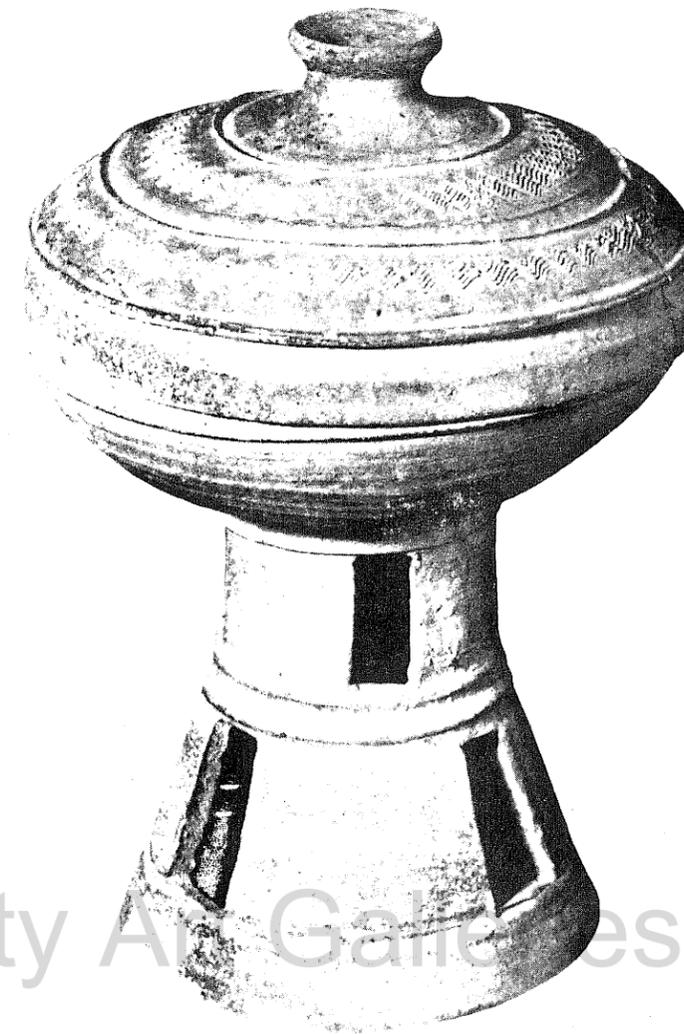


10/77



Syracuse University Art Galleries

The Colonel John R. Fox Collection of
KOREAN CERAMICS
from the Syracuse University Art Collection

Joe and Emily Lowe Art Gallery
Sims Hall Syracuse University

October 12-30, 1977

THE COLONEL JOHN R. FOX COLLECTION OF
K O R E A N C E R A M I C S
FROM THE SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY ART COLLECTIONS

ESSAY BY CHARLES RYDER DIBBLE, Ph.D.
GUEST CURATOR

OCTOBER 12-OCTOBER 30, 1977

Syracuse University Art Galleries

JOE AND EMILY LOWE ART GALLERY
SIMS HALL, SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY
SYRACUSE, NEW YORK

Copyright, 1977 by Joe and Emily Lowe Art Gallery
College of Visual and Performing Arts, Syracuse University
Syracuse, New York.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is with great pride that the Joe and Emily Lowe Art Gallery presents the Colonel John R. Fox Collection of Korean Ceramics from the Syracuse University Art Collections.

This exhibition illustrates the high level of professional expertise available from the School of Art and the depth of the international art collection at Syracuse University.

My special thanks to Dr. Charles R. Dibble, Assistant Dean C.V.P.A. for curating the exhibition and for providing the historical information printed in this document. I would also like to extend my thanks to Laura Fleischmann for her very able assistance on all aspects of the exhibition and Dianne Ludman for designing the graphics and helping with the installation. Thanks to Gary McLoughlin and Judy Barry of the gallery staff and thanks to Dr. August Freundlich, Dean of the College of Visual and Performing Arts, Dr. Alfred T. Collette, Director of the Syracuse University Art Collections, Domenic Iacono, Registrar and Bill Boylan for their special cooperation.

Joseph Scala
Interim Director of Exhibitions
Joe and Emily Lowe Art Gallery
Syracuse University

Syracuse University Art Galleries

THE COLONEL JOHN R. FOX COLLECTION OF
KOREAN CERAMICS FROM THE SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY ART COLLECTIONS

Early Korean artifacts are primarily Neolithic (1500 - 1000 BC), but exploration and study will extend our knowledge back into the Paleolithic era. Meanwhile, according to ancient legend, Korea was populated by the descendents of the god Ung and an earthly bear-woman; their son, Tan Gun, was the first leader of Korea. However, archaeological evidence indicates that Tungusic and Mongolian nomads from the north gradually filtered down through the peninsula for at least a millenium, settling and evolving late into the early Korean kingdoms whose legendary foundation dates occur within a span of some forty years.

In the north a semi-nomadic existence continued; in the south, however, sedentary agricultural societies developed under impetus from China. This southern influence came much later, intensified by the struggle of the Chinese in their northern provinces to prevent the same infiltration by the nomads as had already taken place in Korea. In 108 BC the Chinese overthrew the earliest Korean kingdom of Choson and planted their famous colony of Lo-lang. Through this outpost of empire the Han dynasty was able to instill a prediliction for Chinese models which became unmistakably paramount in the subsequent development of Korean art, literature, philosophy and governmental institutions.

PRE-HISTORY - 108 BC

Neolithic dolmens, great stone monuments bearing a resemblance to Stonehenge and perhaps paralleling it in date, remain. But for our purposes pottery shards are more significant, for ceramics always furnish the earliest

authentic record of any developing civilization. Shards from this era are classified into three main categories: primitive comb-marked pieces of simple design; several varieties of plain brown ware; and a red-colored type (sometimes painted) related to Yayoi pottery (200 BC - 200 AD) in Japan. Long production experiences provided Koreans with the technology to develop the sophisticated stoneware of the Three Kingdoms; these, in their turn, profoundly affected the growth of Hagi and Sue wares in Japan.

LO-LANG 108 BC - 313 AD

This first historical period might be more properly labelled Chinese, for Lo-lang was an oasis of Chinese culture in the midst of simple Korean tribal societies where products in the Chinese taste must have seemed excitingly desirable to the Koreans. Around the headquarters of the colony numerous tombs were uncovered yielding an array of gold and metal pieces of the highest quality, magnificent lacquer work, household furniture, tortoise shell objects, basketry, jewelry, weapons, etc. Even then, the Chinese promoted a brisk trade between themselves and the Koreans, for the Chinese were ever interested in cultivating an image of cultural superiority to which the Koreans, no different from other Asians, were susceptible.

THE THREE KINGDOMS 57 BC - 668 AD

At the end of Lo-lang's predominance Korean clans coalesced into the three major political divisions that lasted until the last of the seventh century. After the destruction of Lo-lang, KOGURYO (37 BC - 668 AD) moved its capital to Pyongyang. The tombs in the Yalu region contain fine examples of

the mural painting of the period, but centuries of looting have left little but ceramic fragments of unglazed bricks, tiles and a green-glazed ware.

In the southwest PAEKCHE (18 BC - 663 AD) is best known as middleman, for it maintained close relations with both south China and with Japan. Indeed, the NIHONGI (The CHRONICLES OF JAPAN) unequivocally credits the king of Paekche with being the donor of the statue which is said to have introduced Buddhism into Japan in the year 552; in addition the small kingdom contributed numerous architects, scholars, philosophers, monks and imperial tutors to her eastern neighbor. However, scant testimony is left, thanks to the sacking and looting by the armies of China and Silla which finally destroyed her.

SILLA, (57 BC - 668 AD) the third of the triumvirate, also bequeathed an important legacy in her tombs, where quantities of gold and other jewelry and vessels have survived. Her ceramics, rather high fired, vary from tan to dark gray. The resulting bodies resemble unglazed stoneware in hardness and often show a kiln gloss or traces of a natural ash glaze. Often the pots are supported by pedestals with roughly-cut-out geometric openings. Many have tall cylindrical necks; others bear low, dome-shaped covers with prominent knobs. Larger pieces display a massive, well-proportioned dignity; some bore combed wave designs, others simple geometric motifs or unerased potters' marks -- all to be found also on the Sue wares of Japan. There are also figurines, hardy, naive in concept, endowed with a vigorous sturdiness.

UNITED SILLA 668 - 935 AD

After unification, the nation enjoyed two and a half centuries of peace and prosperity. Buddhism and Confucianism flourished side by side; intellectual contact was maintained with T'ang China; and the building of temples and expansion of the priesthood penetrated to the farthest corners of the

land. Gray stoneware continued as peasant property, but beside it there developed a new type inspired by burial customs. With interment abandoned for cremation, there arose a demand for burial urns to hold the ashes of the dead. Large in scale, these show two important innovations uncharacteristic of earlier stoneware; first, instead of being incised, their geometric or stylized floral decoration was stamped, often with a heavy hand, and secondly, brownish and green glazes, now produced deliberately instead of accidentally, became widespread.

KORYŎ 918 - 1392 AD

With a new capital at Songdo central power tended to become dispersed into the hands of regional nobles. Hence the influence of Sung China was somewhat diluted by being diverted into several channels. The end result was the establishment of separate centers of culture, each of them characterized by a certain native robustness, born as much, perhaps, of necessity as of aesthetic compulsion.

The glory of this period is generally conceded to be its ceramics which, with some simplification, may be divided into three types: the celadons, the white porcelains, and the black wares. The history of celadon in Korea is not completely clear, but certainly Yüch wares of the Five Dynasties and the Sung dynasty in China were powerful influences. Celadon prototypes originated late in the tenth century (there is a piece actually dated 993) with constant progress thereafter, both qualitatively and quantitatively; by 1123 the Chinese envoy Hsü Ching considered the green pottery of Korea worthy of favorable mention.

These wares fall into three sub-categories, beginning with the plain on whose full development depended the subsequent painted and inlaid versions. "Plain" is not to be construed as being limited to smooth-walled vessels concerned only with the superior color of the glaze; also included are those pieces with simple incised decoration. Many of the latter were made over biscuit molds into which the design had been worked in intaglio. Fired but unglazed, this form was inverted and over it was laid a circle of clay rolled out exactly like a piece of pastry. This clay was firmly pressed against the model, duplicating on the inside of the prototype. Such designs were often pointed up by further incising with various bamboo tools.

A painting technique influenced by the Tz'u Chou wares of Yuan or early Ming characterizes the second branch of the celadon family. In this category designs were painted on the body in white or black slip or iron oxide before the glaze was applied, and a very limited number is also known to have carried underglaze decoration in underglaze copper.

But the third type -- perhaps Korea's outstanding contribution to the potter's art -- was the inlaid celadon, or sanggam, a technique borrowed from the inlaid metal wares of T'ang China and from the painted slip decoration mentioned above. The earliest examples come from a tomb also containing a coffin bearing a death date of 1159. These pieces show an astonishing state of technical development, however, so it must be assumed that the process had been initiated some time shortly after Hsu Ching's mission in 1123 -- he mentions no examples in his account -- and progressed rapidly in the relatively short interval following his departure and the burial of 1159.

The technique is simple but painstaking. In leather-hard clay a design is formed by incising, removing clay in a line or in whole areas; it is usually practised in the positive aspects of pattern, but it may be turned to "excavating" the background of the design, in which case the process is termed reverse inlay. Either way, the depressions are filled with a contrasting slip and the excess carefully wiped away before glazing; white is the most predominant color, although black runs a close second. The number of firings is not precisely determined. It is possible that there were two, one after the inlay had been completed, followed by a second after the glaze had been applied to the resultant biscuit; it is also possible that the inlay was accomplished, the glaze applied directly and the pot then fired in a single operation.

Glaze standards vary throughout the period of celadon production. At first strict attention was paid to achieving the proper limpid bluish-green "kingfisher" hue and its acceptable variations. These glazes were the result of reduction firings, a practice gradually diminished from the onset of the thirteenth century in favor of firing in an oxidizing atmosphere, although one cannot be sure whether this was due to preference or to a general loss of facility in the techniques of kiln control. For whatever cause, an increasing number of late Koryo celadons bear brown, yellow or straw-colored glazes.

The second major classification of Koryo ceramics consists of the white porcelains, long thought to have been imported from China until shards were found in 1938 at Korean kiln sites. Pieces were either plain, impressed, or pierced with openwork, and a few were done in an inlay technique similar to

the sanggam of the celadons. They are all important as the forerunners of the white porcelains of the Yi dynasty, especially those with cobalt or copper decoration, and those of Tekugawa Japan.

The third broad category comprises the so-called black wares, comparatively rare, difficult to analyze, all based on iron. The first, or iron-black, were of the same clay as celadon wares but coated with an iron wash or slip before the application of the celadon glaze; where a design was incised, the lighter body shows through the celadon against the dark areas surrounding it. The iron-glazed works, however, achieved their reddish off-black colors from the glaze itself. High in iron content, it was applied directly to the pot, all color effects deriving from the glaze itself. The third and last sub-type was that covered by a thick, opaque black or dark brown lustrous slip glaze known to the Japanese as temmoku.

CHOSUN: THE YI DYNASTY

Basically, Yi ceramics may be divided into two main streams. The first is the punch'ong ware, a direct outgrowth of Koryo inlaid celadons. Its distinguishing feature lies in the handling of the slip and in the methods used to achieve the decoration, for designs now ceased to be meticulously incised into the body of the pot. In a rough way this technique did indeed survive, but the depressions to receive the slip came to be made by means of stamps, yielding an effect understandably coarser and in some respects less controlled or disciplined. But the pieces done in this manner (known in Japan as mishima), with their concentric circles, chrysanthemum or aster forms and the ubiquitous rope curtain design, display a total unselfconscious-

ness which is refreshing. Slip itself, moreover, was used with a new freedom. Most often it was brushed on with an abandon which leaves its spiral application quite apparent. Sometimes the effect is a nearly solid one, and when this is so, the slip often serves as a base for brush drawing or sgraffito work. Where the slip is spiralled so thinly as to itself provide the main decorative feature or when it is then incised in solid or chattered concentric circles, the Japanese refer to the technique as hakeme.

The other broad ceramic category consists of the white porcelains which, like punch'ong ware, were also outgrowths of Koryo. Before the Japanese invasions these were either plain or decorated in underglaze blue in a style influenced by the great blue-and-white wares of the Ming dynasty. In the sixteenth century blue-and-white became the predominant type, along with its derivatives which employed underglaze iron and/or copper decoration, sometimes alone but most often in conjunction with the cobalt.

These types continued to be made very nearly to the end of the period, but Japanese domination in the latter part of the nineteenth century dealt a final blow to an already dying artistic production.

GENERAL NOTES ON KOREAN CERAMICS

There are difficulties in assessing the significance of Korean ceramics, none of them new in tracing the history of any ceramic production, and none of them due exclusively to any one cause of source. One of them is, however, endemic to the geographical location of Korea and Japan, both of whom have suffered from the success of a Chinese cultural ethnocentrism which has convinced the world that the arts of these two small countries are but pale copies of

models provided by an infinitely superior civilization.

Korea, at the crossroads of northeast Asia, is very nearly the archetype of a buffer state. As such it has chosen selectively from a multitude of influences, modifying them in the process of assimilation so as to produce results peculiarly its own. This is no late development born of some recently acquired sense of discrimination, for its roots are buried deep in the past, at least as far back as the painted decorations in the tombs of Koguryo where Han Chinese motifs and concepts have taken on at this early date an unmistakable Korean stamp.

In addition, Korea has performed yeoman service for Japan, serving as a funnel directing a steady flow of ideas and objects of commerce and art. She has always provided her neighbor with colonists, the bulk of them remarkably competent in their chosen specialties. In the face of modern history, one tends to forget that, historically, Japan has profited from this phenomenon in spite of isolated instances of reverse flow.

Add, too, that until recently dealers and collectors failed to question the provenance of the lootings from royal and aristocratic tombs, thus consigning many desirable opportunities for dating to eternal oblivion and encouraging further looting and clandestine marketing. In a real sense this situation, intensified by Korea's own domestic policy of enforced seclusion, has long conspired to keep the rest of the world in darkness in respect to her aesthetic accomplishments.

Charles Ryder Dibble, Ph.D.
Assistant Dean for Students
College of Visual and Performing Arts

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Footed Jar
Old Silla Dynasty, 57 BC - 688 AD
Gray-tan stoneware

*Jar and cover on pierced pedestal
Old Silla Dynasty, 57 BC - 688 AD
Stoneware

Footed Bowl
Old Silla Dynasty, 57 BC - 688 AD
Gray stoneware

Vase or urn on pierced pedestal
Old Silla Dynasty, 57 BC - 688 AD
Stoneware

Cup
Old Silla Dynasty, 57 BC - 688 AD
Stoneware

Globular Jar or vase
Old Silla Dynasty, 57 BC - 688 AD
Stoneware

Deer
Old Silla Dynasty, 57 BC - 688 AD
Stoneware

Bowl
Koryo Dynasty, 918 - 1392
Stoneware

Vase
Koryo Dynasty, 918 - 1392
Stoneware

Bowl
Koryo Dynasty, 918 - 1392
Stoneware

Vase
Koryo Dynasty, 918 - 1392
Reddish stoneware

Bowl
Koryo Dynasty, 918 - 1392
Stoneware

Bowl
Koryo Dynasty, 918 - 1392
Stoneware

Bottle
Koryo Dynasty, 918 - 1392
Stoneware

Vase
Koryo Dynasty, 918 - 1392
Stoneware

Small Dish
Koryo Dynasty, 918 - 1392
Stoneware

Oil Bottle
Koryo Dynasty, 918 - 1392
Stoneware

Bowl
Koryo Dynasty, 918 - 1392
Stoneware

Bowl
Koryo Dynasty, 918 - 1392
Stoneware

Large Bowl
Koryo Dynasty, 918 - 1392
Stoneware

Drinking Cup
Koryo Dynasty, 918 - 1392
Stoneware

Small Dish
Koryo Dynasty, 918 - 1392
Stoneware

Small Dish
Koryo Dynasty, 918 - 1392
Stoneware

Drinking Cup
Koryo Dynasty, 918 - 1392
Stoneware

*Illustrated on cover

Syracuse University Art Galleries

Syracuse University Art Galleries

Oil Bottle
Koryo Dynasty, 918 - 1392
Tan stoneware

Small Dish
Koryo Dynasty, 918 - 1392
Stoneware

Bowl
Yi Dynasty, 1392 - 1910
Cream stoneware

Small Vase or wine bottle
Yi Dynasty, 1392 - 1910
Stoneware

Small Vase
Yi Dynasty, 1392 - 1910
Porcelain

Small Vase
Yi Dynasty, 1392 - 1910
White porcelain

Wine Pot
Yi Dynasty, 1392 - 1910
White porcelain

Vase
Yi Dynasty, 1392 - 1910
White porcelain

Vase
Yi Dynasty, 1392 - 1910
Gray-white porcelain

Vase
Yi Dynasty, 1392 - 1910
Dark gray stoneware

Vase
Yi Dynasty, 1392 - 1910
Porcelain

Large Food Jar
Yi Dynasty, 1392 - 1910
White porcelaneous body

Jar
Yi Dynasty, 1392 - 1910
Red stoneware

Vase or wine bottle
Yi Dynasty, 1392 - 1910
Gray stoneware

Flower Bowl
Yi Dynasty, 1392 - 1910
White porcelain

Vase
Yi Dynasty, 1392 - 1910
White porcelain

Vase
Yi Dynasty, 1392 - 1910
White porcelain

Bowl
Yi Dynasty, 1392 - 1910
Stoneware

Bowl or cup
Yi Dynasty, 1392 - 1910
Stoneware

Vase
Yi Dynasty, 1392 - 1910
White porcelain

Vase
Yi Dynasty, 1392 - 1910
White porcelain

Vase
Yi Dynasty, 1392 - 1910
Ivory porcelain

Vase
Yi Dynasty, 1392 - 1910
White porcelain

Bowl
Yi Dynasty, 1392 - 1910
Stoneware

Syracuse University Art Galleries

Syracuse University Art Galleries