



asian art **KNAPTON RASTI**
Ming and Qing Ceramics

asian art KNAPTON RASTI
Ming and Qing Ceramics
November 2007

Knapton Rasti Asian Art Limited
1 Princes Place, Duke Street St James's, London SW1Y 6DE
Telephone: 020 7839 3888 Fax: 020 7839 8833
Email: knaptonrasti@btconnect.com Web: www.knaptonandrasti.com

We would like to thank Rachel Zamet for her help in putting together this catalogue, Anthony Evans for his translation work, Manijeh Bayani for her work on the arabic and persian inscriptions, Alan Tabor for the photography, Landels Associates for the design and Henry Ling Ltd for the printing.

introduction

This catalogue contains two important objects and it is these we would like to concentrate on in the introduction. The first is a Chenghua blue and white flower basin, which poses many questions as to its stylistic origins. A bronze rectangular basin (pan) with interlacing dragon designs, Eastern Zhou, Warring States Period (475-221 BCE), Palace Museum, Beijing (no. 48, China 5000 Years, Innovation and Transformation in the Arts), is a good place to start. By the beginning of this period it is possible to see the mass production techniques associated with the porcelain workshops at Jingdezhen, nearly two thousand years later. But unsettled times as the authority of the Zhou ruling house dwindled, and the political and military struggles between the states intensified, meant that major advances in the forces of social production led to new forms of workmanship. The flaring flowerpot of the Chenghua Period exemplified this thinking too, with its wide flaring walls imitating the rims of cast brass flower vessels from Khorasan (10th-11th Century), whose artists had in turn imitated sheet-metal objects of gold and silver. Perhaps we can draw a straight line from these pieces to the Warring States basin, with its ritual usage and functional styling. However, the most interesting period in this possible scenario is the early thirteenth century, when Khorasan metal workers were exporting their wares to Armenia. It is not difficult to understand the influence of this Eastern Iranian area on Chinese potters two hundred and fifty years later once the trade routes had been established and court exchanges completed. Indeed Yuan blue and white wares have been found in Iran, Turkey and India. The production was strictly regulated, often through Muslim merchants and sea traders and a blue pigment, cobalt, was imported from Kashan in Iran.

With the defeat of the Yuan government, there came a hiatus in the number of ceramics exported outside China, particularly during the Hongwu reign (1368-98), but by the late fifteenth century when this basin was made, the lines of trade had been established once more.

The decoration also gives us a clue to dating with the presence of Leping cobalt, from Jiangxi province, which creates a softer and paler pigment when fired. The lines on the floral designs are consequently softer, than say Xuande period pieces.

The tiered box and cover is easier to put into a specific category, as it falls into a well known period in the Zhengde period. Over the last seven years we have provided many examples of the porcelain made for Muslim high officials in China and this particular example shows once again the fascinating juxtaposition of Arab and Persian scripts. The Persian couplets are religious but from what text? It would be instructive to learn the source of some of the inscriptions as they are not all from the Qu'ran, though often invoking their God. The containers or objects themselves are sometimes the direct subject, but more often than not, a poem or religious tract is suggested, perhaps one favoured by the recipient of the porcelain.

Christopher Knapton
Nader Rasti

November 2007

China: Transitional circa 1640
Height: 7 1/8 in. (18 cm)

1

A rare blue and white bottle for the Japanese market, in Shonsui style, the rounded sides tapering towards the small short mouth mounted in metal with a stopper, the centre painted with boats bordered by pavilions, rocks and trees, a five masted boat appearing from behind an outcrop to one side, all separated from a lower frieze of The Three Friends flanking a pair of birds in flight by a castellated border, a leafy floral meander around the shoulders.

Provenance: The Property of the Reverend John Barker
Sotheby's London, 11th July, 1978, Lot 189

Note: For a discussion of Shonsui wares made for the Japanese tea masters see Soame Jenyns, 'The Chinese Ko-sometsuke and Shonsui Wares', *The Oriental Ceramic Society*, vol. 34, 1962-63.





China: Transitional circa 1640
Height: 8³/₄in. (22.2cm)

2

A rare blue and white gin bottle made for the Dutch Market, of slender tapering form with slightly ribbed neck, painted with a lady in a garden below wisteria, watching three playing boys before a fence, within borders of flower sprigs, the underside unglazed.



China: Wanli (1573-1619)
Height: The porcelain 8³/₈in. (4.2cm)

3

A rare blue and white pricket candlestick, standing on a base of campana form painted with rising and descending phoenix amidst clouds below a petal border and a floral meander on the shoulders, further meanders around the exterior of the flared sides of the tray and around the interior centred with a column, the interior rim with a band of trellis pattern, the underside unglazed.

Provenance: Private American Collection
Sotheby's London, December 1989, Lot 294.



China: Hongzhi (1488-1505)
Height: 15¹/₈ in. (38.5cm)

4

A large blue and white shallow bowl boldly painted with interlacing scrolling lotus enclosing another central lotus flower, within a double lined border, the exterior with a similar running lotus design within borders of lappets enclosing whorl motifs and foliate scroll.

Provenance: Private American Collection.

Reference: For a similar large blue and white bowl from this period see Blue and White, Chinese Porcelain Around the World, John Carswell, 2000, p. 132, no. 146; and another in Encounters, The Meeting of Asia and Europe 1500-1800, Anna Jackson & Amir Jaffer, V&A exhibition 2004, p. 48, no. V&A: C.18-1957.





China: dated "Auspicious Day of the Winter Twelfth Month of the
bingchen Year of the Jiajing Period" (1556-7)
Length: 11⁵/₈ in. (29.5cm)

5

A blue and white tomb epitaph tablet of rounded rectangular form,
painted with confronting phoenix among clouds flanking a flaming
pearl above one horizontal and sixteen vertical lines of calligraphy,
within borders of scrolling foliage, the reverse unglazed.

Inscription: May be read and translated as:
ming gu zubi huang ruren tong xianbi cheng ruren mufen ji

'Memorial Grave Inscription Elucidating the Histories of my
Deceased Grandmother Lady Huang, and of my Deceased
Mother Lady Cheng, (who is buried with her).'

NB In China an inscription detailing the life and achievements of
the deceased is placed inside the tomb, ready for presentation
as credentials to the Underworld functionaries.

Reference: For a circular tomb epitaph see Yuan and Ming Blue and White
Ware from Jiangxi, 2002, no.101 and a rectangular epitaph in the
same exhibition no.113.

明祖妣黃孺人出吾鎮右族有賢行歸我祖考諱珙姓藍
甚執婦道內外兩賢之生先君一人諱玉聖甫弱冠而祖
考棄養賴孺人益大先業卜葬祖考於下義合親家壻孺
人亦穴於右以俟歸生天順甲申年七月二十八日子時
卒於嘉靖丙午年十一月初十日己時享年八十有三先
妣孺人程氏生而處閨歸我先君生德興第尚仁中年不
幸而先君亦忽見背時德初出童姑婦相依萃子立益
勤女事充拓基業為德興先生孫男國禎妻劉氏生孫
男一源國禎妻沈氏生一清國祜聘王氏國祜國祚俱幼
為尚仁娶劉氏生孫男國恩嘉靖己亥歲奉先君柩葬清
塘孺人生成化丁未年六月十五日己時歿於嘉靖乙卯
十二月二十一日未時享年六十有九德等以祖考玄室
未善茲奉祖妣骸魄同孺人之柩合葬於星槎之董家灣
坐丙向壬嗚呼劬勞莫報徒裂肝腸謹記此于墳中以識
墳歲月云

記

嘉靖丙辰年冬十二月吉旦奉祀男尚德尚仁泣血立石

China: Kangxi (1662-1722)
Height: 4 1/2 in. (11.5 cm)

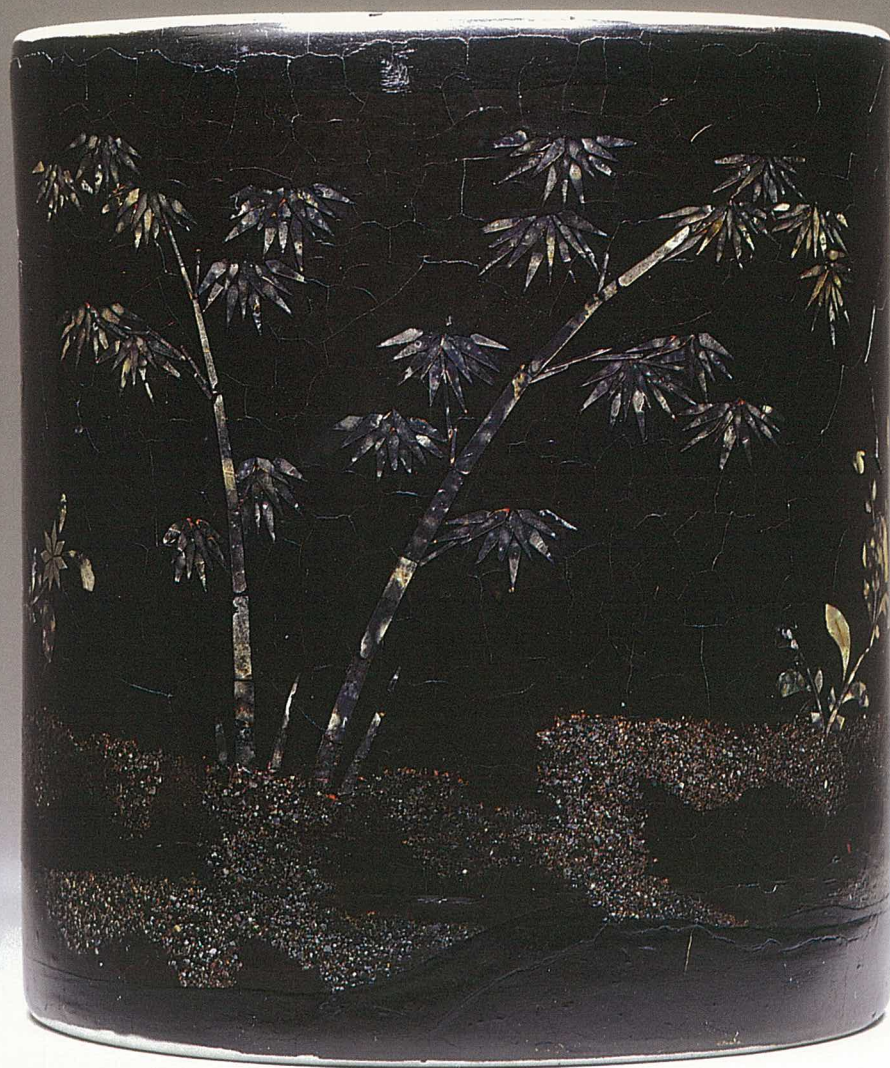
6



A rare lac burgaute decorated porcelain brushpot of cylindrical form, decorated with butterflies and bats in flight amongst bamboo, fruiting peach trees and flowering plants issuing from rockwork, the interior in a white glaze, the underside partially unglazed.

Provenance: Exhibited Oriental Ceramics Society, London, 1979, with related label to base.

Reference: For a similar slightly larger brushpot see Christies London, 8th June 2004, lot 465, from the Collection of Rev. Victor Farmer; and a similar vase from the Collection of George de Menasce, OBE, illustrated in Spink & Sons catalogue, London, 1971, p.51, no.206.



China: Xuande (1426-35)
Width: 11³/₈ in. (28.9cm)

7

A blue and white rectangular tile painted with a central flowerhead within a hexagonal border interlocked with repeated similar shaped bands interspersed with circular disc motifs enclosing triform designs, the thickly formed tile unglazed at the rims and back.

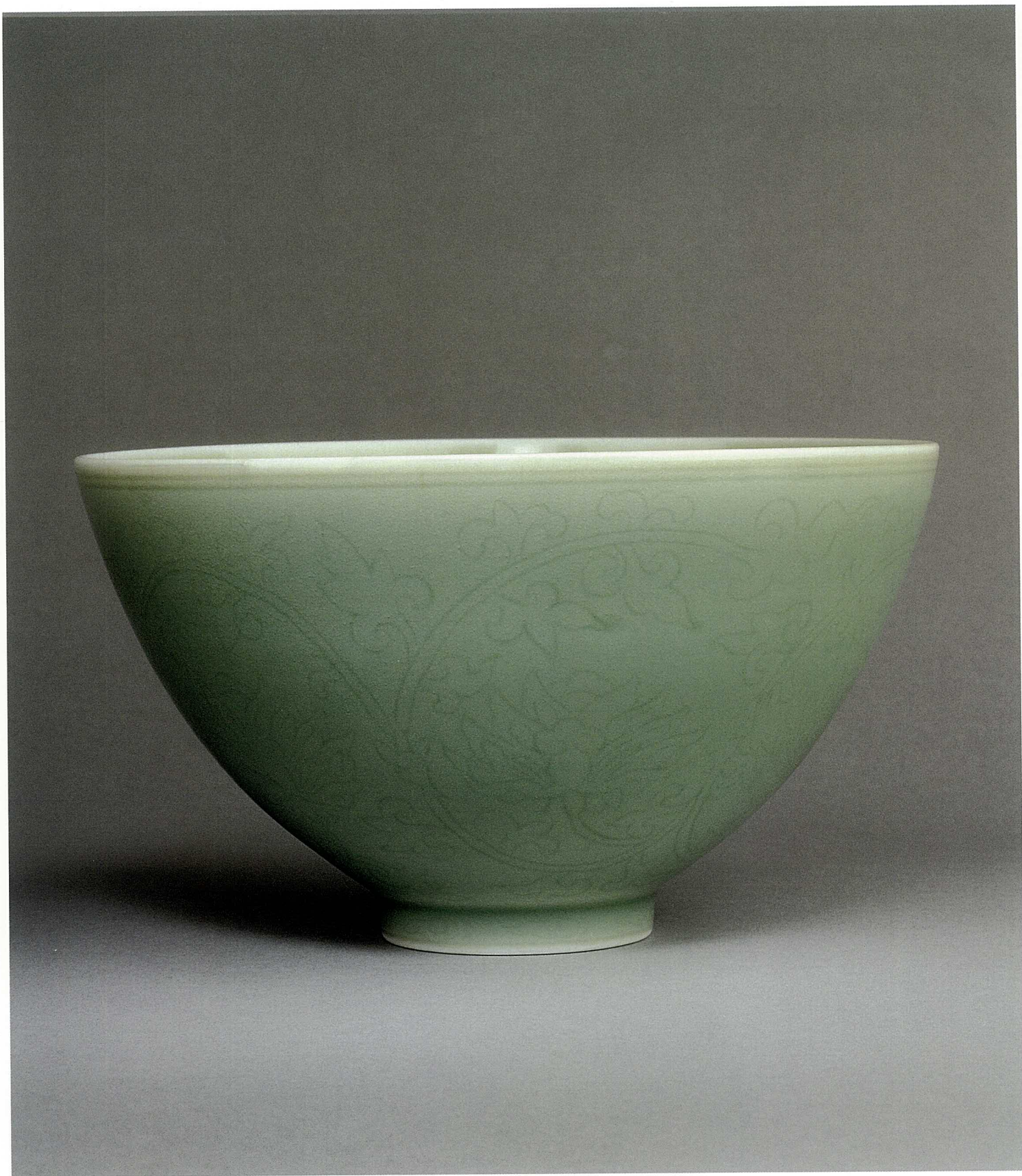


China: Zhengde four character mark, Kangxi (1662-1722)
Diameter: 6 1/2 in. (16.5 cm)



8

A celadon glazed *lianzi* (lotus seed) bowl, the deep vessel incised to the exterior with anhua decoration depicting a continuous band of scrolling lotus among interlacing foliage below a double horizontal ring band, the interior plain.



China: Yongle (1403-24)
Diameter: 6 1/4 in. (15.9 cm)

9

A blue and white bowl with flaring rim, painted to the interior with a central roundel of flowering lotus branches and leaves issuing from water within a wide band of a single lotus flower interlaced with a continuous scrolling leaf design, within two borders of stylised cell pattern and trellis pattern to the rim, the exterior painted with a band of running leaves below an interweaving linear design, the underside with a hexafoil floral mark in the Middle Eastern taste.

Provenance: Private collection

Reference: For a similar bowl with an identical mark see Special Exhibition of Early Ming Porcelains, National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan, 1982, p.94, no.26; a related similar mark on a late 15th century bowl can be seen in Chinese Porcelains from the Ardebil Shrine, John Alexander Pope, 1956, plate 63, no. 29.345; another in the F. Gordon Morrill Collection, USA, Sotheby's London 13th December 1978, lot 468.



China: Qianlong (1736-95)
Height: 13 in. (33cm)

10

A blue and white ewer with tall cylindrical neck, a raised collar and sloping shoulders above a fluted tapering body and spreading foot, the handle with ruyi head terminals, the faceted spout with a gourd shaped opening, painted with flowering lotus above a band of lotus petals and panels of lingzhi and flower sprays, the foot with a band of key fret.

Provenance: Private French Collection

Reference: The form of the above ewer derives from Islamic metalware ewers which were then copied originally in blue and white in China in the Yongle period; for another 18th Century blue and white ewer see Sotheby's, London, 15th April 1980, lot 289; and another in the Brundage Collection Catalogue, pl. LXXII; for an early 15th Century ewer see Ming Ceramics in The British Museum, Jessica Harrison-Hall, 2001, p.106, no.3:15; another in Chinese Porcelains from the Ardebil Shrine plate 54; and another with the Persian bronze prototype illustrated by Gray in The Influence of Near Eastern Metalwork on Chinese Ceramics, T.O.C.S, vol.18, 1940-41, plate 5.





China: Jiajing six character mark and of the period [1522-66]
Height: 20¹/₂ in. [51.1cm]

11

A large blue and white meiping with flaring neck, the tapering body painted with a continuous wide band depicting four scholars and attendants in fenced gardens of pine and pierced rockwork below clouds, above a narrow band of flowerheads and ruyi form lappets to the foot, the shoulder with stiff leaves enclosing lotus sprays below the six character mark, the underside unglazed. Wood box.

Provenance: Private Japanese Collection

Reference: For a similar large meiping decorated with figures see Chinese Porcelains from the Ardebil Shrine, John Alexander Pope, 1956, plate 86, no. 29.402; another in The Complete Collection of Treasures of the Palace Museum, Beijing II, 2000, vol.35, p.174, no.163.





China: Dehua, Fujian Province, early 17th century
Height: 8 in. (20.3cm)

12

A blanc de chine model of Guanyin seated with her head slightly turned and lowered, her hair tied up in a knot and in two splayed tresses falling over her shoulders, wearing long flowing robes and necklace, her left arm on a triform arm rest and holding a ruyi sceptre, the right hand on her knee, the left leg crossed over the right foot to the front, the glaze of subtle ivory tone. Silk lined fitted stand and box.



Provenance: Private English Collection

Note: He Chaozong was one of the most celebrated potters of blanc de chine from the early 17th Century. John Ayers in the Hickley Collection catalogue states that the master potter He Chaozong is mentioned in the section on Arts and Crafts of the Ming Dynasty in the revised 1763 edition of the Quanzhou Fu Zhi [Gazeteer of Quanzhou Prefecture] which was compiled in 1612. This early reference suggests that He Chaozong was active between 1522 and 1612, whereas Donnelly's suggested date in his book 'Blanc-de-Chine' is between 1665 and 1695, which now seems improbably late.

Seal: impressed gourd shaped seal mark of He Chaozong and square seal He Chaozong yin.



China: Zhengde six character mark and of the period (1506-21)
 Height: 8³/₈in. (21.2cm)
 Diameter: 7¹/₈in. (18.1cm)



13

An extremely rare blue and white two-tiered box and cover of circular form, the cover painted with a central roundel of Arabic invocations within a double ring, set within a wide band of ruyi heads interspersed with triangular motifs, the sides painted to each section with continuous bands of lozenge panels containing Persian invocations between borders of ruyi sprays. Fitted box.

The Arabic roundel to the cover may be translated as:
 'As hidden for the creatures of God'.

The Persian repeated couplets to the sides may be translated as:
 'It was God's intention to bestow (favours) on the world
 So he made you king of the world with his divine mercy'

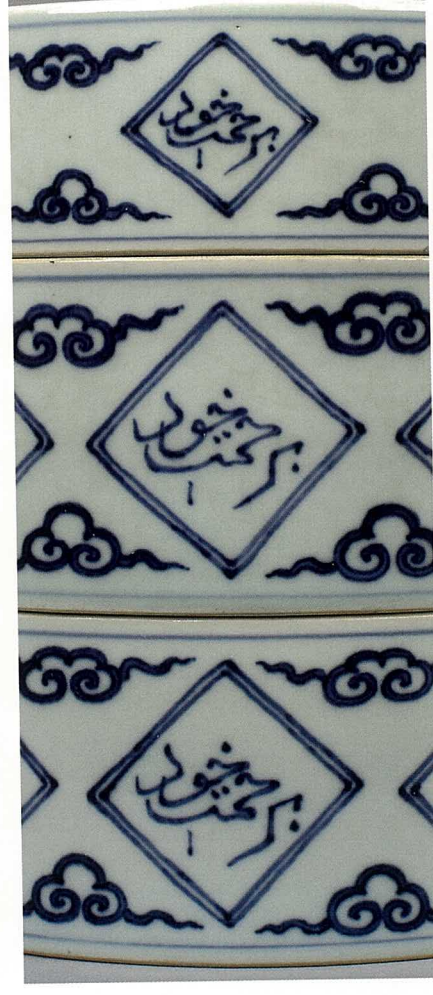
Provenance: Private Collection

Reference: For a similar circular box and cover with both Arabic and Persian inscriptions see Ming Ceramics in The British Museum, Jessica Harrison-Hall, 2001, p.196, no.8:7; another box and cover in the Edward T. Chow Collection, part one, Ming and Qing Porcelain, Sotheby Parke Bernet (Hong Kong) Ltd, 25th November 1980, lot 13; another box illustrated in the Eumorfopoulos Collection illustrated in the Seligman Collection catalogue, vol. 2, pl. LXXIII, no. D 247 and also in Chinese Art exhibition Catalogue, Venice 1954, p.181, no.667, and again in Chinese Art I, Daisy Lion-Goldschmidt, 1980, p.254, no.194; another box and cover in The Complete Collection of Treasures of the Palace Museum II, Beijing, vol. 35, p.58, no.53; another from the George Crofts Collection, Royal Ontario Museum, no.925.25.1, illustrated in The Blue and White Porcelain of China, Barry Till, Brian S. McElney, 1992, p.61, no.25.









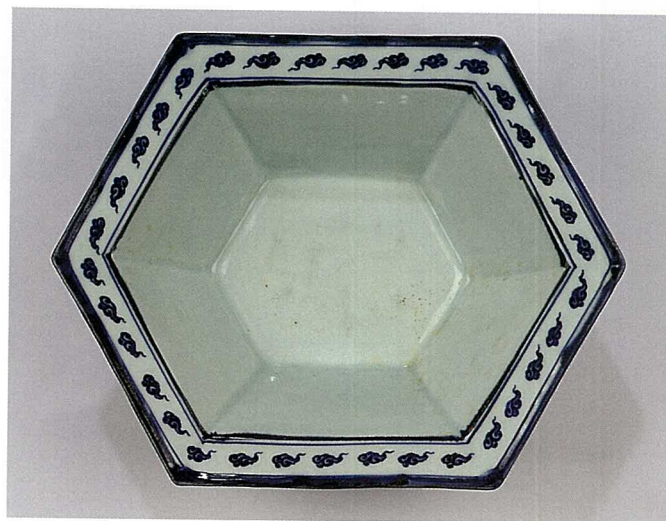
China: Chenghua (1465-87)
Length: 12⁷/₈ in. (32.7cm)
Width: 10¹/₄ in (26cm)
Height: 4¹/₂ in. (11.5cm)

14

An extremely rare blue and white flowerpot of flaring hexagonal form with a flattened rim, set on a spreading tapering foot, painted to each panel with bamboo, peonies, chrysanthemums and further flowering plants issuing from rockwork above water set within double ring borders, the foot with bands of scrolling, entwined flower sprays, the rim with moulded underglaze blue band to the edge and painted with a continuous band of cloud scrolls, the interior and underside plain glazed. Wood box.

Provenance: Private Japanese Collection

Reference: For an almost identical example of the flowerpot see Catalogue of the Special Exhibition of Chenghua Porcelain Ware, National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan, no.82 and page 1.



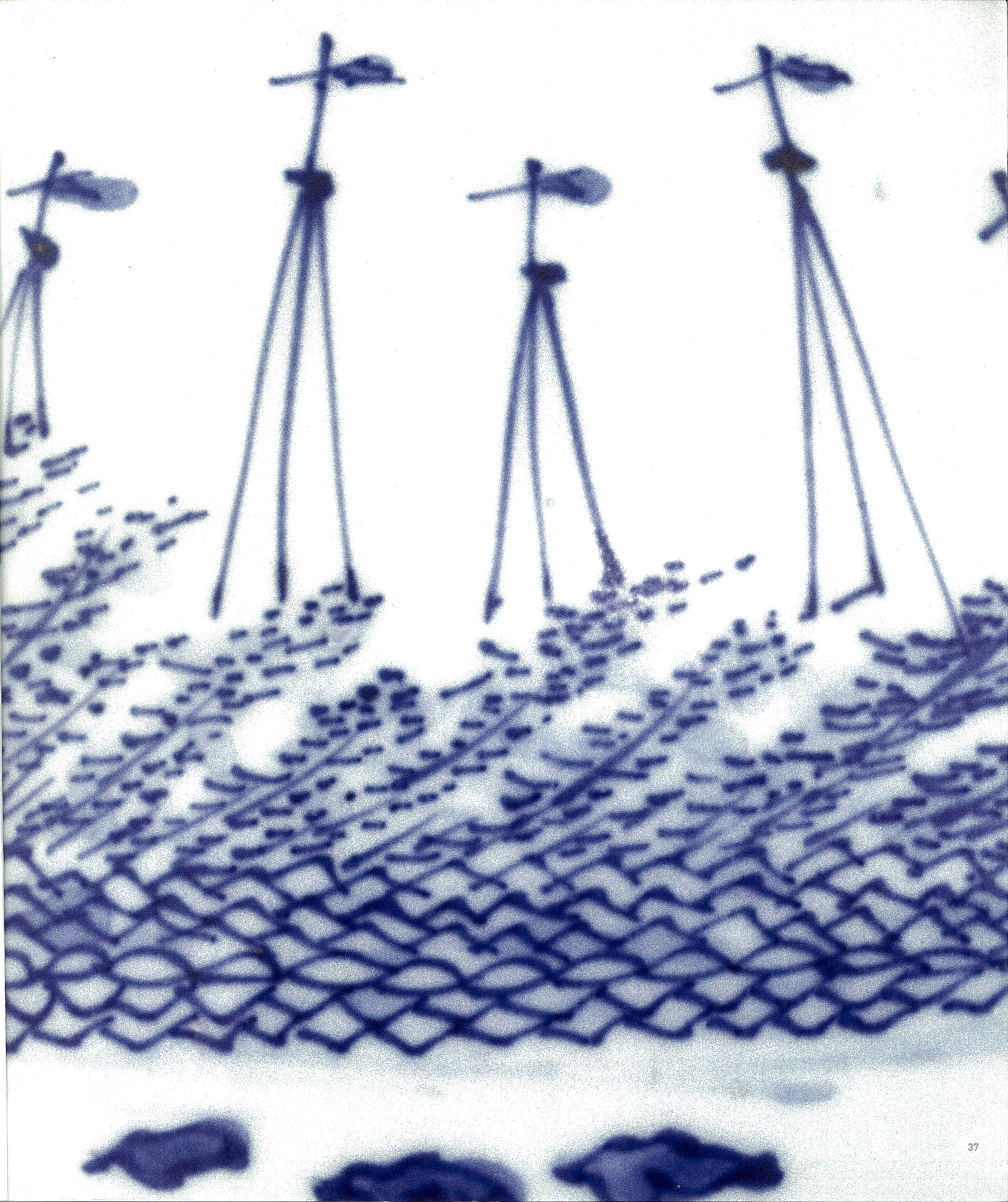






Bibliography

- The Philadelphia 1949 Exhibition of Ming Blue-and-White with the Oriental Ceramic Society 1954 Exhibition, H.F. Collins + Co. Ltd. 1985
- Mary Gardner Neill, *The Communion of Scholars, Chinese Art at Yale*, China Institute in America, New York, 1982
- Decorative Arts, Part II*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1998
- Jessica Harrison-Hall, *Ming Ceramics in the British Museum*, London 2001
- John Carswell, *Blue and White Chinese Porcelain Around The World*, Art Media Resources Ltd, Chicago, 2000
- R.L Hobson, *The Wares of the Ming Dynasty*, London, 1923.
- Blue and White Porcelain with Underglazed Red (II)*, The Complete Collection of Treasures of the Palace Museum, Vol.34, Hong Kong, 2000
- In Pursuit of Antiquities, Thirty-fifth Anniversary Exhibition of the Min Chui Society*, Hong Kong Museum of Art, 1995
- The Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society, 1950-51*, Vol. 26, London 1952
- Gunhild Avitabile; Stephan Graf von der Schulenberg, *Chinesisches Porzellan*, Frankfurt am Main, 1977
- Sotheby Parke Bernet (Hong Kong) Ltd, *The Edward T. Chow Collection*, 1980
- Soame Jenyns, *Ming Pottery and Porcelain*, Faber and Faber, London, 1973
- Rosemary Scott and Rose Kerr, *Ceramic Evolution in the Middle Ming Period*, V+A and Percival David Foundation of Art, London 1994
- Gyllensvard, Pope, *Chinese Art*, Asia House Gallery, 1966
- R.L Hobson, *The Wares of the Ming Dynasty*, Charles E. Tuttle Co. USA, 1962
- Spink and Son Ltd, *The George de Menasce Collection*, London, 1971
- Ming Blue-and-White From Swedish Collections*, Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm, 1964
- Robert D. Jacobsen, *Appreciating China, Gifts from Ruth and Bruce Dayton*, The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 2002
- Blue and White Porcelain from the Collection of Tianminlou Foundation*, Hong Kong, 1996
- Catalogue of The Special Exhibition of Selected Hsuan-te Imperial Porcelains of the Ming Dynasty*, National Palace Museum, Taipei, 1998
- Beauty of Ceramics (3), Blue and White Porcelain*, Art Book Co., Beijing, 1998
- Yau Hokwa, *Yuan and Ming Blue and White Ware from Jiangxi*, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2002
- Chiang Fu-Tsung, *Catalogue of a Special Exhibition of Hsuan-Te Period Porcelain*, National Palace Museum, 1984
- Chiang Fu-Tsung, *Catalogue of a Special Exhibition of Early Ming Period Porcelain*, National Palace Museum, 1982
- Ho Kam-cheun, *Imperial Porcelain of the Yongle and Xuande Periods, Excavated from the Site of the Ming Imperial Factory at Jingdezhen*, Urban Council, Hong Kong, 1989
- John Alexander Pope, *Chinese Porcelains from the Ardebil Shrine*, Smithsonian Institute, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington D.C, 1956
- Barry Till, *The Blue and White Porcelain of China*, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Canada, 1992
- Catalogue of the Special Exhibition of Chenghua Porcelain Ware, 1465-1487*, National Palace Museum, Taipei, 2002





Knapton Rasti Asian Art Limited
1 Princes Place, Duke Street St James's, London. SW1Y 6DE
Telephone: 020 7839 3888 Fax: 020 7839 8833
Email: knaptonrasti@btconnect.com Web: www.knaptonandrasti.com