

Special Feature

The Characteristics of Blue-and-white Porcelain Consumption and Trends during the First Half of Joseon Seen through Excavated Artifacts

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Introduction

During the first half of the Joseon period, the blue-and-white porcelain had a special status as wares that commoners could not use. However, despite the law that designated these wares as drinking vessels of the ruling class, the wealthy commoners of Hanyang (present-day Seoul) also had an affinity for blue-and-white porcelain. A luxury item and a proof of power, the blue-and-white porcelain increased in popularity and consumption after the late fifteenth century. The recent excavations suggest that the members of the royal family and the high officials used a small number of blue-and-white porcelain produced in the official kiln from Gwangju, Gyeonggi Province, as well as imported ones from the Chinese Ming dynasty. On the other hand, the majority of others used the blue-and-white porcelain from the private kilns of Jingdezhen (Park 2022a). Another notable observation is that most of the blue-and-white porcelain that was popular during the first half of the Joseon dynasty served as drinking vessels. In order to identify such trends, it is necessary to study how the blue-and-white porcelain came to popularity during the first half of Joseon and examine the early Joseon and Ming blue-and-white porcelain found during the excavations.

During the fifteenth century, Joseon saw an increased stability of the central government and a growing economy. It was during the reigns of Kings Sejo 世祖 (r. 1455–1468) and Seongjong 成宗 (r. 1469–1494) when it became trendy in Hanyang to acquire various luxurious fashion and furniture that blue-and-white porcelain gained increased popularity. But the beauty and rarity of the blue-and-white porcelain were not the only driving forces behind the popularity. Its role as a status symbol also seems to have contributed to the trend.

Even before they were produced domestically, the members of Joseon's royal family and the scholar-officials used blue-and-white porcelain from China. The blue-and-white porcelains found their way from the Yuan dynasty during the late Goryeo dynasty. They were also gifted to Joseon's royalty by the Ming emperor during early Joseon. During the early days of Joseon, the blue-and-white porcelain was considered a special symbol of Joseon royalty's authority and the alliance between Joseon and Ming. These porcelain wares also came into Joseon via private imports from China and as gifts from Ming officials from Joseon. While many people loved blue-and-white porcelain for its beautiful blue-on-white motifs, its domestic production was difficult as it required blue

pigment only available from China.

The current research suggests that Joseon began to produce its own blue-and-white porcelain at least by the 1450s (Yoon 2006, 354–55; Kim 2017, 160–62). At the time, types of Joseon blue-and-white porcelain were limited to drinking cups and epitaphs of certain classes including the members of the royal family. However, as white porcelain gained popularity in the cities, the demand for luxury blue-and-white porcelain grew as well. The economic growth during the first half of Joseon meant that not only the royals and the high officials but also wealthy commoners were now looking for opulent wares such as blue-and-white porcelains.

As prized as gold and silverware during this time, blue-and-white porcelain is currently seen as an item that embodies the contemporary art and culture in ceramics history. With such background, many studies have been conducted on the blue-and-white porcelain during the first half of Joseon. Most of these previous studies have focused on the characteristics of early Joseon blue-and-white porcelain (Yoon 2006; Yoon 2020a, 45–68; Kim 2016, 42–75), the Ming's influence on Joseon ceramics (Kim 2007, 35–36; Jeon 2009; Lee 2011), and the domestic excavation of early Joseon and Ming blue-and-white porcelain (Bang 2002; Lee 2012; Park 2013, 2022a, 2023; Kim 2019; Cheng 2022).

Based on the various findings of the previous studies, this study will attempt to examine the consumption of blue-and-white porcelain during the first half of Joseon through actual results from excavations. To do this, we will compile and compare the early Joseon and Ming blue-and-white porcelain excavated from Hanyang.

The Increased Consumption of Blue-and-white Porcelain and Its Domestic Production

Until 1450, the year King Munjong ascended the throne, Joseon received multiple pieces of blue-and-white porcelain from the Ming Empire including a vase with dragon and cloud patterns. King Sejong 世宗 (r. 1418–1450) even used a blue-and-white pottery jar he received from Ming as royal ceremonial ware (Koo 2017, 14–16). King Sejo ordered blue-and-white porcelain cups to be used in place of golden ones in the main palace and presented blue-and-white porcelain to those who helped him ascend the throne (Kim 2022,

282–84). In other words, blue-and-white porcelain drinking vessels were used in national ceremonies and political statements during the early Joseon dynasty. At the time, drinking vessels were more than just containers of liquor, being a symbol of a king's grace and filial piety, one of the core concepts of Confucianism (Kim 2011, 127–28). This was also why kings gifted drinking vessels to Sungkyunkwan, one of the foundational national institutions, and his retainers.

King Sejo went as far as to classify royal crockery into separate categories by designating blue-and-white porcelain for use in the main palace and regular white porcelain for the eastern palace. By bringing the hierarchy of a king and his liege to even the everyday crockery, he was seeking to fortify the royal authority. It would not be too far off to suggest that such intention was one of the most important driving forces behind the establishment of official kilns (Kim 2022, 284–90).

Under such circumstances, the blue-and-white porcelain began to be revered as much as silver- and gold-ware. Even the public began to prize the luxurious pottery imported from China. While most of the blue-and-white porcelain during this time was owned by the royal family, some of the civilians such as the relatives of Ming officials with Joseon roots owned some as well. As more and more people began to use blue-and-white porcelain, the Joseon government forbade commoners from using blue-and-white porcelain as well as gold- and silver-ware in 1469 (the 1st year of King Yejong's reign) through *Gyeongguk daejeon* (*National Code* 經國大典), limiting them only to be used by the officials drinking vessels.¹ This refers to the currently working officials regardless of their position and ranking. However, there were many officials who only held their titles without any role.² So it was likely that the officials mentioned in the decree included those not currently in position which meant most scholar-officials of early Joseon. Thus, the blue-and-white porcelain became the ware of the scholar-officials, the core ruling class of Joseon.

Permitted only as drinking vessels of the officials and prized as much as

silver-and gold-ware, the blue-and-white porcelain would have been seen as a symbol of privilege in the early Joseon society. Such legal limitations on blue-and-white porcelain in turn added more prestige which would have fueled the civilian demand for the ware. Indeed, even in the late 1470s after blue-and-white porcelain had been banned from common use, the public continued to use them.³ The legal limitation did little to stop the public from using blue-and-white porcelain. Even as late as 1498 (the 4th year of Yeonsangun's reign), government officials demanded that the king enforce the ban so the public would not use blue-and-white porcelain. As the public continued to use the forbidden ware, the officials decried the extravagance and tried to reclaim the exclusive use of the blue-and-white porcelain. Unfortunately, Yeonsangun who liked luxuries did not respond to their demands.⁴

Despite such popularity of blue-and-white porcelain, its domestic production remained extremely limited which meant most of what people used every day were actually Chinese imports. Indeed, the contemporary Joseon society mostly perceived blue-and-white porcelain as Chinese.⁵ Even a scholar-official such as Seong Hyun 成俔 (1439–1504) who would have used blue-and-white porcelain saw no difference between domestic and Ming products.⁶ This would suggest that the ban applied to both domestic and Ming blue-and-white porcelains. Here, we may focus on the fact that the Ming blue-and-white porcelain excavated from Joseon sites far outnumber the early Joseon blue-and-white porcelain. During the first half of Joseon, blue-and-white porcelain could only be procured from China unless one had access to the official kilns.

3 *Seongjong sillok* (*The Veritable Records of King Seongjong* 成宗實錄), Vol. 77, Year 8 (1477), intercalary Month 2, Day 14: “傳旨議政府曰 金銀珠玉之禁 儀章服色之制 載在《大典》所以杜奢僭而崇節儉 辨貴賤而敦禮化也. 比聞動戚貴近 先自壞法 閭巷小民 亦相率而侈靡 其中巨商富賈 縱情無忌 習以為俗 至如畫磁器 非土產也 而求買上國 其不畏邦憲如此 夫有令不行 有禁不止 何以爲國 其申論中外 自今有乖式令者 明加糾察 痛行禁斷.”

4 *Yeonsangun ilgi* (*The Records of Yeonsangun* 燕山君日記), Vol. 29, Year 4 (1498), Month 6, Day 15: “...第十六條油蜜果金銀青畫白磁器行果盤《大典》已有禁令 司憲府申明痛禁...但當部官員罷黜未穩 勿用. 議入 留中不下. 傳曰 當詳覽發落.”

5 *Seongjong sillok*, Vol. 55, Year 6 (1475), Month 5, Day 12: “...夫畫器 上國所產 馱載爲難 而家家有之 使臣之行 禁令雖嚴 而冒法如是 平安之民 緣此困敝 不能聊生 是誠可慮.”; Vol. 77, Year 8 (1477), intercalary Month 2, Day 10: “...永濡曰 今豪富之家 競用青畫器 唐物非能自來 必有輸來之者. 其弊不貲 請痛禁. 上曰 勿質唐物 會已立法 其申明之.”; Vol. 77, Year 8 (1477), intercalary Month 2, Day 14: “...至如畫磁器 非土產也 而求買上國 其不畏邦憲如此.”

6 *Yonghae chonghwa* (*The Collected Writings of Yongjae Seong Hyeon* 慵齋叢話), Vol. 10: “求回回青於中國 畫樽罍盃觴 與中國無異...”

1 *Gyeongguk Daejeon*, Vol. 5, Hyeongjeon (Criminal Code 刑典): “大小員人用...酒器外金銀青畫白磁器者[庶人男女則并禁...金銀青畫酒器]...杖八十.”

2 *Taejong sillok* (*The Veritable Records of King Taejong* 太宗實錄), Vol. 36, Year 18 (1418), Month 7, Day 2: “同知總制李順蒙陳言 各道監司節制使之行 伴黨公事齋持 依憑鋪馬 或二十餘匹 或至三十四匹. 且道內族親及閑散員人 或因公事 給馬橫行 願自今一禁...”

Accordingly, most of the porcelain available to the public would have been Chinese imports from licensed merchants in the city who led official and private trades with Ming (Koo 2018, 36–74).

While the Joseon government allowed its officials to use blue-and-white porcelains, it is likely that not all of them got to use them as they remained as exclusive and expensive as ever. On the other hand, many wealthy commoners such as the licensed merchants would have been able to use the blue-and-white porcelain. Under such circumstances, the city of Hanyang, a hub for officials and the first place various Chinese imports reached, became the greatest consumer hub of blue-and-white porcelain. Indeed, most blue-and-white porcelain excavation sites are focused around Jongno-daero, a main residential area of high officials and a place where licensed merchants do their business.

However, it is difficult to assume that blue-and-white porcelain became popular among the public in Hanyang simply because they were beautiful. In the hierarchical Joseon society, the fact that access to blue-and-white porcelain was limited to certain classes would have fueled the public desire for the ware. In addition, people saw blue-and-white porcelain as a luxury from China which meant it became an extravagance and a status symbol. Indeed, the scholar-officials of Hanyang seem to have eagerly used blue-and-white porcelain in banquets.⁷ Since banquets served as occasions to show off one's power and wealth, the blue-and-white porcelain would have served as an effective symbol of one's status.

Unfortunately, the domestic production could not follow the increased demand for the blue-and-white porcelain. After all, the primary purpose of the official kilns was to produce what the royal family needed. While producing blue-and-white porcelain was an important part of their job, their production quantity remained low due to the limited access to the blue pigment.⁸ Only a few scores of blue-and-white porcelain are found from the early Joseon official kiln sites (Kim 2017, 56–57). Judging from such circumstances, it is likely that the official kilns did not produce set amounts of blue-and-white porcelain consistently every year.

7 *Seongjong sillok*, Vol. 55, Year 6 (1475), Month 5, Day 12: “今觀士大夫之家 日事修麗 爭相誇美 以其甚者言之 大小宴集 非畫器不用 婦之服飾 無貂裘 羞與爲會 即此而觀之 習俗之弊 益可想矣。”

8 *Yonghae chonghwa*, Vol. 10: “...然回青罕貴 求中國亦未多得 朝廷議曰 中國雖窮村茅店 咸用畫器 豈皆回青所畫 應有他物可畫者 訪於中國 則皆曰此土青也 然所謂土青者 亦未求得 由是我國畫磁器尠少。”

With production being so limited, the overall quality and pigment refinement technology improved only slowly. Even as late as 1478 (the 4th year of King Seongjong's reign) when the official kilns were already established, the refining technology for blue pigment had not yet reached a stable level.⁹

By 1489 (the 20th year of King Seongjong's reign), the domestic kilns could create blue-and-white porcelain of a decent quality such as *Blue-and-white Porcelain Vase with Bamboo and Pine Tree Patterns Inscribed* “弘治二年” (National Treasure) (Figure 1). However, even in the previous year of 1488 (the 19th year of King Seongjong's reign), Joseon was struggling to secure blue pigment from China.¹⁰ Since Joseon had to rely solely on China for the blue pigment, such scarcity continued in the sixteenth century¹¹ which



Figure 1. A blue-and-white Porcelain Vase with Bamboo and Pine Tree Patterns Inscribed with “弘治二年” (National Treasure), H. 48.7 cm, Dongguk University Museum

9 *Seongjong sillok*, Vol. 95, Year 9 (1478), Month 8, Day 11: “知事李克培啓曰 臣觀尙衣院用回回青 其費甚廣 以鐵椎碎其青塊 取其中如粟粒者用之 通事張有誠謂臣曰 中國之人其用之 不如是 吾習而試之 可用 請招有誠更問其法 令今之赴京畫工傳習 上曰 可。”

10 *Seongjong sillok*, Vol. 211, Year 19 (1488), Month 1, Day 23: “畫員李季眞曾受公貿易回回青價 黑麻布十二匹 而卒不買來 令本府徵其本色 囚家僮累及數百名 而季眞不能納者 以回回青 非我國所產 亦非民間所用 季眞雖至死 不能納必矣。”

11 *Seongjong sillok*, Vol. 97, Year 36 (1541), Month 12, Day 28: “明珀纓子及擣鍊鴉青回回青等物 無之故未得買來 琥珀獨活馬牙硝等物 亦未得買來。”; *Gwanghaegun ilgi* (*The Records of Gwanghaegun* 光海君日記), Vol. 127, Year 10 (1618), intercalary Month 4, Day 3: “司饗院啓曰 朝家宴享所用畫樽 自經亂後蕩無遺在 每欲買青燻造 而絕無貿易之路。”

meant the domestic production of blue-and-white porcelain continued to be fundamentally limited. As late as during the early reign of King Yejong 睿宗 (1468–1470), Joseon sought to secure sources of blue pigment domestically. Unfortunately, such efforts were in vain (Kim 2017, 58–69). Such domestic production circumstances meant that the early Joseon society realistically had to rely mostly on Ming imports of blue-and-white porcelain. After the late fifteenth century, the ceramics production in Jingdezhen became stable. With increased procurement of cobalt and growing productivity of private kilns, blue-and-white porcelain production flourished even more (Bang 2012, 397–405). More blue-and-white porcelain from Jingdezhen private kilns began to reach the international market. Multiple of blue-and-white porcelain produced from the private kilns of Jingdezhen during the reigns of Emperors Hongzhi 弘治帝(1487–1505) and Zhengde 正德帝(1505–1521) were excavated from Joseon sites.

The Characteristics and Excavation Status of the Early Joseon and Ming Blue-and-white Porcelain

The Domestic Excavation Status

Most early Joseon blue-and-white porcelain were excavated from Hanyang. The limited number of blue-and-white porcelain found in other regions are epitaphs and other burial goods (Park 2023, 80). Even in Hanyang, early Joseon blue-and-white porcelain was found only in 41 sites including Gyeongbokgung Palace, Jongmyo, Wongaksa Temple Site, Jongchinbu Site, and Gungishi Site. Aside from the palace and administrative buildings, most of these sites with blue-and-white porcelain are clustered around Jongno-daero (Figure 2).

Hanyang residents consisted of those who ran the nation and maintained the city, including some members of the royal family, scholar-officials, low-ranking officials, members of the military, and merchants. While the city was not strictly divided into different zones for different classes of people, there were differences in the compositions of various neighborhoods.

Most high officials including the in-laws and the kinfolk of the royal family lived around Gyeongbokgung Palace 景福宮 and Changdeokgung Palace 昌德宮, owning several mansions in the area and forming a neighborhood. In

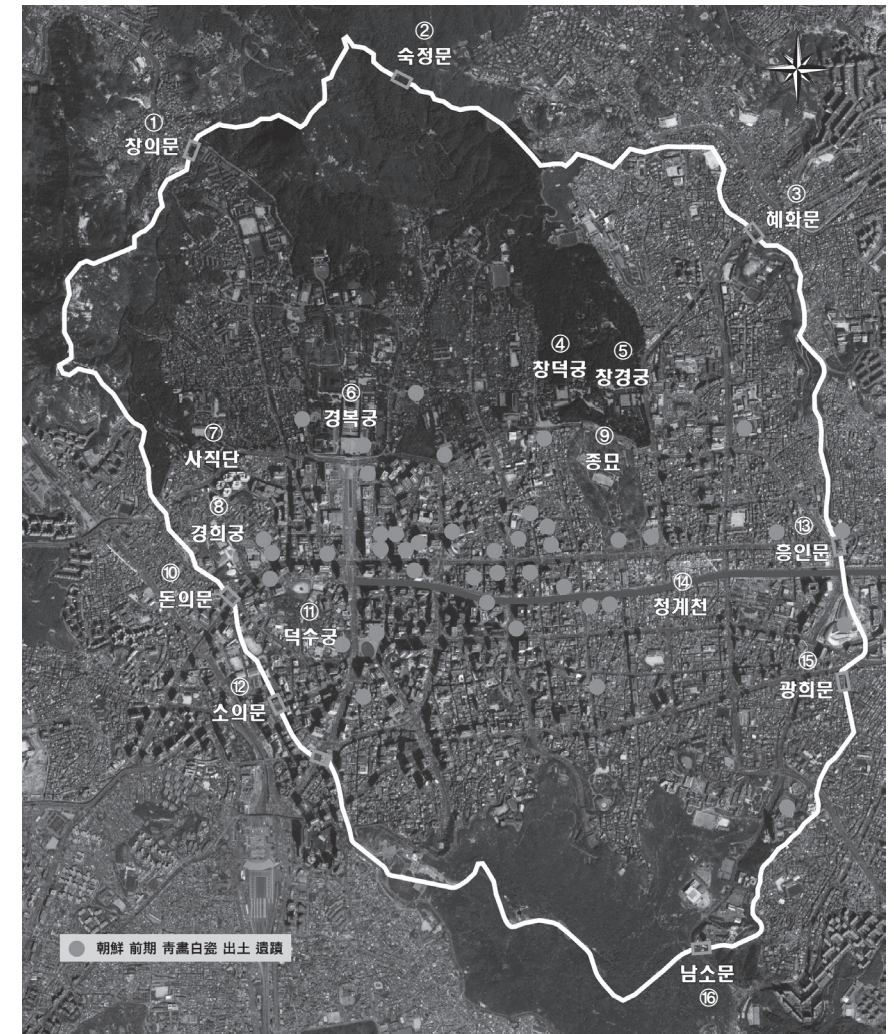


Figure 2. Map of Early Joseon Blue-and-white Porcelain Found in Hanyang
 ① Changmuimun ② Sukjeongmun ③ Hyehwamun ④ Changdeokgung ⑤ Changgyeonggung
 ⑥ Gyeongbokgung ⑦ Sajikdan ⑧ Gyeonghuikung ⑨ Jongmyo ⑩ Donuimun ⑪ Deoksugung
 ⑫ Souimun ⑬ Heunginmun ⑭ Cheonggyecheon ⑮ Gwanghuimun ⑯ Namsomun

particular, Cheongjin-dong 清進洞 and Gongpyeong-dong 公平洞 were home to well-known in-laws such as the Gu family of Neungseong (Bae 2017). In Cheongjin-dong, a carved stone road was excavated. Such roads paved with thin, wide stones were only found in special places such as palaces or royal tombs which testify to just how powerful the residents of the neighborhood were. Indeed, many royals lived in Cheongjin-dong during the first half of Joseon (Park 2023, 86–87).

To the south of Cheongjin-dong is Jongno-daero 鐘路大路 where people involved in trades, crafts, and distribution such as Gyeongjaeon, licensed merchants, and skilled craftsmen lived and ran their workshops.¹² They were part of the public who had the wealth to own houses beyond the legal limit and enjoyed various imported luxury goods.

The highest number of early Joseon blue-and-white porcelain were excavated from the sites of Cheongjin-dong and Gongpyeong-dong. Considering that the two areas housed both the mansions of the ruling class and the houses of merchants, it makes sense that many high-quality ceramics including blue-and-white porcelain would be found. Unlike the other areas in Hanyang, this area not only had drinking vessels but also vases, seats, and dice made of blue-and-white porcelain. As such items were normally forbidden for regular scholar-officials, it is likely that they belonged to the members of the royal family and their in-laws.

Table 1. Types of Early Joseon Blue-and-white Porcelain Excavated from Hanyang

Quantity Type	Total (items)
Jar	46
Liquor bottle	1
Bowl	4
Cup (+ Cup with double handles)	9
Scalloped edge cup	3
Stem cup	4
Saucer	50
Lid	10
Bowl with lid	2
Flower pot	3
Toy (dice, etc.)	2
Etc. (seat, miscellaneous, etc.)	15
Total (items)	149

A total of 149 pieces of early Joseon blue-and-white porcelain were

excavated from Hanyang (Table 1). The current number includes both the number from the previous studies and that from the reports published up to 2023 (Park 2023, 89–92). Newly reported or previously missed items were added while those found to be made in China were excluded. As a result, six early Joseon blue-and-white porcelain were added to the existing number. While the number may change according to future excavation results, the ratio of types of the ware is likely not to change significantly.

Nearly 76% of the early Joseon blue-and-white porcelain was excavated from palaces, administrative buildings, and central regions of Hanyang including Cheongjin-dong. This suggests that blue-and-white porcelain were intensively consumed in a very limited area in early Joseon.

Along with Joseon blue-and-white porcelain, a vast number of the Ming blue-and-white porcelain were used during this time in Hanyang. In its early days, the Joseon royals received various ceramics from the Ming Empire as well as those received as private gifts (Bang 2020, 76–86). The majority of such ceramics were likely from the official kilns of Jingdezhen. However, they would still have been small in number, so only a very limited amount is found from the excavations (Park 2020, 134–35).

Indeed, most of the Ming blue-and-white porcelain excavated from Hanyang were from the private kilns of Jingdezhen. They were mostly produced during the period stretching from the late fifteenth century to the sixteenth century with a significant number of them dating to the sixteenth century (Park 2022a, 274; Cheng 2022, 108–09). Albeit small in number, *wuca* white porcelain was also excavated from Hanyang along with Ming blue-and-white porcelain.

The recent research has allowed us not only to see the number of Ming blue-and-white porcelain but also their exact excavation locations in Hanyang (Park 2022a, 266–71; Cheng 2022, 52–75). According to the recent revelations and the published reports dating up to 2023, nearly 730 Ming blue-and-white porcelain were found in 99 locations of Hanyang.¹³ This number is twice the number of sites where the early Joseon blue-and-white porcelain were excavated and almost five times the number of actual artifacts found.

Among the artifacts categorized as Ming blue-and-white porcelain were

¹² *Bibyeonsa dengnok* (*The Records of the Border Defense Council* 備邊司謄錄), Vol. 111, Year 18 of King Yeongjo's reign (1742), Month 10, Day 11: "...祖宗之制 中人及小民 許令居生於朝市近處 以便其生理 此中路之名所以出也."

¹³ Since the excavation is still ongoing in Seoul, more Ming blue-and-white porcelain are expected to be found. However, we do not believe that the current trends would change significantly.

those produced during the first half of the seventeenth century which would be at the end of the Ming dynasty. A small number of them are blue-and-white porcelain and red-and-green porcelain produced in the Fujian Province of China. Some of these items could have made their way into Joseon through the Ming army that participated in the Imjin War after 1592 (the 25th year of King Seonjo's reign) (Park 2021, 186–87). Late-Ming blue-and-white porcelain such as a piece inscribed with “大明萬曆年製” were also found in the tomb of Princess Suksin 淑愼公主 (1635–1645), the eldest daughter of King Hyojong 孝宗 (r. 1649–1659). Her tomb is thought to have been built in the year 1650 (the 1st year of King Hyojong's reign). This suggests that Joseon royals kept Ming blue-and-white porcelain even after Later Jin changed its name to Qing (Park 2022b, 15–17).¹⁴ This suggests that during the Japanese invasion when the domestic production of blue-and-white porcelain would have been difficult or even in the seventeenth century, Ming blue-and-white porcelain continued

to serve to meet the demands.

Ming blue-and-white porcelain were used in Joseon for a long period of time. They are also more widely found than their counterparts that were produced in Joseon. Even in Hanyang, Ming blue-and-white porcelain is excavated from a much wider area than early Joseon blue-and-white porcelain (Figure 3).

While Ming blue-and-white porcelain are more widely found than their early Joseon counterpart, a significant number of them are still clustered around the central region of Hanyang like the early Joseon pieces. The central regions include 32 of the 99 sites from which Ming blue-and-white porcelain were excavated. In these sites, early Joseon blue-and-white porcelain were found along with the piece from Ming. Most of the early Joseon blue-and-white porcelain and about 75% of the Ming blue-and-white porcelain in Hanyang were found at these sites. The 32 sites are mostly gathered around Gyeongbokgung Palace, Yukjo Street, and Jongno-daero (Figure 4).

We can see that the blue-and-white porcelain that was trendy in the early Joseon society was only consumed in specific areas of Hanyang. Observing the excavations in Region “Ga” from Areas 15 and 16 of Gonggyeong which is near Jongno-daero, we can clearly see that the Ming blue-and-white porcelain are



Figure 3. Map of Ming Blue-and-white Porcelain Excavated in Hanyang

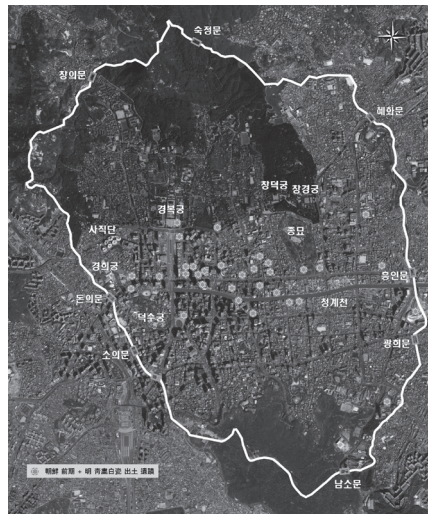


Figure 4. Map of Early Joseon and Ming Blue-and-white Porcelain Excavated Together in Hanyang



Figure 5. The Locations of the Early Joseon and Ming Blue-and-white Porcelain Excavated in Areas 15 and 16 (Region “Ga”) of Gonggyeong, Seoul

14 In the previous research, I misinterpreted *Shimyangjanggye* 瀋陽狀啓 and stated that Princess Suksin passed away in the year 1637 (Park 2022b, 16). Per the records, Princess Suksin's year of death should be revised as 1645 (the 23rd year of King Injo's reign). *Injo sillok* (*The Veritable Records of King Injo* 仁祖實錄), Vol. 46, Year 23 (1645), Month 8, Day 2: “上下教于政院曰 世子長女病死 令該司 依郡主例 斂葬...”

more widely found than the early Joseon ones (Figure 5). The Ming blue-and-white porcelain outdo the early Joseon ones in number as well. The number of Ming blue-and-white porcelain found from the sites is 49, nearly five times that of early Joseon pieces which is 9 (Hanul Research Institute of Cultural Heritage 2023). The site in question was the busiest area in Hanyang where both the scholar-officials and the licensed merchants lived. Here, we can see once more that the early Joseon consumers of the blue-and-white porcelain in Hanyang mostly relied on Ming products from private kilns.

As the residential area of the scholar-officials and the wealthy merchants in the city of Hanyang expanded with time during the first half of the Joseon dynasty, more Ming blue-and-white porcelain would have been consumed. The excavations also suggest that the wealthy commoners such as the licensed merchants who worked near Jongno continued to use blue-and-white porcelain from Ming despite several bans. As we continue to find Ming blue-and-white porcelain from the late fifteenth century to the sixteenth century near Jongno-daero, the center of Hanyang, we also see another trend. Ming blue-and-white porcelain, mostly dating back to the sixteenth century, begin spreading throughout different corners of Hanyang. During the sixteenth century, Joseon saw an increased trade with Ming with an equal rise in private trade (Koo 2018, 158–90). Along with the rising demand for blue-and-white porcelain in the Joseon society, this would have led to an increased number of imports from Ming.

Unlike the early Joseon blue-and-white porcelain, their Ming counterparts are found not only in Hanyang but also in other provinces (Lee 2012, 281–301; Cheng 2022, 76–92). This demonstrates that the provincial demand for blue-and-white porcelain was mostly met by imports from Ming. However, while the number of blue-and-white porcelain found in the provincial regions varies per site, the overall number remains small. Still, this suggests that the use of blue-and-white porcelain steadily spread throughout the regions and classes in Joseon.

Most of the Ming blue-and-white porcelain found in administrative buildings, temples, and graves of the provincial regions including Jeju Island come from the private kilns of Jingdezhen. Ming blue-and-white porcelain were found also in temples such as Sinreuksa Temple of Yeosu, Gyeonggi Province, and Jigoksa Temple Site of Sacheong, South Gyeongsang Province in addition to the sites mentioned in the previous studies. We can also find reports of

Ming blue-and-white porcelain being found in fortresses and administrative buildings such as Bukhansan Fortress, Anseong and Jukjusan Fortress of Gyeonggi Province as well as Jeollabyeongyeong Fortress of Gangjin, South Jeolla Province, and Bangok-dong site of Wonju near Gangwon provincial office (Hansung Institute of Cultural Heritage 2019, 132; The Gaya National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage 2003, 70; 2003, 204; Gyeonggi Research Institute of Cultural Heritage 2018, 76; 2018, 82; 2018, 90; Hanbaek munhwajae yeonguwon 2012, 341; 2012, 568; 2012, 616; Park and Song 2024, 65–68; Gangwon Institute of Cultural Heritage 2008, 190; 2008, 201; 2008, 245).

In the case of Jeollabyeongyeong Fortress in Gangjin, the Ming blue-and-white porcelain was found mostly in the east wing, the reception room, and the banquet hall where an important official such as a Byeongmajeoldosa would have lived or received guests (Figure 6). The types of Ming blue-and-white porcelain found on site include bowls and plates. These are mostly found with drinking vessels and plates produced in the official kilns of Gwangju (Park and Song 2024, 65–68). We can see that the Ming blue-and-white porcelain was often used in the spaces of the officials in the administrative buildings.

Ming blue-and-white porcelain are also found in some provincial pit graves. Such graves typically hold a significantly larger number of burial goods compared to the graves surrounding them. Some examples are the pit graves of Dangdong-ri of Paju, Gyeonggi Province, Wau-ri of Hwaseong, Jucheon-ri of Yeongwol, Gangwon Province, and Angang-gol of Jangjae-ri, Asan, South



Figure 6. Piece of Blue-and-white Porcelain Bowl with Playing Children Motif, H. 5 cm, excavated from Jeollabyeongyeong Fortress, Gangjin, Goryeo Celadon Museum



Figure 7. Blue-and-white Stem Cup with Fortune Motif, D. 8.2 cm, excavated from Angang-gol pit graves, Jangjae-ri, Asan, South Chungcheong Province, Gongju National Museum



Figure 8. Ming Blue-and-white Porcelain and White Porcelain Inscribed with “別” Being Excavated from the Pit Grave No. 15 of Wau-ri, Hwaseong, Gyeonggi Province

Chungcheong Province. In these pit graves, Ming blue-and-white porcelain are found with ten or so other burial goods including Joseon white porcelain, ceramic bottles, multiple white porcelain plates, white porcelain cups, bronze pitchers, bowls with lids, bowls, utensils, steel scissors, and bronze mirrors (Gyeonggi Research Institute of Cultural Heritage 2009, 167–73; Giho Cultural Heritage Research Center 2009, 67–74; 2009, 210–12; Jungbu Institute for Archaeology 2016, 115–19; 2016, 289; Chungcheong Institute of Cultural Heritage 2008, 157–70; 2008, 184; 2008, 265–72). These pit graves differ from their neighbors who only house a few pieces of Joseon ceramics. Most of the Ming blue-and-white porcelains found in such extravagant graves are generally drinking vessels including stem cups, cups, and small bowls (Figure 7).

They mostly date back to the late fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries. Some such as the pit grave no. 15 in Wau-ri Site of Hwaseong, Gyeonggi Province, have pieces from late sixteenth-century official kilns like the white porcelain plate inscribed with “別” (Figure 8). Joseon white porcelain buried with Ming blue-and-white porcelain is generally from the sixteenth century. Most of them are quality pieces that were glazed before they were fired. Such excavation results show that in the provincial regions, Ming blue-and-white porcelain were used mostly in administrative and military buildings by scholar-officials who had both wealth and power during the sixteenth century.

Ming blue-and-white porcelain were also found in the sites of official kilns that were active during the early Joseon dynasty. Scholars conjectured that they would have been used as samples for the domestic production of blue-and-white porcelain in early Joseon (Jeon 2009, 52). However, previous studies have also questioned such assumptions on the grounds that most of the Chinese blue-and-white porcelain found in early Joseon official kilns were low-quality pieces produced in the private kilns of Jingdezhen. Thus, it was difficult to see clearly how they would have been used in the domestic production of blue-and-white porcelain (Jeon 2009, 54–56). One possibility is that these Ming blue-and-white porcelain pieces from private kilns were sent to the official kilns to be mended (Park 2015). Some Ming blue-and-white porcelain found in Hanyang also show that they had been patched at one point. Thus, once we have gathered more relevant materials, it would be possible to figure out how the Ming blue-and-white porcelain ended up in the early Joseon official kilns.

The Types and Motifs of Excavated Blue-and-white Porcelain

The previous studies have pointed out that the early Joseon blue-and-white porcelain are mostly jars and plates (Jeon 1997; 2008, 168–70; Yoon 2006, 336–39; Kim 2011, 134–40; Song 2013, 50–55; Kim 2017, 120–22).

The excavations in Hanyang also support such findings. As Table 1 shows, almost 50 plates and 16 cups of various shapes were found, suggesting that 44% of the total number found were drinking vessels. The plates likely served as a saucer underneath the cup (Jeon 1997; Song 2013, 50–55). The cups with double handles and scalloped edge cups are also types of high-quality white porcelain drinking vessels of early Joseon (Yoon 2020b, 190–207). Small jars and their lids also comprise 38% of the finds. In other words, 82% of the total excavated items are either drinking vessels or jars. While some of the jars might be vases or purely decorative in nature, some of them are thought to have served as liquor containers. If we decide to include cylindrical bottles as liquor containers as well, we could say that aside from some vases, the majority of the early Joseon blue-and-white porcelain found in Hanyang are drinking vessels of sorts. The fact that the government allowed blue-and-white porcelain to be used as drinking vessels for scholar-officials likely contributed to such a trend (Park 2023, 92–94).

The motifs on the early Joseon blue-and-white porcelain vary greatly according to the type of the ware. Jars, for example, only bear a few select motifs such as dragon and cloud patterns or three friends of winter motifs even though they were used for ceremonies and decorations as well as for utilities (Figures 9 and 10). On the other hand, saucers have a diverse array of motifs including inscriptions of poetry, fish and seaweed, vines, plum blossoms, bamboo, flowers and birds, human figures, grapes, waves, and clouds and dragon. We can see that jars and saucers, the two most common types of the early Joseon blue-and-white porcelain, differ greatly when it comes to the diversity of motifs (Figures 11, 12, and 13) (Park 2023, 96–99).

Since saucers unlike jars were exclusively used for drinking, the makers seemed to have added a variety of motifs to liven up the occasion. The fish and seaweed motif which shows fish of various sizes swimming through seaweeds, for example, is a good choice for a scholar-official's drinking vessel as it signifies a king and his retainer enjoying their time together (Yoon 2020a, 45–68). Poetry was also a popular choice for decorating saucers. Yeonsangun 燕山君



Figure 9. Piece of a Blue-and-white Jar with Dragon and Cloud Motif, H. 13.1 cm, excavated from Sites 12–16, Cheongjin, Jongno, Seoul, Seoul Hanseong Baekje Museum



Figure 11. Piece of a Blue-and-white Porcelain Plate with Fish and Water Plant Motif, H. 2.1 cm, excavated from Sites 2–3, Cheongjin, Jongno, Seoul, Seoul Museum of History



Figure 13. Piece of a Blue-and-white Porcelain Plate with a Human Figure Motif, H. 1.8 cm, excavated from Areas 15–16 (Region “Ga”), Cheongjin, Jongno, Seoul, Hanul Research Institute of Cultural Heritage



Figure 10. Piece of a Blue-and-white Jar with Plum Blossoms and Bamboo Motif, excavated from Sites 12–16, Cheongjin, Jongno, Seoul, Seoul Hanseong Baekje Museum



Figure 12. Piece of a Blue-and-white Porcelain Plate with Vine Pattern, H. 1.7 cm, excavated from Areas 15–16 (Region “Ga”), Cheongjin, Jongno, Seoul, Hanul Research Institute of Cultural Heritage

(r. 1494–1506) is known to have made a drinking vessel inscribed with his own poem that celebrates drinking,¹⁵ and blue-and-white porcelain saucers with such poetry verses were excavated from Doma-ri kiln site no. 1. The Doma-ri kilns are thought to have been active during the reign of Yeonsangun because a ceramic piece inscribed with “乙丑” which refers to the year 1505 (the 11th year of Yeonsangun’s reign) has been excavated there (National Museum of Korea 1995, 84–94). The saucers found in Eoyeong-cheong Site and Tongui-dong 35-32 also have poetry verses inscribed each in iron-brown and blue (Figures 14 and 15) (Hanul Research Institute of Cultural Heritage 2011, 158; Seoul Institute of Cultural Heritage 2013, 62).

Both pieces have a character “左” engraved on the bottom which is a characteristic of white porcelain produced in official kilns after the year 1560 (Park 2014, 155–67; Kim 2020, 157–60). The verses that decorate the saucers of Eoyeong-cheong Site and Tongui-dong 35-32 are from “Chou Han Yu Shilang deng Yueyang lou jian zeng” (In Response to Vice Minister Han Yu’s Ascending the Yueyang Tower 酬韓愈侍郎登岳陽樓見贈) of Dou Xiang 竇庠 (circa 766–828). The same verse has also been found on a blue-and-white



Figure 14. A Piece of the Saucer of Poetry Verses-Written White Porcelain with Iron-brown Painting, H. 3.2 cm, excavated from Eoyeong-cheong Site, Jongno, Seoul, Hanul Research Institute of Cultural Heritage

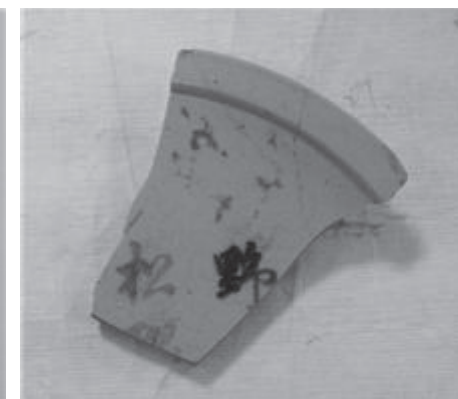


Figure 15. A Piece of Blue-and-white Porcelain Saucer with Poetry Verses, H. 2.2 cm, excavated from Tongui-dong 35-32, Jongno, Seoul, Seoul Hanseong Baekje Museum

15 *Yeonsangun ilgi*, Vol. 62, Year 12 (1506), Month 6, Day 21: “下御製詩曰 壽期華嶽爛 福指碧河枯 丹慈思恩報 瑤觴併玉壺 其以此 銘大妃誕日所用酒器。”

porcelain saucer from Beoncheon-ri kiln site no. 9. A plate inscribed with “嘉靖壬子” which refers to the year 1552 (the 7th year of King Myeongjong’s reign) has also been excavated from the same site (Ewha Womans University Museum and Gwanju-si 2007, 273). This shows that verses from celebratory poetry about drinking continued to decorate saucers which were one of the most common types of the early Joseon blue-and-white porcelain for almost a hundred years since the sixteenth century.

While other motifs that decorate the saucers reflect the contemporary painting style or the popular motifs in China, poetry verses allowed the makers to decorate the pieces with the joy of drinking itself. The blue-and-white porcelain decorated with poetry verses that gained popularity during the sixteenth century also had some positive effects on the domestic production of porcelain. One was that people who could not paint could still decorate blue-and-white porcelain pieces. Another was that this decorative method saved a lot of blue pigment as the blue-and-white porcelain saucers with poetry inscriptions often did not have additional motifs on their edges. Since Joseon had to import all of its blue pigment from China, using poetry as decoration must have been quite beneficial.

By the late sixteenth century, we can also begin to see scalloped edge cups decorated with text. The blue-and-white porcelain excavated from Seun Area 6-2-8 of Jongno, Seoul, has the name of the cup, “太和盃,” inscribed (Figure 16) (Hanul Research Institute of Cultural Heritage 2020, 73). A very similarly shaped blue-and-white porcelain cup inscribed with “太和” has been found in

Gonjiam-ri kiln site no. 3. The Gonjiam-ri Kiln is an official kiln that was active after the 1560s (Figure 17) (Gyeonggi Ceramic Museum 2019a, 214–45). Almost no blue-and-white porcelain was found in the sites of official kilns including Gonjiam-ri kiln site no. 3 that were active after the 1560s.

While a large number of Ming blue-and-white porcelain were consumed in Hanyang at the time, official kilns in Joseon did not produce many blue-and-white porcelain pieces. The only pieces we can find are blue-and-white porcelain drinking vessels decorated with poetry verses or the name of the cup. Moreover, some of early Joseon blue-and-white porcelain works such as the blue-and-white porcelain cup inscribed with “太和盃” found in Seun Area 6-2-8 include cases where the blue is almost grey or the motif is unclear. The blue-and-white porcelain cup with a lotus motif that was found in Sites 12–16 of Cheongjin was also produced after the 1560s as can be seen through the inscription of “左” or “右” on the bottom (Figure 18) (Hanul Research Institute of Cultural Heritage 2013, 251). The lotus motif that decorates the inside and the outside of this cup is also very faint. Other early Joseon blue-and-white porcelain pieces from Hanyang such as the piece of blue-and-white porcelain with vine motif or the piece of blue-and-white porcelain with fish motif either has strong tints of black and brown on its blue or poor color development (Figures 19 and 20). We can see that despite using expensive pigments imported from China and having painters from Dowhaseo paint the motifs, some of the early Joseon production of blue-and-white porcelain could not meet the standard due to the small production number and the lack of proficiency in pigment refinement.

On the other hand, the artifacts excavated from Hanyang also suggest



Figure 16. A Piece of Blue-and-white Porcelain Scalloped Edge Cup Inscribed with “太和盃,” H. 4.5 cm, excavated from Seun Area 6-2-8, Jongno, Seoul Hanseong Baekje Museum



Figure 17. A Piece of Blue-and-white Porcelain Scalloped Edge Cup Inscribed with “太和,” H. 4.5 cm, excavated from Gonjiam-ri kiln site no. 3, Gyeonggi Ceramic Museum



Figure 18. A Piece of Blue-and-white Porcelain Cup with Lotus Motif, H. 4.5 cm, excavated from Sites 12–16, Cheongjin, Jongno, Seoul, Seoul Hanseong Baekje Museum



Figure 19. A Piece of Blue-and-white Porcelain with a Vine Motif, H. 8.5 cm (current), excavated from Changsin-dong 693-3, Jongno, Seoul, Seoul Museum of History

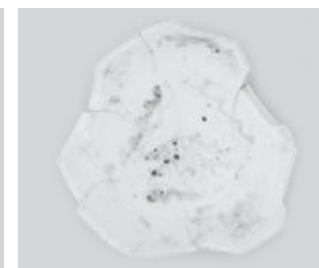


Figure 20. A Piece of Blue-and-white Porcelain with Fish Motif, D. 4.2 cm (bottom), excavated from Nagwon-dong 108-1, Jongno, Seoul, Seoul Museum of History



Figure 21. A Piece of Polychrome Porcelain with a Vine Motif, H. 8.7 cm, excavated from Sites 12–16, Cheongjin, Jongno, Seoul, Seoul Hanseong Baekje Museum

the early Joseon official kilns also made various experimental attempts such as adding overglaze patterns to blue-and-white porcelain. This is quite remarkable in that despite the limitations of the early Joseon official kilns, the makers attempted to create polychrome porcelain with overglaze patterns on top of the blue-and-white porcelain pieces.

This suggests that the early Joseon blue-and-white porcelain from the official kilns reflected various elements of Ming blue-and-white porcelain (Jeon 2009, 45–52; Lee 2011, 141–44). However, it is difficult to find a case where the makers attempted to mimic overglaze methods as they did for the piece of polychrome porcelain with a vine motif that was found in Sites 12–16 of Cheongjin (Figure 21) (Hanul Research Institute of Cultural Heritage 2013, 313). The piece of polychrome porcelain with a vine motif shows yellow flowers and dark red vines painted in overglaze. Beneath the flower and the vines is a lotus petal pattern painted in underglaze. The color of the motif suggests that the makers used blue pigment combined with copper and other materials.

We can only see a few cases of overglaze motifs in early Joseon. One of them is the test piece that was found in Doma-ri kiln site no.1. The pieces of white porcelain with inscriptions of “德五” and “德七” have traces of various pigment tests including dark red, brown, and grey (Figures 22 and 23). The inscription of “玄” on the bottom of the piece with “德五” shows that the piece had been used to test overglaze pigments (Figure 24) (Gyeonggi Ceramic

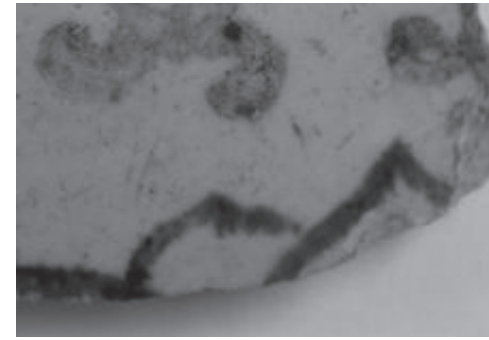


Figure 25. A Detail Shot of the Piece of Polychrome Porcelain with a Vine Motif, H. 8.7 cm, excavated from Sites 12–16, Cheongjin, Jongno, Seoul, Seoul Hanseong Baekje Museum



Figure 26. A Piece of Wucai Porcelain with a Vine Motif, H. 4.9 cm, excavated from Sites 2–3, Cheongjin, Jongno, Seoul, Hanul Research Institute of Cultural Heritage

Museum 2019, 257).

The dark red pigment found on the test pieces is similar in color to the vines of the piece of polychrome porcelain with a vine motif found in Sites 12–16 of Cheongjin. Such artifacts found in Hanyang show that though the results might not be of high quality like the *wucai* porcelain from Ming, the overglaze experiments in Doma-ri official kiln no. 1 did produce a small number of finished pieces. We can also see that there were sample pieces the makers of overglazed pieces worked off. For example, the dark red vine leaves on the piece of polychrome porcelain with vine motifs excavated from Hanyang have their tips tinted green. This suggests that the maker of this piece tried their best to mimic the vine motifs of red-and-green porcelain from Ming (Figure 25).

During the reign of Emperor Chenghua 成化帝 (1465–1487), overglazed porcelain was produced and prized as an imperial ware. The production of such overglaze porcelain pieces increased throughout the reigns of Emperors Hongzhi 弘治帝 (1487–1505) and Zhengde 正德帝 (r. 1505–1521) (Bang 2012, 399–402). Though small in number, overglazed porcelain from Ming has also been found along with the blue-and-white porcelain in the early Joseon Hanyang (Figure 26).

While it is difficult to pinpoint the exact period when Doma-ri official kiln no. 1 where the overglazed piece was found was active, it is clear that it was active in the year 1505 (the 11th year of Yeonsangun’s reign). Yeonsangun liked uniquely shaped objects with elaborate decorations which would have included

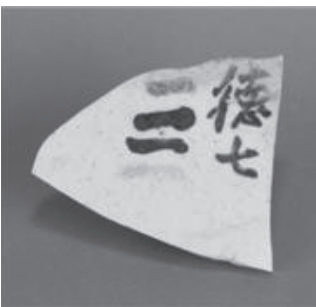


Figure 22. A Test Piece of White Porcelain Inscribed with “德七,” H. 9.3 cm (current), excavated from Doma-ri kiln site no. 1, Gwangju, Gyeonggi Province, Gyeonggi Ceramic Museum

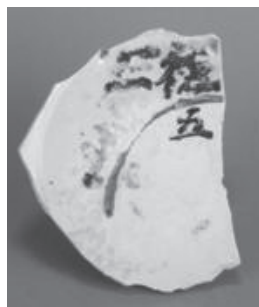


Figure 23. A Test Piece of White Porcelain Inscribed with “德五,” D. 8.4 cm (bottom), excavated from Doma-ri kiln site no. 1, Gwangju, Gyeonggi Province, Gyeonggi Ceramic Museum

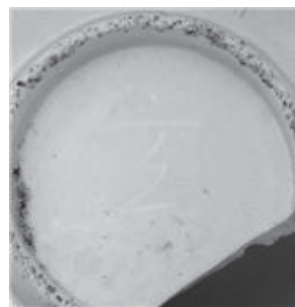


Figure 24. A Detail Shot of “玄” Inscription on the Bottom of the Test Piece of White Porcelain Inscribed with “德七”

blue-and-white porcelain.¹⁶ Also, Yeonsangun unlike other kings tended to make very specific orders regarding the shape, motif, and color of the piece.¹⁷ So enthusiastic was he about making elaborate works of craft that he even included craftsmen in the delegations to China so they would learn textile and dye work.¹⁸ Of course, it is also possible that the porcelain pieces with “德五” and “德七” were produced after King Jungjong 中宗 (r. 1506–1544) ascended the throne. However, it is reasonable to say that the attempt to add overglaze patterns on the blue-and-white porcelain began as part of the effort to create elaborate works of craft during the reign of Yeonsangun. Unfortunately, such experiments seemed to have come to an end due to technical problems as it is difficult to find similar cases in the sixteenth century. Still, finding a new production trend in the early Joseon official kilns through the artifacts from Hanyang has been an important milestone.

Only a small number of blue-and-white porcelain were produced in early Joseon with most of them being produced in the official kilns. The number found in Hanyang also remains limited. We also examined some common characteristics of jars and saucers used by certain classes of officials and the members of the royal family in Hanyang. On the other hand, we saw that the Ming blue-and-white porcelain found in Hanyang were common products that circulated in the Chinese market. There are no distinct differences between the shapes and motifs of Ming blue-and-white porcelain found in Korea and those found in the Chinese kilns and other sites. (Park 2022a, 280–81; 2022a, 287). However, it is possible to observe some differences in the types of wares. Most of the excavated porcelain pieces are cups or bowls. Plates are relatively rare while jars and other types are only rarely found. Bowls, which comprise most of the Ming blue-and-white porcelain found in Korea, are small with a top diameter of around 14 centimeters (Figure 27).

The mentioned pieces can be categorized as *wan* 碗 or *boa* 甫兒 as



Figure 27. Blue-and-white Porcelain Bowl with Pine Tree and Bamboo Motif, D. 13.2 cm (top), excavated from Site 1, Cheongjin, Jongno, Seoul, Seoul Museum of History

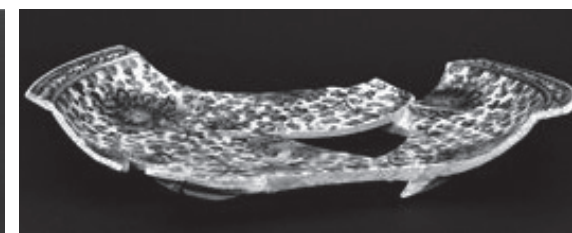


Figure 28. A Piece of Blue-and-white Porcelain Plate with a Vine Motif, D. 32.2 cm (top), excavated from Site 1, Cheongjin, Jongno, Seoul, Seoul Museum of History

mentioned in the documents. Most likely, they were used as drinking vessels. A *boa* is slightly bigger than a typical cup and is mentioned as a drinking vessel in a sixteenth-century document (Chung 2017, 126–28). Such observation can be seen as a reflection of the contemporary Joseon society. Of course, we may also consider the fact that small ware such as bowls and cups were easier to transport than large jars, but it is most likely that the designation of blue-and-white porcelain as drinking vessels of the ruling class played in which types of Ming porcelain were imported. The fact that it is very difficult to find a Ming blue-and-white porcelain jar when we can see a few cases of such jars made in the early Joseon official kilns would also be related to such social limitations. In other words, the desire for the blue-and-white porcelain that grew as the first half of Joseon progressed was fulfilled by Ming blue-and-white porcelain that could be used as drinking vessels due to the legal limits and shortage of domestic production.

A provincial official presenting a blue-and-white porcelain *boa* as a drinking vessel also makes an appearance in *Swaemirok* (*The Records of a Refugee* 瑣尾錄), a diary of O Hui-mun 吳希文 (1539–1613), a scholar-official active during the sixteenth century. This piece of porcelain is also thought to be from Ming.¹⁹ O Hui-mun wrote detailed records of his life in his diary, which gives an insight into the names of various ware used during the contemporary time. However, the only mention of blue-and-white porcelain is as a drinking vessel offered by a provincial official he met in a storehouse. Even considering the

16 *Yeonsangu ilgi*, Vol. 58, Year 11 (1505), Month 7, 16: “下龍文方席體樣 傳曰 此畫文亦是舊樣 其改(制) (製) 龍文花草 竝爲奇異之狀。”

17 *Yeonsangu ilgi*, Vol. 35, Year 5 (1499), Month 12, Day 12: “前此命工曹 造奉時牌木人 令鬚長如李承健. 及造入 傳曰 鬚似長 削而短之.”; Vol. 36, Year 6 (1500), Month 2, Day 23: “傳曰 以正鐵 依稱錘樣 稍高大 上置圓孔 各重五十斤者二箇 方正造作入內.”; Vol. 50, Year 9 (1503), Month 8, Day 10: “摘下鮮紅鳳仙花數片曰 令尙衣院 以綉絹布各裁剪 染此花色入內.”; Vol. 52, Year 10 (1504), Month 2, Day 19: “傳曰 蟒龍帖裏 紵絲衣袖內外胸背左右 皆織兩龍 使交尾於後 交頸於前 爭一如意珠狀以進.”; Vol. 56, Year 10 (1504), Month 11, Day 26: “下體方中空兩隅有孔 一圓一方木器于政院曰 依此樣 以銅鑄入.”

18 *Yeonsangu ilgi*, Vol. 42, Year 8 (1502), Month 1, Day 12: “傳曰 赴京之行 令綾羅匠隨去 如大紅草綠諸色 紵絲 習染習織 各將四五尺而來.”

19 *Swaemirok*, Vol. 3: “...進見太守於司倉...太守飲余酒一盞保兒 但酸不堪飲.”

wartime scarcity, we can assume that the blue-and-white porcelain remained relatively rare. Judging from the fact that most of the blue-and-white porcelain retrieved from the early Joseon sites were Chinese in origin, it is likely that the *boa* of O Hui-mun was also made in China.

But with time, such trends change as well. Though limited to the objects found in Hanyang, we can see an increase in the number of plates among the Ming blue-and-white porcelain found after the sixteenth century with some even larger than 30 centimeters in diameter (Figure 28) (Cheng 2022, 134). While plates were not drinking vessels themselves, they could be used in drinking parties or other various occasions. That more such plates were made during the sixteenth century suggests that the Ming blue-and-white porcelain began to be used for more than drinking.

However, the fact remains that the majority of the Ming blue-and-white porcelain found in the provinces still were small bowls and cups. Though plates have been found, the number was small compared to that found in Hanyang. While the number of blue-and-white porcelain objects other than bowls, cups, and plates remains small even in Hanyang, we can still find jars and other types of wares not found in the provinces from the sixteenth century. On the other hand, we see little difference between the motifs of the blue-and-white porcelain found in Hanyang and the provinces, with the only observation that the kinds of pattern in the blue-and-white porcelain found in the provinces are limited compared to that of the capital due to the differences in number. The Ming blue-and-white porcelain that entered Joseon through official, private, and illegal trades were distributed throughout the country through Hanyang, so the consumption trends in Hanyang and the provinces only differed in terms of quantity.

To sum up, as the first half of Joseon progressed, the use of blue-and-white porcelain spread to provincial offices and scholar-officials. Most of such products were from the private kilns of Jingdezhen. While most of the Ming blue-and-white porcelain were made in private kilns, they sometimes had more delicate motifs and vivid colors than the products made in Joseon's official kilns. In the late sixteenth century, most Joseon blue-and-white porcelain pieces begin to be decorated with poetry verses and texts such as *taewhabae* 太化盃. On the other hand, most Ming blue-and-white porcelain continued to be decorated with colorful patterns. As such, we can see that Ming blue-and-white porcelain was one of the most luxurious consumer items along with Joseon porcelain in

the early Joseon society.

Conclusion

In the first half of Joseon, blue-and-white porcelain along with silver- and gold-ware were designated as drinking vessels of the scholar-officials. Joseon society valued honor and formalities. Therefore, the fact that blue-and-white porcelain drinking vessels were only permitted to a certain class of people would have increased the demand. Indeed, for the Joseon scholar-officials, banquets and drinking vessels were not just some pastime and crockery but a necessary occasion for kings and retainers or a group of relatives to establish bonds with one another. Unfortunately, blue-and-white porcelain were rare and pricy. Even with legal permission, not all scholar-officials of Joseon could use them on a daily basis. On the other hand, wealthy commoners such as the licensed merchants of Hanyang could also get their hands on the blue-and-white porcelain despite it being limited to the officials. Despite the legal barriers, some wealthy commoners of Hanyang seem to have used blue-and-white porcelain which was a luxury item and a symbol of privilege.

Under such circumstances, the consumption of blue-and-white porcelain in early Joseon shows a few distinctive trends that are also evident in the excavations. First, we find blue-and-white porcelain mostly in Hanyang around the palaces, the residential areas of powerful scholar-officials, and Jongno-daero where licensed merchants ran their businesses. Most of the excavated blue-and-white porcelain can be categorized as drinking vessels, which reflect the legal regulations at the time. The blue-and-white porcelain from the early Joseon official kilns are mostly found clustered around the center of Hanyang. Their types are limited to saucers and jars. One of the most remarkable observations is that the majority of the excavated blue-and-white porcelain was from the private kilns of Jingdezhen.

Though blue-and-white porcelain were designated as drinking vessels of the ruling class that the wealthy commoners also prized, only a small amount could be produced domestically from the official kilns due to the scarcity of pigment and other factors. As a result, most of the demand for blue-and-white porcelain during this time was fulfilled by the imports from China. Specifically, most of the blue-and-white porcelain used outside of Hanyang in the provinces

was from the Chinese private kilns. The current research shows that almost no piece of blue-and-white porcelain from the early Joseon official kilns was found in the regions outside of Hanyang. On the other hand, Ming blue-and-white porcelain were found widely in provincial administrative buildings, temples, and graves.

In this research, we saw with evidence from the recent excavations how the Ming blue-and-white porcelain comprised a large part of blue-and-white porcelain consumed in the early Joseon society. We hope that analyzing a variety of individual artifacts not mentioned in this research and examining excavation sites would lead to a more thorough understanding of imported blue-and-white porcelain that became a part of Joseon's ceramics culture.

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Abstract

This study focuses on the fact that the products from the private kilns of Jingdezhen comprise a major portion of the blue-and-white porcelain excavated from the early Joseon sites in Korea including Hanyang. The blue-and-white porcelain that was used mainly by the royal family and the scholar-officials in Hanyang during the first half of Joseon spread to the public and the provinces. One of the driving factors behind the increasing popularity was the fact that the Joseon government limited the use of blue-and-white porcelain as a luxury item of a privileged class. Due to the limitation in domestic production, most of the demand for the blue-and-white porcelain was fulfilled by the imported products from Ming. The excavated items also show us that most of the blue-and-white porcelain used nationally were drinking vessels such as small bowls and cups.

Keywords: early Joseon, Ming dynasty, blue-and-white porcelain, Hanyang, drinking vessels, Jingdezhen, private kilns

