

## The Textual Criticism on the Age of 'Wan Li' Shipwreck Porcelain and Its Comparison with 'Whitte Leeuw' and Hatcher Shipwreck Porcelain

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**Abstract :** After the Wan li shipwreck was discovered 60 miles off the east coast of Tan jong Jara in Malaysia, numerous marvelous ceramic shards have been salvaged from the seabed. Remarkable pieces of Jing dezhen blue-and-white porcelain recovered from the site represent the essential part of the fascinating research. The porcelain cargo of Wan li shipwreck is significant to the studies on exported porcelains and Jing dezhen porcelain manufacture industry of Late-Ming dynasty. Using the ceramic shards categorization and the study of the Chinese and Western historical documents as a research strategy, the paper wants to shed new light on the Wan li shipwreck wares classification with Jingdezhen kiln ceramic as its main focus. The article is also discussing Jing dezhen blue-and-white porcelains from the perspective of domestic versus export markets and further proceeding to the systematization and analyses of Wan li shipwreck porcelain which bears witness to the forms, styles, and types of decoration that were being traded in this period. The porcelain data from two other shipwrecked projects -White Leeuw and Hatcher- were chosen as comparative case studies and Wan li shipwreck Jing dezhen blue-and-white porcelain is being reinterpreted in the context of art history and archeology of the region. The marine archaeologist Sten Sjostrand named the ship 'Wanli shipwreck' because its porcelain cargoes are typical of those made during the reign of Emperor Wan li of Ming dynasty. Though some scholars question the appropriateness of the name, the final verdict of the history is still to be made. Based on previous historical argumentation, the article uses a comparative approach to review the Wan li shipwreck blue-and-white porcelains on the grounds of the porcelains unearthed from the tomb or abandoned in the towns and carrying the time-specific reign mark. All these materials provide a very strong evidence which suggests that the porcelain recovered from Wan li ship can be dated to as early as the second year of Tianqi era (1622) and early Chongzhen reign. Lastly, some blue-and-white porcelain intended for the domestic market and some bowls of blue-and-white porcelain from Jing dezhen kilns recovered from the Wan li shipwreck all carry at the bottom the specific residue from the firing process. The author makes the corresponding analysis for these two interesting phenomena.

**Keywords :** blue-and-white porcelain, Ming dynasty, Jing dezhen kiln, Wan li shipwreck

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