

COMPARISON OF TRANSITIONAL BENCHARONG AND PROBABLE BAT-TRANG ENAMELED WARES

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There is a small group of Bencharong ceramics which does not conform in composition or decoration to the bulk of Bencharong wares — Chinese porcelain decorated with Thai motifs that came into favor at the Thai court during the Ayutthaya period, 1351-1767. While the composition of this group of wares can be porcelain, it is more often porcelaneous or high-fired stoneware, and the painted decoration is less meticulously intricate than that of most Bencharong pieces. In an article, "Sino-Thai Ceramics," in the *Journal of the Siam Society*, Volume 73, 1985, page 124, I placed these wares in the Transitional period extending from the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767 into the reign of Rama I, 1782-1809 — circa mid-eighteenth to very early nineteenth centuries.

Roxanna M. Brown, in her second, 1988, edition of *The Ceramics of South-East Asia* shows in Color Plate XIIc-d two jars probably from the Vietnamese Bat-trang kilns. She dates the blue-and-white one as "probably seventeenth century" and the polychromed enameled one as "probably late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries" (Brown, p. 30). The covered polychrome jar has a single band of white dots on a blue ground around the shoulder and an identical border above the footring. Red dots on a green ground form the border of the footring. The body is decorated with branching floral designs within four yellow, ogival lozenges, and between these are more intricately branched floral motifs on an orange ground. Six enamel colors are employed: orange, blue, pink, green, white, and yellow. The other jar in Brown has similar patterns in under-glaze blue. The branching floral design is called Himaphan-forest-flowers in Thailand and will be discussed later. The leaves of the patterns are spiky, a familiar characteristic of leaves on Vietnamese pots from the fifteenth century on.

In a note from Roxanna Brown, she explained that she could find no evidence for such enamel-decorated wares in Viet Nam — "excluding those earlier three-color enameled wares of red, green, and yellow usually combined with under-glaze blue seen amongst latter fifteenth and sixteenth

century trade wares." However, resemblances to established Bat-trang blue-and-white convince her that enameled pieces such as her Color Plate XIId must be Bat-trang. Still in use today, the Bat-trang site has not been excavated to discover past production, so evidence is not yet available from that source. There are numerous pieces in the Sarawak Museum — many in under-glaze blue and some with over-glaze enamels — which have the Himaphan-forest-flowers motif. Ms. Brown's study of these is presented in her "Seventeenth-Eighteenth Centuries Vietnamese Wares in the Sarawak Museum."

In Figure 56 of my article in the *Journal of the Siam Society*, I illustrate a stoneware limepot with designs suggesting those of Bencharong which has the same style of decoration as the Bat-trang jars illustrated by Brown (Fig. 1). The limepot has a border on the shoulder composed of white dots on a blue ground and a matching border above the footring. Pinkish-red dots on a watery-green ground decorate the footring border. The pattern on the body consists of branching floral designs — Himaphan-forest-flowers — within four yellow ogival lozenges and more intricate floral designs between the lozenges on a red ground. Enamel colors represented are again six: aubergine, yellow, blue, green, red, and white. The white is in raised blobs, and the glaze on the base is pitted (Fig. 2). In some places the enamel does not cover the designs (Fig. 3). Above the brass-clad neck, the mouthrim has a coating of brown slip.

This limepot conforms to Brown's description of polychrome over-glaze enamel wares from Bat-trang with thick footrings, rounded mouthrims, and slightly recessed, glazed bases (Fig. 2), and now, because of these and design similarities, this particular limepot appears to be from Bat-trang rather than from Jingdezhen (where most Bencharong is thought to have been made to order for Thai royalty) or from an unknown Chinese provincial kiln. In my previous article, I said that the shape of this limepot is not found in Thai Bencharong. Its shape, though, does resemble that of metal limepots used

in Borneo (Fig. 4), and since it was found in Brunei on the island of Borneo, it might well have been made specially at Bat-trang for the Borneo trade. Bat-trang pieces have been discovered elsewhere in Indonesia (Harrisson, p. 122), and the Sarawak Museum collection has several almost identical jars, one with a lid (Fig. 5) — confirmation that the jars were marketed at least in the northern parts of Borneo.

The decoration of the enameled piece in Brown and the limepot exhibit many likenesses to motifs found on traditional Bencharong, and Brown's late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries dates overlap my dates for Transitional Bencharong, 1767-1809.

The decoration on Bencharong is usually Indian-influenced and its symbolism Buddhist. During the Ayutthaya period, Thepanom (minor Buddhist gods in praying posture) were the typical motif on Bencharong. The Himaphan-forest-flowers emblem within upright lotus-petal panels seems to have been used first in the Transitional period — at least no pieces with this motif appear to have survived the destruction of Ayutthaya (Fig. 6). In the mythology of Thai Buddhism, there are five sacred flowers which grow in the seven lakes of the Himaphan forest; these were painted as branching floral sprays on many Bencharong pieces (Graham, p. 125).

The branching flower design may have developed from the ancient Tree of Life motif of the Assyrio-Babylonian epoch of the Middle East (Amir, p. 16). The design — and the creation concept behind it — migrated to India and was called *duvaska* in the Vedas and Upanishads of the pre-Hindu religions. With time, as Buddhism developed from Hinduism, the Tree of Life was translated into a branching lotus plant. Significantly, the lotus became one of the symbols of the Buddha (Coomaraswamy, p. 7). In Indian iconography, the ancient depiction of a branching lotus rising from a water-filled vase is called a *purna ghata* (Fig. 7) and represents creation, fullness, and prosperity (Ghosh, p. 40), an emblem of great good fortune. The *purna ghata* was introduced to Southeast Asia as the Indian civilization spread to this region and was especially prevalent in Java (Fig. 8). One of the earliest examples found in Thailand is on a fifth century ivory comb (Krairiksh, p. 53). In somewhat modified form, it occurs on painted and stucco decorations of the Ayutthaya period (Paknam, Fig. 260, p. 146 and Fig. 273, p. 151; Van Beek, p. 157) and of the Bangkok period (Fig. 9). The Himaphan-forest-flowers motif is essentially the branching-flowers part of the *purna ghata* that acquired a poetic Buddhist name in Thailand. Perhaps it was first depicted on royal ceramics during the troubled Transitional period because of its auspicious symbolism.

On ceramics, the branching floral motif is nearly always shown without a vase. In Thailand, it is a rare symbol on fourteenth to mid-sixteenth century Sawankhalok wares (Refuge, Afb 113, p. 83 and Afb 133a, p. 96). The pots in Brown and the limepot of Figure 1 exhibit devolved, almost skeletal motifs, but lotus buds are apparent on the tips of the branches. Bencharong designs developed from the simple ones of the Transitional period to better-drawn, more compli-

cated and ornate forms in later periods (Figs. 10-11) which are somewhat similar to patterns found in Java (Fig. 8).

Why should a probable Bat-trang limepot with a Borneo shape have these Thai decorations? Could it be that at least a portion of the Transitional Bencharong was ordered from Bat-trang by Thai royalty and that the Vietnamese potters appropriated the patterns for some of their other wares? The years between the fall of Ayutthaya until the restoration of some stability in the reign of Rama I were chaotic. New courts were established, first at Thonburi and then at Bangkok. Normal trade must have been affected, and it was undoubtedly difficult to obtain ceramics from China. Old Chinese-made pieces from the Ayutthaya period that survived, or drawings of these, could have been sent for copying to Bat-trang, a kiln where export wares were made (Brown, p. 18) and which was closer to Bangkok than to China. When the Chakri dynasty of Thailand, begun by Rama I, became well established, large amounts of Bencharong could have been imported once again from China, while orders of the coarser wares were probably discontinued. Because of their relative lack of variety in shape and designs, as well as their small numbers, the coarser wares seem to have been made only for a short time, and there are not nearly as many of them as of the porcelain-bodied Bencharong with elaborate decorations.

Designs of the porcelain Bencharong bowl of Figure 6 have many similarities to those of the probable Bat-trang limepot of Figure 1. The Himaphan-forest-flower pattern within the lotus-petal panels decorating the exterior of the bowl are devolved and resemble those between the ogival lozenges of the limepot. The ogival lozenges of the limepot might even have been intended as lotus-petal panels. A border of white and green dots (Fig. 12) decorate a red band just below the interior side of the mouthrim, while raised white enamel dots in trefoil disposition appear just below the mouthrim on the exterior side. Much like the limepot, the exterior footring of the bowl is painted a watery green. The six enamel colors on the bowl are red, green, yellow, blue, white, and pink. The base is partially glazed. The mouthrim has a coating of brown slip.

The larger and more carefully painted Bencharong bowl of Figure 13 has the same pattern as the bowl of Figure 6. Here, the Himaphan-forest-flowers are strikingly like those between the ogival lozenges of the limepot (Fig. 3). The interior border consists of alternate green and pinkish-white dots on a red ground. The exterior of the footring displays a weak, green enamel.

A small stoneware saucer — a rare Bencharong shape but fairly prevalent in Vietnamese ceramics — also shows similarities to the limepot, particularly in the raised white enamel dots and spiky vegetal fronds encasing Buddhist Thepanom outlined in red (Fig. 14). Spiky leaf patterns on Vietnamese wares are illustrated in *Vietnamese Ceramics*, the catalogue of the Southeast Asian Ceramic Society's exhibition of 1982, Numbers 220-225, page 173. The outlined, six-petaled center flower, which occurs as well in the center of the bowl of Figure 12, is reminiscent of outlined six-petaled flowers in the same source, Number 160, page 141, and Numbers

193-196, page 161. Red, green, and yellow enamels are used in addition to white, and there is a brown dressing on the rim. The Thepanom and center ring are not enameled but of white glaze. The exterior is covered with a grayish-white, pitted glaze which also covers the base. A Bencharong bowl in the Chantara Kasem Palace Museum, Ayutthaya, has the same enamels and pattern.

Some porcelain bowls of Thepanom ware show affinities in enamels and motifs to the limepot, ranging from crudely drawn spiky leaves and ogival medallions and unpainted Thepanom of white glaze (Fig. 15) to a bowl with a brown mouthrim on which much of the pattern is left in white glaze without any enameling (Fig. 16). As mentioned before, the limepot and saucer have unpainted designs, probably by intent on the saucer and wear on the limepot, and the omissions on the bowls could be intentional rather than accidental.

The bowl of Figure 17 has enamels of much the same colors as those of the limepot, including a watery-green footring. Possibly the prototype of this bowl can be found in a Chinese Bencharong bowl from the Kangxi reign, 1662-1722, corresponding to part of the Ayutthaya period of Thailand during which some Bencharong was imported from China (Fig. 18). The Kangxi bowl is made of very fine porcelain with carefully drawn, plump, leaf designs. On the bowl of Figure 17, the leaf motifs have become more spiky and closer to Vietnamese style but are arranged in the same spatial positions as those of the Kangxi bowl.

A few porcelain or porcelaneous bowls (Figs. 19-20) have floral sprays reminiscent of Vietnamese peony patterns such as those of Figure I, page 105, of Cheng Lammers' *Annamese Ceramics in the Museum Pusat Jakarta*. Also, the spiky leaf designs in Lammers, page 105, resemble those on the bowls of Figures 19-20. Lammers, in 5 A103/1910, page 66, illustrates a spiky leaf pattern in an ogival medallion very like the medallion design of Figure 20. The bowl of Figure 20 also has a green footring like that of the limepot of Figure 1. The peonies of these two bowls can be compared with those on a probable Bat-trang vase photographed by Roxanna Brown in the Sarawak Museum, East Malaysia (Fig. 21).

Figure 22 illustrates a probable eighteenth-century Vietnamese stoneware covered jar perhaps from the Bat-trang kilns. Jars like this one are pictured and dated in *The Talking Jars* by C. Chan Gunn, R188 and R189, page 64. The base is unglazed, and the interior has an unglazed stacking ring in the bottom (Fig. 23). This jar with a flat knob bearing a red flower on the lid may be related to Bencharong *toh* (covered jars), although Bencharong *toh* have no stacking rings.

The shape is an ancient one in Vietnam, perhaps passed down from Chinese Han dynasty storage jars. In Color Plate I, Brown shows three Vietnamese covered jars, one with a flat, two with lotus-bud knobs, dated eleventh to thirteenth centuries.

In Thailand, stoneware covered jars of nearly the same shape are called lotus-blossom jars (Rajanubhab, p. 41), undoubtedly because of a band of tall lotus-petal panels encir-

cling many of them. On some (Fig. 24), the lotus-petal panels are filled with Himaphan-forest-flowers. The six enamel colors on the jar are yellow, green, blue, red, white, and pink as are those of the bowls of Figures 6 and 13.

Another lotus-blossom *toh* has Himaphan-forest-flowers in lotus-petal panels on the cover (Fig. 25). The body is painted with peonies of Vietnamese style as on the bowls of Figures 19 and 20 between patterns very like those separating the ogival lozenges on the lime-pot (Fig. 3). Again, the enamels palette consists of six colors: white, red, pink, yellow, green, and blue. This jar, photographed by Roxanna Brown in the Museum of History, Ho Chi Minh City — formerly the Saigon Museum — is unusual in that it combines the more conventionally Thai patterns on the cover with those on the body which strongly suggest Vietnamese influence and which are seldom used on a *toh*.

A Thepanom ware *toh* of the same shape (Fig. 26) has the pattern and enamel colors of the saucer of Figure 14. The fat, Chinese-style Thepanom of this *toh* and of those on the saucer could be derived from such Thepanom as those depicted on porcelain Kangxi period Thepanom ware covered jars (Fig. 27) and bowls (Fig. 18) imported during the Ayutthaya period. After Rama I, this kind of Thepanom was not seen again on Bencharong.

Another *toh* of lotus-blossom shape with a flattened lotus-bud knob (Fig. 28) appears to copy the pattern of a Bencharong Thepanom ware bowl (Fig. 29) with a Chinese Wanli, 1573-1620, reign mark — the oldest known piece of Bencharong, its interior painted with Chinese flowers-of-the-four-seasons on a turquoise enamel background (Fig. 30). Although the exterior design and enamel colors of the *toh* are quite like those of the Wanli bowl, the painting is so inferior, so carelessly done, that it is probably a much later copy. The floral design of the knob (Fig. 31) resembles that of the knob of the eighteenth century Vietnamese jar of Figure 21, as does the shape.

A probably small amount of finely painted porcelain with Thai designs was ordered from China in the Transitional period (Fig. 32). In these wares, Chinese flame motifs replace Vietnamese-style spiky leaves, and the Thepanom are no longer the chubby, Chinese motifs but conform to *lai* Thai (Thai design) tradition.

The coarser Bencharong wares continued into the Rama I period when jars with stupa-form covers appeared (Figs. 33, 35). One kind of poorly made stoneware jar has panels containing horizontal ranks of joined lotus buds in a vertical configuration similar to that of Himaphan-forest-flowers (Fig. 33). This pattern disappeared after the Rama I reign and is unique. I can find no precedent nor resemblances to this design on other wares. This kind of *toh* usually has heavily pitted glaze with adhesions of sand on the base (Fig. 34) and is not as well made as the *toh* of figures 24-26. The enamels are always red, green, yellow, and white with either a red or a green ground, the same color-scheme associated with other previously mentioned Transitional Bencharong (Figs. 14, 15, 26). A better-made kind of Rama I period, stoneware *toh* — one represented in the Lee Kong Chian Art Museum of the



Fig. 1. Stoneware limepot probably made at the Bat-trang kilns. H 8.8 cm. Possibly late seventeenth to eighteenth centuries. Private Collection.



Fig. 2. Base of the stoneware limepot of Figure 1.



Fig. 3. Limepot of Figure 1 showing pattern not painted with enamels (white areas in center above footring).

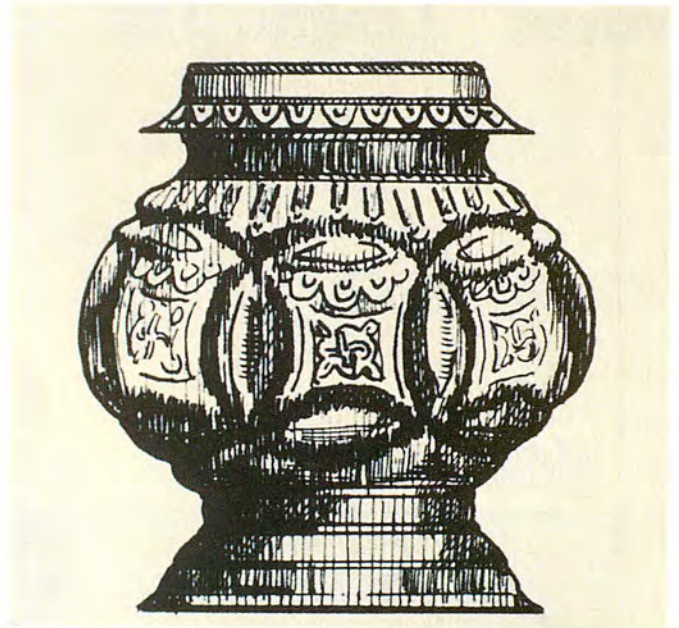


Fig. 4. Old brass *sireh* container from Sarawak. H 8.5 cm. Taken from *Handicraft in Sarawak*, p. 54.



Fig. 5. Stoneware covered jar probably from the Bat-trang kilns. H 12.3 cm. Possibly late seventeenth to eighteenth centuries. Courtesy of the Sarawak Museum. Photograph by Roxanna M. Brown.



Fig. 6. Porcelain Bencharong bowl with Himaphan-forest-flowers pattern in lotus-petal panels. H 5.8 cm. Transitional period, 1767-1809. Private Collection.



Fig. 7. *Purna ghata* on the railing of the Bharhut stupa. Sunga dynasty, 185-72 B.C. Courtesy of the Indian Museum, Calcutta.



Fig. 8. *Purna ghata* on Prambanan Temple, Jogjakarta, Java, ninth to tenth centuries. Photograph by Dr. Elizabeth Moore.

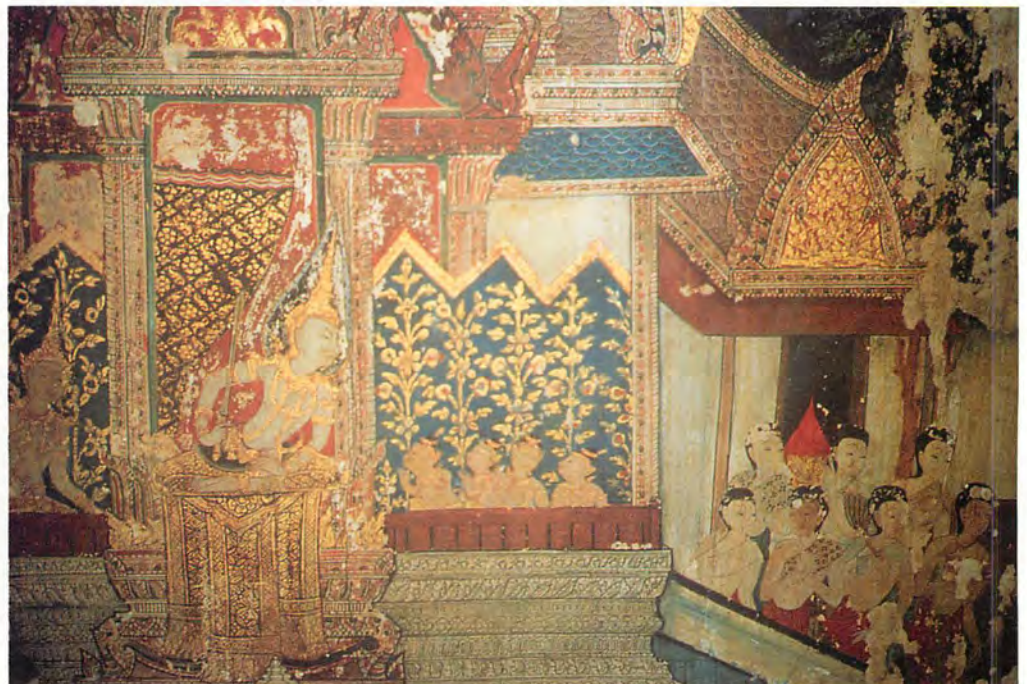


Fig. 9. Panel 19 of the mural at Wat Buddhaisawan, Bangkok, showing Himaphan-forest-flowers. Rama I period, 1782-1809. Photograph by Natalie V. Robinson.

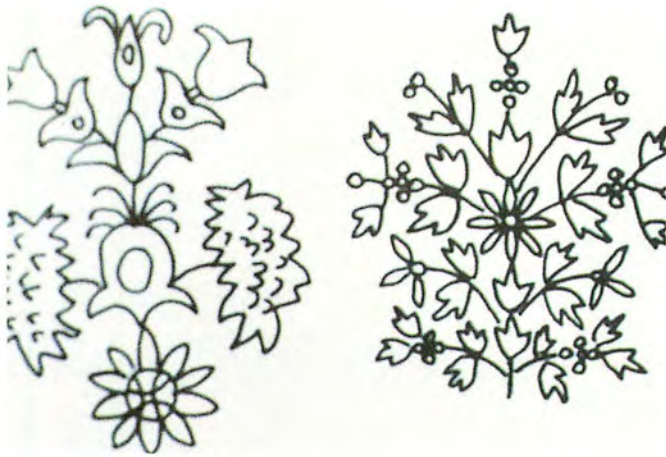


Fig. 10. Himaphan-forest-flowers on nineteenth century Bencharong. Taken from *Sino-Thai Ceramics*, p. 115.



Fig. 13. Porcelain Bencharong bowl with Himaphan-forest-flowers motifs in lotus-petal panels. H 9 cm. Transitional period, 1767-1809. Tom and Anne Tofield Collection.



Fig. 11. Porcelain Bencharong octagonal covered jar with Himaphan-forest-flowers in lotus-petal panels. H 12.5 cm. Rama II period, 1809-1824. Montchai Pankongchuen Collection. Photograph by Bhujjong Chandavij.



Fig. 14. Stoneware Bencharong Thepanom ware saucer. D 11.8 cm. Transitional period, 1767-1809. Private Collection.



Fig. 12. Interior of Bencharong bowl of Figure 6.



Fig. 15. Porcelain Bencharong Thepanom ware bowl. H 8.7 cm. Transitional period, 1767-1809. Max Spaeti Collection.



Fig. 16. Porcelain Bencharong Thepanom ware bowl with unpainted designs. H ca. 8 cm. Transitional period, 1767-1809. Photograph by John A. Listopad.



Fig. 17. Porcelain Bencharong Thepanom ware bowl. H 9 cm. Transitional period, 1767-1809. Courtesy of the National Museum, Singapore.



Fig. 18. Porcelain Bencharong Thepanom ware bowl. H 10 cm. Kangxi period, 1662-1722. Private Collection.



Fig. 19. Porcelain Bencharong bowl with peony design. H ca. 8 cm. Transitional period, 1767-1809. Sawet Piamphongsant Collection.



Fig. 20. Porcelain Bencharong bowl with peony design. H ca. 9 cm. Transitional period, 1767-1809. Chantara Kasem Palace Museum, Ayutthaya. Photograph by John A. Listopad.



Fig. 21. Stoneware vase with peony design probably from the Bat-trang kilns. H 33.4 cm. Possibly late seventeenth to eighteenth centuries. Courtesy of the Sarawak Museum. Photograph by Roxanna M. Brown.



Fig. 23. Interior of the jar of Figure 22 showing stacking ring. Photograph by Dinorah Kranker.



Fig. 22. Stoneware covered jar probably from the Bat-trang kilns. H 13.5 cm. Eighteenth century. Sylvia Zimmermann Collection. Photograph by Dinorah Kranker.



Fig. 24. Stoneware lotus-blossom *toh* with Himaphan-forest-flowers in lotus-petal panels. H ca. 15 cm. Transitional period, 1767-1809. Chantara Kasem Palace Museum, Ayutthaya. Photograph by John A. Listopad.



Fig. 25. Probably stoneware, Bencharong, lotus-blossom *toh* with Himaphan-forest-flowers in lotus-petal panels on the lid and a peony design on the body. H ca. 15 cm. Transitional period, 1767-1809. Museum of History, Ho Chi Minh City. Photograph by Roxanna M. Brown.



Fig. 27. Porcelain Bencharong Thepanom ware covered jar. H 15.5 cm. Kangxi period, 1662-1722. Sanan Plangprayoon Collection.



Fig. 26. Stoneware Bencharong Thepanom ware, lotus-blossom *toh*. H ca. 18 cm. Transitional period, 1767-1809. Chantara Kasem Palace Museum, Ayutthaya. Photograph by John A. Listopad.



Fig. 28. Stoneware Bencharong Thepanom ware *toh* of Wanli style, H ca. 16 cm. Transitional period, 1767-1809. Sawet Piamphongsant Collection.



Fig. 29. Porcelain Bencharong Thepanom ware with wanli mark, 1573-1620. H 9.5 cm. Montchai Pankongchuen Collection. Photograph by Bhujjong Chandavij.



Fig. 32. Porcelain Bencharong Thepanom ware bowl. H 9.3 cm. Eighteenth to nineteenth centuries. Tom and Anne Tofield Collection.



Fig. 30. Interior of the bowl of Figure 29. Photograph by Bhujjong Chandavij.



Fig. 31. Cover of the *toh* of Figure 28.



Fig. 33. Stoneware Bencharong *toh* H 13.3 cm. Rama I period, 1792-1809. Private Collection.



Fig. 34. Base of the *toh* of Figure 33.

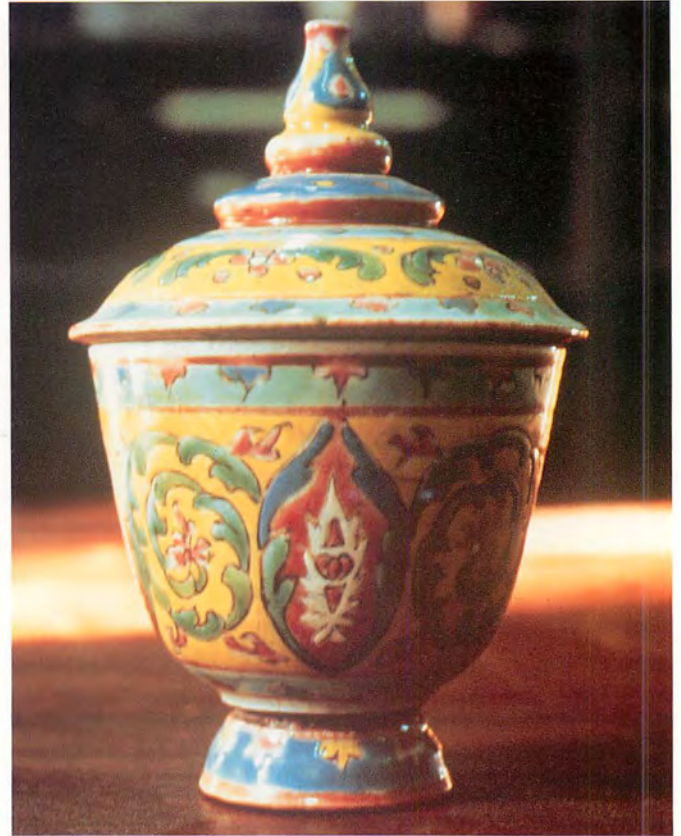


Fig. 35. Stoneware Bencharong *toh*. H 12.6 cm. Rama I period, 1792-1809. Courtesy of Lee Kong Chian Art Museum, University of Singapore. Photograph by Anne Tofield.



Fig. 36. Two Transitional period, 1767-1809, *toh* of lotus-blossom shape. Left: H 22 cm.; coarsely decorated. Right: H 20.5 cm.; decorated in traditional Thai style. Montchai Pankong-chuen Collection. Photograph by Bhujjong Chandavij.

National University of Singapore (Fig. 35) — has ogival lozenges and enamels similar to those of the limepot. Its shape is not Vietnamese but an Indian-derived Thai form.

The stoneware lotus-blossom *toh* with flat or flattened lotus-bud knob does not appear after Rama I. Both stoneware and porcelain jars of this shape, but with intricate decorations such as those of Figure 36, right, and Thepanom of Thai style rather than the fat Chinese type, were probably ordered from China during the Rama I reign, and, like the more crudely decorated lotus-blossom jars, do not occur after the Rama I period. Figure 36 shows one of the coarser lotus-blossom *toh*, left, beside a lotus-blossom *toh* with typical Bencharong decoration, right.

As has been demonstrated, there are resemblances between the Bencharong pieces of the Transitional period and examples probably from the Bat-trang kilns. A great similarity is in Thai-influenced Himaphan-forest-flowers decorations on Bat-trang wares (Figs. 1, 5). Brown shows these on Color Plate XIIIc-d. Harrison (Figs. 245, 247, pp. 124-125) illustrates plates possibly made at Bat-trang which have a devolved Himaphan-forest-flowers motif between ogival medallions on the rims. Ogival medallions or lotus-petal panels containing Himaphan-forest-flowers motifs occur on Bencharong throughout its production (Figs. 10-11).

In a reverse exchange, leaf designs and peony patterns of Vietnamese style appear on Transitional Bencharong ceramics (Figs. 14-17, 19-20). There have been trade connections between Vietnam and Thailand from the twelfth century (*Vietnamese Ceramics*, p. 21). In fact, Vietnamese influence on design even occurs on some of the Thai wares of the Sukhothai, Sawankhalok, Sankampaeng, and Kalong kiln centers (*Vietnamese Ceramics*, p. 26), but these wares were made in Thailand, whereas Bencharong was made outside of Thailand and imported. Other Transitional pieces might be Bat-trang-made copies (Figs. 17, 26) of Ayutthaya period, Chinese-made Bencharong (Figs. 18, 27). Lotus-blossom *toh* appear to have Vietnamese-influenced shapes.

Many Transitional Bencharong ceramics are porcelainous or clearly stoneware, which are both more characteristic of Vietnamese wares than of Chinese-manufactured, porcelain Bencharong.

Polychrome enamels of red, green, and yellow appeared in Viet Nam in the fifteenth century (Brown, p. 26) but are not the same as the far more thickly applied opaque enamels of the Transitional wares. The opaque enamels that appear on the limepot probably came to Viet Nam from China. The Kangxi reign in China saw additions to the ceramics palette of opaque enamels introduced from Europe. Opaque white enamel on Chinese porcelain is mentioned by Père d'Entrecolles in his letter from Jingdezhen in 1712. Pink enamel from gold chloride was discovered by Andreas Cassius of Leyden in 1650 (Jenyns, p. 34) and may have reached China between 1720-1723 (Howard, p. 45). Blue enamel from cobalt was also introduced in the Kangxi reign (Hobson, Vol. II, p. 161). The black enamel ground so prevalent in Bencharong of the Ayutthaya period is very often replaced by color — mostly red, green, and yellow — in Transitional Bencharong.

With a few exceptions, Bat-trang and Transitional Bencharong ceramics employed opaque enamels in solidly painted patterns with no interstices of white glaze. All-over enameling was especially common in the Qianlong reign, 1737-1795 (National Palace Museum, "Introduction," *Painted Enamels of the Ch'ing Dynasty*). This Chinese painting technique could have traveled to Viet Nam.

Brown dates Bat-trang polychrome over-glaze enamel wares to probably the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. Allowing a time lag for opaque enamels to have reached Viet Nam from China, the date for the appearance of these enamels on Bat-trang wares would move to around the mid-eighteenth century. This corresponds more closely to the dates I proposed for Transitional Bencharong. The fact that most of the probable Bat-trang ceramics in the Sarawak Museum were acquired from heirloom collections (Brown, p. 30) and not excavated also points to a later date. Ms. Brown wrote to me that Bat-trang enameled wares "provide a link to the contemporary enamel-decorated wares of Viet Nam; enamel decoration is still one of the popular techniques at Bat-trang and at kilns established in towns on the outskirts of Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) since early this century."

There are discrepancies, however, as well as similarities in the comparison of Transitional Bencharong and the probably Bat-trang ceramics. As has been said, many of the Transitional pieces are porcelain or porcelainous, and porcelain is not considered to have been made in Viet Nam. Nevertheless, William Willetts says that porcelain was made at the Bat-trang kilns in the twentieth century from kaolin and feldspar brought from nearby sources (Willetts, p. 10). Could porcelain have been made there in the eighteenth century as well? Or could Chinese glazed porcelain have been sent to Bat-trang to be painted there? In the eighteenth century, it was customary for the Chinese to send large amounts of glazed porcelain from Jingdezhen to Canton where it was painted for the export trade (Hobson, Vol. II, p. 211), and perhaps this was done in Viet Nam to a lesser degree. In the late nineteenth century, a few Chinese porcelain pieces were also painted in Thailand with Bencharong designs (Robinson, *JSS*, p. 126) but not on a commercial basis.

The Vietnamese jars whose shapes resemble the Thai lotus-blossom jars (Fig. 22) have an interior, unglazed stacking ring (Fig. 23) that the Bencharong *toh* do not have. Roxanna Brown has written me that "at excavations of trade-ware period kiln sites by Hoi Du'ong Provincial Museum together with Research Centre for Southeast Asian Ceramics, Adelaide, in Hai Hung province (Viet Nam) in January-February of this year (1990) wasters show unglazed rings made for stacking throughout the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, so the method was used, but the traders did not choose to export such pieces." If the later Transitional period *toh* were indeed made at Bat-trang, perhaps they, too were made without stacking rings because they were an export product.

The *toh* with stupa-form covers and lotus-bud motifs (Fig. 33) are so poorly potted and painted they even suggest a Swatow derivation, especially since many have the typi-

cally Swatow adhesions on their bases (Fig. 34). Brown (pp. 30-31) and Harrison (p. 122) point out that there was interchange between the Swatow kilns and Bat-trang. A Swatow jar (Harrison, No. 20, p. 24) has a design similar to the Himaphan-forest-flowers motifs of Bat-trang. This is one more complication to consider in trying to find the origin of Transitional Bencharong.

Transitional Bencharong ceramics do not fit with the finer Bencharong wares made in China. Perhaps Bat-trang

may prove to be the place where some or all of them were made. Only excavations at Bat-trang can provide the answer, since no kiln sites for these ceramics nor any sherds have been found. Whether or not Transitional Bencharong was made at Bat-trang, it seems evident that at least some cultural exchange took place between Transitional Bencharong and Bat-trang wares.

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