

3. Yue Ware Celadon Lamp

Height: 15.9 cm. (6 1/4 in.)

Diameter: 15.3 cm. (6 in.)

Six Dynasties period

3rd-4th century A.D.

Formerly in the collection of Anthony Hardy

The thick-walled lamp, of pale greyish stoneware body, is comprised of a basin with a wide, flattened, triple-grooved rim, raised on three husky bear-form feet, a broad, ringed stem rising in the center of the basin from a splayed base to support a shallow bowl for holding the fuel, the interior of the bowl slightly raised and the exterior with horizontal grooves. The interior of the basin and the splayed base of the stem are impressed with a faint lattice pattern. The lamp is covered overall with a thick olive-green glaze, its bright surface exhibiting crazing. The base is also glazed with the exception of five unglazed patches where it was raised on supports during firing, the center of the base deeply recessed.



The pedestaled lamp appears to have been a well-established type during the Six Dynasties period as evinced by numerous excavated examples (figs. 1-3) and a good number also in collections outside of China (fig. 4). Variations within this category include the height of the stem, how the basin is supported—whether on bear-form or hoof-shaped feet, on a wide raised foot, or produced to rest simply on a flat base. The number, size and placement of the horizontal grooves also varies; their appearance has resulted in such stems being likened to bamboo stalks. Some examples, typical of Six Dynasties Yue ware, are decorated with iron-brown spots.

The lamps are products of kilns producing high-fired wares with ferruginous glazes, much later given the appellation “celadon” in the West. The primary kilns were located in the Yuezhou region of northern Zhejiang province, some established by the later Han dynasty. The period of florescence was during the Six Dynasties period between the 3rd and 6th centuries when six dynasties ruled one after the other from Nanjing. They provided strong patronage and also inspired the production of similar wares outside of the Yuezhou area and even outside of Zhejiang province. The economic success of ceramic production was further insured by export of the wares to Southeast Asia, Korea and Japan. Such lamps appear to be products primarily of the first couple of centuries of this period, during the Wu, Western, and Eastern Jin dynasties.

Such lamps might have had some ritual function, similar to both the contemporaneous and somewhat later Korean wares of the Three Kingdoms period and Japanese Haji and early Sue wares of related pedestal shape. The Yue kilns are known to have produced a line of their high-fired wares in forms designed as *mingqi*, “spirit objects,” for burial with the deceased, including chicken coups and pig pens. Given, however, that Yue ware had come into domestic, mundane use during the Six Dynasties period, one can imagine such a utilitarian implement as the lamp functioning within one’s daily life.



Fig. 1: Yue ware celadon lamp on wide foot, Western Jin dynasty, 3rd-4th century A.D., from a tomb excavated in Wuxing, Zhejiang province dated to 300 A.D., Huzhou Museum, Hunan province, after *Zhejiang ji'nian*, Beijing, 2000, pl. 62.



Fig. 2: Yue ware celadon lamp on flat base, Eastern Jin dynasty, 4th-5th century A.D., Zhejiang Provincial Museum, after *Zhongguo taoci quanji*, vol. 4 (*Sanguo, Liangjin, Nanbeichao*), Shanghai, 1999, pl. 161, p. 158.



Fig. 3: Yue ware celadon lamp on three feet, Eastern Jin dynasty, 4th-5th century A.D., excavated near Nanjing, Jiangsu, Nanjing Municipal Museum, after *The Six Dynasties: A Time of Splendor*, Beijing, 2004, pl. 94, p. 130.



Fig. 4: Yue ware celadon lamp on three feet., Eastern Jin dynasty, 4th-5th century A.D., after Mary Tregear, *Catalogue of Chinese Greenware in the Ashmolean Museum Oxford*, Oxford, 1976, pl. 92.