

abundance of aquatic foods in Tongking—that is, the frog, sea turtle, land crab, sea crab, shrimp, prawn, and small anchovylike fish—appear on fifteenth-century ceramics.⁷¹ The local environment was clearly a source of inspiration. Foreign customers for these ceramics included the prestigious and wealthy in both West Asia and insular Southeast Asia. Some ceramics were highly valued.

In insular Southeast Asia, some of the most valued ceramics are those that harmonize, in either motifs or colors, with local custom. These include an heirloom dish with a spotted fish (*ca chep*) painted in fragile overglaze reds and greens. It was used by traditional owners in the pre-wedding ceremony, known in Buginese-Makasarese as Macapi, as a receptacle for the leaves of the *karuntigi* plant. When bruised, the leaves exude a red substance, and in the ceremony each guest would take some leaves and rub them into the bride's palms, leaving a red mark in a symbolic gesture that wished her wealth and good fortune in married life. In this example, the red coloration served to heighten the symbolism.⁷²

Fanciful dragon and phoenix ewers are new ceramic forms that found favor in island markets precisely because they harmonized with local imagery and allude to traditional iconography (cat. no. 86b; fig. 7). The dragon ewer entered communities in which the *naga* was already an important iconographic image. Water processions featuring royal boats with *naga*-headed prows were part of the seascape in the archipelagic world. In communities that set store by power-laden objects, an exotic blue-and-white ewer would contribute to the demonstration of economic success and royal power that emanated from the courts.

Like the dragon, the Hindu *garuda* also has resonance in much of the Southeast Asian world and was a long-standing member of Indonesia's cultural iconography. The stemmed fruit-dish is a form associated with Buddhist worship in Viet Nam, but was also exported to Indonesia. The heirloom vessel illustrated here features squatting *garudas* like those carved on stone altars in Viet Nam's Buddhist pagodas, documented to the second half of the fourteenth century, and an iconography deriving from Cham influence. Yet the pearl they hold in each clawed hand ignores iconographic precedent and yields instead to the pearl-and-cloud design painted around the stem of the vessel (fig. 8). The *garuda*'s recent arrival in Viet Nam may partly explain this poetic irreverence, and cross-medium transfer may also have opened the door to novel interpretation, but in the final analysis, this product is rich in cultural fusion.

The *kendi*, an ancient form not part of Viet Nam's cultural tradition, was made for markets in Indonesia and the Philippines. The prominent mammiform spout that characterizes the Vietnamese-made vessel connects to regional concepts of fertility (fig. 9). This vessel is related to another drinking vessel, the *kundika*, featured on ninth-century Javanese sculptures, and these reveal how such vessels were held and handled. Exotic glazed *kendi* were reserved for ritual use, while those made locally served as hygienic drinking vessels.⁷³

The influence of Islamic culture is particularly evident in certain ceramic ewers; those of late Yuan (1279–1368) and early Ming China (1368–1644) are classic examples. The potters of fifteenth-century Viet Nam also bring their interpretation to this influence. While some ewers feature a distinct angularity, it is the innovation of pierced, decorative plaques in conjunction with a transverse tube that is particular to Viet Nam's production. The tube ensures that the vessel remains watertight without compromising the effect of the pierced work. The body of the blue ewer