

in this exhibition is an adaptation of the *yuhuchun* form, but its tall, slender spout with attached strut, high-placed handle, and pierced plaques are all features common to ewers of this type from this export period; they bear the influence of metal prototypes (cat. no. 86k). The plaques are variously treated, some in biscuit, others painted in red and green, or with a goldlike luster. The majority feature a parrot surrounded by filigree-like foliage, and while the parrot has a long history in Viet Nam's ceramic imagery, the theme of bird amid foliage would resonate well with West Asian clientele, as would the pierced decoration. These export ewers are significantly different from those made for Viet Nam's domestic market (cat. no. 82). The similarities noted above are significant—neither casual nor by chance—and they indicate purposeful dialogue across distance and place.

And while ceremonial ceramics survived as heirlooms, enormous quantities of generally more prosaic wares were lovingly interred in Southeast Asia's island graves following rituals that predate Islamic and Christian influences. Burial goods often included small figurines, water-droppers, brush-washers, and an endless variety of charming miniatures (cat. no. 86). This burial custom ensured their safekeeping into the present.

The extensive waterways of the Red River delta facilitated the transport of ceramics from the Hai Duong kilns to coastal ports for export. In the fifteenth century, the most likely route would have been along the Thai Binh River to Nam Khe and down the Kinh Thay River. In Dai Viet, foreign trading ships were required to register at a designated port reserved for them, and at this time, Van Don, located in karst-studded Ha Long Bay, served that purpose. The Vietnamese Annals record that Thai ships called at Van Don in the fifteenth century, in 1437 and again in 1467.⁷⁴

The ship timbers from the Cu Lao Cham shipwreck are identified as teak, belonging to a species known to grow in Thailand, and used in the construction of ships before the eighteenth century. The features of the ship's construction show hybrid Sino-Southeast Asian techniques. Skeletal remains of the crew are compatible with those of Thai ethnicity, and the storage jars that served the crew are products of Thai kilns. This evidence indicates a ship built in Thailand, a Thai crew, and a voyage that originated there.⁷⁵ This is compatible with the facts recorded in the Vietnamese Annals.

Unlike Hoi An, Van Don is only known from textual references. It was located in the eastern part of Ha Long Bay, but precisely where remains unclear, although heavy deposits of sherds dating from the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries indicate its approximate location.⁷⁶ As early as 1149, traders from Java and Thailand were granted permission to establish a place to reside while engaging in commerce.⁷⁷ This was Van Don, but the court in Thang Long controlled and taxed the foreign commerce, and there were serious consequences for those who dared circumvent stringent regulations concerning payment of tribute, and also forbid foreigners any contact with the local population.⁷⁸

A second route from the Hai Duong kilns followed the Thai Binh River into the Luoc River and the riverine port of Pho Hien, present-day Hung Yen. Pho Hien was situated on the left bank of the Red River, about 130 kilometers from the sea and two to three days by boat from Thang Long. At the end of the thirteenth century, the Tran gave Song refugees safe haven here, but only in the latter sixteenth century did the community begin to rise in prominence.⁷⁹ The earliest reference to the name Pho Hien is a stele dated 1615, on which it is described as a small and famous metropolis.⁸⁰ Sixty-three years later, Dampier estimated there were two