

# Formative Characteristics and Nature of Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-century Blue-and-white Porcelain Excavated from Sites within the City Wall of Seoul

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## Introduction

In fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Joseon (朝鮮, 1392–1910), blue-and-white porcelain, known as *cheonghwa baekja* (靑華白磁), was used by a limited group of people—the royal court and ruling class. As a result, extant examples from this period, including findings from excavations, are scarce. Scholars have been relying mainly on historical records and the small number of heirlooms that have survived to this day (傳世品, *jeonsepum*).<sup>1</sup> Around the turn of the new millennium, however, large quantities of Joseon ceramics were discovered during excavations carried out in connection with urban redevelopment projects in Seoul. In particular, sites in Cheongjin-dong in Jongno-gu yielded a large quantity of blue-and-white porcelain believed to date from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, providing concrete evidence of its use in the early Joseon dynasty.

The excavations greatly facilitated research into consumption patterns and characteristics of blue-and-white porcelain of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that previously had been little known. This study seeks to explore the aesthetic

characteristics and consumption patterns of the blue-and-white porcelain recovered from sites within the city wall of Seoul, known as Hanyangdoseong (漢陽都城), which protected the Joseon capital of Hanyang (漢陽, present-day Seoul). Particular focus will be placed on sites in Cheongjin-dong in Jongno-gu, Seoul.

The study will first provide an overview of sites in Seoul where blue-and-white porcelain from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was discovered, and then examine the forms and designs of the blue-and-white porcelain wares recovered from sites in Cheongjin-dong through a comparison with other extant examples, including heirlooms and those excavated from kiln sites. It will further investigate the characteristics of the blue-and-white porcelain unearthed from Cheongjin-dong and analyze historical documents to determine how blue-and-white wares was used outside the royal court. Past studies on blue-and-white porcelain excavated from the Cheongjin-dong area have focused on individual sites. This paper is significant in that it provides a comprehensive survey of early Joseon blue-and-white porcelain discovered from several sites within the city wall of Seoul.

<sup>1</sup> The author classifies extant examples of blue-and-white porcelain into two categories: excavation finds and those handed down among owners from generation to generation. Those in the latter category, termed *jeonsepum* in Korean, are referred to as “heirlooms.”

## Details of Excavations of Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-century Blue-and-white Porcelain from Sites within the City Wall of Seoul

Historic sites within the city wall of Seoul that have confirmed the consumption of blue-and-white porcelain during the early Joseon period are located in the Cheongjin-dong and Seorin-dong areas, Jongmyo Shrine Square in Jongno-gu, and the ancient sites of Dongdaemun Stadium, Wongaksa Temple within Pagoda Park in Jongno 2-ga, and the Gungisi at Taepyeongno 1-ga in Jung-gu (Fig. 1).

Redevelopment projects in Cheongjin-dong, where the excavations were the largest in scale and produced the greatest yield, were carried out as part of the Seoul Urban Renewal and Revitalization Project in the area north of the Hangang River in Seoul (Research Institute of Korean Architectural Culture of Myongji University 2007; Hanul Research Institute of Cultural Heritage 2011a, 2012, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c). Cheongjin-dong, located within the heart of the capital city of Hanyang, was an area partially encompassing Unjongga Street, a central commercial avenue lined with government-licensed shops known as *sijeon* (市廛). It was also near Yukjo Street, where the six ministries, or *yukjo* (六曹) were located. Moreover, in the northern part of Cheongjin-dong were situated royal residences, including Yongdonggung Palace (龍洞宮) and Sujingung Palace (壽進宮).

A wide variety of artifacts ranging from earthenware and porcelain to metalwares were excavated in Cheongjin-dong. A total of 62 blue-and-white porcelain wares from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were discovered—most of which are high-quality porcelain with a cross-section for the foot in the shape of an inverted triangle or trapezoid and fired on a support of fine sand, similarly to other surviving blue-and-white heirlooms of this date.

In the area where Cheongjin-dong meets the main street (Jongno-daero) in front of Jongmyo Shrine Square, structural remains of licensed shops were discovered. It is believed that a marketplace of licensed shops, known as *sijeon haengnang* (市廛行廊), was established around the present-day Jongno intersection (Hoh Young-Rok 1995, 70–76). Large quantities of both domestic and imported ceramics were recovered from this commercial area, just as from other excavation sites within Cheongjin-dong. Each of the shops in the commercial area specialized in the sale of a specific type of goods, and therefore not all of the ceramics recovered would have been intended for sale. From this perspective, there is a high probability that the pieces discovered were personal possessions of the licensed merchants. Among the ceramics excavated from the sites of licensed shops, only thirteen examples of blue-and-white porcelain from the fifteenth

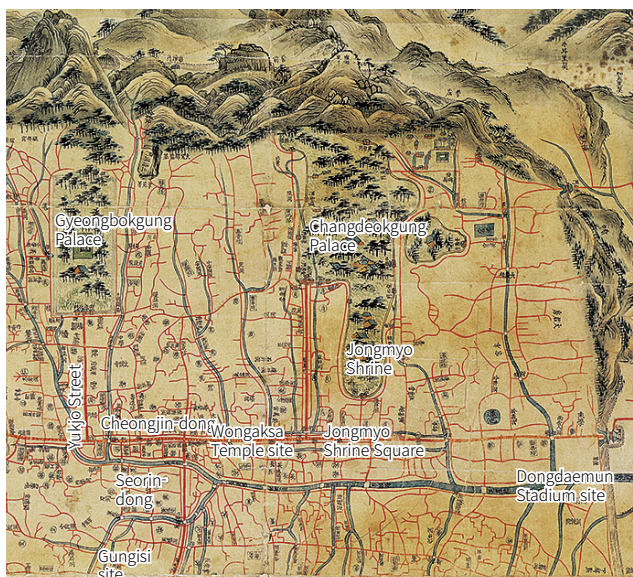


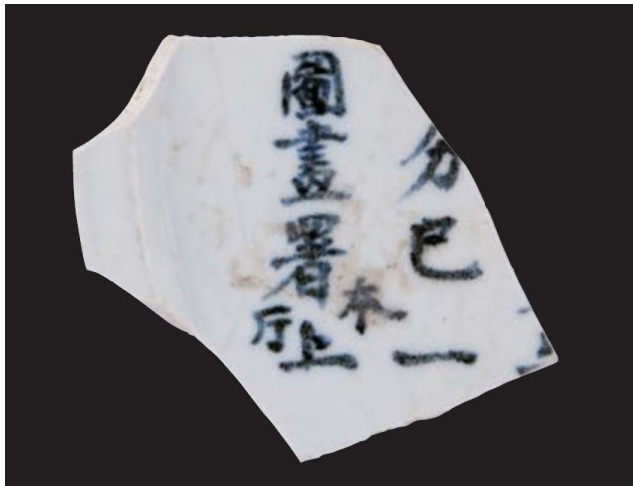
Fig. 1. Blue-and-white porcelain consumption sites in the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Hanyang after *Doseongdo* (都城圖, Map of Capital City) (detail). Joseon, late 18th century. 67.0 × 92.0 cm. Treasure No. 1560. Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies (Image edited by the author; Seoul Museum of History 2016, p. 64)

and sixteenth centuries were discovered, which is minimal in terms of the total number of ceramics found. Most of them are high-quality white porcelain, and similar types of rimmed dishes and jars were found in large amounts concentrated in small areas.

Small numbers of blue-and-white porcelain wares were also discovered from other sites within the city wall, such as Dongdaemun Stadium, Jongmyo Shrine Square, the Gungisi, and Wongaksa Temple sites. At the Dongdaemun Stadium site, structural remains from the Joseon period had been damaged and most of the related findings had been disturbed, making it difficult to date the excavated ceramics and other remains (Seoul Metropolitan Government and Jungwon Cultural Properties Institute 2011, 424). As for official porcelain from the early Joseon period, seven blue-and-white porcelain shards of various sizes were recovered together with porcelain wares bearing inscriptions incised on the glazed surface.

The Gungisi site was the location of the Gungisi (軍器寺, Government Arsenal), which was responsible for the production of gunpowder and weapons during the Joseon period. From this site, four pieces of early Joseon blue-and-white porcelain were recovered—most of which were excavated from the interior space of architectural structures (Hangang Institute of Cultural Heritage 2011b, 652). Notable among these findings is *White Porcelain Rimmed Dish Shard with Inscription of “Dohwaseo” in Underglaze Cobalt-blue*, which bears an inscription of “Dohwaseo” (圖書署), the government-run bureau of painting where court painters worked (Fig. 2).

Excavation of the Wongaksa Temple site was conducted by the Seoul Museum of History in 2001. The temple was



**Fig. 2.** White Porcelain Rimmed Dish Shard with Inscription of “Dohwaseo” in Underglaze Cobalt-blue. Joseon, 15th-16th century. Excavated from the Gungsi site. Diameter: 20.0 cm (mouth). Seoul Museum of History (Hangang Institute of Cultural Heritage 2011b, p. 105)

ordered closed in the early Joseon period and was continuously vandalized thereafter. In consequence, the current findings are weighted more towards their relevance to the government offices or private homes that were later built on the site (Seoul Museum of History 2002, 109–111). Two shards from blue-and-white rimmed dishes were discovered here. They were excavated from different locations, but they are similar in terms of appearance and craftsmanship. Also found at this site were high-quality bowls and dishes with inscriptions engraved into the glazed surface of the exterior base and fired on a support dusted with fine sand.

The site of the square at the entrance to Jongmyo Shrine yielded different kinds of porcelain shards dated from the early Joseon period to the early twentieth century (Seoul Museum of History 2012, 429). Findings from the site include a large amount of premium-quality royal porcelain from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries with inscriptions on the glazed base. Also unearthed from the site was a blue-and-white porcelain shard from a jar simply decorated with a plum and bamboo design and a shard from a rimmed dish with a *bosanghwa* (寶相華, Ch. *baoxianghua*) scroll design.

The sites of the Jongchinbu (宗親府, Office of the Royal Genealogy) and Eoyeongcheong (御營廳, Royal Guards

Command), also in the Jongno area, each yielded a shard from a decorated rimmed dish inscribed with a poem. In the Seorindong area in Jongno-gu, where structural remains of buildings from the Joseon period were found, *White Porcelain Lid Shard with Bosanghwa Scroll Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue* was discovered together with Ming Chinese blue-and-white porcelain. The shard is described in the excavation report as being from Ming China, but it appears to be a product of the official court kiln of Joseon (Hangang Institute of Cultural Heritage 2012, 87).

This paper has thus far examined blue-and-white porcelain from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries discovered at sites within the city wall of Seoul. The characteristics of the sites and the quantity of blue-and-white porcelain excavated are outlined in Table 1. It is important to note that the Cheongjin-dong area, where government bureaus and upper-class residences were situated, yielded the largest amount of blue-and-white porcelain. However, in the future, more blue-and-white porcelain is likely to be excavated from the sites of the central commercial area of licensed shops (*sijeon haengnang*), the Gungsi office, Jongmyojeonggyo Bridge in Jongmyo Shrine, and Wongaksa Temple where the Jangagwon (掌樂院, Royal Bureau of Music) was established during the reign of King Yeonsangun (燕山君, r. 1494–1506). As for the sites in Seorindong and Dongdaemun Stadium, only structural remains of buildings lacking sufficient corresponding written records have been identified, which makes it difficult to verify the functions of the remains. Only a small quantity of blue-and-white porcelain was discovered in Seorindong.

Blue-and-white porcelain from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was excavated from layers dating to the early to mid-Joseon dynasty. At most sites, blue-and-white porcelain from private local kilns in China was discovered in large quantity along with high-quality Joseon official porcelain incised on the glazed exterior base with Chinese characters, including 天 (*cheon*, heaven), 地 (*ji*, earth), 玄 (*hyeon*, black), 黃 (*hwang*, yellow), 左 (*ja*, left), and 右 (*u*, right). However, porcelain with decorations of inlaid designs, underglaze cobalt-blue designs, and underglaze iron-brown designs were discovered in small numbers and only at certain building sites, demonstrating that the ownership of decorated porcelain produced in the official court kilns of

Excavation Site	Discovered Remains	Function or location of Excavated Site	Number of excavated finds
Cheongjin-dong	<i>Sijeon haengnang</i>	Licensed shops	13
	Miscellaneous	Buildings	62
Dongdaemun Stadium	Buildings	Adjacent to military facilities and city wall	7
Gungsi Site	Government Arsenal	Administrative office	3
Wongaksa Temple Site	Buildings	Administrative office (Jangagwon) and residences	2
Jongmyo Shrine Square	Jongmyojeonggyo Bridge	Remains of royal palace	2
Eoyeongcheong Site	Royal Guards Command	Administrative office	1
Jongchinbu Site	Office of the Royal Genealogy	Adjacent to Jongmyo Shrine	1
Seorindong	Buildings	Unidentified	1

**Table 1.** Sites that yielded fifteenth- and sixteenth-century blue-and-white porcelain and the amount of porcelain excavated

Joseon was highly restricted. Among the decorated porcelain discovered, those with underglaze cobalt-blue motifs were the rarest.

Formative Characteristics of Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-century Blue-and-white Porcelain Excavated within the City Wall of Seoul

Over 100 items (shards and/or intact vessels) from a total of 88 blue-and-white porcelain wares from the early Joseon period were unearthed within the city wall of Seoul. Overall, they are similar in terms of form and design to heirlooms and those excavated from kiln sites. However, there are also items that are of a unique type and design, as indicated in Table 2.

The excavated blue-and-white porcelain is diverse in type. However, the majority is comprised of rimmed dishes and jars, and there is a concentration of special ware compared to daily tableware. In terms of design, plum blossoms and floral scrolls are most prevalent. Many of the porcelain designs are highly sophisticated and correspond to accounts in the *Sinjeung dongguk yeoji seungnam* (新增東國輿地勝覽, Revised augmented survey of the geography of Korea) and Yi Ro (李魯, 1544–1598)’s *Songam-jip* (松岩集, Complete works of Yi Ro), which state that court painters painted designs such as fish and water plant, crab, and bird and flower motifs on blue-and-white porcelain.

This paper focuses on jars and rimmed dishes since they were excavated in the greatest number and appear to be the most diverse in style. Characteristics of their forms and featured designs will be investigated in the following.

Jars

High-quality porcelain jars—both plain and decorated—were excavated from sites within the city wall of Seoul. These mid-to large-sized jars were intended as special vessels for storage or decorative purposes rather than for everyday use. Blue-and-white porcelain jars are highly sophisticated vessels with exquisite designs, and many heirlooms are testimonies of their outstanding quality.

The shapes of blue-and-white porcelain jars from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries can be largely grouped into three types: jars with an upright neck, slightly inverted rim, and S-shaped body; jars with a high foot and slender body; and jars with an everted mouth and body tapering sharply toward the base (Kim Hyejeong 2017, 115–116). Comparisons with heirlooms confirm that the shards discovered from sites within the wall of Seoul—particularly those from the mouth and lower body—match these three categories. The only differences among the shards are the thickness of the walls and the apparent quality of the original jar.

Among the blue-and-white porcelain found at sites within the Seoul city wall, over 30 shards from 23 porcelain wares feature plum blossom designs, amounting to 20 percent of the total number of shards found. Among the blue-and-white porcelain jars recovered within the ancient city walls, those decorated with plum and bamboo design were found in the greatest numbers. In District No. 5 of the Cheongjin-dong area, seven shards of blue-and-white porcelain were discovered that are similar in form to *White Porcelain Jar with Plum and Bamboo Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue* in the collection of Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art (Figs. 3-1 and 3-2). The colors of the glaze and the decorative motifs on the seven shards identify them as originating from at least two different vessels. Shards similar

Design	Type	Rimmed dish	Dish	Jar	Lid	Cup with two lugs	Bowl with lid	Cup	Water dropper	Stem cup	Memorial tablet	Incense burner	Flower-pot	Game	Figurative vessel	Unidentified		Total (number of items)
																base	body	
Floral scroll		1			3		1										4	9
Grass and flower		2		2	1	1	1	2		1						3	1	14
Plum and bamboo				3									1				5	9
Plum blossom		1	1	2	2				1				1			3	3	14
Fish and water plant		6														1		7
Poetry		7																7
Chinese character						1					1			2		1		5
Pine tree																	4	4
Dragon and cloud		1		1													1	4
Bamboo				1					1								1	3
Landscape																	1	1
Grape																	1	1
Bird and flower		1																1
Crab		1																1
Wave																1		1
Others		3			1					1		1			1			7
Total		22	1	9	8	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	9	21	88

Table 2. Type and design of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century blue-and-white porcelain excavated from sites within the city wall of Seoul





**Fig. 3-1.** White Porcelain Jar Shards with Plum and Bamboo Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue. Joseon, 15th-16th century. Height: 5.0 cm (lower part). Excavated from Cheongjin-dong District No. 5. Seoul Museum of History (Hanul Research Institute of Cultural Heritage 2012, Fig. 552)



**Fig. 3-2.** White Porcelain Jar with Plum and Bamboo Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue. Joseon, 15th-16th century. Height: 41.0 cm. Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art (National Museum of Korea 2015, Fig. 5)



**Fig. 3-3.** White Porcelain Jar Shard with Plum and Bamboo Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue. Joseon, 15th-16th century. Diameter: 17.2 cm (mouth). Excavated from Gwancheol-dong. National Museum of Korea (National Museum of Korea 2015, Fig. 22)

to the abovementioned seven were discovered in Districts Nos. 1 and 8 and 12 through 16 of the Cheongjin-dong area.

Furthermore, an example of the same shape and design as these shards was discovered in Gwancheol-dong in Jongno-gu in the 1970s (Fig. 3-3). Additionally, a lid shard decorated with a plum and bamboo design in underglaze cobalt-blue was discovered from the Beoncheon-ri kiln site No. 9, which is presumed to have operated in the 1550s. Given this, it is probable that blue-and-white porcelain jars featuring this type of plum and bamboo design were continuously produced in the early Joseon era. All of these plum and bamboo designs feature rather schematized



**Fig. 4-1.** White Porcelain Shards with Plum and Bamboo Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue (body). Joseon, 15th–16th century. Length: 11.8 cm (max). Excavated from Cheongjin-dong Districts Nos. 12–16. Seoul Baekje Museum (Hanul Research Institute of Cultural Heritage 2013c, Fig. 2131)



**Fig. 4-2.** White Porcelain Jar with Plum and Bamboo Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue. Joseon, 15th–16th century. Height: 35.0 cm. Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka (National Museum of Korea 2015, Fig. 62)

and conventional expressions and compositions, suggesting that the jars were used for ceremonial purposes where such stylistic uniformity was required.

Most of the plum and bamboo designs on the abovementioned jars and shards are painted ornately yet harmoniously with twisted and curved plum branches and upright bamboo stems. They are rendered using the *gureuk* (鈎勒, Ch. *goule*) technique in which a pattern is outlined and then filled in with color (in this case, cobalt-blue). The bamboo stems are delicately rendered with attention to details such as the veins of the leaves, and the plum branches are crafted in short, repetitive brushstrokes to accentuate their three-dimensionality. The latter technique is thought to have been devised to remedy the difficulty of creating a natural effect of light and shade using cobalt-blue pigment. The plum trees are characterized by a composition of a gnarled curving trunk that accentuates the jar's curved surface, and the bamboo is defined by bold outlines that emphasize its decorative features.

Blue-and-white porcelain with less elaborate designs of plum and bamboo have also been discovered, as evidenced by *White Porcelain Shards with Plum and Bamboo Design in Cobalt-blue* excavated from Cheongjin-dong (Fig. 4-1). Missing its rim and lower body, its overall shape is not identifiable, but the depiction and composition of the design is comparable to *White Porcelain Jar with Plum and Bamboo Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue* housed in the Museum of Oriental Ceramics in Osaka, Japan (Fig. 4-2). On both jars, the plum and bamboo motif is rendered in a simple manner using the *molgol* (沒骨, Ch. *mogu*), or boneless, technique that uses washes of ink and color. The plum blossoms on the branches are noticeably fewer compared to the aforementioned

jar in the Leeum collection (Fig. 3-2). The lotus petal bands on the shoulders and lower body have disappeared, which suggests that they were produced in the sixteenth century when Joseon blue-and-white porcelain deviated from the influence of Chinese models.

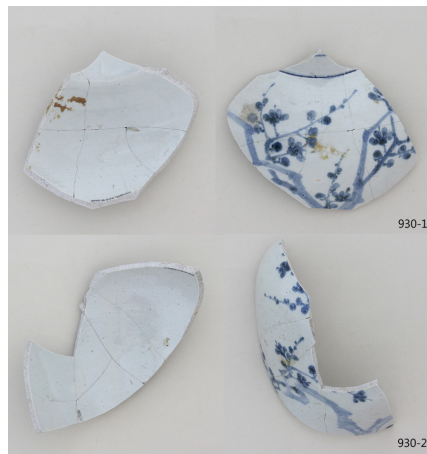
*White Porcelain Jar Shard with Plum and Bamboo Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue* and *White Porcelain Jar Shard with Plum Blossom Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue* excavated from Cheongjin-dong resemble *White Porcelain Jar with Plum, Bird, and Bamboo Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue* in the National Museum of Korea and *White Porcelain Jar with Plum and Bird Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue* in the Ewha Womans University Museum (Figs. 5-1 through 5-3). The jar shard illustrated in Fig. 5-1 was unearthed with the rim section missing, but the shape of its lower portion and the curves of the body present a striking likeness to that of the two intact examples in the National Museum of Korea and Ewha Womans University Museum. The height of the shard is 24.2 centimeters, while the vessels in the National Museum of Korea and the Ewha Womans University Museum measure 24.5 centimeters and 27.0 centimeters in height, respectively. Compared to the abovementioned jar in the Leeum collection, the shoulders of the shards excavated from Cheongjin-dong and the two intact examples are lower and they feature simpler designs with more empty space left in the background. These traits can be attributed to the sixteenth century.

Floral scrolls, which are a typical motif of blue-and-white porcelain from the early Joseon period, strongly reflect influences of blue-and-white porcelain of Ming China. Many examples adorned with floral scrolls were excavated from sites in Seorin-dong and Cheongjin-dong in Jongno-gu. Floral scrolls





**Fig. 5-1.** White Porcelain Jar Shard with Plum and Bamboo Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue. Joseon, 15th–16th century. Height: 24.2 cm. Excavated from Cheongjin-dong Districts Nos. 12–16. Seoul Baekje Museum (Hanul Research Institute of Cultural Heritage 2013c, Fig. 850)



**Fig. 5-2.** White Porcelain Jar Shards with Plum Blossom Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue. Joseon, 15th–16th century. Height: 11.9 cm (top right). Excavated from Cheongjin-dong District No. 5. Seoul Museum of History (Hanul Research Institute of Cultural Heritage 2012, Fig. 930)



**Fig. 5-3.** White Porcelain Jar with Plum, Bird, and Bamboo Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue. Joseon, 15th–16th century. Height: 24.5 cm. National Museum of Korea (National Museum of Korea 2015, Fig. 64)



**Fig. 6-1.** White Porcelain Shard with Bosanghwa Scroll Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue (body). Joseon, 15th–16th century. Length: 8.2 cm. Excavated from Cheongjin-dong Districts Nos. 2 and 3. Seoul History Museum (Hanul Research Institute of Cultural Heritage 2013a, p. 52)



**Fig. 6-2.** White Porcelain Rimmed Dish with Floral Scroll of the Four Seasons Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue. Joseon, 15th–16th century. Diameter: 20.0 cm (mouth). Dewazakura Museum of Art (Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka 1991, Fig. 1)

are also the most common design on Ming Chinese blue-and-white porcelain excavated from sites within the city wall of Seoul, which indicates a preference for floral scrolls at this time (Park Jungmin 2013, 38–39). Because the floral scrolls are found mostly on body shards, it is difficult to extrapolate the complete forms of the original vessels bearing this design. However, considering that the walls are thick and the motifs relatively large, the shards are presumed to have been from jars.

The flowers of the four seasons, featuring scrolls with different kinds of flowers, represent a motif that demonstrates a heavy influence from Ming Chinese blue-and-white porcelain. A shard from the body of a jar featuring the flowers of the four seasons was discovered at a Cheongjin-dong site (Fig. 6-1). Only a few intact blue-and-white porcelain wares decorated with these four-season flowers have survived today, including *White Porcelain Jar with Flowers of the Four Seasons Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue* housed in Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art and *White Porcelain*

*Rimmed Dish with Floral Scroll of the Four Seasons Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue* housed in the Dewazakura Art Museum in Japan (Fig. 6-2). The shard excavated from Cheongjin-dong features two different large floral designs, which are presumed to be part of a four-season floral scroll design. The design is executed in relatively delicate detail, and the elaborate flowers add to its splendor.

*White Porcelain Shard with Bosanghwa Scroll Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue* excavated from Cheongjin-dong is 16 centimeters wide, 2.3 centimeters thick, and relatively crude in form (Fig. 7). This body shard features fairly large *bosanghwa* flowers and scroll motifs elaborately painted in cobalt-blue pigment, yet its glazed surface is cracked and the pigment is smudged. The *bosanghwa* motifs is rendered as if being viewed from the side rather than from above, which is common to blue-and-white porcelain of Ming China.

*White Porcelain Lid Shard with Bosanghwa Scroll Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue* excavated from Seorin-dong is remarkably



**Fig. 7.** White Porcelain Shard with Bosanghwa Scroll Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue (body). Joseon, 15th-16th century. Length: 12.0 cm. Excavated from Cheongjin-dong Districts Nos. 2 and 3. Seoul History Museum (Hanul Research Institute of Cultural Heritage 2013a, p. 54)



**Fig. 8-1.** White Porcelain Lid Shard with Bosanghwa Scroll Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue. Joseon, 15th-16th century. Height: 5.2 cm. Excavated from Seorin-dong. Seoul History Museum (Hangang Institute of Cultural Heritage 2012, p. 198)



**Fig. 8-2.** White Porcelain Rimmed Dish with Bosanghwa Scroll Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue. Joseon, 15th-16th century. Diameter: 22.7 cm (mouth). Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka (National Museum of Korea 2015, Fig. 60)

similar in design to two dishes bearing the identical title of *White Porcelain Rimmed Dish with Bosanghwa Scroll Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue* respectively housed in the Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka and Nezu Museum in Japan (Figs. 8-1 and 8-2). The flowers surrounded by scrollwork are painted using the *gureuk* technique in which the flowers are outlined and filled with color. A shard featuring the same scroll design was discovered in Cheongjin-dong. In terms of composition, the design reflects influences Ming Chinese blue-and-white porcelain, yet it differs in that unlike the stylized scroll designs of Ming China, the scrolls are rendered in an irregular manner across an empty background and the floral motif is reminiscent of a sunflower viewed from above.

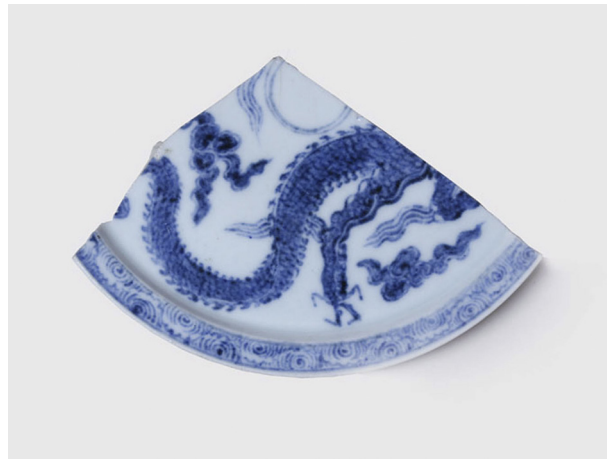
Two shards bearing the same title, *White Porcelain Jar Shard with Dragon and Cloud Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue* were also discovered at a Cheongjin-dong site. One of the shards has an upright mouth with a slightly inverted rim and broad shoulders, suggesting that it comprised large, tall jar of high-quality porcelain delicately decorated with clear and bright cobalt-blue pigment (Fig. 9-1). The shape of the mouth and shoulder and the composition of the design recalls a dragon jar illustrated in the *Gukjo oryewi* (國朝五禮儀, Book on the Five Rites of State, 1474) (Fig. 9-2).

There are two representative examples of blue-and-white porcelain decorated with dragons and clouds in the collection of Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art; both carry the same title of *White Porcelain Bottle with Dragon and Cloud Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue* (Fig. 9-3). The vigorous dragons and clouds on the bottles are similar to the dragons on the shards from Cheongjin-dong. Therefore, it can be assumed that the designs rendered on the Cheongjin-dong jar shards depict the propitious vapors surrounding the head and body of a dragon. A similar shard of a blue-and-white porcelain jar with dragon and cloud design was excavated from the Usan-ri kiln site No. 9 in Gwangju, Gyeonggi-do Province (Fig. 9-4). The shard has horizontal lines across the upper and lower parts of the mouth which is decorated with large cloud patterns. The body features a dragon executed in dynamic brushwork, and the detailed depiction of the scales of the dragon resembles its counterparts on shards from Cheongjin-dong. Moreover, *White Porcelain Lid Shard with Cloud Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue* excavated from Cheongjin-dong is similar to an example recovered from the Beoncheon-ri kiln site No. 9. Considering its flaring rim and the composition of the design, this lid shard is thought to have formed a pair with a jar with a dragon and cloud design.

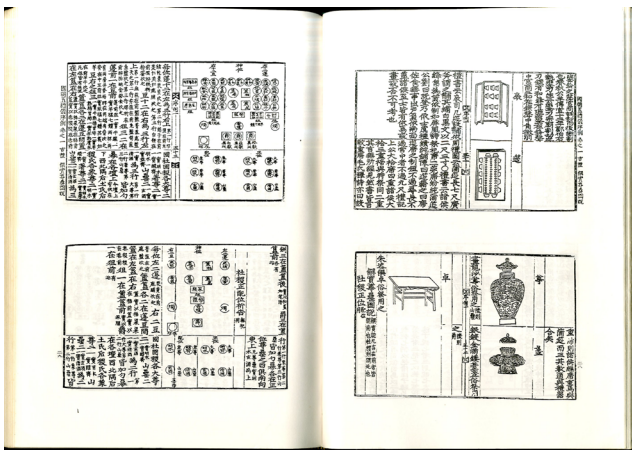
### Rimmed Dishes

Rimmed dishes, characterized by a form strongly influenced by metalware, were used as rests for cups (Jeon Seungchang 1997, 101-110). They are unique in that, unlike conventional dishes, the interior base is plane and they have a raised flat rim. The inner base usually features highly pictorial designs or poetic verses written in a variety





**Fig. 9-1.** White Porcelain Jar Shard with Dragon and Cloud Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue. Joseon, 15th-16th century. Height: 13.1 cm (left). Length: 8.6 cm (right). Excavated from Cheongjin-dong Districts Nos. 12-16. Seoul Baekje Museum (Hanul Research Institute of Cultural Heritage 2013a, Fig. 838)



**Fig. 9-2.** Illustration of a dragon jar in the *Gukjo oryui*. Joseon, 1474 (National Museum of Korea 2015, Fig. 35)

of scripts. There are a number of rimmed dishes among the ceramics unearthed from the sites of official court kilns in Gwangju, Gyeonggi-do Province, and several well-preserved heirlooms of this type have survived to this day. Thus, it can be presumed that rimmed dishes were produced and used as one of the major forms of blue-and-white ceramics in the early Joseon period. This is also indicated by finds from sites within the city wall of Seoul, where 21 rimmed dishes were discovered, thus outnumbering other types of blue-and-white porcelain. Moreover, a considerable number of lower-body shards retrieved from these sites are believed to be the feet of rimmed dishes.

Rimmed dishes were produced in a wide range of sizes, but regardless of



**Fig. 9-3.** White Porcelain Bottle with Dragon and Cloud Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue. Joseon, 15th-16th century. Height: 25.0 cm. Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art (National Museum of Korea 2015, Fig. 55)



**Fig. 9-4.** White Porcelain Jar Shard with Dragon and Cloud Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue. Joseon, 15th-16th century. Excavated from the Usan-ri kiln site No. 9. Height: 22.0 cm. Ewha Womans University Museum (National Museum of Korea 2015, Fig. 17)



**Fig. 10-1.** *White Porcelain Rimmed Dish with Fish and Water Plant Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue.* Joseon, 15th-16th century. Diameter: 22.7 cm (mouth). Private collection in Japan (Ebine Toshio 1999, p. 255)

size they were fired in the same kilns. By the late sixteenth century, rimmed dishes had been reduced in size and the concavity had been increased to form a taller dish (Song Hojin 2013, 34). Rimmed dishes excavated within the Seoul city wall range from 18 to 22 centimeters in diameter and span 1.5 to 2.8 centimeters in height. This is within the parameters of the examples excavated from kiln sites from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as well as of other surviving examples from this period.

The rimmed dishes discovered in Cheongjin-dong are predominantly decorated with fish and water plant designs. A total of six rimmed dishes depicting fish or water plants were excavated from Cheongjin-dong. Among heirlooms, there are three definitive examples of blue-and-white porcelain adorned with fish and water plant designs. These are *White Porcelain Jar with Fish and Water Plant Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue* housed in Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art; *White Porcelain Flat Bottle with Fish and Water Plant Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue* in the Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka; and *White Porcelain Rimmed Dish with Fish and Water Plant Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue* in a private collection in Japan (Fig. 10-1). In addition, a shard from a rimmed dish was found at the Beoncheon-ri kiln site No. 9 that features a water plant that appears to be part of a fish design. Among the intact surviving blue-and-white porcelain embellished with fish designs, the iconography of the Chinese proverb tiaolongman (登龍門, the carp leaping over the dragon's gate) in which a fish leaps over water plants is an often-used decoration.

Shards of rimmed dishes with fish designs excavated from Cheongjin-dong feature not only depictions of fish dynamically twisting and leaping, but also of them peacefully swimming amid water plants (Figs. 10-2 and 10-3). The latter motif is not



**Fig. 10-2.** *White Porcelain Rimmed Dish Shard with Fish and Water Plant Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue.* Joseon, 15th-16th century. Height: 1.8 cm. Excavated from Cheongjin-dong Districts Nos. 2 and 3. Seoul History Museum (Hanul Research Institute of Cultural Heritage 2013a, p. 96)



**Fig. 10-3.** *White Porcelain Rimmed Dish Shard with Fish and Water Plant Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue.* Joseon, 15th-16th century. Height: 2.1 cm. Excavated from Cheongjin-dong Districts Nos. 2 and 3. Seoul History Museum (Hanul Research Institute of Cultural Heritage 2013a, p.84)

found among heirlooms. The depiction of water plants and fish is executed in minute detail, and three-dimensionality is suggested through the use of light and shade. No features of the shards of such rimmed dishes are alike, and each displays distinctive brushwork and composition, demonstrating the pictorial quality of fish painting in the early Joseon period.

The Cheongjin-dong area also yielded *White Porcelain Rimmed Dish Shard with Crab Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue*, whose flat inner base is decorated with a crab motif in cobalt-blue pigment (Fig. 11). Although the coloring is rather somber, the crab is rendered in a highly sophisticated manner. The claws and even the hairs on the legs of the crab are meticulously depicted against a background of sparsely arranged reeds. Fish and crabs





**Fig. 11.** White Porcelain Rimmed Dish Shard with Crab Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue. Joseon, 15th–16th century. Diameter: 19.6 cm (mouth, restored). Excavated from Cheongjin-dong Districts Nos. 2 and 3. Seoul History Museum (Hanul Research Institute of Cultural Heritage 2013a, p.51)



**Fig. 12.** White Porcelain Rimmed Dish Shard with Bird and Flower Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue. Joseon, 15th–16th century. Diameter (mouth): 22.0 cm. Excavated from Cheongjin-dong Districts Nos. 12–16. Seoul Baekje Museum (Hanul Research Institute of Cultural Heritage 2013c, Fig. 1716)

are both iconographic representations of a fruitful career, and using rimmed dishes with these designs as saucers could be understood as an expression of the desire for such success in life. Therefore, rimmed dishes with fish or crab designs befitted scholar-officials more so than the royal household, and could have possibly been used as royal gifts or at royal banquets attended by officials (Kim Hyejeong 2017, 149–150). Also found at the same site is *White Porcelain Rimmed Dish Shard with Bird and Flower Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue* (Fig. 12). This dish shows two concentric circles in the center of the inner base, while birds and trees densely fill the rest of the base in the register between the circles and the rim. This decorative arrangement finds no parallel among heirlooms.

The abovementioned examples correspond with records indicating that blue-and-white porcelain wares of the early-Joseon period were decorated by court painters and therefore provide material for studies of Joseon painting. There are only a small number of extant bird-and-flower paintings from the early Joseon period, but studies have revealed that bird-and-flower paintings were produced at the royal court in the late sixteenth century. This suggests that blue-and-white porcelain wares with bird and flower designs reflect the culture and penchants of the royal court of the late sixteenth century.

In addition to jars and rimmed dishes, there are other types of unearthed blue-and-white wares, though small in number, that match the types of surviving examples, including lidded bowls, cups with two ears (兩耳盞, *yanggijan*), water droppers, and epitaph plaques. Cups with two ears are assumed to have comprised a set with a rimmed dish. Previously unseen types of blue-and-white porcelain include stem cups, flower pots, legs of an incense burner, dice, a game piece for *janggi* (將棋, Korean chess), and figurines. Among these findings, there are flower pots and water droppers adorned with plum branches executed with crude yet distinguishing brushstrokes. A piece for *janggi* with the inscription of the Chinese character 兵 (*byeong*, soldier) was discovered at the Gungsi site, and white porcelain dice featuring different Chinese characters written in cobalt-blue were found at a Cheongjin-dong site, making clear that game pieces were also produced in blue-and-white porcelain.

As examined above, a number of blue-and-white porcelain wares of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were excavated from sites within the city wall of Seoul. In terms of type, rimmed dishes and jars were the most common, and plum and bamboo and floral scroll designs were the most frequently found motifs on the wares, thus indicating the characteristics of blue-and-white porcelain of this time. In addition, unprecedented types and designs were observed, demonstrating the emergence of new styles in the early Joseon period.

### Characteristics of Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Blue-and-white Porcelain Excavated within the City Wall of Seoul

What is noteworthy about the blue-and-white porcelain found within the city wall of Seoul is that it was unearthed in the heart of the ancient capital city, an important area for the consumption of blue-and-white porcelain. Since the establishment of the Bunwon (分院), the official court kilns administered by the Saongwon (司饗院, Office of Royal Cuisine), in the years around 1467 in Gwangju, Gyeonggi-do Province, raw materials for producing white porcelain were regulated by the government

(Entry for the seventh day of the sixth month of the 12th year, *Sejoillok*, vol. 39). Moreover, according to the *Daejeon songnok* (大典續錄, Supplementary records to the Great Code) and the *Gyeongguk daejeon* (經國大典, Great Code of the State administration), ceramics produced in official court kilns in the early Joseon period were used by the royal court and government offices. They also state that others were forbidden from using them except with permission. The *Yongjae chonghwa* (慵齋叢話, Assorted writings of Yongjae) written by Seong Hyeon (成俔, 1439–1504) records the difficulties faced in the production of blue-and-white porcelain due to problems linked to the supply of cobalt-blue pigment. Nevertheless, various sites inside the Seoul city wall, including Cheongjin-dong, have yielded high-quality white porcelain as well as blue-and-white porcelain from official kilns. Although these exclusive pieces were excavated in the central region of the capital in the vicinity of the royal court and government offices, it is believed that official white porcelain and blue-and-white porcelain wares were also disseminated among the general public (Kim Youngwon 2003, 180–183).

Historical accounts have revealed that blue-and-white porcelain produced in official court kilns was indeed transmitted to places other than the royal court and government offices. The *Joseon wangjo sillok* (朝鮮王朝實錄, Annals of the Joseon dynasty) recounts that from the beginning of the dynasty kings bestowed white porcelain and blue-and-white porcelain wares. Such royal gifts were the official means by which blue-and-white porcelain could be disseminated. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, they were bestowed on several occasions, as seen in Table 3.

During the reigns of King Sejo (世祖, r. 1455–1468) and King Seongjong (成宗, r. 1469–1494), white porcelain and blue-and-white wares were bestowed seven times on the kindred of the king, court officials, and to the Seonggyungwan (成均館), the national Confucian academy. These royal gifts are recorded as including white porcelain jars and cups, blue-and-white jars,

and *hwajong* (畫鍾), which means “painted cup” and is assumed to refer to blue-and-white porcelain cups. During the reign of King Sejo the official court kilns were yet to be established, so it is uncertain where the blue-and-white items he bestowed were produced. However, according to records from 1461, a poem composed by the king was written on the interior wall of a vessel, which suggests that the gifts were highly likely to have been manufactured in Joseon (Entry for the fourth day of the sixth month of the seventh year, *Sejoillok*, vol. 24). Some of the building sites in Cheongjin-dong may have been sites of government offices or residences of royal clansmen or high-level officials, and therefore official porcelain found at the sites would probably have been transmitted through the official means of royal gifting.

However, rather than royal bestowal, the main reasons why porcelain from official kilns were disseminated among the public were due to embezzlement, theft, and private commissions. A record in the *Jungjong sillok* indicates that in 1524, Yi Chim (李忱, 1489–1526), also known as Prince Gyeongmyeong (景明君), who had supervised the Saongwon, misdirected for his personal use official wares such as porcelain jars (Entry for the 27th day of sixth month of the 19th year, *Jungjong sillok*, vol. 51). It is unknown whether the official porcelain wares referred to in the above record were blue-and-white porcelain. However, it is evident that royal porcelain was pilfered from the court, government offices, and official kilns, and that demand existed for it outside the court. Such abuse of authority could occur relatively easily because production in the Saongwon was mainly managed by high-ranking government officials of the royal family like Prince Gyeongmyeong. Evidence of such irregularities appears regularly in records after the sixteenth century.

The outflow of royal porcelain included not only theft of blue-and-white porcelain, but also stemmed from the production of ceramics for personal use at the official kilns in Gwangju (Kim Youngwon 2003, 180–183). It is recorded that in

Period		Date	Recipient (Person or Institution)	Type of object	Number of objects
Prior to the establishment of the official court kilns	King Sejo (r. 1455–1468)	28th day of the seventh month of the second year	Third State Councillor Yi Sacheol (李思哲, 1405–1456)	Large cup with blue-and-white decoration	1
		Fourth day of sixth month of the seventh year	Second State Councillor Sin Sukju (申叔舟, 1417–1475)	Cup(s) with painted decoration ( <i>hwajong</i> )	unknown
		Seventh day of the 11th month of the eighth year	Grand Prince Imyeong (臨瀛大君, 1420–1469), Yang Jeong (楊汀, died 1466), Chief State Councillor Sin Sukju, and others	Cup with painted decoration ( <i>hwajong</i> )	1 each
After the establishment of official court kilns	King Seongjong (r. 1469–1494)	21st day of the eighth month of the second year	Seonggyungwan	White porcelain jar	2
		Fourth day of the second month of the ninth year	Seonggyungwan	Blue-and-white porcelain jar, Large cup with painted decoration	2 each
		22nd day of the seventh month of the 20th year	Seonggyungwan	Blue-and-white porcelain jar(s)	unknown
		Seventh day of the 12th month of the 22nd year	Seungjeongwon (承政院, Royal Secretariat)	White porcelain cup(s)	unknown
	King Yeonsangun (r. 1494–1506)	29th day of the tenth month of the eighth year	Princess Hwisun (徽順公主, born 1495)	Jar with painted dragon design	Presumed

Table 3. Royal bestowal of porcelain in the fifteen and sixteenth centuries (Based on records in the *Joseon wangjo sillok*)



1540, Han Semyeong (韓世鳴), a junior eighth-ranking *bongsa* (奉事) official at the Saongwon, ordered potters to manufacture porcelain for his personal use. Although the precise extent of private production is unknown, it would seem that it was not a small amount because the record says that Han collected equal amount of porcelain from each potter (Entry for the 11th day of the fifth month of 35th year, *Jungjong sillok*, vol. 93). Moreover, the *Jungjong sillok* recounts that even people in Hamgyeong-do Province and military border districts purchased and used porcelain from Gwangju (Entries for the sixth day of the second month of the 23th year, *Jungjong sillok*, vol. 60; 18th day of the eighth month of the 33rd year, *Jungjong sillok*, vol. 88). This suggests that porcelain wares produced for private ends were being sold by government officials.

In addition, the *Gyeonhan jamnok* (遣閑雜錄), an assortment of writings by Sim Sugyeong (沈守慶, 1516–1599), records that Sim Ilseung (沈日昇), a junior ninth-ranking *chambong* (參奉) official who was a superintendent and at the same time an overseer (監造官, *gamjogwan*) of the Saongwon, requested that his uncle Sim Sugyeong compose a poem so he could have a saucer produced with the poem inscribed on it. A shard of a rimmed dish featuring this poem in iron underglaze was recovered from Cheongjin-dong, thereby demonstrating that official court kilns did produce porcelain for private use, and that these wares were distributed among the general populace.

The official court wares discovered from sites within the city wall of Seoul therefore include not only royal gifts, but possibly also wares that were pilfered from the court, government offices, and official kilns. A point worthy of note is that a far greater quantity of blue-and-white wares were excavated from the Cheongjin-dong area, where licensed shops were located, than from other areas. Based on historical records, it is assumed that the buildings in Cheongjin-dong once housed the annexes of government offices, residences of government officials and licensed merchants, as well as the palace estates of royal family members. Since such places were part of the official circulation routes of blue-and-white porcelain, the chances of discovering blue-and-white wares here are higher. Moreover, the licensed merchants who resided near centers of licensed shops had close ties with the political elite of the time, and thus it was likely possible for them to obtain blue-and-white porcelain through unofficial means such as private production or embezzlement (Park Pyeongsik 2009, 137). Blue-and-white porcelain excavated from Cheongjin-dong appears to have been circulated outside of the court through such routes. Moreover, in Cheongjin-dong, metalware, stationary goods made of stone, and Chinese ceramics were discovered together with blue-and-white porcelain, a fact which further supports the notion that people residing in this area had the wealth and drive to pursue higher culture.

## Conclusion

Excavations carried out inside the city wall of Seoul have provided an opportunity to examine the characteristics and consumption patterns of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century blue-and-white porcelain. Excavations have been conducted in various areas of the city. However, the discovery of blue-and-white porcelain from the early Joseon period has been restricted to areas housing former government offices or portions of their surroundings. It is notable that a greater amount of blue-and-white porcelain has been excavated from the Cheongjin-dong area, which encompassed a marketplace of licensed shops.

Most of the blue-and-white porcelain wares recovered from Cheongjin-dong comprised jars and rimmed dishes, and this is in accordance with surviving examples of blue-and-white porcelain. This paper examined jar shards with dragon and cloud design by making a comparison between heirlooms and their excavated counterparts and suggested that the shards could be the actual models for the illustration of a dragon jar featured in the *Gukjo oryuei*. Moreover, the sophisticated decorations on the shards, including plum and bamboo, fish, bird and flower, and crab motifs, conform to records stating that these designs were executed by court painters. Thus they can be expected to serve as resources for further studies on early Joseon paintings.

The use of blue-and-white porcelain was, at least officially, limited to the royal court and ruling class. Nevertheless, blue-and-white porcelain wares were misdirected due to systematic irregularities at the Saongwon and corruption among related officials, as well as private commissions. By investigating the rimmed dish with an inscription of a poem featured in Sim Sugyeong's book among other cases, it is proposed that the blue-and-white porcelain wares found in the Cheongjin-dong area were products of the official court kilns and that they may have been manufactured and used for private purposes.

## Translated by Park Shinhee

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