

QUANG NGAI YUAN SHIPWRECK, VIETNAM - PRELIMINARY REPORT

Quang Ngai (Binh Chau) - Yuan Shipwreck was discovered by local fishermen on 7 September 2012 near Binh Chau Village, Binh Son District, Quang Ngai Province, approximately twenty kilometers east of Quang Ngai City in central Vietnam. The shipwreck is located fifty meters offshore at an extremely shallow depth under about three meters of sand. The discovery resulted in rather violent confrontations between the fishermen and the police. There is some speculation that the Chinese vessel, which reportedly measures approximately 20 meters in length and 4 to 5 meters in width, may be relatively intact. If so this would provide archeologists with an excellent opportunity for study and analysis of the construction materials and shipbuilding techniques. The wrecksite area is now under heavy guard by the Vietnamese government authorities. A contract to salvage the wreck has already been awarded to a Saigon firm and excavation is expected to be done next year (2013).

Only Chinese ceramics, dated to the early 14th century of the Yuan Dynasty (1271 to 1368), were recovered and amounted to a few thousand items, which includes intact as well as broken wares. The ceramics consisted primarily of celadon wares from both Longquan and the southern China kilns such as those in Fujian and Guangdong. Also recovered were a limited number of small Jingdezhen jarlets with two loop handles and faceted sides, as well as plain sides, and with various décor: plain yingqing ware (Y-155), with spotted iron decoration as in Y-147 below, blue and white mostly of rather poor quality, and underglaze red in extremely small amounts. A large blue and white plate (broken in half) was also reportedly recovered, but this could not be verified.

Longquan celadons included small censers or incense burners as described in Y-132 below; large plates (approximately 33 to 36 centimeters in diameter) with foliated rim, fluted cavetto, and with floral décor, fish, deer, or dragon; smaller plates, about 26

centimeters in diameter some with twin phoenix, some with pie crust rim; medium bowls with the motif in the central medallion consisting of a lightly molded floral spray, twin fish, or a pair of people (for an example refer to Y-130 as described below). Other celadons (some similar to the Karang Cina finds in Indonesia dated to the early Yuan dynasty), included small shallow bowls with unglazed interior, medium size conical shape deep dishes with unglazed center (see Y-131 below), jarlets with two loop handles and molded floral décor (see Y-133 below), and small dishes with unglazed mouthrim and very lightly molded twin fish motif as in Y-139 below. Also recovered were medium size celadon bowls with foliated mouthrim decorated variously with molded phoenix, dignitaries or floral décor (example of latter at Y-143). Brown glazed wares were also recovered, consisting only of medium sized and larger basins with foliated rim as described in Y-129, Y-141, and Y-148 below.

The authorities confiscated large quantities of the wares recovered by the fishermen. However, very limited numbers of the Quang Ngai ceramics were available in a few of the antique shops in Saigon. There is considerable speculation about the remainder of the cargo, much of which centers upon the possibility of significant quantities of Yuan blue and white material possibly being recovered. We will have to wait and see!

However, since the shipwreck was found 50 to 100 meters from shore (depending on which account you believe) why wasn't the cargo removed when it sank or thereafter? Is it possible the most valuable cargo - Yuan blue and white - was in fact already salvaged?? Who knows!

Brief descriptions of the ceramics referenced above (Y- 129 to Y- 155), along with a List of References are included below.

Quang Ngai (Binh Chau) - Yuan Shipwreck ceramics (27) included in the collection are as follows (Y-129 to Y-155):

Y-129 – brown glazed basin shape deep dishes (2 - pair), the unglazed flattened mouthrim with a foliated flange at the edge; the lustrous dark caramel brown mottled glaze covers the interior, terminating just under mouthrim; D: 21.1 cm. and 21.0 cm.

Y-130 – large celadon bowl covered in light mint green crackled glaze, a lotus spray is lightly incised in the center, with an incised ring encircling the central medallion; underside is encircled by a band of five lightly incised lines just under the mouthrim; exposed biscuit is compact and light grayish-brown colored; D: 18.9 cm.

Y-131 – conical shape deep dish, a counter clockwise potting swirl etched in the unglazed center; the glaze assumes a distinct grayish tone from the underlying body, D: 18.5 cm.

Y-132 – celadon censers (2 - pair) cylindrical body encircled by two molded bands, with the flattened mouthrim flanged on the rounded interior edge; light sea-green glaze extends briefly to otherwise unglazed interior; unglazed base of both censers is markedly nipped, the biscuit where very compact and light beige colored; three short, stubby feet are provided for adornment since the censers are fully supported by the base; D: 9.5 cm and 9.0 cm.



Y-133 – celadon jarlet covered with a light sea-green faintly crackled lustrous glaze, flattened globular body and slightly constricted neck with two small vertical loop handles; around the shoulders and upper body a distinctly molded floral scroll consisting of two chrysanthemum alternating with two lotus; molded band of three leaf sprays interspersed with two Buddhist swastika symbols encircles lower body, ending just above base; D: 9.5 cm.

Y-139 – saucer dishes (2 - pair) very lightly molded with a pair of opposite facing fish in the central medallion encircled by a single line border, at the bottom of the cavetto two tiers of molded lotus petal tips with a double line border above; unglazed band around the edge

and interior of the mouthrim reveals the smooth and very compact light putty colored body, D: 14.3 cm and 14.1 cm.

Y-141 – brown glazed basin shape deep dishes (2 - pair), the unglazed flattened mouthrim with a foliated flange at the edge; the lustrous dark caramel brown mottled glaze covers the interior, terminating just under mouthrim; D: 21.0 cm and 21.2 cm.

Y-143 – large celadon bowl with light sea green glaze, clearly molded aquatic plants with volutes, swirls and curved accents girth the interior wall, central medallion surrounded by outlined *ruyi* head elements and contains a blossom spray; splayed foot, unglazed base is medium textured and grayish brown colored; D: 17.9 cm.



Y-147 – yingqing iron-brown spotted *balimbing* jarlets (2 - pair) with faceted sides divided into eight lobed sections; two small loop handles just below the slightly constricted brief neck. The light bluish tinged glaze has a patterned distribution of mottled blackish brown irregularly shaped iron spots. H: 6.4 cm – No. 1 & 2.



Y-148 – large brown glazed basin shape deep dish, the unglazed flattened mouthrim with a foliated flange at the edge; the lustrous caramel brown mottled glaze covers the interior, extending to just under the mouthrim; D: 25.8 cm.

Y-149 – celadon bowls (2 - pair) with light mint green glaze, except for a clearly incised ring encircling the central medallion, the bowls

are unadorned; sides are rather shallow. Considerable marine encrustation on base of both, D: 14.3 cm and 14.0 cm.

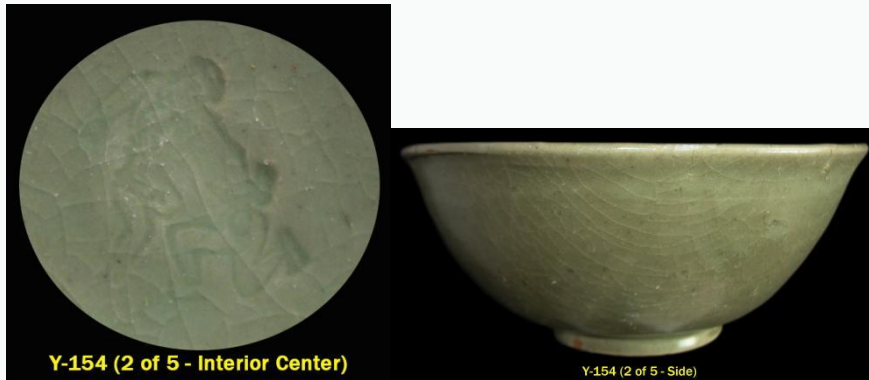
Y-151 – large celadon bowl with very even toned light mint green glaze, everted mouthrim with closely spaced foliations; clearly molded aquatic plants with volutes, swirls and curved accents girth the interior wall, central medallion surrounded by outlined *ruyi* head elements and contains a lotus pod; splayed foot, unglazed base is medium textured and grayish brown colored; D: 18.2 cm.

Y-152 – yingqing *balimbing* jarlets (2 - pair) with faceted sides divided into eight lobed sections; two small loop handles are positioned just below the slightly constricted brief neck. The lustrous light bluish tinged glaze ends at or just above the concave unglazed base without footrim; nominally sugary textured biscuit is medium textured and very light grayish-beige colored, H: 6.4 cm. and 6.1 cm.



Y-154 (1 of 5) – celadon plate fragment, light turquoise-blue green crackled glaze, molded floral spray in center (perhaps peony) with unusual spiky tipped appendage, molded scrolling elements with scalloped edges encircling cavetto, upright rim thickened at edge; glazed foot inward slanting on interior, unglazed firing ring on base with concave center, exposed body compact and brown colored, at fractures light gray colored. D: 25.6 cm.

Y-154 (2 of 5) – celadon bowl fragment, light sea-green crackled glaze, molded in center two male figures, of apparent Middle-Eastern origin, grappling in wrestling posture, mouthrim everted; glazed foot inward slanting on interior, considerable kiln grit on flat base, exposed body compact and brown to dark gray, at fractures light gray. D: 18.7 cm.



Y-154 (3 of 5) – celadon bowl fragment, light sea-green crackled glaze, chrysanthemum spray molded in center, mouthrim everted; foot inward slanting on interior, flat base unglazed, exposed body compact and light beige colored, at fractures light gray. D: 16.3 cm.

Y-154 (4 & 5 of 5) – dish fragments (2 – pair) lightly molded with pair of opposite facing fish in central medallion encircled by a single line border, at bottom of cavetto molded lotus petal tips; unglazed band around the edge and interior of the mouthrim with smooth and very compact light gray colored body on No. 4, light beige on No. 5; vestigial foot, very slightly recessed and narrow unglazed base roughly finished. The glaze on dish No. 4 light gray in tone, on No. 5 light bluish in tone and finely crackled. D: 13.8 cm. and 13.5 cm.

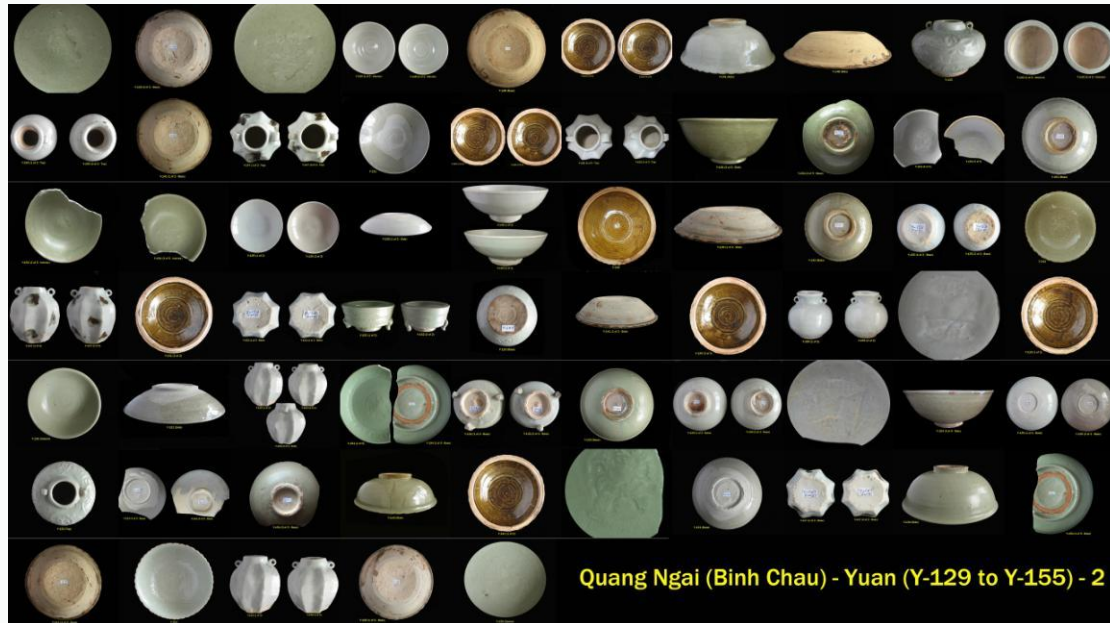
Y-155 – yingqing globular jarlets (2 - pair) with two loop handles flanking the brief slightly spreading neck, mouth with medium sized aperture has a flattened, lipped rim rounded at the edge; the lustrous soft blue glaze covering the jarlets ends at an uneven line just above the concave unglazed base without footrim.



A Separate Photos Folder (1) contains photos of each item briefly described under Y-129 to Y-155, including the base; another **Photos Folder (2)** includes photos of additional ceramics recovered from the Quang Ngai - Yuan Shipwreck. Also, **Detailed Descriptions** of each

individual ceramic are included in the **Ceramics Catalogue** in the Yuan ceramic category. Details include the Catalogue Number, description, size, dating, provenance (origin, place and date of acquisition, cost), and any references to comparable examples.

Quang Ngai (Binh Chau) - Yuan Shipwreck (Y-129 to Y-155)



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