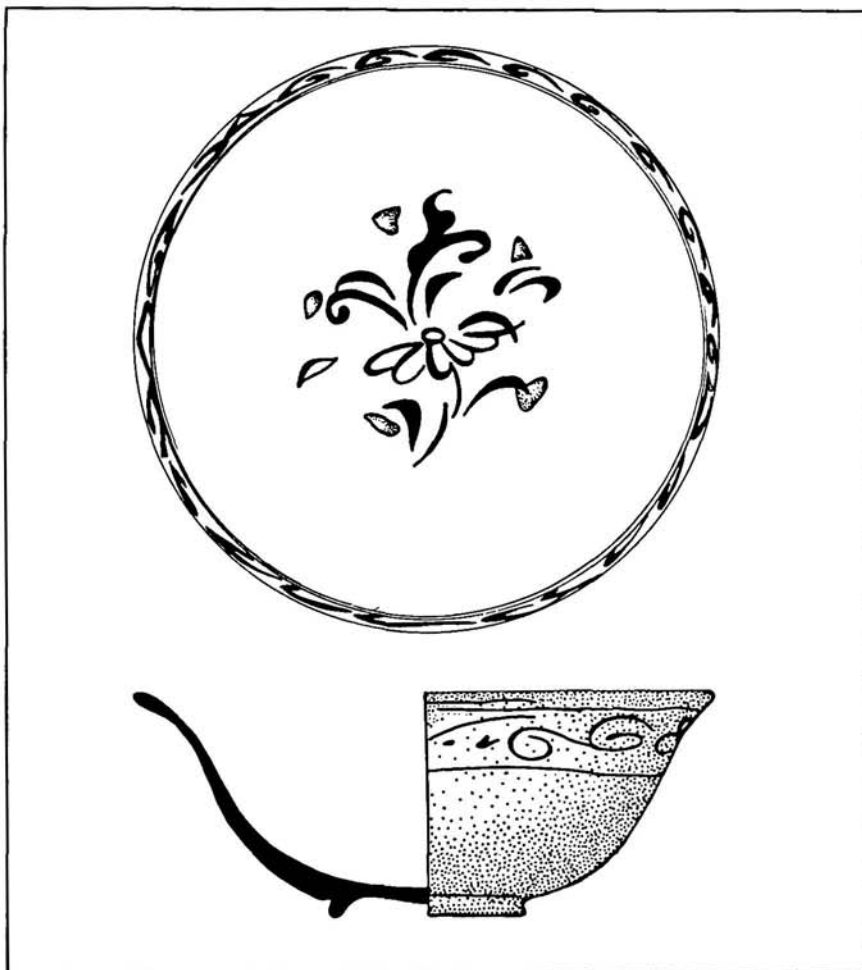


Vietnamese Tradewares Found in Central Philippines

by Thelma M. Roales



Among the artifacts found in the Philippines are Chinese, Siamese, Vietnamese, Cambodian and European ceramic tradewares. Of all these ceramics, Vietnamese or Annamese wares receive the least attention.

In Tagbilaran City, province of Bohol, Mrs Carolina Butalid takes pride in her wide collection of ancient ceramics. She has been collecting ceramics from various parts of the world, including Vietnamese pieces, since 1960. Her collection originated from purchases made from dealers in Bohol. The sellers, according to her, traced the items' provenance to the central and western part of Luzon Island. They claim the ceramics have been excavated from different burial sites in Tagbilaran City and its vicinities, namely: Dauis, Loay, Mansasa, and Hanopol, Balilihan.

Among the hundreds of ceramics in the Butalid collection, most numerous are the Chinese wares. They number around 160 pieces. There are also 38 Siamese or Thai pieces (Sukhothai and Sawankhalok) and 22 Vietnamese pieces in the collection.

In this collection, the Vietnamese ceramics may be classified into three types: the monochromes, the underglazed black and white, and the underglazed blue and white. In the ceramic history of Vietnam, the monochrome wares, as compared to

Fig. 1 Underglazed black Vietnamese bowl with chocolate wash on the base and five triangular spur marks on the interior centre. Height - 7.5 cms, Mouth diameter - 16.6 cms, Footrim - 6.4 cms.

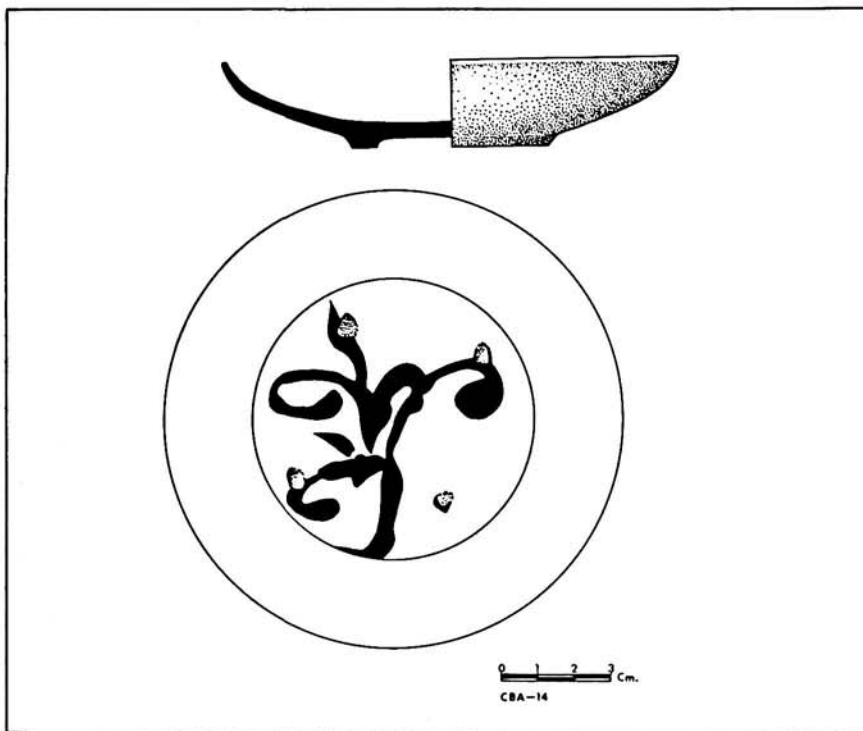


Fig. 2 Underglazed black Vietnamese ware with triangular spur marks. Clay is creamish with crackled glaze and chocolate wash on the bottom.

rounded lips, big plates and saucers exhibit chocolate wash on their bases.

Dishes like plates, saucers and cups are made of underglazed black and white pieces. Their clay body are either whitish or grayish and some have chocolate wash on the base. There is also a short footrim and a stylized lotus design on the interior center. Triangular spur marks (support marks of firing) are prominent on some pieces but absent on others.

The underglazed black pieces are dated between 1375-1425 A.D.

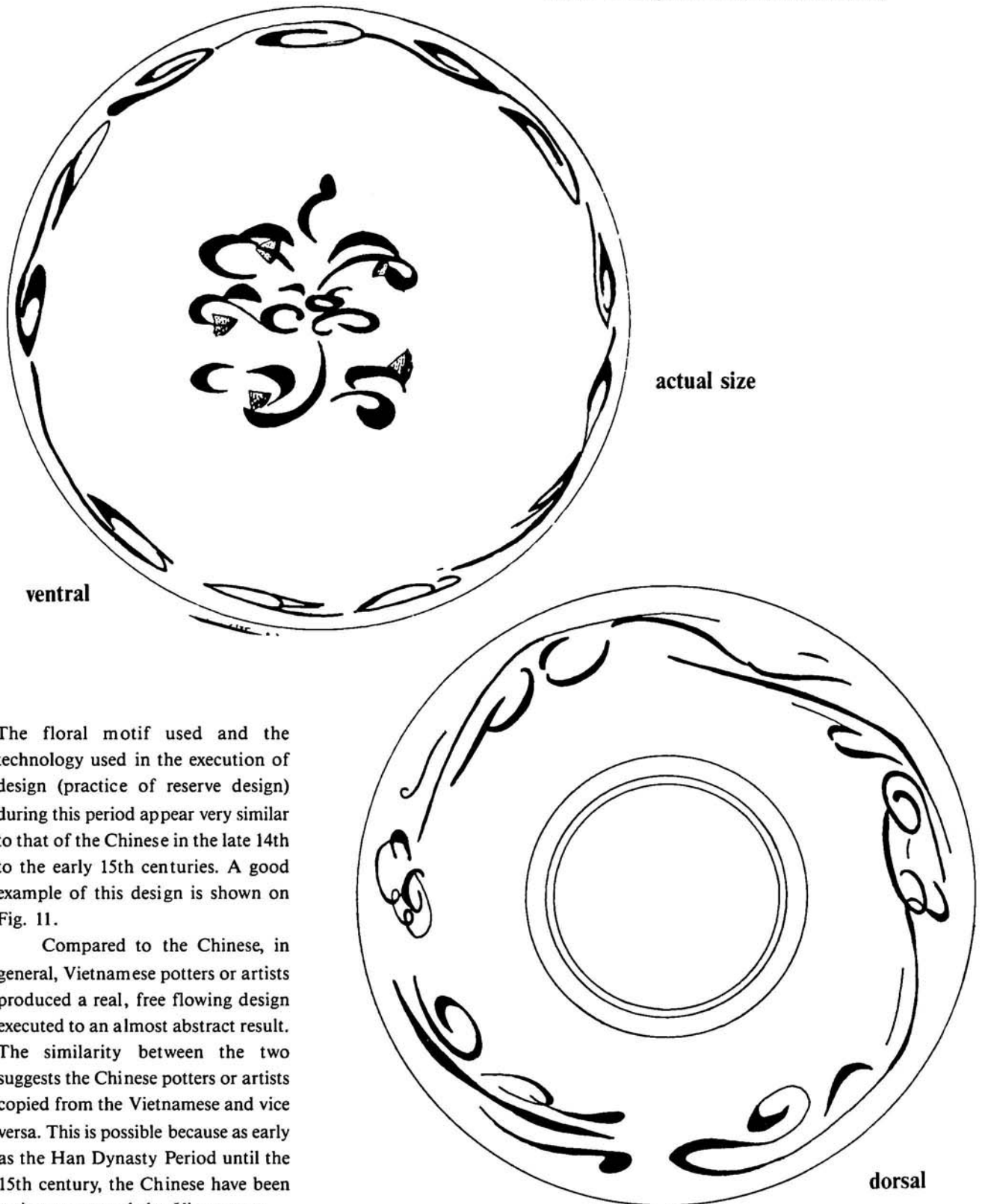
the other types, are from the earliest period. And this could be around the 10th to the 11th century A.D. White monochromes preceed the green ones. For both monochromes, their most outstanding characteristics are very fine crackled glaze and creamish clay body.

The white and cream monochromes are shallow and they are deep bowls, saucers, cups and jarlets. They have flat bases, appearing to have been cut (see Figs. 6, 7, and 8). Among the green and the brown monochromes; footed bowls are most common. They have either impressed or incised design of stylized flowers on the interior center plus four or five triangular spur marks (Fig. 9). Jarlets found in the collection generally have



Fig. 3 Underglazed black Vietnamese cup. Mouth diameter, exterior - 8.3 cms, Height - 5.3 cms, Base - 3.8 cms.

Fig. 4 Underglazed black Anamese bowl.



The floral motif used and the technology used in the execution of design (practice of reserve design) during this period appear very similar to that of the Chinese in the late 14th to the early 15th centuries. A good example of this design is shown on Fig. 11.

Compared to the Chinese, in general, Vietnamese potters or artists produced a real, free flowing design executed to an almost abstract result. The similarity between the two suggests the Chinese potters or artists copied from the Vietnamese and vice versa. This is possible because as early as the Han Dynasty Period until the 15th century, the Chinese have been trying to control the Vietnamese.

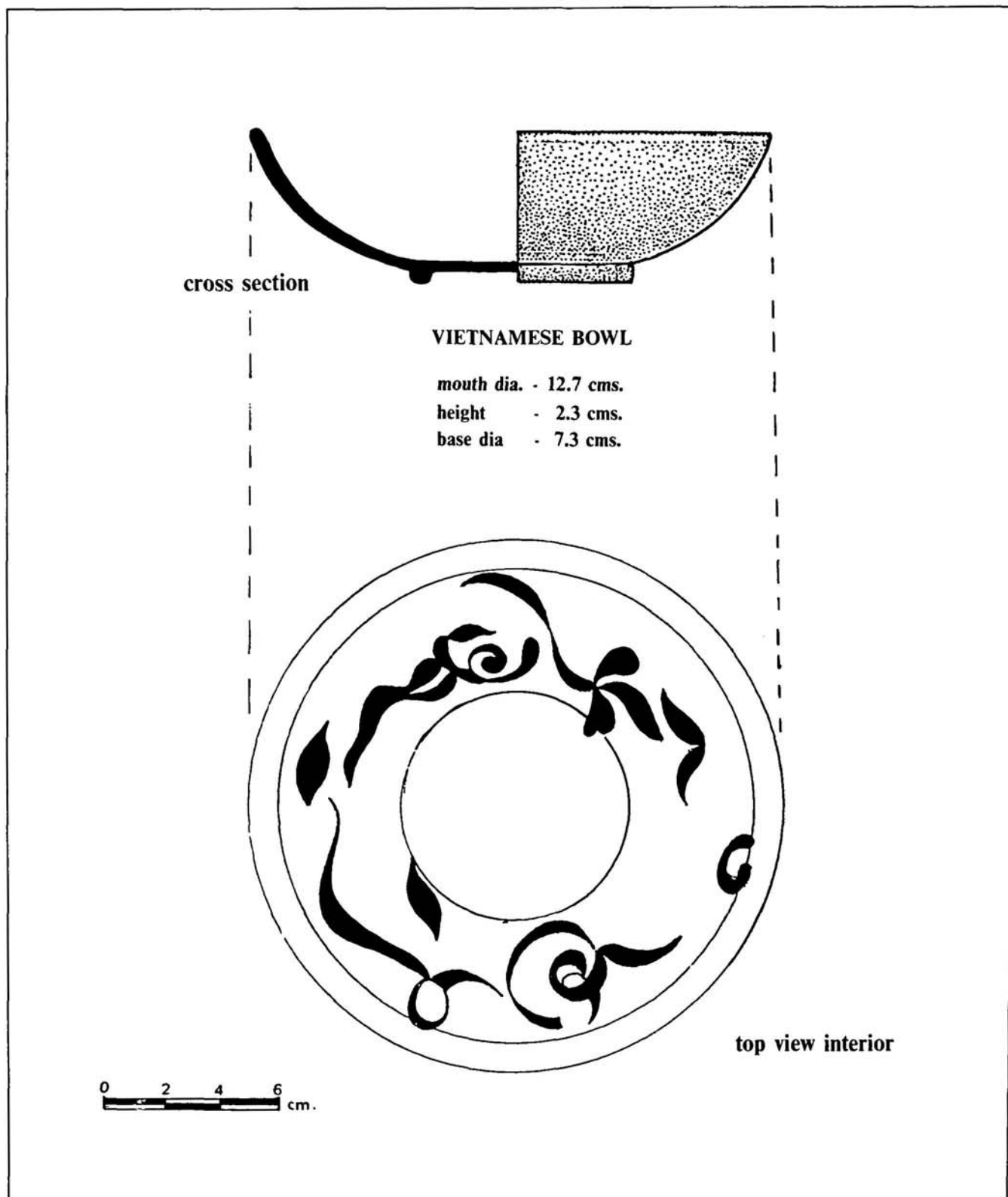


Fig. 5 Underglazed blue floral bowl.

**Vietnamese monochromes
with creamish crackled glaze**

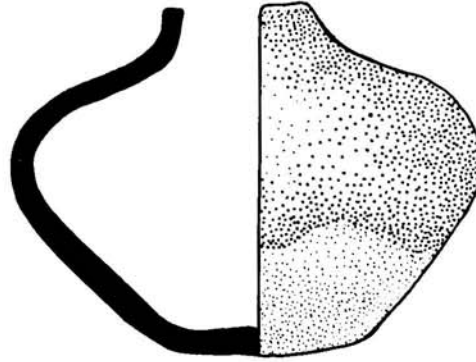


Fig. 6

Mouth dia. - 2.7 cms.
Height - 6 cms.
Body dia. - 7.8 cms.
Base dia. - 3.5 cms.

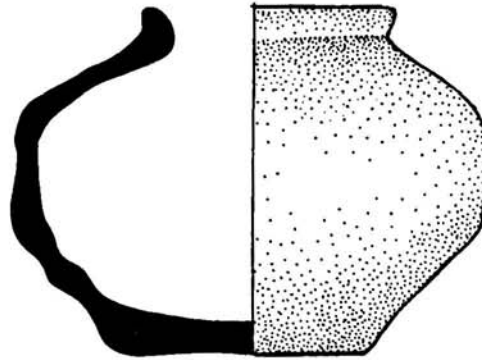


Fig. 7

Mouth dia. - 3.5 cms.
Height - 4.5 cms.
Base - 4.5 cms.

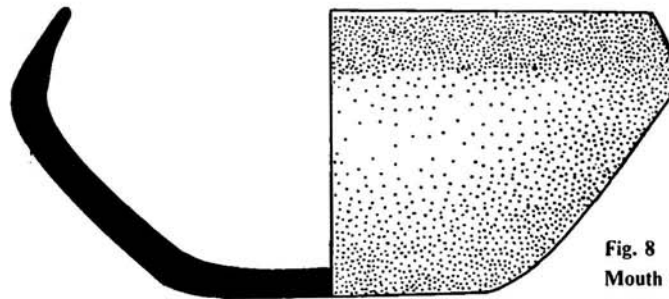


Fig. 8

Mouth dia. - 8.7 cms.
Height - 3.7 cms.
Base (flat) - 4.5 cms.

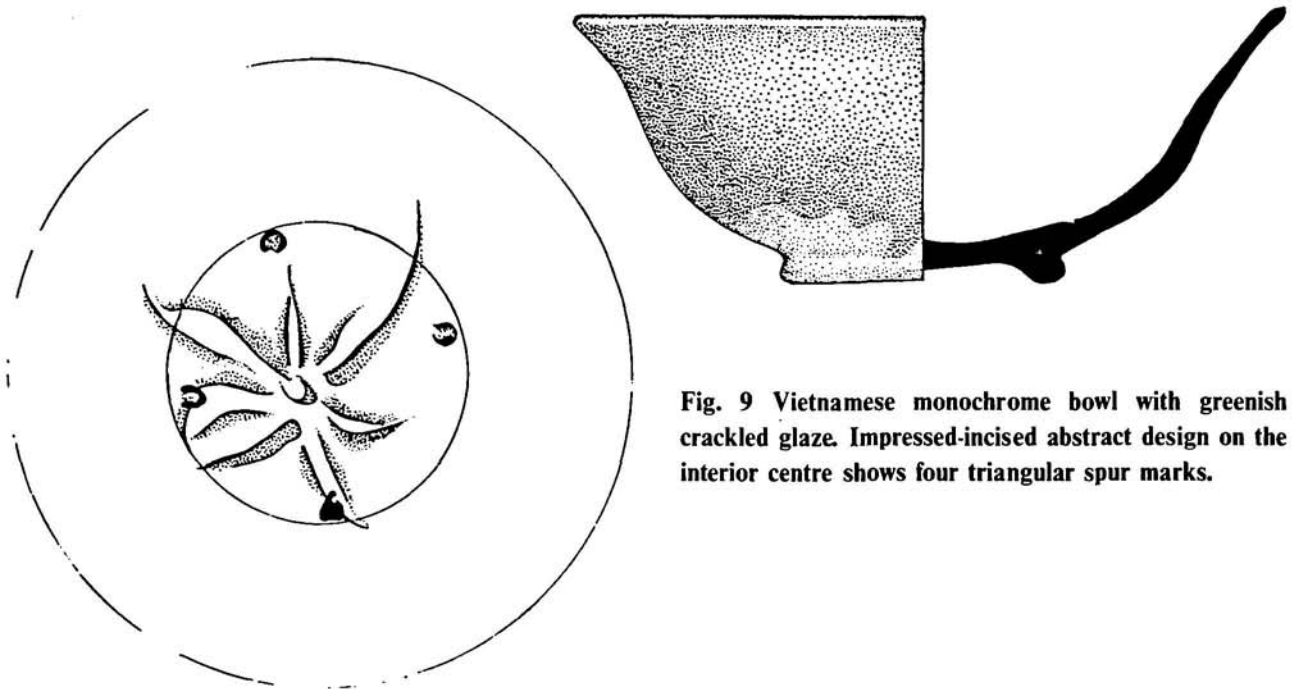
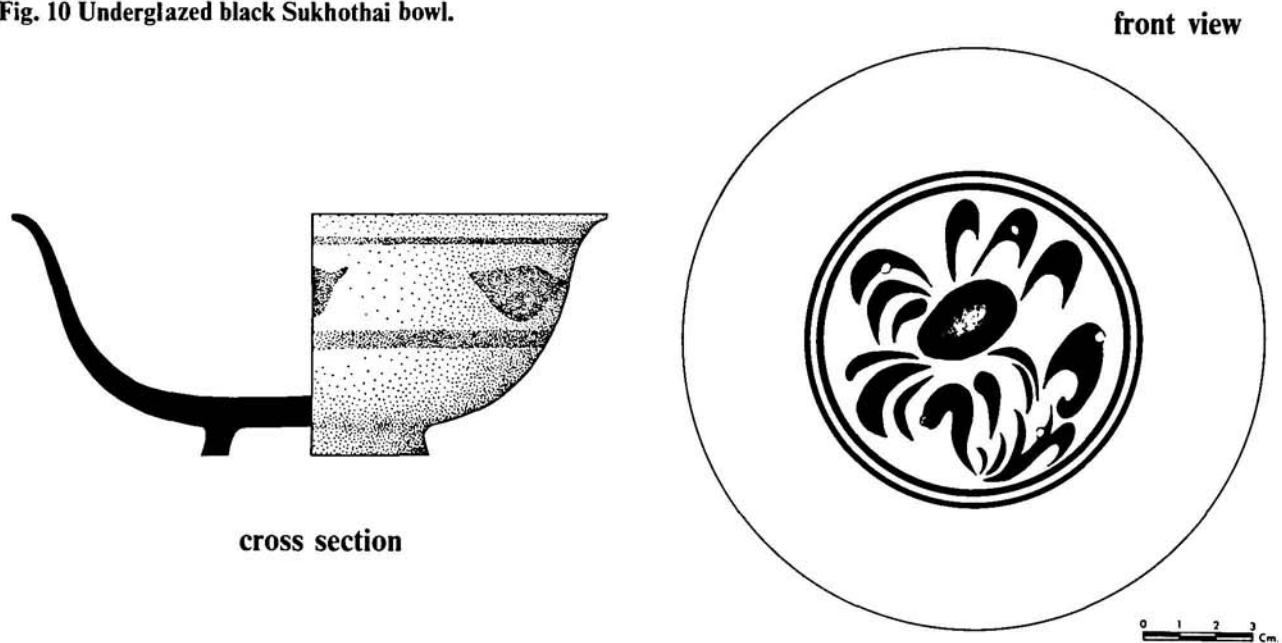


Fig. 9 Vietnamese monochrome bowl with greenish crackled glaze. Impressed-incised abstract design on the interior centre shows four triangular spur marks.

Fig. 10 Underglazed black Sukhothai bowl.



front view

cross section

0 1 2 3 Cm.

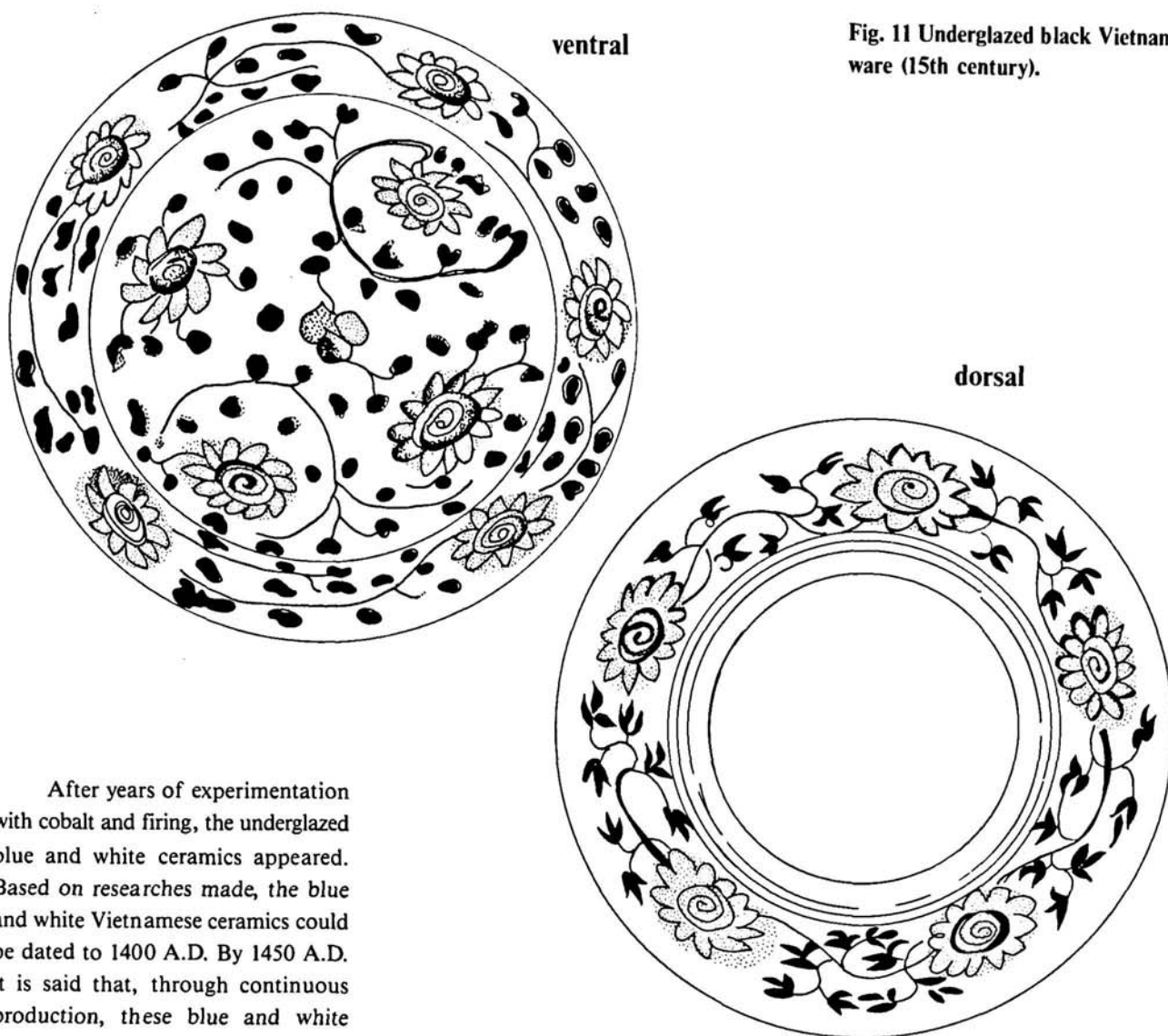


Fig. 11 Underglazed black Vietnamese ware (15th century).

After years of experimentation with cobalt and firing, the underglazed blue and white ceramics appeared. Based on researches made, the blue and white Vietnamese ceramics could be dated to 1400 A.D. By 1450 A.D. it is said that, through continuous production, these blue and white ceramics became comparable to the Chinese blue and whites.

In the Butalid collection, there is an interesting underglazed black bowl (see Fig. 10). Because of the design treatment, it could be mistaken for a Vietnamese underglazed black ceramics. But it is a Sukhothai piece with five triangular spur marks on the interior center. It also has an angular unglazed footrim and base. Needless to say, this is again suggestive of contacts between the Sukhothai and the Vietnamese potters. The Sukhothai and the Vietnamese

underglazed black bowls are both from the 14th-15th centuries.

Because of the minimal attention given to Vietnamese or Annamese ceramics, the writer hopes that, through this descriptive presentation, she has promoted awareness and provided information on Vietnamese ceramics. And although very few pieces have been identified, they certainly are a part of the Philippine Island's maritime trade history. ■

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