

86j. CHARGER WITH DRAGON

Cu Lao Cham shipwreck, late 15th century

Stoneware, D: 37.7 cm

National Museum of Vietnamese History, Ha Noi, LSb24402

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Bui, "Do gom trong Hoang thanh Thang Long," 106–9.

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See the following report for a new interpretation of this material: Nguyen Quang Liem, Gerard Sagon, Vu Xuan Quang, Ha Van Tan, and Philippe Colomban, "Raman study of the microstructure, composition and processing of ancient Vietnamese (proto) porcelains and celadons (13–16th centuries)," *Journal of Raman Spectroscopy* 31, nos. 933–43 (2000).

"Microstructure, composition and processing of 15th-century Vietnamese porcelains and celadons," *Journal of Cultural Heritage* 4 (2003): 187–97. (I would like to thank Kerry Nguyen-Long for bringing these articles to my attention.)

In her essay in this volume, Kerry Nguyen-Long writes about the dragon on this charger: "Viet Nam's art historians noted its similarity to the dragon on a stele of King Le Thanh Tong (1460–1497) carved in 1498. Knowledge about this image has been expanded following recoveries from the Ba Dinh site of quantities of blue and white dishes with the same dragon design, some with five claws, and confidently placed in the reign of Le Thanh Tong."²⁵ Like a number of pieces found in the Cu Lao Cham shipwreck, this one was fired at a very high temperature, but like all Vietnamese ceramics, it is classified as stoneware rather than porcelain.²⁶

The four-clawed dragon chases a pearl. The glaze has been etched by the seawater, softening the drawing, which appears quite detailed and precise in this particular charger. The outer wall of the charger has a row of decorated double-edged lotus petals between rows of a scroll motif. The plate was covered with slip on the base as well as on the body, prior to painting and firing.

LITERATURE

Co Vat Viet Nam (Vietnamese Ceramics), 2003.

