Glazed Ceramics from Qaraqorum – Archaeological Evidence on Routes to the Old-Mongolian Capital

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Abstract: The Old-Mongolian capital Qaraqorum is described in historical sources as a vivid, international, and multicultural city with constant exchange and contacts across cultures. This is particularly so in a description that the Franciscan friar William of Rubruck made while visiting Qaraqorum in the year 1254. Rubruck noted that Muslim traders, Chinese craftsmen, Buddhists, Nestorian Christians as well as several European captives all lived and worked in Qaraqorum. Despite this, the city is seldom included on maps depicting Eurasian and Inner Asian travel and trade networks of the 13th–14th century. Such networks have left archaeological traces at various city sites, through the presence of imported ceramics, food, and other goods. This article will focus on the glazed ceramics excavated in Qaraqorum. The author classified the material and determined the production sites of the different wares. A chorological study based on this data expands our knowledge of connections to Qaraqorum in the medieval Asian trade network. The results are presented in this article. As every aspect of archaeological research reflects parts of the overall picture only, this study is meant to enable further research on the subject. This article is dedicated to the symposium "800 years Qaraqorum" and thus included in a broader research framework on the fascinating Old-Mongolian capital.

Keywords: Chinese Ceramics, Song, Yuan, Ceramic Road, Qaraqorum

In researching routes and connections to Qaraqorum, one starting point is a search for what is known already. Then, additional research material can be analyzed and studied. In this study, the sources on Qaraqorum and its location in the Inner Asian/Eurasian network are briefly reviewed. Following this, the glazed ceramics from Qaraqorum are described and an analysis of the material is given which expands our knowledge of the routes to the Old-Mongolian capital.

Political Framework

According to the famous inscription from the year 1346, Qaraqorum was founded by Chinggis Qan (r. 1206–1227) in the year 1220.[1] As stated in this inscription, the reason for the foundation of the capital in the Orkhon valley was of a political nature.

[1] H.-G. Huettel and U. Erdenebat, *Karabalgasun und Karakorum. Zwei spätnomadische Stadtsiedlungen im Orchon-Tal* (Ulaanbaatar: Mongolyn Shinzhlėkh Ukhaany Akademi, 2009), 8.

Qaraqorum had traditionally served as a base for state formation.[2] Surely, its location was well-considered. In this connection Franke and Twitchett state that the Orkhon valley was "the core territory of all previous nomadic polities of the eastern steppe. According to pre-Mongolian Turkic traditions, good fortune (*qut*) and imperial power [were] strongly associated with possession of these holy mountains." [3] In terms of strategic considerations, the location of Qaraqorum in the Orkhon valley enabled military access to the Ordos Desert and China.[4] Bemman et al. emphasize that the city is "positioned like a keystone […] at the major migration line, allowing the permanent control of every kind of travel and migration activities."[5] Though the location of Qaraqorum seems to have been carefully considered concerning political control, there were recurring problems, for example with its supply of grain. Judging from archaeobotanical analyses most of the plants that were consumed in Qaraqorum were imported.[6] Historical sources reveal that multiple attempts to cultivate crops in the surroundings of the city were ultimately unsuccessful.[7] Consequently, Qaraqorum depended on the import of grain from modern-day northern China. This dependency allowed Qubilai Qa'an (r. 1260–1294) to lay siege to his rival Ariq Böke (r. 1260–1264) when fighting over the position of supreme khan of the Mongol Empire. Qubilai used his power over northern China to ban all imports from there to Qaraqorum. The city suffered a great famine before Ariq Böke finally surrendered in 1264.[8] From then on, Qaraqorum was part of Qubilai's khanate and later belonged to the Yuan Dynasty (1271/79–1368) which Qubilai proclaimed in 1271/72.[9] The capital of the Yuan Dynasty was the newly built Dadu (modern-day Beijing) which was located

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[2] Huettel and Erdenebat, *Karabalgasun und Karakorum*, p. 8.

[3] H. Franke and D. C. Twitchett eds., *The Cambridge History of China. Vol. 6. Alien Regimes and Border States, 907–1368* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 347.

[4] Franke and Twitchett, *The Cambridge History of China,* 341.

[5] J. Bemmann, E. Pohl, B. Schütt and W. Schwanghart, "Archaeological Findings in the Upper and Middle Orkhon Valley and their Geographical Setup." In *Mongolian-German Karakorum Expedition Vol. 1. Excavations in the Craftsmen Quarter at the Main Road.* eds. J. Bemmann, U. Erdenebat and E. Pohl (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2010), 307-19. p. 307.

[6] M. Roesch, E. Fischer, T. Märkle and B. Oyuntuya, "Medieval Plant Remains from Karakorum, Mongolia." in *Mongolian-German Karakorum Epedition Vol. 1. Excavations in the Craftsmen Quarter at the Main Road,* eds. J. Bemmann, U. Erdenebat and E. Pohl (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2010), 219-49. esp. p. 233.

[7] U. B. Barkmann, "Qara Qorum (Karakorum) – Fragmente zur Geschichte einer vergessenen Reichshauptstadt." In *Qara-Qorum-City (Mongolia) I. Preliminary Report of the excavations 2000/2001*, eds. H. R. Roth, U. Erdenebat, E. Nagel and E. Pohl (Bonn: Bonn Institut of Pre- and Early Historical Archeology, 2002), 5-21. p. 14.

[8] E. Pohl, "Interpretation without Excavation – Topographic Mapping on the Territory of the first Mongolian Capital Karakorum." in *Current Archaeological Research in Mongolia. Papers from the First International Conference on "Archaeological Research in Mongolia" held in Ulaanbaatar, August 19th–23rd, 2007*, eds. J. Bemmann, H. Parzinger, E. Pohl and D. Tseveendorzh (Bonn: Vor- und Frühgeschichtliche Archäologie, Rheinische Friedrich.Wilhems-Universität, 2009), 505-33. p. 514 with further references.

[9] Franke and Twitchett, *The Cambridge History of China*, 616; J. D. Langlois ed., *China under Mongol Rule* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981). p. 3.

in the border region between the sedentary culture of the Chinese and the nomadic culture of the Mongols. It is assumed that Qubilai chose this location in order to side with the Chinese without abandoning the Mongols during the political shift to civic consolidation and empire building.[10] Although Qaraqorum lost its status as a capital during this time, the city remained of high political importance for retaining power over the original Mongol territories. It was thus necessary for the successors to the throne of the Yuan Dynasty to have a residence in Qaraqorum.[11] Additionally, Qubilai founded new postal stations in order to provide a strategic and commercial link between Qaraqorum and his capital Dadu.[12]

Generally, Qaraqorum is hardly mentioned in historical sources of the 14th century. The Yuan Dynasty was characterized by a constant change of emperors and ongoing conflicts of power during this time.[13] With the fall of the Yuan Dynasty in 1368, its last emperor Toghon Temür (r. 1333–1368 and 1368-1370) opted to retreat to Qaraqorum. An official from his entourage documented the events of this flight.[14] But the army of the succeeding Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) reached Qaraqorum in 1380 or 1388 and destroyed the city.[15]

Overall, this brief review shows that Qaraqorum was of high political relevance and strongly connected to the territory of modern-day China. The city relied on the supply of grain from this region and the ruling Mongol emperors of the Yuan Dynasty exercised control over Qaraqorum. Postal relay routes between Dadu and Qaraqorum were maintained and provided commercial and other links. Regarding the geographical position of Qaraqorum in the Yuan Empire, the city was located at the northern margin of the realm. At the same time, its location was strategically relevant to nomadic territories of the steppe. In terms of trade and continental communication the role of Qaraqorum is largely unknown. Generally, the commonly known trade routes of the time are located approx. 500 km south of the city.

Trade Connections

In brief, despite the fact that major trade routes belonging to the Silk Road crisscrossed Asia during this time, only a few documents are known that specifically include Qaraqorum in this extensive network. These include two travel reports from the 13th century, written by John of Plano Carpini and the Franciscan Friar William of

[10] Franke and Twitchett, *The Cambridge History of China*, p. 419, 454; Sh. McCausland, *The Mongol Century. Visual Cultures of Yuan China, 1271–1368* (London: Reaction Books, 2014). p. 28.

[11] Barkmann, "Qara Qorum (Karakorum)", p. 17.

[12] Franke and Twitchett, *The Cambridge History of China*, p. 445.

[13] For a short overview see McCausland, *The Mongol Century*, p. 178.

[14] P. Olbricht ed., *Zum Untergang zweier Reiche. Berichte von Augenzeugen aus den Jahren 1232-33 und 1368-70. Aus dem Chinesischen übersetzt von Erich Haenisch* (Wiesbaden: Komissionsverlag F. Steiner, 1969). pp. 27-41.

[15] E. Pohl, "Interpretation without Excavation", p. 515.

Rubruck. Both of their travel routes were published by Shepherd among others.[16] As Rubruck resided in Qaraqorum in 1254, under the reign of Möngke Khan (r. 1251–1259), his description of the city is one of the main historical sources on Qaraqorum. Several translations of his itinerary are available. The present article uses the German translation by Leicht.[17] Most of the contemporaneous European travel reports are collected by Yule.[18] An overview on travel reports of people going from China to Europe is given by Toepel.[19] Following the foundation of Dadu in 1264, and because of its function as the Yuan capital in the 14th century, the described travel routes from the 14th century run along the Silk Road to Dadu and do not mention detours to Qaraqorum. A mapping of these routes is available online as part of the author's PhD.[20]

Whether Chinese ceramics, which are going to be the subject of this study, were part of the regular trading goods on these routes, is under discussion. Medley does assume that there was trade with Chinese ceramics on the Silk Road during the 10th–14th century.[21] Routes to Qaraqorum, however, are not included in her map. Wang Xie doubts the existence of a so-called "continental ceramic-road" (Chin. *lushang taoci zhilu*, 陆上陶瓷之路) and argues that goods such as southern Chinese ceramics were transported overland for the Mongol aristocracy only.[22] Southern Chinese ceramics in particular are better known from the sea trade with South-East Asia.[23] As Qaraqorum clearly was strongly influenced by the Mongol aristocracy, it should be kept in mind that traceable transport routes and connections to Qaraqorum do not necessarily correspond to regular trading routes for these wares. This subject requires further research that includes additional sites. Still, a determination of the production sites of the glazed ceramics found in Qaraqorum clearly displays connections between the city and the production centers.

Regarding the agents of trade during the Yuan Dynasty it is noteworthy that long-distance trade is specifically associated with Muslim merchants who formed

[16] W. R. Shepherd, *The Historical Atlas* (New York 1926).

[17] Wilhelm von Rubruck*, Reise zu den Mongolen. Von Konstantinopel nach Kaakorum. 1253–1255*, ed. H. D. Leicht (Wiesbaden: Marixverlag GmbH, 2012).

[18] Sir H. Yule ed., *Cathay and the Way Thither. Vol. III. Missionary Friars: Rashiduddin, Pegolotti, Marignolli* (Taipei: Ch'eng Wen Pub. Co., 1966).

[19] A. Toepel, *Die Mönche des Kublai Khan. Die Reise der Pilger Mar Yahballaha und Rabban Sauma nach Europa* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2008).

[20] A. Sklebitz, *Glazed Ceramics from Karakorum. The Distribution and Use of Chinese Ceramics in the Craftsmen Quarter of the Old-Mongolian Capital During the 13th–14th Century A. D.* (Bonn, PhD Diss., 2018). Published online https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:5-50054.

[21] M. Medley, *The Chinese Potter. A Practical History of Chinese Ceramics* (Singapore: 1989, Rprint: London: Phaidon, 2006). p. 104.

[22] Wang Xie, "Yuandai jininglu gucheng yizhi chutu ciqi jiedu = The Interpretation of Ceramics Excavated from the Yuan Dynasty City Site of Jininglu". *Beifang Wenwu* 3 (2008), pp. 54-6.

[23] D. Heng, *Sino-Malay Trade and Diplomacy from the Tenth through the Fourteenth Century* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009); F. Gipouloux, *The Asian Mediterranean. Port Cities and Trading Networks in China, Japan and Southeast Asia, 13th –21st Century* (Cheltonham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2011).

partnerships with the aristocracy via merchant associations, the so-called *ortogh*.[24] Rossabi states that these Muslim merchants often lived in rather self-contained quarters that were separated from those of the Chinese population.[25] This matches well with Rubruck's description of Qaraqorum, as he mentions a Muslim quarter. Due to its proximity to the court, many merchants gathered at its markets. Furthermore, it was the quarter where foreign envoys were housed.[26] Therefore, historical evidence for trade connections to Qaraqorum that might include goods for the aristocracy is strong. The question is whether these goods are archaeologically traceable and whether there were significant changes over time. Concerning ceramics there are no references to trade or supply of the city mentioning specific wares. Yet, ceramics are some of the most reliable archaeological sources as ceramic objects are often numerous, well preserved, and cannot be as easily recycled as for example metal wares.

Excavations

The site of Qaraqorum in the Orkhon valley, close to modern-day Kharkhorin and about 320km southwest of the modern Mongolian capital Ulaanbaatar, was first identified by either Pozdneev in 1883 or Jadrincev in 1889.[27] Crucial for the interpretation of the site as ancient Qaraqorum was also the evaluation of the Radloff-expedition in 1891.[28] The archaeological research history of the site has been repeatedly outlined in recent studies and comprehensively summarized by Becker.[29] Some of the mostly smaller excavations that took place before the year 1999 have never been fully published. Still, parts of the data are available, and some has been revised during the past years.[30] Much still remains to be researched and published.

This article is based on an analysis of findings from the excavation project "KAR-2" only. These excavations took place as part of the "Mongol-German

[24] Franke and Twitchett, *The Cambridge History of China*, p. 600, 612; McCausland, *The Mongol Century*, p. 15, 19.

[25] M. Rossabi, "The Muslims in the Early Yüan Dynasty." in *China under Mongol Rule*, ed. J. D. Langlois (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 257-95. p. 259.

[26] Leicht, *Wilhelm von Rubruck*, p. 169.

[27] Ch. Franken, *Die Befunde der „Großen Halle" von Karakorum. Die Ausgrabungen im sogenannten Palastbezirk* (Bonn: PhD Diss., 2012). pp. 34-5.

[28] *Ibid*., p. 35; E. Becker, "Die sowjetisch-mongolischen Ausgrabungen von 1948/49." in *Mongolian-German Karakorum Expedition Vol. 1. Excavations in the Craftsmen Quarter at the Main Road*, eds. J. Bemmann, U. Erdenebat and E. Pohl (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2010), 27-38. p. 27.

[29] Becker, "Die sowjetisch-mongolischen Ausgrabungen".

[30] For example Y. Konagaya and I. Elikhina, *Some Archaeological Findings of the Mongolian-Soviet Expedition Led by S. V. Kiselev. Karakorum Settlement Relicts Stored in Hermitage Museum* (Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 2014) and I. Elikhina, "The Most Interesting Artefacts from Karakorum in the Collection of the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg." in J. Bemmann, U. Erdenebat and E. Pohl eds., Mongolian-German Karakorum Expedition Vol. 1. Excavations in the Craftsmen Quarter at the Main Road. Forschungen zur Archäologie Außereuropäischer Kulturen 8 = Bonn Contributions to Asian Archaeology 2 (Wiesbaden 2010), 39-47.

Qaraqorum Expedition" (MDKE) that was founded in 1998.[31] They were conducted under the direction of Dr. Ernst Pohl during summer campaigns from 1999–2005. The preliminary results were published by Bemmann et al.[32] The surface area of the excavations that were conducted at the site KAR-2 measures about 700 m^2. The excavations are located at the main street of Qaraqorum. Some of the trenches were excavated up to the natural substratum. Overall, the excavator worked out three settlement periods.[33] The findings from the excavation can be assigned to these settlement periods and thus evaluated in relation to them. The first settlement period according to Pohl encompasses the construction of the city in about 1237 until the early period of the Yuan Dynasty in about 1280/90.[34] The second settlement period partly correlates to historically documented reconstruction works in Qaraqorum and dates to about 1280/90 until about 1310.[35] Finally, the third settlement period lasts up until the destruction of Qaraqorum in the late 14th century.[36]

Regarding the context of the excavations it is important to note that the KAR-2-project took place at a quarter of the city that is presumed to be the Chinese craftsmen quarter. The analysis on the actual craft production at the site is part of a PhD-project that, unfortunately, has been yet unpublished when the article was written.[37] Additional studies will bring a clearer picture once further data is available. For now, it is important to bear in mind that the ceramics that are analyzed in the given study belong in the context of the Chinese craftsmen quarter. Their spectrum partly differs from the ceramics that were found inside the so-calld Great Hall (a Buddhist temple) that has been excavated in Qaraqorum.[38] Unfortunately, the ceramics found at the temple-site remain largely unpublished up until now. Furthermore, data from excavations in the presumed Muslim trade quarter is not available yet, although this surely represents one of the most interesting quarters for researching connections to Qaraqorum. Overall, the informative value of the present archaeological data is limited to the specific context of the excavations at KAR-2 as far as results were accessible when writing this article. It needs to be compared with additional data sets from other excavation sites inside Qaraqorum once they are available.

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[31] Bemmann et al., *Archaeological Findings*, pp. 7-12.

[32] *Ibid*.

[33] E. Pohl, "The Excavations in the Chinese Craftsmen-Quarter of Karakorum (KAR-2) between 2000 and 2005 – Stratigraphy and Architecture." in *Mongolian-German Karakorum Expedition Vol. 1. Excavations in the Craftsmen Quarter at the Main Road*, eds. J. Bemmann, U. Erdenebat and E. Pohl (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2010), 63-136.

[34] *Ibid*., p. 126.

[35] *Ibid*., p. 133.

[36] *Ibid*., p. 134.

[37] S. Reichert, *Craft Production in the Mongol Empire. Karakorum and its Artisans* (Bonn: PhD Diss., 2020).

[38] Franken, *Die Befunde der „Großen Halle"*.

Glazed Ceramics from the Craftsmen Quarter

When the author started to work with the glazed ceramics from the excavations at the craftsmen quarter of Qaraqorum, the material was stored at the Mongolian Academy of Sciences in Ulaanbaatar. During a five month stay in Mongolia in 2011, a total of 21,164 fragments of glazed ceramic were recorded in a specially designed database. This amounts to an estimated 70% of all glazed ceramics found at the KAR-2 site. The method and the precise criteria for documenting the ceramics are published in detail by Sklebitz.[39] To establish a classification of the wares, technological features like the color and temper of the body and the color and thickness of the glaze were noted. Furthermore, typological features like shapes and décor were documented. Additional features like signs of repair and marks were also recorded. Wide ranges in each of the criteria reflect the high variety of different wares that were found at the craftsmen quarter. It is interesting to note that neither ceramic pillows nor ceramics figures were entered in the record. Still, few figurines from the site are known.

The vast range of glazed ceramics that was recorded did not match previously existing classifications. Therefore, a classification specifically for the ceramics from Qaraqorum was established. It is intended to be used in further research on the subject and thus is published in English, and is also available online for any researcher who is interested in the topic.[40]

Classification of the Glazed Ceramics

The glazed ceramics from the craftsmen quarter were classified according to the following criteria:

First, the wares were subdivided according to the ceramic group they belong to. These groups are defined as porcelain, porcellaneous wares, stonewares and earthenwares.[41] Second, these groups were subdivided according to glaze colors. This results in groups like "white glazed stoneware" and "white glazed porcellaneous ware" which is important for the determination of the production sites, as porcellaneous wares and stonewares were usually produced at different sites. Many of these groups allow comparability to known Chinese ceramics. A reference to previously used Chinese terms on the ceramics from Qaraqorum and possible kiln sites of the wares is given by Sklebitz in Appendices A+B.[42] Moreover, some of the stonewares were subdivided according to variations in body color or temper which allows additional precision and better comparability of the data for detailed research.

[39] Sklebitz, *Glazed Ceramics from Karakorum.*
[40] *Ibid*.
[41] *Ibid.*, p. 34.
[42] *Ibid.* pp. 238-41.

On the whole, 43 types of wares were determined,[43] some of which are divided into subgroups. The upper-level grouping of the wares is as follows:

- Porcelain (blue-and-white porcelain)
- Porcellaneous wares (6 types of wares, e.g. celadon and Qingbai)
- Stonewares (mostly fine tempered) with a
    - clear glaze (2 types of wares, e.g. Jiaotai)
    - white glaze (6 types of wares, e.g. Cizhou)
    - greenish glaze (2 types of wares)
    - turquoise glaze (2 types of wares)
    - thick blue to green glaze (2 types of wares, mostly Jun)
    - brown to green glaze (6 types of wares, some with a coarse temper)
    - black glaze (7 types of wares, e.g. a few Jizhou and some with a coarse temper)
    - black and white glaze (3 types of wares, e.g. Cizhou)
    - mud-colored slip (1 type of ware)
- Earthenwares (fine tempered, 5 types of wares, e.g. lusterware)

All of the glazed ceramics that were excavated at the craftsmen quarter in Qaraqorum are defined and described by Sklebitz.[44] Shapes and décor of the ceramics are described for each of the defined wares. Plates with drawings of the documented shapes and décor are included in the publication. The definitions of the wares, their shapes and characteristics allow comparability with data from other sites and commonly used definitions of Chinese ceramics. To enable further research on the material, the full classification of the glazed ceramics from Qaraqorum is published online (in English) and freely downloadable. Detailed descriptions of all the documented wares are beyond the scope of this article. It is recommended to look up specific wares individually for future research. Given below is a broad overview of the determined production sites of the ceramics found at Qaraqorum, which is a first result of the classification of the wares.

Production Sites and Specifics

In total, three main production regions can be located for the glazed ceramics found in Qaraqorum. These are northern China, southern China, and Central Asia.[45] The latter category is represented by a share of only 1.17% of all documented fragments. Basically, this is earthenware with a brick-red body and green or turquoise lead glaze plus findings of lusterware. Its production sites cannot be located at the present state of research. Most of these findings appear in lower layers of the excavation only, that is, they date to the first settlement period from about 1220–1280 (see above).

[43] *Ibid.*
[44] *Ibid.*
[45] *Ibid.* p. 199.

Concerning the production sites of the Chinese wares, potential kiln sites are traceable for many of the classified wares. Here, especially the production areas of southern Chinese ceramics are well known. This is the region around Jingdezhen in Jiangxi province as well as the region around Longquan in Zhejiang province. Overall, almost 11% of the documented fragments are attributed to southern Chinese production sites. According to Chinese classifications of these wares, these ceramics include Qinghua (blue-and-white porcelain), Qingbai (pale blue porcellaneous ware), and Longquan celadon. Southern Chinese ceramics from Qaraqorum are especially interesting for interpretation and research. As stated above, some scholars argue that southern Chinese ceramics were transported overland for the Mongol aristocracy only. Still, the findings from Qaraqorum were excavated in the craftsmen quarter. Possibly, this is an indication for a connection of the craftsmen with the Mongol aristocracy which has not yet been researched. The spectrum of southern Chinese ceramics found in Qaraqorum includes high-quality wares for specific uses as well as wares that are known as export goods for example to the Near East or South East Asia. Regarding the blue-and-white porcelain which is found in Qaraqorum from the second settlement period on, i.e. from about 1270/80, it is considered to have been produced for export and specially adapted for the Near Eastern taste.[46] However, compared with published blue-and-white porcelains of the 13th and 14th century, it is likely that the findings from Qaraqorum do not belong to export goods and wares for the imperial households but to porcelains made for the domestic market.[47] The most striking example is a finding from Qaraqorum which is associated with imperial households at first sight because of its dragon décor.[48] This finding is however comparable with stemcups made for family altars and shrines.[49] Thus, it is an indicator for Chinese domestic rituals that took place in the craftsmen quarter of Qaraqorum. Although often connected with imperial relations, blue-and-white porcelain was not necessarily an imperial ware from its beginnings. It does not seem to have been produced for official use before 1328,[50] but is found in Qaraqorum from about 1280 on (see above). Therefore, the findings of blue-and-white porcelain are especially interesting to gain further insight into the controversial early history of blue-and-white porcelain.

Further special findings from Qaraqorum include to a group of pale blue glazed porcellaneous wares. These wares are usually defined as Qingbai when describing

[46] Medley, *The Chinese Potter*, 176ff; J. Carswell, *Blue and White. Chinese Porcelain around the World* (London: British Museum Press, 2000). p. 17.

[47] Medley, *The Chinese Potter*, p. 186ff.

[48] Sklebitz, *Glazed Ceramics from Karakorum,* plate 54, fig. 9.

[49] Medley, *The Chinese Potter*, p. 187; A. D. Brankston, *Early Ming Wares of Chingtechen* (Beijing: Henri Vetch, 1938), p. 27.

[50] Liu Xinyuan, "Yuan Dynasty Official Wares from Jingdezhen." in *The Porcelains of Jingdezhen. Colloquies on Art & Archaeology in Asia No. 16*, ed. R. Scott (London: Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art, 1993), 33-46. p. 37.

Chinese ceramics. This type of ceramics is known to have been produced for the export market and thus widely distributed.[51] Notably, Qingbai vessels with black spots are known as characteristic import ceramics from China in the Philippines.[52] Interestingly, few of the findings from Qaraqorum belong to this group of Qingbai vessels with black spots that were supposed to be made for trade with South East Asia.[53]

Further, the Qingbai ceramics from Qaraqorum have other peculiarities. Some of the fragments can be identified as scholar's accoutrements. This is true especially for brush washers.[54] Furthermore, an imperial use is implied by the motif of a phoenix on one of the findings, as such motifs were exclusively produced for the court.[55] The phoenix also appears on a few findings of celadon from Qaraqorum.[56] Generally, most of the exceptional décor documented from Qaraqorum was applied on celadon. This includes auspicious symbols like the so-called miscellaneous treasures, Buddhist symbols like the endless knot or Taoist designs like the eight trigrams.[57]

Due to comparisons with celadons from the Sinan shipwreck, most of the celadon found in Qaraqorum can be associated with southern Chinese production sites like Longquan. Although much closer to Qaraqorum, hardly any of the celadon fragments found can be connected to northern Chinese celadon production sites like Yaozhou.

Generally, many of the porcellaneous wares found can be associated with southern Chinese production sites while many of the stonewares and some of the earthenwares are associated with northern Chinese production sites. A northern Chinese origin accounts for about 53% of the glazed ceramics from Qaraqorum. Additionally, about 23% of the documented ceramics are assumed to have been produced in or around the traditional northern Chinese production sites in modern-day Inner Mongolia, Liaoning or Ningxia provinces.[58] These wares are not as specialized as southern Chinese ceramics are.[59] Thus, their production regions are more extensive and differences between the products of the kiln sites are less specific. An exception is the so-called Jun ware.

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[51] R. E. Scott, "Introduction: Qingbai Porcelain and its Place in Chinese Ceramic History." in *Qingbai Ware: Chinese Porcelain of the Song and Yuan Dynasties*, ed. S. Pierson (London: Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art, 2002), 6-12. pp. 10-11.

[52] M. Crick, *Chinese Trade Ceramics for South-East Asia from the 1st to the 17th Century. Collection of Ambassadorr and Mrs Charles Müller* (Milan: 5 Continents, 2010). pp. 190, 206-207; D. Wiesner, *Chinesische Keramik auf den Philippinen. Die Sammlung Eric E. Geiling* (Köln: Museum für Orientalische Kunst, 1977). pp. 157-63.

[53] Sklebitz, *Glazed Ceramics from Karakorum,* p. 87.

[54] *Ibid*., 295, fig. 9.

[55] R. Kerr and N. Wood, "Ceramic Technology." in *Science and Civilisation in China. Vol. 5. Chemistry and Chemical Technology. Part XII: Ceramic Technology*, ed. J. Needham (Cambridge 2004). p. 202.

[56] Sklebitz, *Glazed Ceramics from Karakorum,* plate 59.

[57] *Ibid*., pp. 93-94.

[58] *Ibid*., p. 198.

[59] Kerr and Wood, *Ceramic Technology*, pp. 87-88.

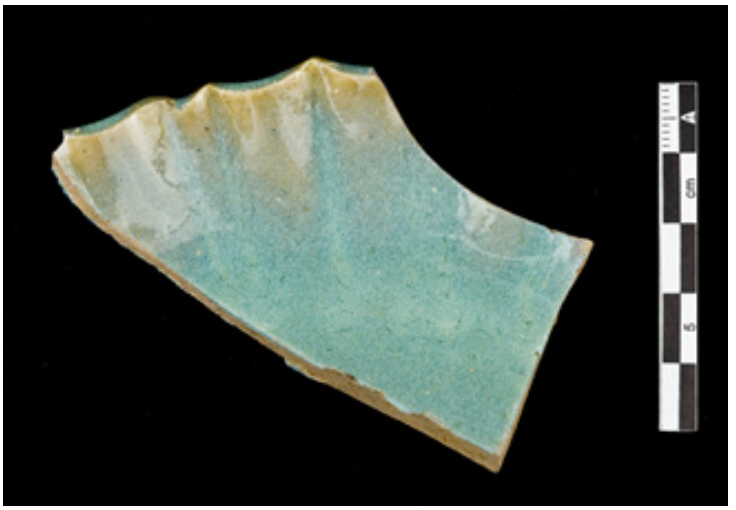

Fig. 1. Sample for Jun ware excavated in Qaraqorum. Photo by Nico Becker.

With its clearly identifiable thick blue glaze, it was a highly specialized ware that was typically produced in the region of modern-day Henan province.

In contrast, an extraordinarily broad spectrum of northern Chinese ceramics found in Qaraqorum is associated with the Cizhou kiln system, and with Cizhou type wares.[60] These ceramics were primarily produced in Hebei, Henan and Shanxi provinces. They include inter alia marbled stoneware (Jiaotai), black and white glazed stonewares, earthenwares with multicolored décor or glaze, parts of black glazed stonewares and large parts of the white glazed stonewares.

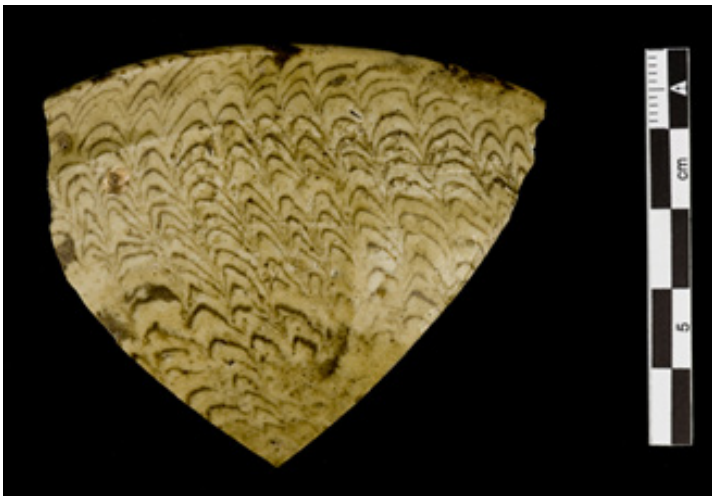

Fig. 2. Sample for Jiaotai excavated in Qaraqorum. Photo by Nico Becker.

[60] Sklebitz, *Glazed Ceramics from Karakorum*, 10ff.

Particularly stonewares with a white glaze are often associated with traditional northern Chinese kiln sites. However, these wares were copied and produced in a wider area.

Fig. 3. Sample for northern Chinese white ware excavated in Qaraqorum.
Photo by Nico Becker.

Based on studies that are available in Europe, a distinction between real Cizhou ceramics and similar wares that were possibly produced further north is currently impossible. To determine their production sites additional studies and field work is necessary. Potential kiln sites of northern Chinese wares found in Qaraqorum include Huoxian, Ding, Gangwa, Cizhou, Lizhou, Lingwu, Jiangguantung, Bacun, Jun, Duyaotai, Huairen, Zibo, Lushan, Baofeng, Jizhou, Guantai, Pengcheng, Changzhi, Bayi, Yuzhou, and Sheshou.[61]

Despite the high variety and uncertain production sites, it can be concluded that the vast majority of glazed ceramics found in Qaraqorum are northern Chinese wares for domestic use. Most of the special findings from Qaraqorum that are striking because of their shape or décor can be associated with southern Chinese production sites. Additionally, a few Central Asian ceramics appear but seem to have been out of use by the end of the 13th century.

[61] *Ibid*., p. 201.

Fig. 4. Fragment of lusterware excavated in Qaraqorum. Photo by Nico Becker

Routes to Qaraqorum – Evidence from the Glazed Ceramics Found

What does the classification and determination of production sites of the glazed ceramics imply about Qaraqorum? First of all, there is evidence for strong connections between the city and modern-day northern China. Almost half of all the ceramics found in Qaraqorum – whether glazed or unglazed – are assumed to derive from northern China.[62] This high share can only be explained by well-working connections between Qaraqorum and the production sites. Furthermore, it correlates with the historical sources that indicate a dependency of Qaraqorum on northern China for its supply of grain (see above). During the Yuan dynasty there were also strong political connections between Qaraqorum and northern China. It is said for example that the heir to the throne of the Yuan dynasty – which was based in modern-day Beijing – also had a residence in Qaraqorum.[63] These connections seem to closely relate the city to the North of China. Regular trade routes for the supply of domestic wares that are widely distributed in Qaraqorum are to be assumed.

Secondly, there are indications that the presence of the Mongol aristocracy in Qaraqorum may have extended the trading power of the city and thus its access to luxury goods. Judging from their shapes and décor, some of the findings of glazed ceramics from Qaraqorum are attributable to the Mongol aristocracy. These include southern Chinese ceramics with phoenix décor and brush washers made for scholars and officials (see above). As these ceramics were found in the craftsmen quarter of the city, their presence needs to be explained. Maybe connections between the craftsmen and the aristocracy were close and enabled them access to luxury goods.

[62] *Ibid*., p. 206.

[63] Barkmann, "Qara Qorum (Karakorum)", p. 17.

Or maybe the general access to high-quality wares from southern China was better than commonly assumed.

As stated above, the routes to Qaraqorum for the supply of ceramics are not as self-evident as it seems at first sight – especially when referring to southern Chinese ceramics that were produced at a linear distance of about 2,500 km from the city. The share of these ceramics found in the craftsmen quarter rose significantly when southern China became part of the territory of the Yuan dynasty.[64] This was about a decade after the Mongol capital shifted from Qaraqorum to Dadu. Whether the higher share of ceramics that were imported via long-distance routes can be explained by a better accessibility in general or a higher demand for such goods by the Mongol heirs to the throne living in Qaraqorum remains unknown. Nevertheless, it proves that connections and routes of supply were running from southern China to Qaraqorum. This is why ceramics are an important source for research on the connections of Qaraqorum with the Inner Asian and Eurasian network. In terms of trade and supply routes and continental communication, the function of Qaraqorum during the Yuan dynasty is largely unknown. As far as the distribution of Chinese ceramics during the 13th and 14th century has been mapped, Qaraqorum has not been included in the network across medieval Eurasia in the research to date.[65] This needs to be changed as the classification of ceramics from Qaraqorum proves its connections to this network. Due to aspects of transportability it is supposed that ceramic trade on overland routes was less important than on maritime routes.[66] However, is it obvious that such transports took place. Unfortunately, additional information on the distribution of ceramics in city sites that are contemporaneous to Qaraqorum are scarce, especially in its surroundings. Regarding sites in Inner Mongolia, the ceramics found at Yanjialiang and Jininglu have been elaborately published.[67] In both cases the spectrum of findings is well comparable though not completely identical to the ceramics found in Qaraqorum.[68] This proves that ceramics that were undoubtedly produced in southern China (such as blue-and-white-porcelain) were distributed at several city sites far in the north. The same can be said for the site of Kharakhoto.[69] Concerning the above-mentioned city

[64] Sklebitz, *Glazed Ceramics from Karakorum,* p. 208.

[65] A. Heidenreich, *Islamische Importkeramik des hohen Mittelalters auf der Iberischen Halbinsel. Unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der frühen Goldlüsterproduktion im Untersuchungsraum* (Mainz: Philip von Zabern, 2007). p. 171, Fig. 111; V. Ciociltan, *The Mongols and the Black Sea Trade in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2012). Map 3; M. Tampoe, *Maritime Trade between China and the West. An Archaeological Study of the Ceramics from Siraf (Persian Gulf), 8th to 15th Centuries A. D* (Oxford: B.A.R., 1989). p. 421, Fig. 114d; Medley, *The Chinese Potter*, p. 104.

[66] Kerr and Wood, *Ceramic Technology*, p. 728.

[67] Ta La, Zhang Haibin and Zhang Hongxing eds., *Baotou yanjialiang yizhi fajue baogao = Excavation Report from Baotou Yanjialiang. 3 Vols.* (Beijing 2010). Chen Yongzhi, *Neimenggu jininglu gucheng yizhi chutu ciqi gaishu = Porcelain Unearthed from the Jininglu Ancient City Site in Inner Mongolia* (Beijing 2004).

[68] Sklebitz, *Glazed Ceramics from Karakorum,* p. 213-218.

[69] A. Th. Kessler, *Song Blue and White Porcelain on the Silk Road* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

sites, Kharakhoto is the only one that is located on the commonly known routes of the Silk Road. Still, the spectrum of ceramics found is the broadest in Qaraqorum, which implies a more extensive network compared to the other sites. Findings from any of the above-mentioned sites include southern Chinese ceramics. It thus needs to be considered whether this distribution can be explained by a supply of the Mongol aristocracy only[70] or whether a regular continental trade route for ceramics existed. Generally, trade with ceramics on overland routes across Yuan China and Eurasia was most likely conducted by Muslim merchants.[71] Therefore, future excavations at the Muslim quarter of Qaraqorum will surely provide further insight on this question.

Regarding the overall picture, the glazed ceramics are but one indication that the 13th and 14th century network across China and Eurasia extended further north than commonly mapped and included goods that we are not yet aware of. Although Qaraqorum was not the capital of the Yuan dynasty it held a vital function in the trade network.

The incorporation of the city in the network is supported by further sources as well, for example, the provenance of edibles documented in the city. Parts of the medieval plant remains from the excavations at the main road of Qaraqorum have been analyzed in a preliminary archaeobotanical report.[72] One of the main source areas for the imported food documented in the city was Baghdad. This correlates with a route from Qaraqorum via Tashkent to Baghdad.[73] Another source is the postulated congruence of the spread of the plague as mapped by Abu-Lughod[74] which connects Qaraqorum to Beijing and Tashkent. An additional connection of Qaraqorum with Central Asia and the network of the Silk Road is implied in the already mentioned travel itinerary of William of Rubruck as mapped by Shepherd.[75] The routes used by Rubruck are assumed to be postal routes for messengers between the Mongol rulers.[76] Apart from the great internationality in Qaraqorum that is described in Rubruck's itinerary but not yet archaeologically proven, Rubruck reports presents from the patriarch of Baghdad for the Nestorian Christians living in Qaraqorum,[77] which is another indicator for connections between Qaraqorum and the Eurasian trade route system. Finally, it needs to be kept in mind that the proximity of Qaraqorum to caravan routes is assumed to have been one of the aspects that lead to the founding of the city on the river bank of the Orkhon.[78]

[70] Wang Xie, *Yuandai jininglu*.

[71] Rossabi, *The Muslims in early Yuan Dynasty*, p. 282.

[72] Roesch et al., *Medieval Plant Remains*.

[73] Roesch et al., *Medieval Plant Remains*, p. 219, Fig. 1.

[74] J. L. Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony. The World System A. D. 1250–1350* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989). pp. 172-3, Fig. 7.

[75] Shepherd, *The Historical Atlas*, pp. 102-3.

[76] Leicht, *Wilhelm von Rubruck*, p. 26.

[77] Leicht, *Wilhelm von Rubruck*, p. 164.

[78] Franken, "Die Befunde der „Großen Halle", p. 26.

Mapping the information about Qaraqorum, the commonly known routes of the Eurasian network as well as the production sites of the glazed ceramics found in the city illustrates the need for further research on yet unknown connections. Additional roads and possibly even stronger networks are to be assumed, including a wide continental distribution of ceramics.[79]

[79] Sklebitz, *Glazed Ceramics from Karakorum*, p. 308, Fig. 61.