

4. Unusual Yue Ware Double-Rimmed Celadon Jar

Height: 19.0 cm. (7 1/2 in.)
Diameter: 16.3 cm. (6 3/8 in.)
Six Dynasties period
3rd-4th century A.D.

The heavily potted jar is of ovoid shape, narrow at the base and rising to the rounded shoulder with two pairs of horizontal loop handles applied opposite each other and equidistant between them on each side a loop handle with a vertical orientation. Above the constricted neck the flat rim encloses a deep well surrounding an interior flat-rimmed mouth. The jar is covered overall with a thickly applied olive green glaze and enhanced with contrasting dark iron-brown décor. Below the handles on the exterior of the vessel, a series of brown strokes appear to have been rapidly brushed while each of the flattened rims is applied with small iron-brown spots dotted on with the tip of a brush. On the rough slightly concave base an unglazed patch of the light grey stoneware body burned red in the firing.



Possibly for the storage of a comestible such as honey, the deep channel around the mouth of the vessel would have been a barrier against crawling insects. If the channel were partially filled with water and a lid fitted over it, the container could be rendered airtight, not unlike, in fact the types of jars used even today for storage of pickles in China.

The origins of this clever shape appear to date back at least to the mid-3rd century A.D., evidenced, for example, by a vessel excavated from a tomb of the Wu kingdom dated to A.D. 259 (fig. 1). The excavated jar is clearly early in the history of Yue ware, adhering to modes of décor associated with bronzes, for example the *taotieh* mask appliques, along with the character of its very thin, matte, and dull greyish-green glaze. The present jar, with its loop handles and the thicker, greener glaze might be a local variation or a signpost to the future. And the inventive, utilitarian shape indeed signals an independence from the powerful traditions of Chinese Bronze Age art and also a step forward.

Despite the presence of kilns in the Yue region already during the late Han, Yue exploded on the scene after the fall of the Han. The potters took full advantage of the rich clay deposits and advances in kiln construction to produce ceramics that were hard, dense, strong, and impermeable to water. The natural resources and high-firing kilns, the sculptural talents of the potters, their skill on the potter's wheel, their fertile imaginations, the winning high-fired celadon glazes they developed, and patronage from a string of dynasties in nearby Nanjing empowered them to produce an unprecedented range of ceramic wares for use by the living and by the dead.

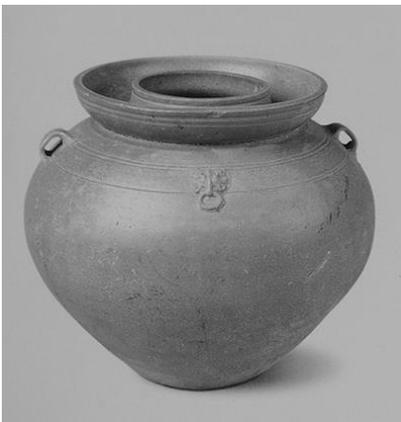


Fig. 1: Yue double-rimmed celadon jar, Wu kingdom, 3rd century A.D., excavated from a tomb in Shaoxing, Zhejiang province, dated to 259 A.D., after *Zhejiang ji'nian*, Beijing, 2000, pl. 11.



Fig. 2: Yue double-rimmed celadon jar, Western Jin period, 3rd-4th century A.D., excavated in Xishanqiao, Nanjing, Jiangsu province, after *The Six Dynasties: A Time of Splendor*, Nanjing Municipal Museum, Beijing, 2004, pl. 6, p. 33.



Fig. 3: Yue double-rimmed celadon jar, Western Jin period, 3rd-4th century A.D., excavated in Liujiashan, Nanjing, Jiangsu province, after *The Six Dynasties: A Time of Splendor* (Nanjing Municipal Museum), Beijing, 2004, pl. 8, p. 35.



Fig. 4: Yue double-rimmed celadon jar with cover, Western Jin period, 3rd-4th century A.D., excavated in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, after *The Six Dynasties: A Time of Splendor* (Nanjing Municipal Museum), Beijing, 2004, pl. 7, p. 34.