

88. LIME POT

15th century

Stoneware, H: 13.8 x D: 12 cm

Viet Nam National Fine Arts Museum, CDA-5/04-4599

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Truong, "Appendix 1. Limepots," 391–92, plate 423.

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Ibid., 391.

This lime pot represents a unique vessel type of the Vietnamese. It was used to store powdered lime, an essential ingredient of betel chewing, an activity practiced throughout Southeast Asia and in earlier periods by the Yue of southern China. An important social activity, betel was offered to guests and exchanged among friends. The paraphernalia associated with its chewing became increasingly refined over the centuries. Lime pots are known in Viet Nam from an early period (second through fifth century), when they had a bulbous rounded form, closely related to this pot.³²

By the fifteenth century, this characteristic type had taken form: a bulbous body, elevated foot, and a handle that mimics the trunk of an areca tree, the nut chewed with the betel leaf, which was in turn rep-

resented wrapped around the areca-tree handle as a betel vine. On this example, the typical green glaze of the handle furthers the association with plants, as does the inclusion of an areca nut at the base of the handle. Philippe Truong points out that the lime pot was a revered household object, "honored and venerated like a tutelary god."³³

