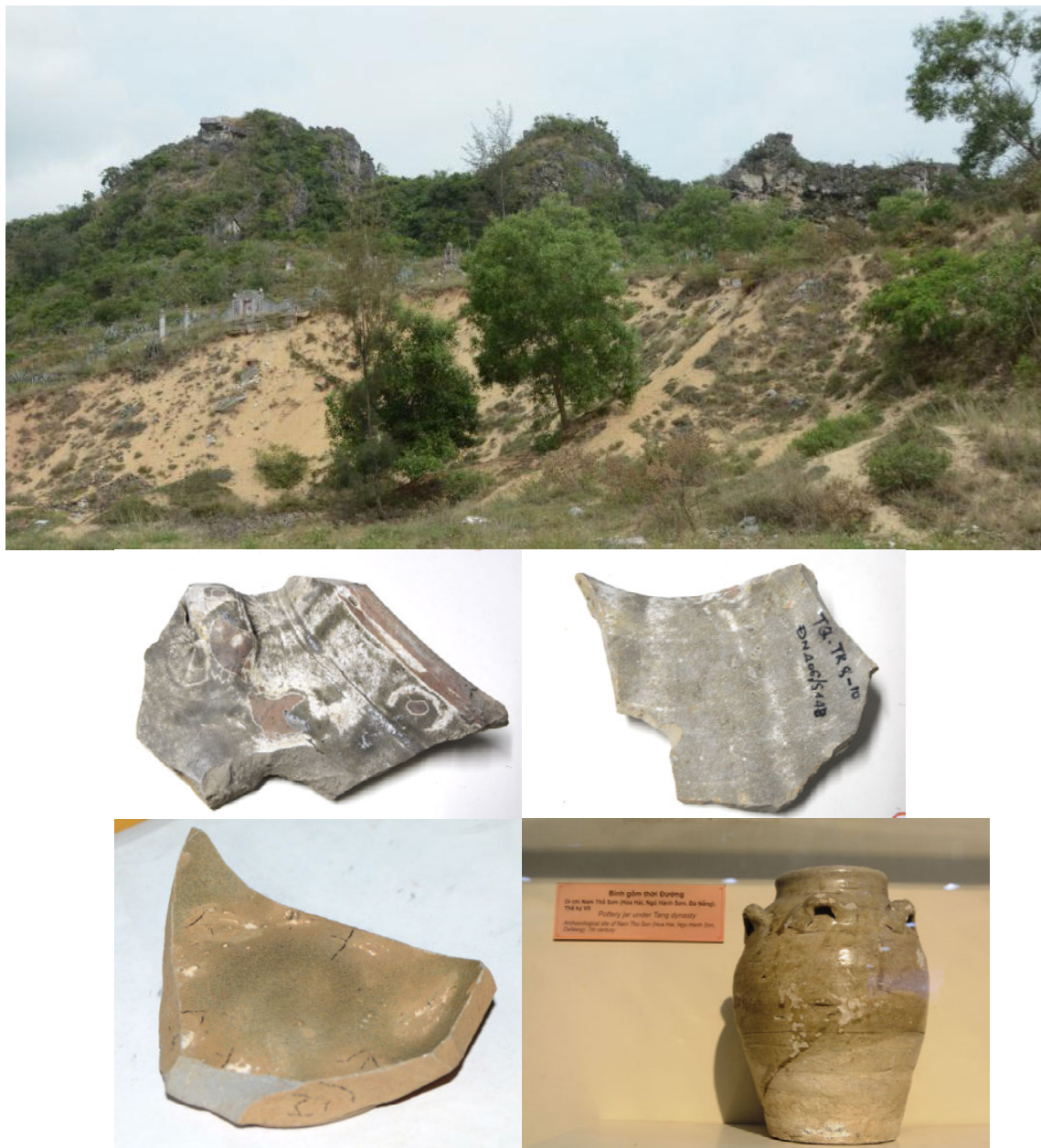


Fig.1 Nam Tho Son site and excavated artifacts, Da Nang city Photo: Đỗ Trường Giang.

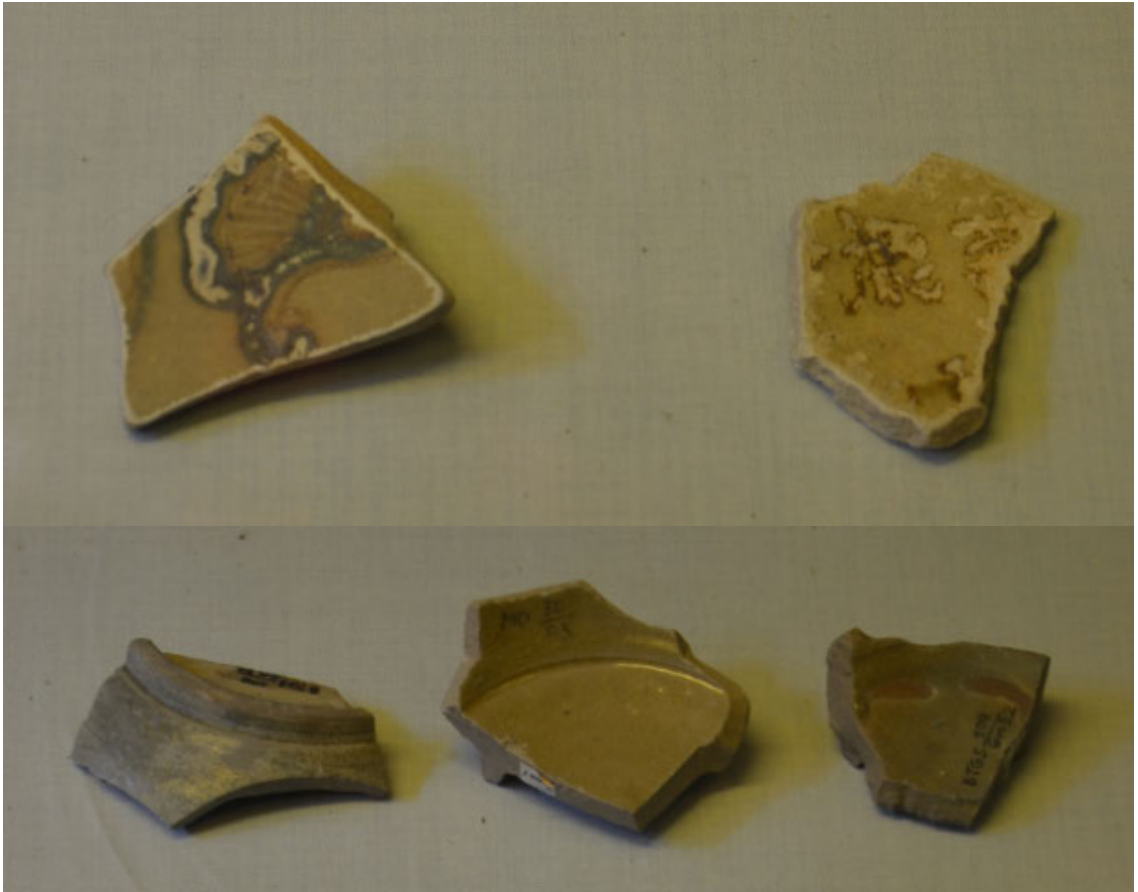


Fig. 2 Changsa and Yuezhou wares, found in Hoi An. Photo: Đỗ Trường Giang.



Fig.3 Yuezhou wares from Chau Tan shipwreck; photo: Đỗ Trường Giang.







Fig. 4: Changsa wares from Chau Tan shipwreck; photo: Đỗ Trường Giang.





Fig. 5 Guangdong wares from Chau Tan shipwreck; photo: Đỗ Trường Giang.



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