Cizhou *Sancai*-Glazed Pillow with a Garden Scene 磁州窯刻石竹榴紋三彩釉瓷枕

Length: 48.5 cm. (19 1/8 in.)
Height: 14.9 cm. (5 7/8 in.)
Width: 23 cm. (9 in.)
Jin dynasty
Late 12th-13th century

長 **48.5** 厘米
高 **14.9** 厘米
寬 **23** 厘米
金

The pillow is rectangular in form with the front and headrest gently curved, the sides angled slightly outward, and the base flat. The pillow was slab-built and the russet-colored stoneware body has a covering of white slip through which the design is incised and colorfully coated with green, yellow and red glazes. A garden scene is the subject of the design with a large dramatic rock with contorted profile and pierced with large holes as the centerpiece, a plant with round red fruit, perhaps pomegranate, growing behind and seen through the perforations in the stone, tall stalks of leafy bamboo growing to the side, a small but sturdy banana palm further off, and grasses sprouting in clumps, all set against a pale green ground and placed within a lobed green and yellow medallion. The window-like cartouche is flanked on each side by a large white lotus blossom with blushes of red on the petals above a large floppy lotus leaf and among further pointed leaves, against a yellow ground, the whole enframed by bands of white and green, The front and back are decorated with elongated pointed leaves arranged along diagonals in a zigzag pattern, in white against a green ground, framed within a white border, with a green-centered yellow floret in each triangular field. The sides are decorated with large, white, foliated scroll segments placed within yellow borders and against a green ground. A hole was punched through the front to allow gasses to escape during firing.

Ceramic pillows were such a useful and popular commodity they were produced in almost every type of ware. Yet for several centuries, during the Song, Jin, and Yuan dynasties, the Cizhou potters were the supreme masters of the craft as evinced in the great number of superbly decorated pillows still extant today, including a fair number that relate to the present example. Among these is a pillow in the Tokyo National Museum decorated with the image of a boy floating among flowers on a pale green ground (fig. 1). Another with figural theme, in the Guangdong Provincial Museum, depicts a child in a garden with fantastic rock and flowering leafy plants, yet the pillow was produced without the floral panels on either side of the main headrest scene (fig. 2). A related pillow, with a design including children playing with puppets and a fantastic rock cordoned off by an ornamental fence, was excavated in 1976 in Jiyuanxian, Henan (fig. 3). A second *sancai* pillow with a very complex design was found along with it. These pillows were buried in the vicinity of kiln remains that included fragments of a *sancai* pillow related in style to the group here, thus providing a likely provenance for the entire group.[1]

The Cizhou *sancai* pillows were in the tradition of the Tang *sancai* wares technically but not stylistically. The incised lines allowed colors to be

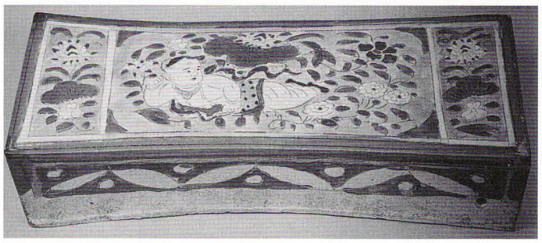

Fig. 1: *Sancai*-glazed Cizhou ceramic pillow with garden scene, Jin, 12th-13th century, Tokyo National Museum, after *Sekai Tōji Zenshū*, vol. 12 (Liao, Jin, Yuan), Tokyo, 1981, pl. 94, p. 113.

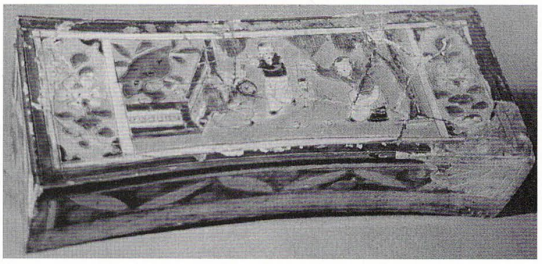

Fig. 2: *Sancai*-glazed Cizhou ceramic pillow with design of youth standing with flowers, Jin, 12th-13th century, after *Guangdongsheng bowuguancang taocixuan*, Beijing, 1991, pl. 92.

controlled and gave the decorators the means to create all varieties of pictorial scenes. Yet the decorators of these pillows appear to have been content with a fairly limited range: garden scenes and children; flowers and bamboo, sometime ducks or other animals. The black- and brown-slip painted pillows provided the clients of the Cizhou kilns with semblances of ink monochrome paintings that were the height of fashion during the Yuan, and furthermore included scenes that were both literary and historical. The colorful pictorial creations represented in the *sancai* pillows appealed to the more emotional and even imaginative side of human nature, and images of young boys were considered very auspicious, along with the pomegranate fruits, manifesting the general wish for plentiful sons. The pillow here with its fantastic garden rock and bamboo is one of the most "literary" of its kind, with the subjects from nature it depicts particularly close to the hearts of the cultured elite.

1. See *Chinese Ceramic Pillows: The Mr. & Mrs. Yeung Wing Tak Gift*, Hong Kong, 1993, nos. 142-144, *et. al.*, for related pillows which are also attributed to this kiln. Also see *Kaikodo Journal*, XV, Spring 2000, no. 58, especially pp. 332-333.

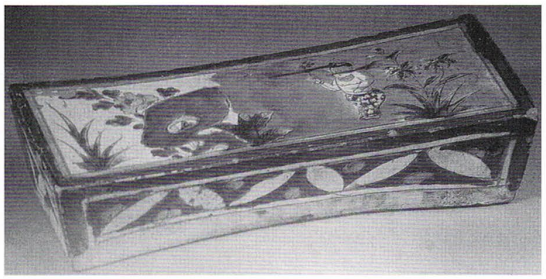

Fig. 3: *Sancai*-glazed Cizhou ceramic pillow with design of boys playing in garden. Jin, 12th-13th century, excavated in Jiyuanxian, Henan, after *Wenwu*, 1981:1, pl. I (bottom).