

# A Sea of Cultures

Medieval Ceramics across  
the Mediterranean:  
Egypt, Syria, Byzantium,  
Italy and Spain



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Egypt, Syria, Byzantium, Italy and Spain

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Catalogue by Matthew Reeves

SAM FOGG



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Map of the Mediterranean basin highlighting key pottery-producing centres represented in this catalogue



## Introduction

**I**n the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, glazed storage jars similar to the fourth item in this catalogue (which in the 14<sup>th</sup> century would have carried exotic fruits and spices from Damascus to Europe) were discovered by collectors in Sicily, still in use.

*Such stories, with their evocations of complex and layered cultural dialogues between East and West, are the subject of this exhibition, which focuses on the ceramics produced and circulated through the Islamic and Christian lands around the Mediterranean during the Middle Ages. In the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries the sources of the most sophisticated vessels were in the East; in Byzantium and particularly in the Islamic kingdoms of Syria and Egypt. The forms, the technology of glazes, and the use of lustre followed historic trade routes around the sea and to the West. From the 14<sup>th</sup> century brilliant, highly decorated wares were produced in Spain and later also in Italy.*

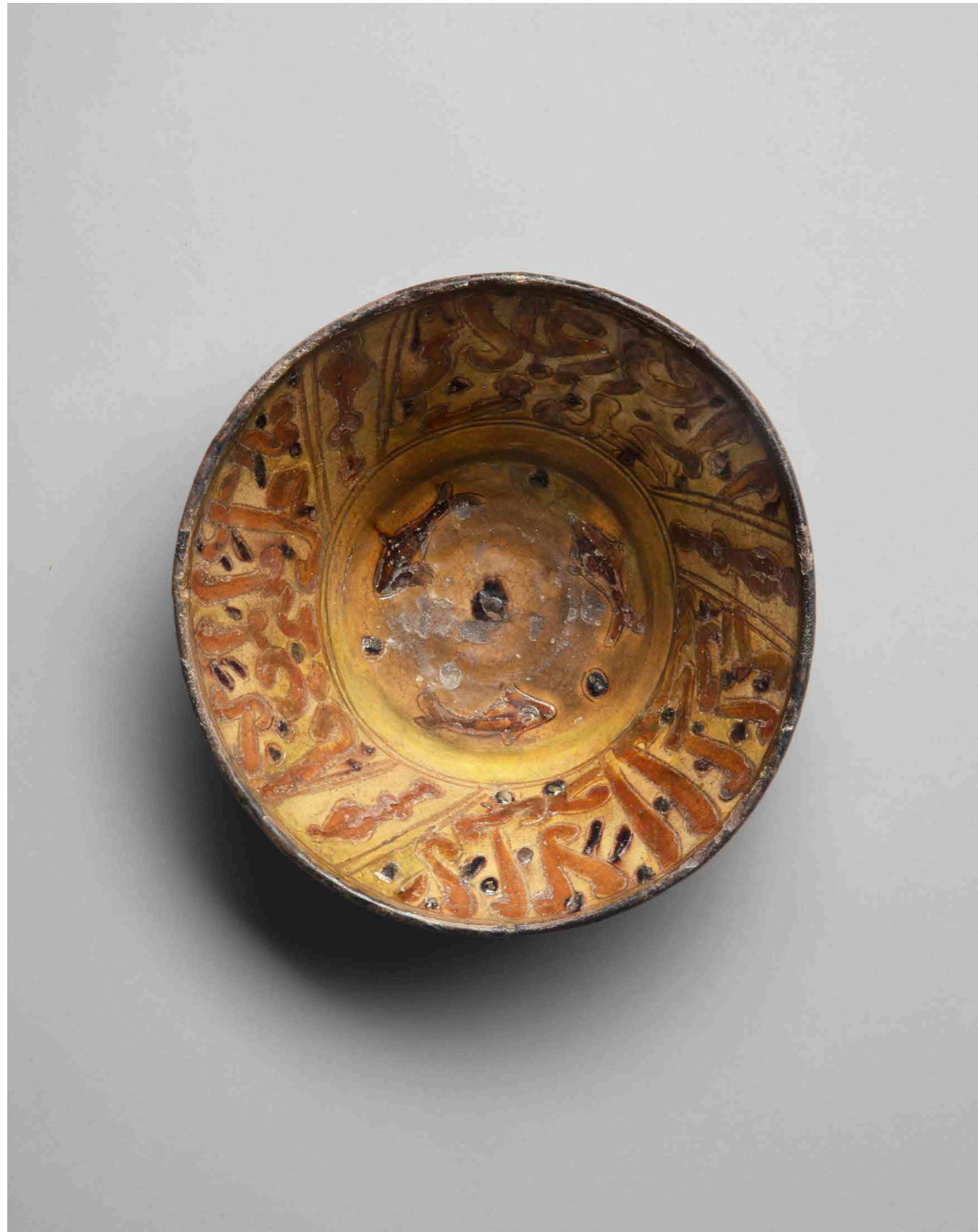
*These local styles are memorable and distinct, but there is a unity to the appearance of the ceramics produced right across the Mediterranean that reveals a tightly linked community of people connected, rather than separated, by water. Whether Christian or Islamic, they share many of the same shapes, patterns, and images, and at their best they were made with a comparable sense of freedom, ambition, and economy.*

*Sam Fogg*



# Mamluk Egypt and Syria

# 1 An inscribed conical bowl emblazoned with the emblem of the arms bearer



Three fish swim around the centre of this deep conical bowl, their silhouettes picked out in a rich brown glaze against the surrounding slip-covered background. Diagonal spokes divide the steep flaring sides of the vessel above them into three fields, which are filled with Arabic inscriptions in *thuluth* calligraphy picked out using a honey-hued glaze within fine sgraffito borders. Within the spokes themselves are depictions of maces. Splashes of green glaze decorate a short section of the exterior just below the rim, but the potter seems to have abandoned the design elsewhere in favour of a clear, unified glaze.

As is also the case for the larger bowl in this catalogue (see Cat. 3), the form and decoration of this conical bowl is typical of a well-known and chronologically defined group of Mamluk ceramics carrying intricate sgraffito designs that date to the first half of the fourteenth century. They were produced in Mamluk Cairo and particularly in Fustat by potters who occasionally signed their wares, a practice that suggests ceramic production was considered a noble rather than quotidian practice. A number of fragments have been excavated at Alexandria, Luxor and Fustat, and intact examples are preserved in institutional collections including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the London museums<sup>1</sup>, and the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo.<sup>2</sup>

The incorporation of mace emblems in three prominent places on our example associates it with the office of the arms bearer (*silahdar*), who were a privileged part of the Sultanate guard during the reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (d. 1341) and represented a high amiral class in Mamluk

**Mamluk Egypt**  
c. 1300-1340

12.2 cm (height) x 23.9 cm (diameter); Earthenware with brown, green, and clear glazes, with incised decoration over a cream-coloured slip on red clay, potted with a slightly carinated body raised on a tall, flaring foot. The exterior and underside of the foot thickly glazed and slip-coated. Repaired breaks across the body. Some chip losses to the glaze around the rim of the vessel and to parts of the interior decoration, as well as small chips to the foot. Three tripod scars in the central well.

*Provenance*  
Private European collection until 2013;  
Art market, London



1, Cf. an example in the Victoria and Albert Museum, inv. C.163-1932; Geza Fehérvári, *Islamic pottery: A comprehensive study based on the Barlow Collection*, London, 1973, no. X.10, p. 133, pl. 74a.

2, Maurice S. Dimand, 'A Recent Gift of Near Eastern Art' in *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, o.s., Vol. 26 (1931), pp. 11-12; Esin Atil, *Renaissance of Islam: Art of the Mamluks*, Washington D.C., 1981, nos. 94-5.

society.<sup>3</sup> Such blazons are thought to have drawn influence from the more longstanding emblem tradition found on coinage, and were part of a wider visual system developed to help define and augment the codification of the empire's various social and military groups, as well as their roles within official ceremonial contexts.<sup>4</sup> The dedicatory tone of its *thuluth* inscriptions, which include the phrase 'from what was made for our lord, the most glorious amir, the revered, the well-served, the most exalted' is a standard formula widespread across this family of wares, and has been interpreted by modern scholars as having a public function in praise of the patron or owner.<sup>5</sup>

Mamluk potters borrowed extensively from Eastern Mediterranean ceramic traditions, especially Crusader, Seljuk, and Byzantine-derivative wares, which in turn have designs that scholars now believe may have evolved from even earlier, seventh- and eighth-century Coptic prototypes.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, the raised elements of these vessels' designs (as exemplified by the inscriptions, mace blazons, and fish<sup>7</sup> on our example), are highlighted in glazes that stand proud of and contrast dramatically with the pale slip surrounding them, an approach that echoes both visually and conceptually the metal inlays on contemporary brass vessels, which were a defining source of influence on Mamluk earthenwares during the period (fig. 1).



**Fig. 1**  
 Basin inscribed with  
 the name of al-Nāṣir  
 Muḥammad  
 Mamluk Egypt  
 Early 14<sup>th</sup> century (before  
 1341)  
 21 cm (height) x 33.7 cm  
 (diameter); engraved and  
 inlaid brass  
 Paris, musée du Louvre,  
 inv. OA7880/116



3, Atil 1981, pp. 50-53.

4, L.A. Mayer, *Saracenic Heraldry*, Oxford, 1933; see also Bethany J. Walker, 'Ceramic Evidence for Political Transformations in Early Mamluk Egypt', in *Mamluk Studies Review*, Vol. 8/1 (2004), pp. 1-114, p. 67.

5, For a recent discussion of inscriptions on Mamluk vessels of this type see Walker 2004, especially pp. 69-70 and pp. 83-6. I am grateful to Marcus Fraser for bringing the literature on this subject to my attention, and to him and Will Kwiatkowski for their help translating the inscriptions on our vessel.

6, Walker 2004, pp. 1-114, p. 13.

7, Fish appear on another Mamluk conical bowl in the National Museums of Scotland, Edinburgh.



## 2 A signed bowl fragment inscribed with the image of a Rider on Horseback



Despite its fragmentary state, this beguiling sherd retains all the evidence of having been meticulously planned, decorated and fired by a highly skilled potter. It depicts a rider on horseback, picked out in a creamy-coloured slip against the vessel's reddish clay. At the top of his chest is an Arabic inscription that seems to read 'Muhammad' and may well be the signature of the potter himself. A golden-yellow glaze is selectively worked over the surface of the clay, pooling more thickly over a background design of tight corkscrew scribbles and throwing the figure into dramatic relief. He is depicted carrying a switch or the reins of his steed in his raised right hand, and judging from his scale, the vessel from which this fragment comes must have been a shallow bowl or a sloping-walled dish of large proportions.

Huntsmen and riders on horseback were themes that proved immensely popular for Medieval potters across a vast geographic region, and this tantalizing fragment is a vivid testament to the complex melting pot of aesthetic influences that come together on Mediterranean ceramics of the Middle Ages. Its stylistic treatment, particularly on details such as the figure's keyhole-shaped eyes and high, broad forehead, suggest that its potter was responding to forms of figurative decoration developed on Islamic ceramics from Ayyubid Syria and Fatimid Egypt; the manipulation of the red clay and its pale slip covering layer to create an image marked by strong contrasting tones was likely informed by, if not a direct attempt to imitate, the appearance of inlaid metalwork and lusted ceramics from these regions (fig. 1). It has strong formal links to surviving Fatimid vessels such as a large dish in the Freer Gallery in Washington, where the rider's forearm is brought across the body in an identical manner (fig. 2). Many of its closest material analogs are the so-called 'Zeuxippus wares', sgraffito vessels, and other Byzantine redwares



Mamluk Egypt, signed by the potter Muhammad?  
Late 13<sup>th</sup> century

10.3 x 9.7 cm; Incised slipware with a yellow-tinted glaze over cream-coloured slip on a red clay. Pale yellow glaze to the underside.

Provenance  
Collection of Maurice Bouvier (1901-1981), Alexandria, and by descent to his son George Bouvier until 2014



Fig. 1 (above)  
A lusted bowl with a huntsman on horseback  
Fatimid Egypt  
12<sup>th</sup> century  
Cairo, Islamic Art Museum

Fig. 2 (below)  
A large dish with a huntsman on horseback  
Fatimid Egypt  
12<sup>th</sup> century  
38.4 cm (diameter) x 7.5 cm (depth); Tin-glazed earthenware with lusted decoration  
Washington, D.C., Freer Gallery of Art, inv. F1941.12



traded across the Aegean, but its peculiar use of dense corkscrew mark making reveals an approach largely absent on vessels discovered as part of excavations across this region. Smooth red-clay vessels covered in similar corkscrew sgraffito designs closely comparable to those on the background surface of our fragment have however been found in large numbers at Fustat,<sup>1</sup> as well as on rarer intact vessels such as a large bowl with geometric decoration in the al-Sabah collection, Kuwait.<sup>2</sup> They are now thought to be a class of Syrian/Egyptian ware produced in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries that bridge the gap between the Byzantine sgraffitos of the Eastern Mediterranean (such as numbers 6 and 7 in this catalogue) and the more fully developed Mamluk slipwares (such as numbers 1 and 3) produced during the third reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (610-641 AH/1310-1341 AD) (see figs. 3-4). Most (like the al-Sabah bowl) are complex but non-figurative, but despite the relative infrequency of figurative decoration some sporadic examples have survived which reinforce the link (fig. 5) and suggest a potter either active in the Mamluk territories or perhaps travelling from further afield producing works for a local clientele.<sup>3</sup>



**Fig. 5 (above)**  
Fragment of a conical bowl  
with a figure holding a cross  
Mamluk Egypt  
Late 13<sup>th</sup> or early 14<sup>th</sup>  
century  
St Petersburg, State  
Hermitage Museum

1, Bethany J. Walker, 'Ceramic Evidence for Political Transformations in Early Mamluk Egypt', in *Mamluk Studies Review*, vol. 8/1 (2004), pp. 1-114, p. 12, fig.4, p. 25, fig. 9.



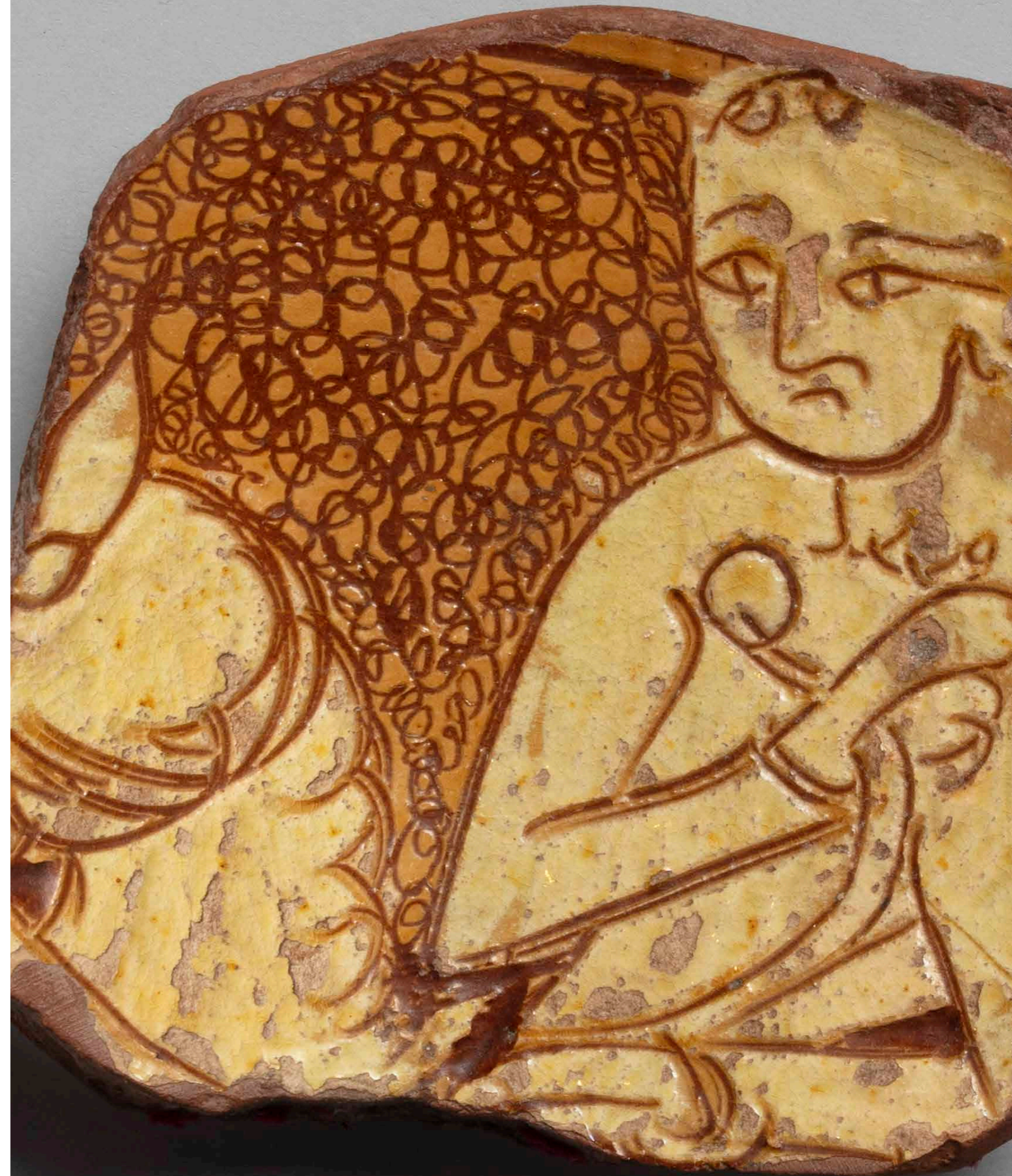
**Fig. 3 (above)**  
Bowl with fleurs-de-lys  
Mamluk Egypt, found at  
Fustat  
Early 14<sup>th</sup> century  
8.2 cm; glazed earthenware  
with sgraffito decoration  
London, British Museum,  
inv. 1921.0301.2



**Fig. 4 (below)**  
Fragment of a bowl (with  
the head of a bird?)  
Mamluk Egypt, excavated  
at Oxyrhynchus  
Early 14<sup>th</sup> century  
4.8 cm; glazed  
earthenware with sgraffito  
decoration  
London, British Museum,  
inv. OA+.15858

2, Giovanni Curatola, *Arte della Civiltà: La Collezione al-Sabah, Kuwait*, Exh. Cat., Milan, Palazzo Reale, 2010, no. 192; see also Oliver Watson, *Ceramics from Islamic Lands*, London, 2004, nos. R.18, p. 411 and R.20, p. 412, as well as a small sherd also in the al-Sabah Collection, inv. LNS 971 C p, p. 414.

3, A strongly analogous fragment depicting a lion (the sovereign emblem of Sultan Baybars I), dated to c. 1260-1277, is in the Benaki Museum in Athens, inv. 40374, illustrated in Anna Ballian ed., *Benaki Museum: A Guide to the Museum of Islamic Art*, Athens, 2006, no. 111, p. 99.



**3** A massive Mamluk bowl inscribed with a serpent and the blazon of the sword bearers





A massively-potted Mamluk earthenware bowl of deep, rounded form raised on a tall cylindrical foot. It is decorated using a technique known as *sgraffito*, in which the main elements of a design are scratched through a layer of pale slip to reveal the deeper colour of the body clay beneath. On our vessel this takes the form of a central armorial roundel decorated with a sword, and further groups of concentric bands spreading up the sides of the bowl, the largest of which contains a serpent. The inclusion of this creature, rare on such vessels, is thought to be a symbol of cosmological significance, historically associated with the concept of *al-Sakina* (the Divine Presence); both the shape of the bowl and the positioning of the serpent echo the interpretations of this concept as the 'ouroboros serpent that wraps herself like a snake on the site of the sanctuary of the Ka'ba and provides Abraham with the exact location of the sanctuary'.<sup>1</sup>

Unlike the brilliant blue and white porcelain-like tiles made by Mamluk potters in Syria for architectural adornment (and represented by no. 5 in this catalogue) the majority of Mamluk tablewares produced in Egypt during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were decorated using clear and brown glazes over pale slips, giving modern viewers the suggestion that these were modest objects, an idea that completely belies their technical brilliance and – as with our vessel – astonishingly ambitious scale. In fact, the muted greens, browns, and honeyed hues of Egyptian Mamluk ceramics were adopted because of their brilliant ability to evoke the effects produced by brass, silver and gold inlays on contemporary metalwork. Their conical and hemispherical forms also parallel those of both metalwork and glassware, revealing an interlinked language of design across a spectrum of artforms.

This massive bowl has a shared provenance, and forms a pair with, another now in the al-Sabah Collection at the National Museum of Kuwait.<sup>2</sup> Some modern scholars have suggested that these types of deep, hemispherical vessels were used as 'barracks ware' for the kitchens and mess tables of the retainers and guards of the Mamluk elite.<sup>3</sup> In the case of our example, these would have been members of the office of the *silahdar* (sword or arms bearer), whose blazon appears prominently in the circular field at its centre. A similar footed hemispherical bowl, decorated with the same sword blazon against a rectangular field within its central well, was found at Jabal Adda in Nubia in 1966 and is now preserved in the Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo.<sup>4</sup> Based on the form, type and appearance of these vessels' blazons, as well as groups of inscriptions occasionally inscribed onto their surfaces, the family of wares to which they belong are dateable to a period spanning from the end of the thirteenth century up to the end of the reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (d. 641 AH/1341 AD).<sup>5</sup> It was in this period that the practice of marking vessels with emblems of status, although not an Egyptian invention, nonetheless found its full and potent efflorescence.

**Mamluk Egypt  
c. 1300-1340**

38.5 cm (diameter) x 26 cm (depth); A deep slipware bowl with incised decoration and brown and green glaze over cream-coloured slip on a dark reddish-brown clay. The underside with a clear lead glaze and some dotted green highlights around the rim. Losses to the rim and base, the latter restored.

*Provenance*

Khawam Collection, Cairo (before 1970);  
Hotel Drouot, Paris, 20<sup>th</sup> November 1974, lot 21;  
Collection of Claude and Françoise Bourelier

*Exhibited*

Zurich, October 1976, no. 73 (according to the sale catalogue of the Bourelier collection)

*Published*

Helen Philon, *Benaki Museum Athens: Early Islamic Ceramics, Ninth to Late Twelfth Centuries*, vol. 1, Athens, 1980, p. 68 and p. 116, fig. 242.

Abbas Daneshvari, *Of Serpents and Dragons in Islamic Art: An Iconographical Study*, Mazda Publishers, California, 2011, p. 154, fig. 35.

4, inv. 23832, illustrated in Esin Atil, *Renaissance of Islam: Art of the Mamluks*, Washington D.C., 1981, pp. 186-7, no. 94. A conical bowl fragment with the same blazon is in the British Museum, London, inv. 1908,0522.1012.

1, Abbas Daneshvari, *Of Serpents and Dragons in Islamic Art: An Iconographical Study*, Mazda Publishers, California, 2011, pp. 120-1.

2, inv. LNS 125C: M. Jenkins, *Islamic Art in the Kuwait National Museum, The al-Sabah Collection*, London, 1983, p. 83.

3, Oliver Watson, *Ceramics from Islamic Lands*, London, 2004, Cats. R.15 and R.16, pp. 408-9.

5, See Esin Atil, *Renaissance of Islam*, Washington D.C., 1981, pp. 50-53; E. Gibbs, *Mamluk Ceramics: 648-923 AH/1250-1517 AD*, *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society*, London, Vol. 63, (1998-1999), p. 25; See more recently Bethany J. Walker, 'Ceramic Evidence for Political Transformations in Early Mamluk Egypt', in *Mamluk Studies Review*, vol. 8/1 (2004), pp. 1-114, especially pp. 57-60.



## 4 A blue and black albarello with a design of hanging palmettes



Large palmettes with the appearance of cut seedpods hang from the shoulder of this imposing Syrian albarello, with rows of berries picked out in a turquoise blue against a pale cream background. Further berry forms and splashes of black and turquoise blue fill the wedge-like spaces between each palmette. A thick horizontal band of circular motifs encircles the lower body, just above the foot, while below the upper rim a pattern of alternating turquoise stripes and thicker, cross-hatched black panels serves to visually elongate the neck. Thick bands of black encircle the rim, shoulder and lower body.

Following the destruction of Raqqa by the Il-Khanids in 1265<sup>1</sup> Damascus absorbed many of the region's best potters and began to corner the local and international market for fine stonepaste ceramics. In the decades around 1300 a new class of pottery inspired by contemporary Iranian wares developed in the Damascus workshops, its decorative lexicon dominated by the juxtaposition of finely-painted motifs in black and blue on an almost pearlescent white ground. The 'Sultanabad' style, as it has become known, developed with confidence in the city's workshops before being carried further west to Mamluk Egypt, where fragments with underglaze blue and black have been discovered in some quantities.<sup>2</sup> Among the grandest wares produced in this period by Damascus potters are storage jars or *albarelli*, a name derived from the bastardized Italian translation of the Arabic phrase for pots of terracotta 'al-burma'. They are a type of ceramic vessel first thought to have originated in eleventh- or twelfth-century Iran before spreading across the Mediterranean and beyond over the course of the Middle Ages.<sup>3</sup> They enjoyed popularity in an international market, many having been exported to Europe filled with

Syria, Damascus?  
Early 14<sup>th</sup> century

31.5 cm (height) x 18 cm (diameter); Stonepaste with underglaze painting in turquoise-blue and black on a buff-coloured body, potted with a stout, waisted form raised on a broad foot ring, a shallow shoulder and inward-sloping neck, and a large beaded rim. The interior is thickly glazed with some turquoise tinting. Bands of loss around the rim, shoulder, and lower body from use. Thermoluminescence analysis undertaken by Oxford Authentication in November 2021 confirms a date of firing between 600 and 900 years ago. Report by Helen Mason, 8<sup>th</sup> December 2021.

Provenance  
Christie's London, 26<sup>th</sup> April 1994, lot 244;  
Old collection label on base '259.000'



1, For a comprehensive study of Raqqa ceramics during the short-lived resurgence of production in the late twelfth/early thirteenth century, see Marilyn Jenkins-Madina, *Raqqa Revisited: Ceramics of Ayyubid Syria*, New York, 2006.

2, Cf. Oliver Watson, *Ceramics from Islamic Lands: The Al-Sabah Collection*, London, 2004, pp. 420-1.

3, Laura Weinstein, *Ink Silk & Gold: Islamic Art from the Museum of Fine Arts*, Boston, Boston, 2015, p. 57.

spices, candied fruits and ginger, before being retained by apothecaries and diverted to other uses. Valencian apothecaries' inventories of the fourteenth century list 'pots de domas' among their holdings, and some numbers of these magnificent vessels were rediscovered in Sicily by nineteenth-century collectors who labelled them 'Siculo-Arabian'.<sup>4</sup> Such was the longevity of their use and appeal that they are thought to be among the only pre-sixteenth-century Islamic pottery to have survived above ground since it was produced.<sup>5</sup>

Damascus albarelli evolved away from the small, faceted and sometimes heavily waisted forms found on their Raqqa forebears and instead took on the much grander and stouter silhouette of our vessel, with its tall, inward-sloping neck and shallow, angular shoulder profile. Similar pieces have been excavated at Hama in Syria, and examples with comparable decorative motifs to those used on our jar are preserved in the musée du Louvre<sup>6</sup> (fig. 1), the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford<sup>7</sup> (fig. 2), the al-Sabah Collection in Kuwait<sup>8</sup>, the Qatar Museum, and the Museum für Islamische Kunst in Berlin (fig. 3). It is to magnificent early vessels like ours that the Valencian potters of the fourteenth and fifteenth century (as exemplified by the two Manises albarelli in this catalogue; see nos. 16 and 17) turned for inspiration, reflecting the high status and prestige given to Syrian ceramics in Europe during the Middle Ages.



**Fig. 1**  
Albarello with hanging palmette design  
Mamluk Syria or Egypt  
Late 14<sup>th</sup> century  
31.1 cm (height) x 16.5 cm (diameter); Stonepaste with underglaze painting in blue and black  
Paris, musée du Louvre, inv. OA4091



**Fig. 2**  
Albarello with vegetal motifs  
Mamluk Syria  
Late 13<sup>th</sup> or early 14<sup>th</sup> century  
24.5 cm (height) x 15.5 cm (diameter); Stonepaste with underglaze painting in blue and black  
Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, Reitlinger Gift, inv. 1978.1683



**Fig. 3**  
Albarello with inscriptions and four-petalled motifs  
Mamluk Syria  
14<sup>th</sup> century  
26.6 cm (height) x 14.9 cm (diameter); Stonepaste with underglaze painting in blue and black  
Berlin, Museum für Islamische Kunst, inv. I. 3978

4, Arthur Lane, *Later Islamic Pottery*, London, 1957 (1971 ed.), p. 17.

5, Ibid

6, For dating see *Arabesques et jardins de paradis: collections françaises d'art islamique*, Exh. Cat., Paris, 1989, no. 10, p. 34.

7 For dating see James W. Allan, *Islamic ceramics*, Oxford, 1991, no. 26, p. 44..

8, Watson 2004, no. R.3, p. 400.



## 5 Two Mamluk tiles decorated with vegetal motifs



Stonepaste, also known by the terms fritware and faience, describes a type of ceramic made using the addition of quartz and ground silica to a fine clay. It is a mix that allows for a lower firing temperature and a stronger fused bond between the glaze and the supporting body than typical clay-heavy wares, thus lowering the risk of flaking and delamination to the glaze both during the firing process and over time. It was first developed by Islamic potters in Iraq during the ninth century before moving to Egypt where it was perfected during the Fatimid dynasty, and from there to Iran and Syria where it was in use by the end of the twelfth century.

These two blue and white glazed tiles represent one of the highpoints of any stonepaste ware to have been produced by fifteenth-century Mamluk potters. Snaking vertically across their surface with unbounded freedom are sinuous, curling leaf sprays, vines, and berry clusters picked out in a rich cobalt blue against a brilliant white ground. They must have been produced as part of a single commission since they both share a distinctive blue double-border running down their left-hand edges. Scholars have so far been unable to ascertain exactly where this was since rectangular tiles of this type are vanishingly rare; barely more than a dozen are known and are now divided between institutions including the musée du Louvre in Paris<sup>1</sup>, the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto<sup>2</sup>, and the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo (fig. 1). However, several hundred extremely closely related tiles of a smaller, hexagonal format but almost certainly produced by the same potters can still be found covering the walls in the mosque and tomb of the Mamluk dignitary Ghars al-Din Khalil al-Tawrizi (d. 1430) in Damascus, which was begun in 1423 (fig. 2).<sup>3</sup> And in the Tawrizi museum is a square tile with a similar double border to that which features on ours, suggesting a shared provenance



Mamluk Syria, Damascus  
c. 1420-1450 (most probably after 1423 and before 1451)

18.1 x 20.2 x 1.6 cm (height x width x depth); Stonepaste with cobalt blue underglaze decoration on a pale buff-coloured body. The tile with berry heads broken into four parts and rejoined. The top left corner of the tile with stems broken diagonally and rejoined.

Provenance

Artcurial, Paris, 11th April 2013, lots 133 and 134; Collection of Pierre le-Tan, Paris



Fig. 1 (above)

A panel of nine tiles with ships, architecture, and vegetal decoration  
Mamluk Syria, Damascus  
Second quarter 15th century  
Cairo, Museum of Islamic Art

Fig. 2 (below)

Section of dado tiles in the tomb chamber of Ghars al-Din Khalil al-Tawrizi (d. 1430)  
Syria, Damascus  
Image: Millner 2015, p. 73





perhaps to that site.<sup>4</sup> A large group of hexagonal examples of a slightly variant type also survive in the mosque at Edirne, which seem to have been commissioned by Murad II (d. 1451), and in places bear his name. Although different in conception and design, they offer a useful *terminus ante quem* for the dating of the group as a whole.<sup>5</sup>

The technique of applying cobalt pigment to stonepaste wares is beset by risks, and during the medieval period it had a constant tendency to run, so the relative lack of this defect on our tiles indicates that they were fired in a kiln whose temperature was controlled with great precision and skill. Their decorative lexicon of large willow-, plantain-, and banana-like leaf sprays is heavily indebted to the types of vegetation depicted on Chinese porcelain, which was imported into the Mamluk lands in some quantities during the period and profoundly influenced its local potters (fig. 3).



**Fig. 3**  
Foliated plate with rocks,  
plants, and melons  
China  
14th century  
40 cm (diameter); Porcelain  
painted with cobalt blue  
under transparent glaze  
New York, Metropolitan  
Museum of Art, inv.  
1991.253.35

3, Hexagonal examples produced by the same potters as our pair and generally localized to Damascus and/or the Ghars al-Din complex specifically include examples in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto, the Kunstgewerbemuseum in Dresden, the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, the al-Sabah Collection and the Tareq Rajab Museum in Kuwait, the David Collection, Copenhagen (outlined with turquoise), and the National Museum in Damascus (some also with turquoise); see Millner 2015, p. 242; Rainer G. Richter, 'Die Kunst des Islam im Kunstgewerbemuseum Dresden', in Joachim Gierlich and Annette Hagerdorn eds, *Islamische Kunst in Deutschland*, Mainz am Rhein, 2004, p. 80; Giovanni Curatola, *Arte della Civiltà: La Collezione al-Sabah, Kuwait*, Exh. Cat., Milan, Palazzo Reale, 2010, nos. 231-2; Kjeld von Folsach, *Art from the World of Islam in The David Collection*, Copenhagen, 2001, p. 165, no. 203; Esin Atil, *Renaissance of Islam: Art of the Mamluks*, Washington D.C., 1981, pp. 177-182, nos. 86-91.

1, Sophie Makariou, *Islamic Art at the musée du Louvre*, Paris, 2012, no. 129, p. 217.

2, Arthur Millner, *Damascus Tiles*, Munich, London and New York, 2015, p. 10.

4 Millner 2015, p. 253, fig. 6.26.

5, John Carswell, 'Ceramics', in Yanni Petsopoulos ed., *Tulips, Arabesques & Turbans: Decorative Arts from the Ottoman Empire*, London, 1982, p. 79.





Byzantium

## 6 A champlevé-decorated bowl with a hare sleeping among plant tendrils



On middle-Byzantine dishes like this one, decorated with what are known as champlevé designs, the body of the vessel is either fully or partially coated with a thick layer of white slip before the decoration is scratched back through it to reveal the ground colour beneath. In this way the two surfaces and colours - one a deep red clay and the other a creamy slip - are thrown into strong relief and the pictorial scheme given a shadow-catching texture and a crisp legibility. Our example, with its gently flaring sides, is decorated with the image of a hare sleeping or lying in defence among a tangle of plant forms. The creature's long back legs are given full prominence while slender ears poke straight up from behind one of them, which has brought up and over the top of its head as if in a gesture of self-protection. He lies curled up with only his front paws breaking the perimeter of the sharp circular field with which he is framed. Around him is a broad outer border decorated at evenly spaced intervals with roundels filled with cross-hatching, roundels of concentric rings, and curlicue-like flourishes. There are some traces of an ochre glaze which may once have covered the design completely in order to make the vessel waterproof. The fact that it is now all but missing (coupled with the presence of marine deposits on the underside of the dish) indicates that our vessel has spent most of the last eight centuries underwater.

Our plate's iconography is reminiscent of Fatimid ceramics of the twelfth century, though it was most likely produced in the city of Corinth where a number of similar vessels have been excavated.<sup>1</sup>



Byzantine Empire, probably Corinth  
Late 12<sup>th</sup> or early 13<sup>th</sup> Century

26 cm (diameter) x 5.6 cm (height); Incised slipware dish with incised decoration on a pale buff-coloured slip over a red clay, raised on a short cylindrical foot. Some throwing marks and trails on the underside of the vessel. Traces of a yellow glaze near the rim in places. Marine encrustation to the reverse.

Provenance  
Private collection, France;  
Private collection, UK, acquired from the above in December 2000

1, Charles H. Morgan, *The Byzantine Pottery. Corinth. Results of Excavations Conducted by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens*, Cambridge, Mass., 1942; Helen C. Evans and William D. Wixom, eds, *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, A.D. 843-1261*, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997, no. 190, p. 268.

It is thought to have formed part of a large cargo of such ceramics found in a group of shipwrecks in the Aegean Sea, all of which can be attributed to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Closely related fragments have also been unearthed at sites including Ephesus in modern-day Turkey.<sup>2</sup> Most surviving ceramics of the middle-Byzantine period are executed in simpler sgraffito motifs, rather than the more meticulous and involved technique of *champlevé* decoration exemplified by our example. Others of its type can be found in a handful of museum collections including the David Collection in Copenhagen<sup>3</sup>, the British Museum in London<sup>4</sup>, the Metropolitan Museum in New York<sup>5</sup>, and the Benaki Museum in Athens (fig. 1). A figurative dish utilising the same pictorial device of allowing small details to break through the design's circular framing elements, is preserved in the Archeological Museum of Ancient Corinth (fig. 2).<sup>6</sup>



**Fig. 1 (above)**  
Plate with a hare between large roundels  
Probably Northern Greece or Eastern Thrace  
Late 12<sup>th</sup> or early 13<sup>th</sup> century  
*Glazed earthenware with champlevé decoration*  
Athens, Benaki Museum, inv. 30498, gift of Jeanette Zakou

**Fig. 2 (below)**  
Plate with lovers  
Probably Northern Greece or Eastern Thrace  
First half 13<sup>th</sup> century  
*Glazed earthenware with champlevé decoration*  
Archaia Korinthos, Archeological Museum



2, Cf. a fragment of a bowl excavated at Ephesus in the British Museum, inv. OA+.15911.

3, inv. 30/1969

4 Ken Dark, *Byzantine Pottery*, 2001, fig. 36.

5, Evans and Wixom 1997, no. 191, p. 269.

6, *Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Art*, Exh. Cat., Athens, Byzantine and Christian Museum, 1986, cat. no. 301.

**7&8** Two shallow sgraffito dishes depicting falcons





**Byzantine Empire, perhaps Corinth**  
Mid-12<sup>th</sup> century

Dish with a falcon encircled by chevrons: 25.7 cm (diameter) x 9.2 cm (height); Incised slipware with clear glaze on a deep pinkish buff clay, raised on a short cylindrical foot ring. The underside unglazed. Marine encrustations across the lower right-hand register of the design and across the reverse. Broken in two and repaired.

*Provenance*  
Collection of Claude and Françoise Bourelrier

Both of these shallow dishes are potted in a similar way, with broad and stable foot rings supporting shallow, flaring interiors framed, in each case a short, sharply raised rim suggestive of the influence of metalwork forms on the ceramic arts. They are both decorated at the centres with large images of falcons, their outlines and a few picked-out forms and feathers delicately delineated using the *sgraffito* method, in which a vessel's clay is selectively revealed by scratching through a layer of pale slip applied onto the surface. Both birds are displayed in profile encircled respectively by rings of regularly spaced chevron motifs and leafy branches. Bracketing the bird on the slightly smaller of the two vessels are a pair of long, wing-like forms, which have been interpreted by modern scholars as depictions of a falconer's lure.<sup>1</sup>

In the Byzantine Empire, and even more so in the Islamic world, hunting falcons were a symbol of wealth and high status. The spectrum of designs in which they are to be found on twelfth-century Byzantine pottery in particular, offer a forceful testament both to the cultural reach of such vessels during the period, and to the skill of the potters who were able to produce large numbers of beautifully worked slipware vessels destined for marine trade.



**Byzantine Empire, perhaps Corinth**  
Mid-12<sup>th</sup> century

Dish with a falcon between leafy branches: 26.5 cm (diameter) x 9.5 cm (height); Incised slipware with clear glaze on a brick-red clay, raised on a short cylindrical foot ring. Some splashes of slip around the rim on the otherwise unglazed underside. Marine encrustations across the lower half with corresponding inpainted losses to the decoration.

*Provenance*  
Private collection, Rheinland-Pfalz, Germany, acquired c. late 1960s to early 1980s

1, Christoph Stiegemann ed., *Byzanz - Das Licht aus dem Osten: Kult und Alltag im Byzantinischen Reich vom 4. bis 15. Jahrhundert*; Exh. Cat., Paderborn, Erzbischöflichen Diözesanmuseum, 2001, no. 109, pp. 359-60; Helen C. Evans and William D. Wixom, eds, *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, A.D. 843-1261*, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997, no. 184, p. 262.

Both of our dishes are likely to have been discovered in the late 1960s, when it is thought that a twelfth-century shipwreck laden with slipware vessels was excavated off the coast of Izmir in Turkey.<sup>2</sup> Further cargoes have since been discovered at sites in the northern Sporades, off the coast due east of Athens, and near Castellorizo and Antalya.<sup>3</sup> From around 1967 onwards a number of such dishes, undoubtedly produced by the same potters on account of their almost identical proportions, style and treatment, came onto the market and several were acquired by American and European public collections including the British Museum<sup>4</sup>, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Detroit Institute of Arts<sup>5</sup>, and the Cleveland Museum of Art.<sup>6</sup> Over sixty examples, many of almost identical treatment to our pair, are now preserved in the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire in Geneva.<sup>7</sup> Thought to be the work of potters active in the city of Corinth, they are recognised as key evidence for our understanding of Byzantine commerce in the twelfth century, underpinned by the empire's reliance on the connecting waters of the Mediterranean.<sup>8</sup>



2, Departmental notes for a dish with a wading bird in the Victoria and Albert Museum, inv. C.20-1970: <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O122416/dish/> (accessed 20<sup>th</sup> March 2022).

3, The most recent and authoritative study of this material is by Véronique François, 'De la cale à l'atelier. La vaisselle byzantine de la donation Janet Zakos' in Marielle Martiniani-Reber, *De Rome à Byzance: Donation Janet Zakos*, Milan, 2015, pp. 201-272.

4, inv. 1967.1207.3: Ken Dark, *Byzantine Pottery*, Stroud, 2001, fig. 28.

5, P. Armstrong, 'Byzantine Glazed Ceramic Tableware in the Collection of the Detroit Institute of Arts', in *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts*, 71, 1/2 (1997), pp. 4-15.

6, inv. 1967.137, 1967.138 and 1967.139: "Year in Review 1967" *CMA Bulletin* (December, 1967), p. 342.

7, François 2015, p. 201 ff.

8, Cf. New York 1997, no. 187, p. 265; For sherds of this type discovered in Corinth see especially Charles H. Morgan, *The Byzantine Pottery. Corinth. Results of Excavations Conducted by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens*, Cambridge, Mass., 1942.

## 9 A large section of a glazed dish emblazoned with a lion passant among geometric lozenges



This fragment of a small, shallow dish, its slip-coated surface incised with the image of a strutting lion-like beast, is among the most accomplished and sophisticated Byzantine sgraffito ceramics of the thirteenth century. The animal's furry body, rib-like mane, and sharp claws are meticulously drawn, with a level of care and sensitivity that surpasses the vast majority of such wares. On either side of the animal's head, diamond-shaped lozenges arranged on their points float against a plain and airy background. A thicker gauge of utensil was used to create two double-line borders encircling the vessel's rim, with each pair of lines separated by a running frieze of fine s-curl or wave motifs. During the firing process the coating glaze pooled thickly in the incised areas of the design, and its resultant deep chocolate hue brilliantly utilised to throw the vessel's pattern into full and legible relief.

A small number of vessels characterised like our fragment by their orange-hued glaze, delicate sgraffito designs, and red clay bodies have survived with find spots across the Byzantine Empire. Most scholars concur that they were probably the product of kiln sites in Thessaloniki, but it is clear that they enjoyed wide consumption and were traded by sea throughout the twelfth to fourteenth centuries.<sup>1</sup> A small fragment thought to come from Constantinople and now in the musée du Louvre has a similar language of decoration to that on our dish, and may have come from an associated vessel either produced in the Byzantine capital itself or shipped there from the Greek peninsula for local consumption (fig.



Byzantine Empire, most likely Constantinople  
Late 13<sup>th</sup> century

14.5 x 13.5 x 4.5 cm; Incised slipware decorated with a yellowish lead glaze over a cream-coloured slip on a red clay body. Reconstructed from five sections. A broad band of over-glazed slip on the underside. The short cylindrical foot unglazed. Three tripod scars on the animal's body.

Provenance  
Bonhams, London, *Antiquities*, 29<sup>th</sup> April 2009, lot 273 (part)

1, A. H. S. Megaw and R. E. Jones 'Byzantine and Allied Pottery: A Contribution by Chemical Analysis to Problems of Origin and Distribution' in *The Annual of the British School at Athens*, Vol. 78 (1983), pp. 235-263.

2, For other closely comparable fragments in the Louvre collection also attributed to Constantinople see Véronique François, *La vaisselle de terre à Byzance: Catalogue des collections du musée du Louvre*, Paris, 2017, no. 148, p. 212, no. 158, p. 215.

1).<sup>2</sup> Other vessels of a broadly comparable type include the small bowl in this catalogue (Cat. 10) as well as excavated vessels and sherds of similar proportions and form in collections including the musée du Louvre, the British Museum<sup>3</sup> and an earlier example in the Argos Museum (fig. 2).<sup>4</sup> It must be said, however, that the vast majority of such survivals (as well as the large corpus of wares discovered at other sites such as Corinth<sup>5</sup>) are of a variant form of decoration, and that the vessel from which our fragment originates would have stood out markedly both for the nature of its design and the skill of its execution.



**Fig. 1 (above)**  
Fragment of a bowl  
Byzantine Empire,  
Constantinople?  
Late 13<sup>th</sup> or early 14<sup>th</sup>  
century  
8.1 cm; earthenware with  
lead glaze over a pale slip  
on red clay  
Paris, musée du Louvre,  
Département des Arts de  
l'Islam, inv. AA 327-31

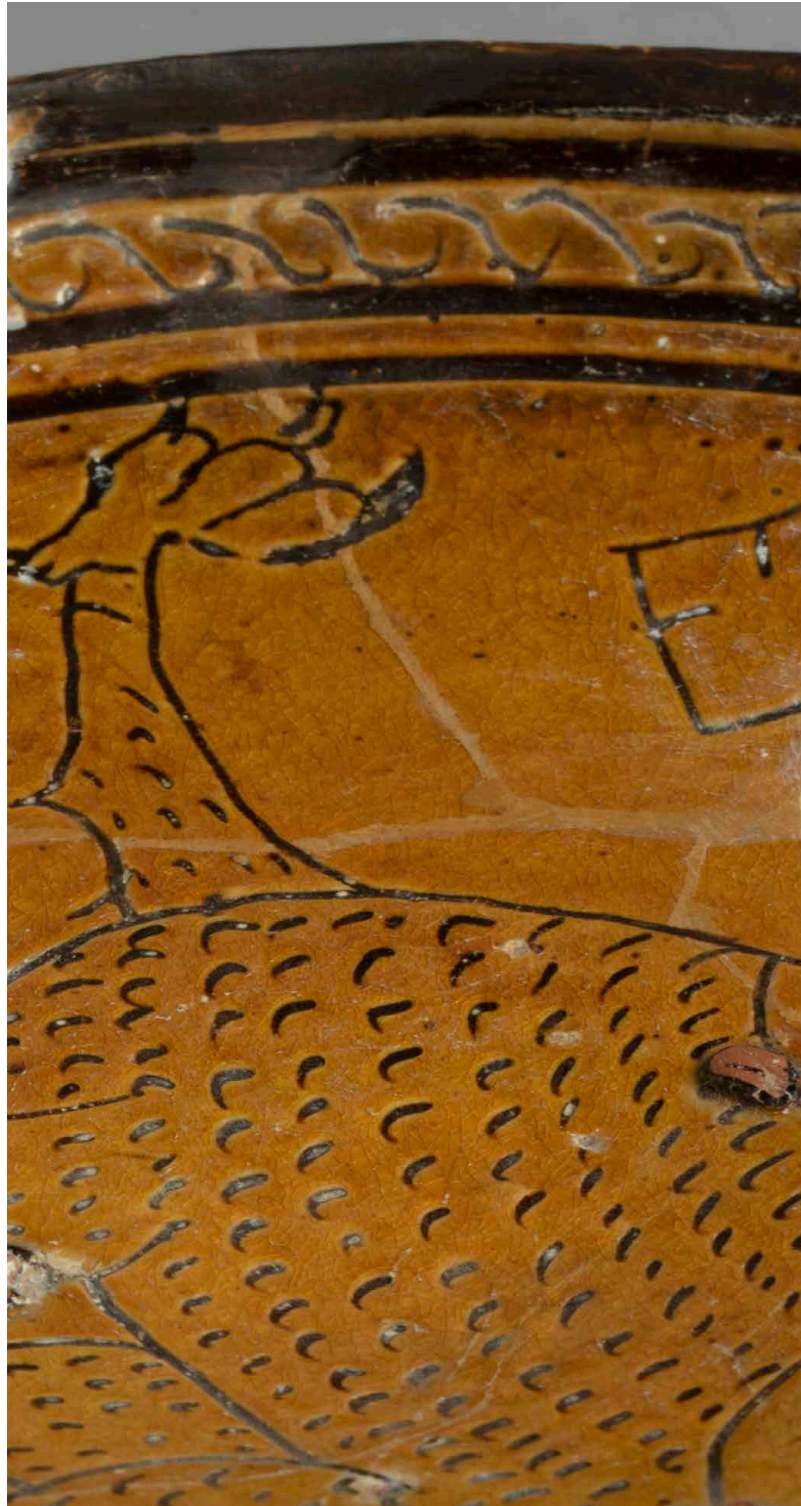
**Fig. 2 (below)**  
A slipware dish found at  
Argos  
Byzantine Greece  
Second half 12th century  
21.3 cm (diameter) x 5 cm  
(depth)  
Argos, Archeological  
Museum, inv. AA71



4, See also Dimitra Papanikola-Bakirtzi ed., *Byzantine Glazed Ceramics: The Art of Sgraffito*, Athens, 1999.

3, inv. OA+.15972. Though far more plainly decorated, it is notable for its similar use of a thick-gauge implement for drawing the concentric ring design around the rim.

5, Charles H. Morgan, *The Byzantine Pottery. Corinth. Results of Excavations Conducted by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens*, Cambridge, Mass., 1942.





# 10 A deep bowl depicting a bird eating a worm



This intact, deep-sided bowl is decorated in its central well with the image of a bird incised into its pale coating layer of slip and turned in profile to our right. Its body is contoured with curved incisions that help to pick out the markings on its breast, the form of its wing, and a haystack of a tail. It holds in its beak a long wriggling line most likely intended to represent a freshly plucked worm; it struts with head held high and an upright posture as if proud of its catch. An incised, double-line frame almost perfectly encircles the scene, with a further circular pattern of three-lines incised immediately below the rim, in each case created with a stylus or sharp implement pressed into the slip while the vessel was still turning on the wheel. The outside is lead glazed over a rapidly applied series of slip 'drips' or arcs.

A number of both intact vessels and sherds dateable to a period spanning the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries have been discovered at the Greek port city of Thessaloniki, which has led to the relatively large corpus of vessels with similar motifs being associated with local workshops and local Late Byzantine production there.<sup>1</sup> Most are far plainer than our example, often incorporating a simple design of concentric rings (fig. 1), but a small number of similarly proportioned vessels also display inscribed images of birds either eating worms or touching their beaks to leaf sprays and cypress tree motifs (fig. 2).<sup>2</sup> Thessaloniki wares tend to have in common their striking use of a brick-red clay and a pale slip, the latter almost always covered by a warm, golden-hued glaze. Nevertheless, a concurrent trend for worm-eating bird designs developed in Cypriot pottery-producing centres during the same period<sup>3</sup>, suggesting close commercial and aesthetic links between Byzantine wares of the Greek lands, and their counterparts in the eastern Mediterranean.

Byzantine Empire, Thessaloniki  
Late 13<sup>th</sup> or early 14<sup>th</sup> century

7.7 cm (height) x 15.3 cm (diameter); Incised slipware with deep yellow glaze over cream-coloured slip on a pale red clay, raised on an everted foot. The underside partially glazed with a series of slip swags around the rim. Tripod scars in three places in the central well. Some chips to the glaze and clay in places around the rim.

Provenance  
Collection of Claude and Françoise Bourelier



**Fig. 1 (above)**  
Bowl inscribed with concentric rings  
Found at Thessaloniki  
14<sup>th</sup> century  
London, British Museum,  
inv. 1930,0418.1

**Fig. 2 (below)**  
Bowl with a bird  
Thessaloniki  
late 13<sup>th</sup> or early 14<sup>th</sup>  
century  
Thessaloniki, Museum of  
Byzantine Culture



1, D. Papanikola-Bakirtzi, ed. *Byzantine Glazed Ceramics: The Art*

2, Cf. examples in the Benaki Museum of Islamic Art, Athens; Helen Philon, *Early Islamic Ceramics*, Athens, 1980.

3, Cf. an example of the worm-eating bird type, embellished with splashed green and brown decoration, was discovered on Cyprus and has been linked to a local kiln site: Paphos, Archaeological Museum, inv. 2577-107.



# 11 A footed cup with a striding figure



A footed drinking cup with a concave central bowl and a tall, slightly inward sloping collar. Its design of a figure walking in profile to our right, framed on either side by corkscrew forms enclosing long, straight lines, is incised into the pale slip using the *sgraffito* method. Green and brown glazes enliven the surface as if splashed at speed, though their pooling swathes of colour have a carefully controlled sense of balance and rhythm.

Cyprus was conquered by Crusaders in 1191. Over the course of the next four centuries the island rose to become the most important commercial centre in the entire eastern Mediterranean basin. It acted as a gatekeeper between Italy, Greece, north Africa, and the Iberian peninsula to the west, and the countries of the Levant sprawling around the Mediterranean coastline to the east. It was during this period that the production of ceramics intended for use at the table flourished, supplying not just the island's local demand but also a broad trading network that encompassed countries much further afield. Its principal centres of production were at Lemba, near Paphos in the south west, and at Lapithos, in the district of Kyrenia on the north coast, although some evidence has also been found to suggest that there was more limited production near Famagusta as well. Designs and techniques varied only subtly in each centre, and a fairly restricted lexicon of forms and styles remained in use for centuries, as is evidenced by the later, sixteenth-century jug in this catalogue (Cat. 13).

Though Cypriot vessels are marked by their lively use of coloured glazes and their graphic, essentialized figurative decoration, they do in fact share a number of key features with pottery produced elsewhere in the Byzantine Empire, as well as taking inspiration from what is typically described as 'Crusader pottery' made in Syria and Palestine. The decoration of our vessel, with its spirited figure portrayed in an angular, striding motion, and wearing a large panelled dress embellished with a helicoidal design, accords closely with similar vessels dated to the fifteenth century.<sup>1</sup>



Cyprus, perhaps Lapithos  
15<sup>th</sup> century

15.5 cm (diameter) x 9.1 cm (height); Incised slipware decorated with copper green and manganese brown glazes over a cream-coloured slip on a pale pink clay. The foot everted. The collar of the vessel, the feet and right-hand side of the figure, and parts of their hair restored.

Provenance  
Bonhams, London, *Antiquities*, 29<sup>th</sup> April 2009, lot 274 (part)

1, Demetra Papanikola-Bakirtzi, *Colours of Medieval Cyprus through the Ceramic Collection of the Leventis Municipal Museum of Nicosia*, Nicosia, 2012 ed., nos. 12, p. 62, and 15, p. 65.



The green-tinted glaze, intimate proportions, and tightly closed form of this bowl, with its deep, inward curling rim, are characteristic features of Cypriot wares produced during the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries (fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> However, despite the industrial scale of marine trade in Cypriot ceramics during the Middle Ages, its iconography of a ship at full sail, inscribed using the traditional Byzantine *sgraffito* method into its pale slip, is almost unique.<sup>2</sup> It takes the form of a lateen-rigged sailing ship with a stern-hung rudder, of the type that was commonly used in both fishing and the transport of goods during the later Middle Ages, and is analogous in conception both to contemporary marine graffiti<sup>3</sup>, and to the depiction of such craft on other forms of European pottery of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (fig. 2).<sup>4</sup> Across the corpus of incised Cypriot ceramics, this is nonetheless exceptional.



**Cyprus**  
**Early 15<sup>th</sup> century**  
13.3 cm (diameter) x 6.5 cm (height); Incised slipware decorated with a green-tinted lead glaze and splashes of darker green glaze over a pale slip on a pinkish clay body. With a stout cylindrical footring. Some splashes of green glaze around the rim on the exterior; the underside otherwise unglazed. Restoration to parts of the rim.

**Provenance**  
Private collection, London, purchased from Axia Gallery 24<sup>th</sup> February 1977

**Published**  
Dragomir Garbov and Kroum Batchvarov, 'Served on a Plate: A Late Medieval Ceramic Vessel with Sgraffito Decoration of a Sailing Ship from the Ropotamo Underwater Excavations, Black Sea, Bulgaria' in *Heritage*, No. 5 (2022), pp. 170-191, p. 178, fig. 8 [as comparison to a vessel with the same iconography]



**Fig. 1 (above)**  
Sgraffito-decorated cup  
Lusignan Cyprus  
Late 14<sup>th</sup> or early 15<sup>th</sup> century  
12 cm (diameter) x 5.4 cm (height); Slipware decorated with a green-tinted glaze  
Paris, musée du Louvre, Département des Arts de l'Islam, inv. MAO 449-315

1, Véronique François, *La vaisselle de terre à Byzance: Catalogue des collections du musée du Louvre*, Paris, 2017, p. 265.

2, Dragomir Garbov and Kroum Batchvarov, 'Served on a Plate: A Late Medieval Ceramic Vessel with Sgraffito Decoration of a Sailing Ship from the Ropotamo Underwater Excavations, Black Sea, Bulgaria' in *Heritage*, No. 5 (2022), pp. 170-191, p. 177.

3, See most recently Garbov and Batchvarov 2022, pp. 170-191.

4, Cf. also an almost identically rendered craft on a Valencian lustrated bowl of c. 1450-75, illustrated in *Mallorca i el comerç de la ceràmica a la Mediterrània*, Exh. Cat., Palma, 1998, no. 51, p. 109.

**Fig. 2 (right)**  
Socarrat tile with a ship in full sail  
Spain, Valencia, Paterna 15<sup>th</sup> century  
41 x 33.5cm, fired earthenware  
Madrid, Museo Arqueológico Nacional, inv. no. 60399



**13** A bulbous jug incised with a striding figure



This stoutly potted jug is a spirited example of the rich legacy and longevity of the Byzantine Cypriot pottery tradition, which continued well after the island fell to the Venetians in the late fifteenth century. Its decoration consists of a covering of slip incised on either side of the body with two figures, their ornately clad anatomies depicted frontally but their heads turned in profile and treated with an almost caricaturist approach. Punctuating the space between them is a large flowerhead motif highlighted with green and encircled by an undulating border alongside a smaller, quadrilobe knot motif of a type that can be found on Byzantine vessels from the twelfth century on.<sup>1</sup> Bands of zigzag decoration encircle the vessel's rim and the base of the neck on either side of a delicate vine tendril sprouting leaves in alternating directions.

The unique and vivid language of Cypriot pottery hardly changed during the centuries of Frankish rule between 1192 and 1489, and it was only when the island came under Venetian control at the turn of the sixteenth century that the largescale production of wares destined for trade across the Adriatic waned and, finally, were brought to a standstill. Late-stage vessels like our jug are characterised by a new sparseness of design, with decorative embellishment reduced to almost impossibly fine outlines and pigmented glazes stripped back to a restrained monochrome applied in patterns dashed with incredible speed and economy.<sup>2</sup> Despite four centuries of intervening time, jugs like ours are the rich heirs of a decorative tradition established much earlier on the thirteenth-century Crusader pottery made in the Byzantine port of Antioch, and known today as 'Port Saint Symeon ware'.

The ornately dressed figures with panelled dresses shown dancing on either side of the central rosette on the present vessel show the extent to which Cypriot idioms evolved away from the broad and slanting figure type represented by the earlier footed cup in this catalogue (see Cat. 11) and instead towards a rounded and finely outlined variant, a type that can also be found on other forms of tableware surviving from the period (fig. 1).<sup>3</sup> It has been argued that such wares were predominantly produced at Lapithos on the north coast of the island, a pottery-producing town whose kilns seem to have remained in full swing longer than those at other Cypriot sites.

**Cyprus, probably Lapithos  
Late 15<sup>th</sup> or early 16<sup>th</sup> century**

21.2 cm (height) x 13.5 cm (width) x 14.5 cm (depth including handle); Incised slipware decorated with copper green glaze over a cream-coloured slip on a pale pink clay. Glaze losses to one side of the body. A thick strap handle connecting the neck to the shoulder of the body.

*Provenance*  
Bonhams, London, *Antiquities*, 29<sup>th</sup> April 2009, lot 273 (part)



**Fig. 1 (above)**  
Bowl with a figure in elaborate costume  
Cyprus  
15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> century  
13 cm (diameter) x 5 cm (depth)  
University of St Andrews,  
Bridges Collection, inv.  
HC1994.3(18)

1, Charles H. Morgan, *The Byzantine Pottery. Corinth. Results of Excavations Conducted by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens*, Cambridge, Mass., 1942, p. 107.

2, Cf. footed bowls of this type dated to the late 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> centuries in Leventis Municipal Museum, Nicosia, illustrated in Demetra Papanikola-Bakirtzi, *Colours of Medieval Cyprus through the Ceramic Collection of the Leventis Municipal Museum of Nicosia*, Nicosia, 2012 ed., nos. 93-4, p. 147.

3, Cf. a related variant also dated to the sixteenth century, illustrated by Demetra Papanikola-Bakirtzi in *Chypre: entre Byzance et l'Occident IVe-XVIe siècle*, Exh. Cat., Paris, musée du Louvre, 2012, no. 152, pp. 324-5.





Spain

# 14 A massive presentation bowl decorated with palmettes



Three purple-brown pineapple heads or palmettes pierced by swirling stems and interspersed with flowering green reeds punctuate the capacious, creamy tin-glazed interior of this massive serving bowl. Just below the rim a thin green band encloses the design, while the rim itself, which rounds out slightly to offer ease of handling for the carrier, is decorated with a series of tapered diagonal hatch marks, applied with great speed and a loaded brush using the deep purple brown of manganese pigment. The underside of the bowl is unglazed, and retains the highly textured, spiralling marks left in the clay when it was thrown on the wheel.

The production of purple-and-green ware was a Mediterranean phenomenon, but one that manifested itself in regions governed by Islamic overlords – lands such as the Maghreb, Andalusia, Portugal and Sicily, and from the late twelfth century onwards southern Italy, France and Spain, where it found its unrivalled efflorescence in Paterna, Teruel and Catalonia.<sup>1</sup> The deep, conical form of this massive presentation bowl (which far surpasses the usual small-scale tableware and preparation utensils typically representing its type in museum collections today), is descended from Islamic wares brought to Spain during Arab rule over the peninsula in the early Middle Ages, and retained by the Muslim potters of Málaga working for the Nasrid court.<sup>2</sup> Just as indebted to the pottery workshops of Málaga is the radial composition of its embellishment, in which the three focal pineapple heads or palmettes are divided by radially-anchored green lines which meet at the centre of the well.<sup>3</sup>

The aesthetic influence of the Nasrid-ruled workshops of Málaga spread north in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, taken by the many potters who resettled in the towns of Manises and Paterna, two important satellite towns of one of Spain's key trading ports, the Christian-ruled city of Valencia. In Paterna the striking Málaga palette of black and green,

Spain, Valencia, probably Paterna  
c. 1300-1350

42.4 cm (diameter at rim) x 17.8 cm (height); Tin-glazed earthenware with copper green and manganese brown decoration on a buff-coloured clay, raised on a short, bulbous foot ring with subtle faceting to the outer corner. Splashes of tin glaze on the underside. Some minor losses and abrasion to the glaze around the rim and in the central well, otherwise miraculously well preserved.

Provenance  
With Antiquariat Elvira Tasbach;  
Private collection, England, acquired from the above March 2013



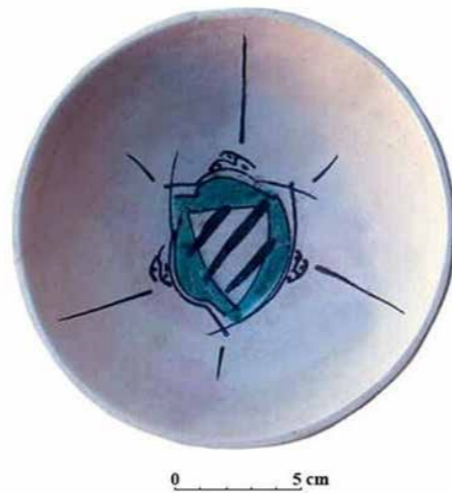
1, Anthony Ray, *Spanish Pottery 1248-1898*, London, 2000, pp. 41-4.

2, Cf. a fifteenth-century Málaga-made bowl now in the Victoria & Albert Museum, illustrated in Balbina Martínez Caviro, *Cerámica Hispanomusulmana: Andalusí y Mudéjar*, Madrid, 1991, p. 84.

3, Jaume Coll Conesa, 'Propuesta de seriación y cronología de las producciones cerámicas mudéjares del Reino de Valencia', in *En torno a la cerámica medieval de los siglos VIII-XV. Actas del XVII Congreso de la Asociación de Ceramología* (December 2020), p. 196; Josefa Pascual and Javier Martí, *La cerámica verde-manganeso bajomedieval valenciana*, Valencia, Ayuntamiento de Valencia, 1986.



obtained from manganese and copper glazes, gave the town a unique artistic idiom which changed little over the subsequent centuries.<sup>4</sup> It is to this pottery producing centre that our decorated bowl can be attributed, since several of its motifs (and particularly the diagonal hatching encircling its rim) compare closely with earthenware vessels and shards localised by find spot or provenance to that town. A number of smaller and less elaborately decorated Paterna-made bowls or *escudelles* survive which incorporate similar spiked radial motifs (fig. 1), while a rare few of larger size have comparable freeform palmette designs separated by copper framing elements or sprouting reeds (fig. 2). Other Paterna wares of monumental size offer context to a presentation bowl of this scale (fig. 3), and in the Paterna museum there is a single surviving bowl with almost identical decoration to ours except for the omission of the swirling palmettes or pineapple heads.<sup>5</sup> The forceful copper green and manganese brown decoration of our bowl places its likely date of creation in the first half of the fourteenth century, in line with other early purple-and-green wares excavated from Paterna's kiln sites or preserved in museum collections today.<sup>6</sup>



**Fig. 1 (above)**  
Small bowl with a coat of arms among radial decoration  
Spain, Paterna  
c. 1350  
Tin-glazed earthenware with manganese and copper decoration  
Museo Municipal de Algeciras

**Fig. 2 (below)**  
A bowl with Persian palmettes  
Spain, Valencia, Paterna  
14<sup>th</sup> century  
25 cm (diameter) x 10.5 cm (height); Tin-glazed earthenware with manganese and copper decoration  
Barcelona, Museu de Ceràmica, inv. 18960



**Fig. 3 (left)**  
Deep basin  
Spain, Valencia, Paterna  
14<sup>th</sup> century  
30 cm (diameter) x 14 cm (height); tin-glazed earthenware with manganese and copper decoration  
Paterna, Museu Municipal de Ceràmica



5, Jaume Coll Conesa, 'Propuesta de seriación y cronología de las producciones cerámicas mudéjares del Reino de Valencia', in *En torno a la cerámica medieval de los siglos VIII-XV. Actas del XVLL Congreso de la Asociación de Ceramología* (December 2020), p. 193 fig. 1.7.

4, M. Mesquida, *La cerámica de Paterna: Reflejos del Mediterráneo*, Valencia, 2002.

6, *Mallorca I el comerç de la ceràmica a la Mediterrània*, Exh. Cat., Palma, 1998, p. 104.



# 15 A serving bowl decorated with *Alafia* motifs and palmette sprays



This small serving dish, or *scodella*, fits perfectly into the cupped palms of two hands. The cusped and pointed handles which extend horizontally from either side of its rim would have helped its bearer grip the vessel with their thumbs as it was being used, passed, and tilted. Its monochromatic decoration of cobalt blue over a white tin glaze, unusual for this form of dish, consists of a single line of repeating *Alafia* motifs (a bastardised version of the Arabic for ‘health and happiness’) running right the way through its central axis from handle to handle. Each *Alafia* is boxed into place by simple single-line borders, and above and below by florid palmette sprays. A fine single band of blue encircles the inside of the rim, and two heart-shaped motifs on each handle extend and echo their cusped outlines.



The intimately-scaled *scodella* format became a ubiquitous sight in the potteries of post-medieval Spain, but our example is one of a small handful to have survived from the first half of the fifteenth century when such vessels were only beginning to spread in popularity. It was most likely created in a Manises workshop by the same potters responsible for the more elaborate and richly decorated lustred vessels of this period that have become so highly prized among modern collectors and museums. Examples including albarelli and deep-sided dishes now split between institutional collections in London, Paris, Sèvres, Madrid and New York (among others) display the same lexicon of *Alafia* symbols and palmette motifs and, like our humbler bowl, can be dated to the first half of the fifteenth century on the basis of their stylistic and technical similarities to stratigraphically dated archeological findspots (figs. 1-2).<sup>1</sup>

Spain, Valencia, probably Manises  
c. 1400-1450

5.5 cm (height) x 20.2 cm (diameter including handles);  
Tin-glazed earthenware with cobalt blue decoration on a pale buff-coloured body. The underside also tin-glazed. The vessel reconstructed from three large fragments. Two small sections of the rim restored.

Provenance  
Private collection, Barcelona, until 2010;  
With Pierre-Richard Royer, Paris, until 2012



**Fig. 1 (left)**  
Lustred albarello with palmette sprays  
Spain, Valencia, Manises  
c. 1400-1425  
39 cm (height) x 14.5 cm (diameter); tin-glazed earthenware with copper lustre and cobalt blue decoration  
Paris, musée de Cluny, inv. CL2119

**Fig. 2 (below)**  
Lustred dish with *Alafia* motifs and palmette sprays  
Spain, Valencia, Manises  
c. 1400-1425  
Tin-glazed earthenware with copper lustre and cobalt blue decoration  
Paris, musée du Louvre, inv. OA6742

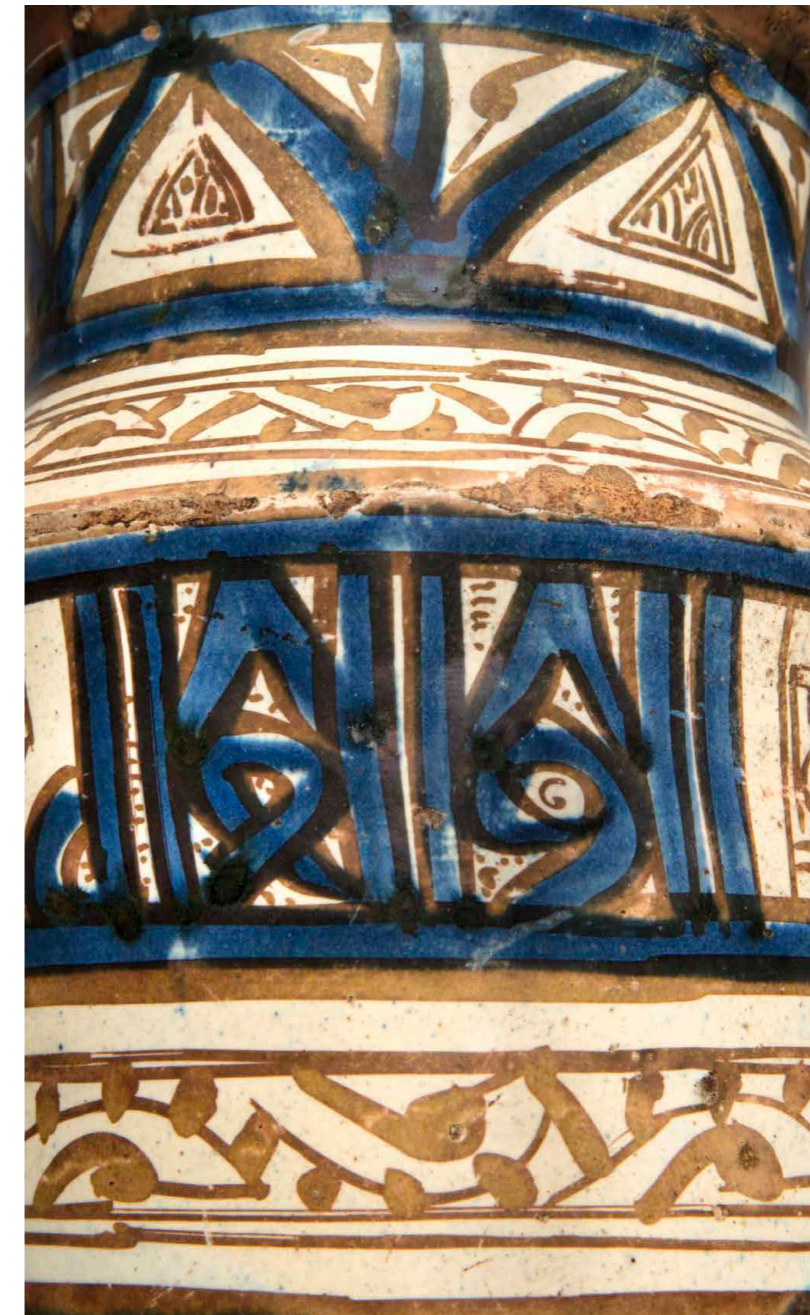


<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the closest analogue for our vessel is a larger dish in the Palacio Nacional, Barcelona, which was in all probability made by the same potter; Alan Caiger-Smith, *Tin-Glaze Pottery in Europe and the Islamic World: The Tradition of 1000 Years in Maiolica, Faience & Delftware*, London, 1973, fig. 43. Cf. also a group of similarly decorated fragments excavated at Poblet and dated to c. 1400-1450, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, illustrated in Anthony Ray, *Spanish Pottery 1248-1898*, London, 2000, p. 48, especially no. 103.

# 16 An early Hispano-Moresque albarello with geometric and 'pseudo-Kufic' decoration



This imposing and perfectly fired cylindrical albarello belongs to a highly prized group of early fifteenth-century Hispano-Moresque lustrewares that are believed to have been produced in the workshops of Manises, the foremost pottery-producing satellite town of Valencia, close to Spain's eastern seaboard. They are celebrated for their unique cultural hybridity and their status as symbols of exchange between Muslim potters and the complex network of international trade (dominated by Christian centres which relied on the Mediterranean basin as their primary conduit) they helped to fuel. This extremely refined example is formed with a tall neck, slanting shoulder, slightly waisted form and short foot rim, decorated in blue and copper-lustre with seven alternating geometric horizontal bands, including abstracted *alafia* symbols alternated with panels of lustre scrollwork and a central band of trellis-work. A single band decorated with abstracted 'pseudo-Kufic' motifs in cobalt blue alternating with fine grills and spirals of copper lustre encircles the body immediately below the shoulder.



Spain, Valencia, Manises  
c. 1400-1430

28.5 cm (height) x 11.8 cm (diameter); Tin-glazed earthenware with copper lustre and cobalt blue decoration on a buff-coloured clay. A slightly waisted body raised on an everted foot, with a tall neck and subtly flanged rim. Some small chips to the glaze around the rim and at the bottom of the interior, a single larger chip to the glaze and body near the foot. The glaze consistently fired and excellently well preserved.

*Provenance*  
Paul Peyta collection, Biarritz, by 1929;  
His sale, The Peyta Collection of Hispano-Moresque, Italian, and Asiatic pottery, Arnold Seligmann, Rey & Co, 1935;  
William Randolph Hearst (1863-1951);  
His sale, Hammer Galleries, New York, 1941, no. 1242-3;  
Where purchased for Mary Duke Biddle Trent Semans (1920-2012);  
Property of The Mary Duke Biddle Trent Semans Foundation;  
On loan to the Duke University Museum of Art, 1956-2020

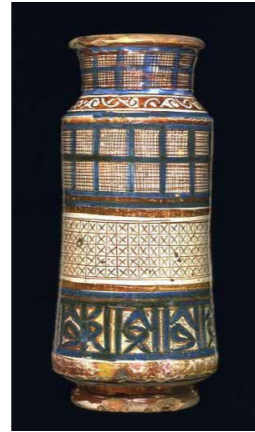
*Published*  
*Art Objects and Furnishings from the William Randolph Hearst Collection*, Sale cat., New York, Gimbel Brothers, 1941, p. 315.

*A note on the albarello's recent history*  
Mary Duke Biddle Trent Semans (1920-2012) was an American philanthropist, local and state-wide leader, and patron of the arts. A member of the Duke University Board of Trustees and the first female chairman of The Duke Endowment, she helped guide these institutions during five decades of service. In the 1960s she helped found the North Carolina School of the Arts, the USA's first public conservatory, and in her mother's memory, created The Mary Duke Biddle Gallery for the Blind at the North Carolina Museum of Art. In the 1940s she acquired a group of Hispano-Moresque ceramics of the first rank, several of which had come from a series of well-publicised sales of the collections amassed by the newspaper tycoon William Randolph Hearst. Among the albarelli with Hearst provenance that Mary Duke Biddle Trent Semans purchased at the time, probably through or with the help of the dealer Raphael Stora, were this fabulous early example and the following albarello in this catalogue (Cat. 17), which it has now come to light had previously been in the collections of Paul Tachard in Paris, and Paul Peyta in Biarritz (fig. 4).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I am sincerely grateful to Dr Lyle Humphrey for bringing the Peyta collection to my attention.

In the fourteenth-century, the town of Malaga in south-eastern Spain became widely celebrated for earthenware decorated with what we now describe as 'gold lustre'. The technique had in fact been perfected centuries earlier in the Near East and had probably been transmitted to Spain via potters travelling up from Egypt. A number of Moorish potters are known to have moved north to settle near Valencia, which came under Christian rule in 1232 and from then on imposed increasingly strict regulations concerning the professions Muslim artisans could occupy. By around 1400 the kilns these master potters controlled were able to produce a superb and consistent lustreware, shimmering with its distinctive metallic sheen. Early wares such as the present example and the family to which it belongs continued the strongly arabesque style of Malaga, with quasi-Arabic inscriptions and calligraphic details in a rich, dazzling blue obtained from glazes using imported cobalt.<sup>2</sup>

The trellis-work panels encircling the centre of this vessel appear on a number of drug jars, as does the *al-afiya* (also known as *alafia*) design which is here reflected in a calligraphic motif consisting of a 'circumflex accent' over an 'alpha' and which has variously been interpreted as the Arabic phrase for 'good health', 'health and happiness', and a degenerate form of the Arabic word for 'grace'.<sup>3</sup> However, the combination of both features together with the discrete panels of 'pseudo-Kufic' lettering, draws particular analogies to another albarello, also attributed to the early fifteenth century and now preserved in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (fig. 1). Little attention has been paid to the group to which they belong, but it is clear from their identical sizes that they must have been produced not just at the same time by the same potters, but also it would seem as part of a single large pharmacy commission. Other related examples are preserved in the British Museum (inv. 1878,1230.332) and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (fig. 2). A charger decorated with a similar division of bands, including alternating *alafia* and stylised Kufic script around the rim, is in the Wallace Collection in London, while a deep-sided dish, which like the V&A and MET albarelli is likely to have been produced in the same workshop as the jar under discussion, is now in the David Collection in Copenhagen (fig. 3).<sup>4</sup> The whole family of vessels to which our albarello and these examples all belong has historically been dated to the first half of the fifteenth century, but the surrounding scholarship is now starting to favour a more refined date range of around 1400-1430.



**Fig. 1**  
A Hispano-Moresque albarello  
Spain, Valencia, Manises  
c. 1400-1430  
28.5 cm (height) x 13 cm  
(diameter); Tin-glazed  
earthenware with copper lustre  
and cobalt blue  
London, Victoria and Albert  
Museum, inv. 46-1907



**Fig. 2**  
A Hispano-Moresque albarello  
Spain, Valencia, Manises  
c. 1400-1430  
31.5 cm (height); Tin-glazed  
earthenware with copper  
lustre and cobalt blue  
New York, Metropolitan  
Museum of Art, inv. 56.171.147



**Fig. 3**  
A Hispano-Moresque earthenware dish  
Spain, Valencia, Manises  
c. 1400-1450  
8 cm (height) x 35 cm (diameter); Tin-glazed  
earthenware with copper lustre and cobalt  
blue  
Copenhagen, David Collection, inv. 32/2005

2, For a discussion of the family of wares to which our example belongs see Balbina Martínez Caviro, *Cerámica Hispanomusulmana: Andalusí y Mudéjar*, Madrid, 1991, p. 141 ff.; Xavier Dectot, *Céramiques hispaniques (XIIe-XVIIIe siècle)*, Paris: Musée National du Moyen Âge - Thermes et Hôtel de Cluny, 2007. pp. 38-39.

3, For differing interpretations see Anthony Ray, *Spanish Pottery 1248-1898*, London, V&A Publications, 2000, p. 401; and Timothy B. Husband, 'Valencian Lusterware of the Fifteenth Century: Notes and Documents.' in *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, n.s., Vol. 29, No. 1 (Summer 1970), pp. 20-32, p. 22.

4, A.V.B. Norman, *Wallace Collection Catalogue of Ceramics I: Pottery, Maiolica, Faience, Stoneware*, London, 1976, p. 40ff.



**Fig. 4**  
Our albarello (top left) as part of a grouping of early Hispano-Moresque wares in the Peyta collection in Biarritz, 1929

# 17 An early Hispano-Moresque albarello with vine and feather decoration



The juxtaposition of cobalt blue and copper lustre decoration on this Hispano-Moresque albarello must have been meticulously considered before its execution, since its entire design is marked by a harmonious and consistent visual weighting from top to bottom. Around the neck is a single broad band of intertwinced, calligraphic arches, hooks and flicks executed in cobalt glaze and interspersed with delicate lusted swirls. The latter continue on the shallow slope of the shoulder, and around the lower body, where they are used to fill the negative space left by a series of inverted arch or fleur-de-lis motifs. Around the upper section of the body is a tall band of decoration consisting of a series of columns hatched in diagonal strokes of copper lustre imitating the fronds of feathers, and alternating with slender cobalt blue chain links formed as strung, heart-shaped beads or leaves.

Hispano-Moresque ceramics were so costly to produce that on the whole only a tiny portion of society would have had regular personal access to them in any form, and yet this rule of privilege was in fact broken in the public sphere, since albarelli, the collective name typically used to describe these types of slender, lidless storage jars, were primarily used in apothecary shops, one of the rare places ‘where men of all classes could meet as intellectual equals’.<sup>1</sup> As with its counterpart in this catalogue (Cat. 16), this fabulously decorated example is one of a tiny handful of surviving albarelli attributed almost unanimously across the scholarship on the field to the workshops of Manises, Valencia’s foremost pottery-producing town during the Middle Ages. It belongs to an early family of wares that really only started to emerge to scholars as a result of public auctions in the twentieth century (this example came to light when it was sold from the collection of the Parisian collector Paul Tachard in 1912). The surviving group has quite rightly become widely celebrated not only for its artistic refinement but also for its unique cultural hybridity, its decorative language exemplifying the complex and sophisticated arena of cultural exchange that existed between Muslim potters and the Christian-dominated Mediterranean trade networks they helped to fuel.



Spain, Valencia, Manises  
c. 1400-1430

28.5 cm (height) x 12 cm (diameter); Tin-glazed earthenware with copper lustre and cobalt blue decoration on a buff-coloured clay. A slightly waisted body raised on a narrow, everted foot, with a tall neck and flanged rim. Losses to the glaze around the rim, shoulder, lower body, and foot ring. The glaze consistently fired and otherwise very well preserved.

#### Provenance

Paul Tachard collection, Paris;  
His sale, Hotel Drouot, Paris, 18th March 1912, lot 5;  
Paul Peyta collection, Biarritz, by 1929 (see fig. 1);  
His sale, The Peyta Collection of Hispano-Moresque, Italian, and Asiatic pottery, Arnold Seligmann, Rey & Co, New York, 1935;  
William Randolph Hearst (1863–1951);  
His sale, Hammer Galleries, New York, 1941, no. 1242-4;  
Probably purchased by Raphael Stora and sold to Mary Duke Biddle Trent Semans (1920-2012), before 1948;  
Property of The Mary Duke Biddle Trent Semans Foundation;  
On loan to the Duke University Museum of Art, 1956-2020

#### Published

*Catalogue des anciennes faïences hispano-mauresques, plat important à reflets métalliques, en faïences de Manises, XIV siècle, composant la collection de M. Paul Tachard*, Sale Cat., Paris, 1912, p. 11, ill.

*Art Objects and Furnishings from the William Randolph Hearst Collection*, Sale cat., New York, Gimbel Brothers, 1941, p. 315.

1, Caroline Campbell ‘The Place of Maiolica’, in Elisa Sani and J. v. G. Mallet, *Maiolica in Italy and beyond: Papers of a Symposium Held at Oxford in Celebration of Timothy Wilson’s Catalogue of Maiolica in the Ashmolean Museum*, Oxford, 2021, pp. 11-25, p. 19.

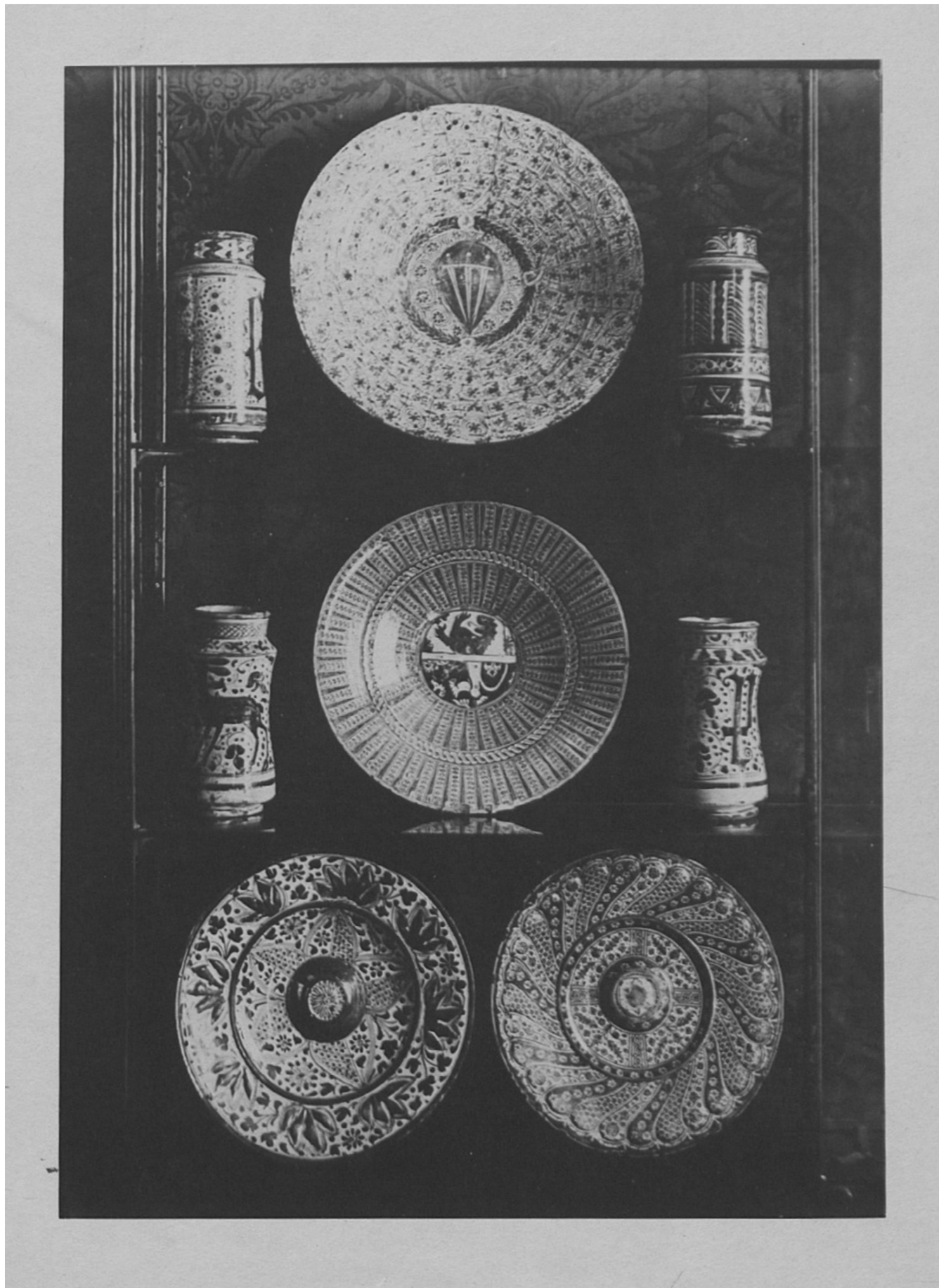


Fig. 1  
Our albarello (top right) as part of a grouping of early Hispano-Moresque wares in the Peyta collection in Biarritz, 1929



Several of the motifs used in the decoration of this drug jar can be found on a handful of related lustrewares of varying shapes and forms now in museum collections around the world. Key sister-pieces to our jar (and which must surely come from the same workshop) include a deep dish with the arms of the Despujol<sup>2</sup> family of Catalonia (fig. 2), a pitcher in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (fig. 3), and a pair of albarellos of almost identical size to ours, all three of which are preserved in the collection of the Hispanic Society of America (fig. 4). An albarello in the British Museum in London decorated with a variant arrangement of almost all of the same motifs must surely have been produced by our potter (fig. 5). Though it is fractionally larger than our example, several of the other related vessels are of identical size, which suggests that they were made as part of the same pharmacy commission. Other related examples are preserved in the National Archaeological Museum and the Instituto Valencia de Don Juan in Madrid, the Museo de Cerámica in Barcelona and the Metropolitan Museum.<sup>3</sup>



**Fig. 2**  
Deep dish with the arms of the Despujol family  
Spain, Valencia, Manises  
Late 14th or early 15th century  
48.2 cm (diam.); Tin-glazed earthenware with  
copper lustre and cobalt blue  
New York, Hispanic Society of America, inv.  
E634



**Fig. 3**  
A Hispano-Moresque pitcher  
Spain, Valencia, Manises  
c. 1430  
46.7 x 22.9 cm; Tin-glazed earthenware  
with copper lustre and cobalt blue  
New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art,  
inv. 56.171.146



**Fig. 4**  
A Hispano-Moresque albarello  
Spain, Valencia, Manises  
c. 1400-1430  
29.7 cm (height); Tin-glazed earthenware  
with copper lustre and cobalt blue  
New York, Hispanic Society of America,  
inv. E574



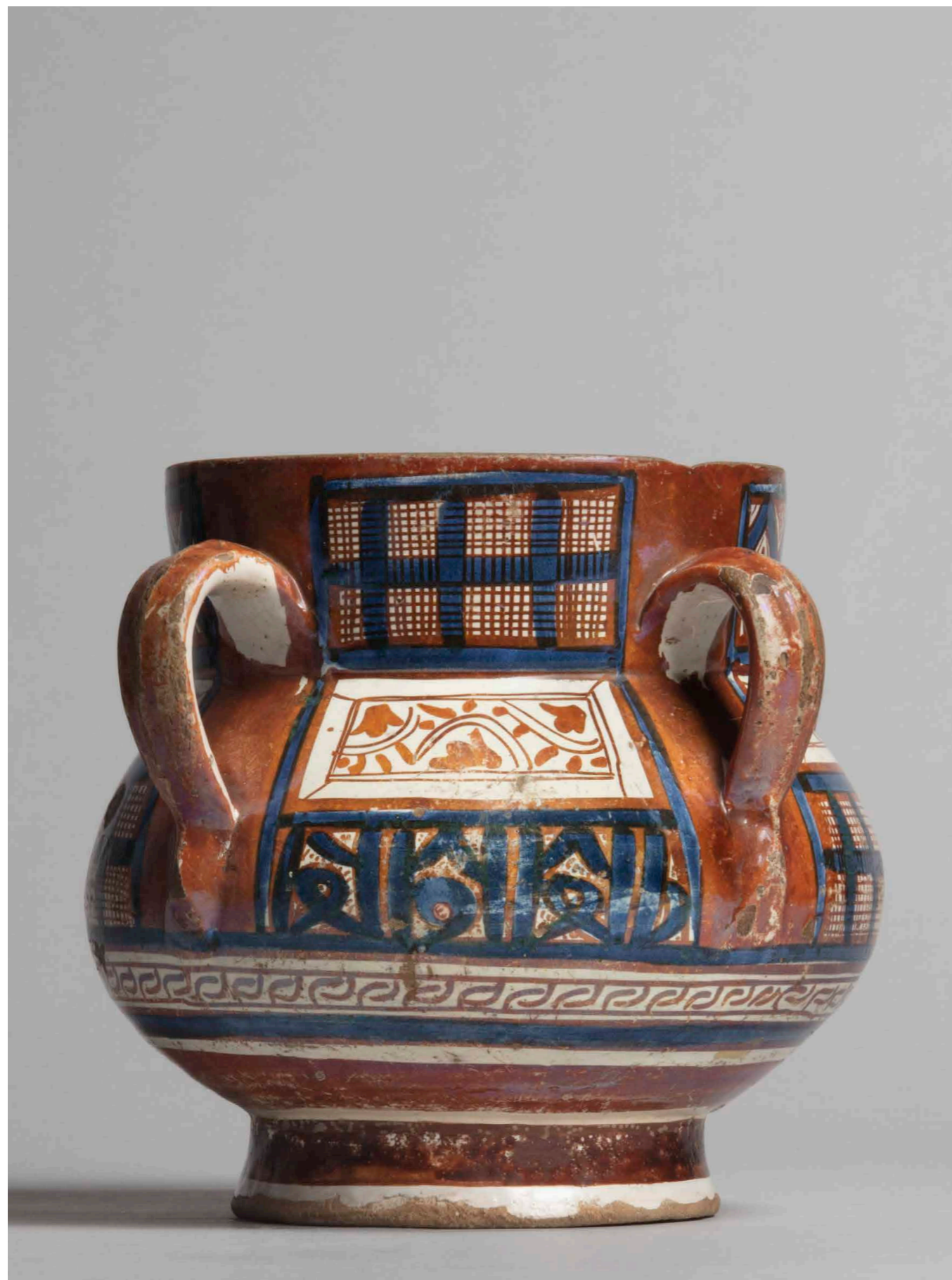
**Fig. 5**  
A Hispano-Moresque albarello  
Spain, Valencia, Manises  
c. 1400-1430  
32 cm (height); Tin-glazed earthenware  
with copper lustre and cobalt blue  
London, British Museum, inv. G.557



3, Balbina Martínez Caviro,  
*Cerámica Hispanomusulmana:  
Andalusí y Mudéjar*; Madrid,  
1991, pp. 142-3; See also  
Josep A. Cerdà i Mellado, *La  
Loza Dorada de la Colección  
Mascort*, Torroella de Montgrí,  
2011, no. 88, p. 167; the New  
York albarello is inv. 56.171.147.

2, For the Despujol  
dish see Anne Wilson  
Frothingham, *Lusterware  
of Spain*, New York, 1951,  
p. 98 ff.

# 18 An early Hispano-Moresque four-handled vase with geometric and pseudo-Kufic decoration



Undoubtedly produced by the same potters responsible for the two albarelli in this catalogue (Cats. 16 and 17) the form of this impressive lusted vase draws heavily on glass mosque lamps. It is masterfully potted, with a rotund, near-spherical body supporting a tall conical neck, and with four large handles attached in an equidistant arrangement around its circumference. It is covered in a bright off-white tin glaze and heavily ornamented using the characteristic Valencian palette of copper lustre and cobalt blue. The vessel's decorative scheme consists of dense patterns of arabesque, chevron, grid- and penwork ornament separated by the handles into four main panels but united above and below the handles by bands of continuous fish-bone decoration. The handles are all painted in solid bands of lustre. Further tin-glaze and copper lustre decoration enlivens the interior of the neck.

This magnificent vessel belongs to an extremely rare class of four-handled vase of which only a handful of other examples are known, most being in the collection of the British Museum in London (figs. 1-2). For ease of reference, these vessels can be divided into two categories based on their painted decoration; pseudo-Kufic (since short scrolls of fictive Kufic script encircle the neck) and geometric (for the patterns of diamonds and grids that embellish the neck and body). Despite their differences however, the group of surviving vessels to which our example belongs is likely to have been the output of a single workshop, since the proportions and style of their profiles, the techniques by which their handles are applied with faceted chasing to the clay, and the density and weighting of lustre to cobalt decoration, are all very closely related. They were almost certainly produced in the town of Manises, the foremost pottery-producing satellite of Valencia close to Spain's eastern seaboard. Manises pottery of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is celebrated for its unique cultural hybridity and its status as one of the most profound symbols of exchange between Muslim artisans and the complex network of international trade (dominated by Christian centres which relied on the Mediterranean basin as their primary conduit) they helped to fuel.

Lusted ceramics strongly analogous to our vessel and similarly associated with early fifteenth-century Manises workshops include a tall albarello now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (fig. 3), and a group of albarelli, chargers, and four-handled vases whose lexicon of motifs concur with those on our vase (see examples at the musée du Cluny, inv. CL21120; the British Museum, inv. 1878,1230.332, as well as inv. G.542 and G.557; the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, inv. 487-1864, as well as C.123-1931; and the Instituto Valencia de Don Juan, Madrid, inv. 179, 191, 200, and 232).



**Fig. 3 (right)**  
Pharmacy jar or albarello  
Spain, Valencia, Manises  
c. 1400-1450  
33.2 cm (height); Tin-glazed  
earthenware with copper lustre  
and cobalt blue  
New York, Metropolitan Museum  
of Art, inv. 17.190.826

Spain, Valencia, Manises  
c. 1400-1430

18.5 cm (height) x 22 cm (diameter at centre); Tin-glazed earthenware with copper lustre and cobalt blue glazes. The vessel is remarkably well preserved. The foot has been broken and replaced. Additionally, there are some hairline cracks to the body, along with abrasion and flake losses to the glaze around the rim and foot as well as in a few places on the bodies and handles, and to the interior (as a result of continued use). One larger chip to the rim.

Provenance  
Collection of Otto Beit (1865-1930);  
French private collection until 2013



**Fig. 1 (above)**  
Four-handled vase with  
arabesque and geometric  
decoration  
Spain, Valencia, Manises  
c. 1400-1425  
18 cm (height) x 14  
cm (diam.); Tin-glazed  
earthenware with copper  
lustre and cobalt blue  
London, British Museum,  
inv. G. 597

**Fig. 2 (below)**  
Four-handled vase with  
geometric decoration  
Spain, Valencia, Manises  
c. 1400-1425  
16.5 cm (height) x 11.8  
cm (diam.); Tin-glazed  
earthenware with copper  
lustre and cobalt blue  
London, British Museum,  
inv. G. 599







# 19 A set of four Hispano-Moresque floor tiles depicting a songbird, a falcon, a hare and a fox



The use of blue cobalt decoration on a ground of white tin in imitation of Iranian stonepaste and Chinese porcelain was a sea-change in the history of European pottery, and it was felt first and keenest in the kilns of Muslim Spain during the Middle Ages. During the fifteenth century, trade in Valencian ceramics extended right across Europe, dominated by the connecting force of the Mediterranean, which helped to fuel demand just as quickly as it promised to meet it. Records show that Valencian wares were exported as far afield as England and Flanders in the west to Venice, the Byzantine lands, and even the Baltic countries in the east. The desirability of Manises and Paterna ceramics in particular, with their rich, consistent blue decoration continued throughout Europe until the late sixteenth century, being described in many places as "work of Valencia" or "Mallorca" because of the origins of the seafarers who traded with it.

The lexicon of motifs used in the decoration of these four floor tiles situate them firmly in a Valencian context, and undoubtedly in one of the foremost workshops of Paterna or Manises, two closely situated and interlinked pottery-producing centres close to the country's Eastern seaboard; groups of blue and white wares of a similar type have been found in waste pits in both towns.<sup>1</sup> Well published fragments of tiles and other ceramics on which animals are depicted with similarly slender, willowy silhouettes against a background design incorporating parsley leaves and Arabesque palmette sprays include a small dish dated to the first half of the fifteenth century (fig. 1), and a fragment of a floor tile dated to the first quarter, and painted by an artist working in close and sustained contact with the individual responsible for ours.<sup>2</sup>

Spain, Valencia, Manises or Paterna  
c. 1425

11.5 x 11.5 cm (height x width). Depth varies from 1.8 to 2.4 cm across all four tiles; Tin glazed earthenware with cobalt blue decoration on a pale buff-coloured clay. Chip losses to the glaze in places, particularly around the perimeter of each tile. A larger loss to the upper right-hand corner of the falcon tile.

Provenance  
Art market, Paris



**Fig. 1 (above)**  
Small dish with a hooked-beaked bird  
Valencia, Paterna or Manises  
c. 1400-1450  
25.2 cm (diameter) x 6.6 cm (height); Tin-glazed earthenware with cobalt blue decoration  
London, Victoria and Albert Museum, inv. C.51-1989

1, Anthony Ray, *Spanish Pottery 1248-1898*, London, 2000, pp. 315, 320-21.

2, *Ibid*, no. 614, p. 315.

## 20 Four hexagonal floor tiles from the cell of San Vicente Ferrer



These four richly pigmented hexagonal floor tiles were made by a group of highly skilled Manises potters for the cell of San Vicente Ferrer (also known as Saint Vincent, c. 1350-1419), Valencia's most famous and intensely venerated religious figure. He became a Dominican preacher at the age of eighteen and gained popularity in the region for his missionary work, as well as his staunch support of the Avignonese antipope Clement VII during the papal schism of 1378-1417. Following his death, Vicente's cell in the Convent of Santo Domingo in Valencia was converted into a chapel under the care of a confraternity who called themselves the 'Hermandad de los Caballeros de la Celda' (the Brotherhood of the Knights of the Cell), and under whose patronage it was richly embellished.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps shortly after San Vicente's death, and certainly by the middle of the fifteenth century, they had commissioned a large set of these fabulous blue and white tiles to decorate the cell's floor. The overall design consisted of tessellating groups of four hexagonal tiles arranged around a central square decorated with a rose.<sup>2</sup> The resultant rhythm and geometry of the design would have been similar to a similar floor made by Manises potters for an Italian patron, of which a large and well-preserved section is now in the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles (fig. 1).<sup>3</sup> As with the Getty floor, each one of the hexagonal tiles from San Vicente's cell is adorned with a flying scroll on which short mottos are inscribed. Three of the four mottos known to have been used by the potters responsible for the Santo Domingo commission are represented on our tile group; 'bon regiment' (a well-ordered life), 'ab sana pensa' (with right thoughts), and 'e ab saviesa' (and with knowledge) respectively.

In the nineteenth century San Vicente's cell was redecorated and its medieval floor tiles removed and dispersed shortly afterwards. They are now split between a number of the world's museums, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Hispanic Society in New York, the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, the Victoria and Albert Museum and the British Museum in London, the Instituto Valencia de Don Juan in Madrid, and the Museo Nacional de Cerámica in Valencia.<sup>4</sup>

Spain, Valencia, probably Manises  
c. 1425-1450

10.5 cm (height) x 20.5 cm (length) x 2.6 cm (depth); Tin-glazed earthenware with cobalt blue decoration on a pale pinkish clay. Thickly potted, with only minor abrasion to the glaze, though chips dot the perimeter of each tile.

Provenance

With Bealu Galleries, Paris;  
Pierre Richard Royer, Paris, until 2012



Fig. 1 (above)

Tile floor  
Spain, Valencia, Manises  
c. 1425-1450  
Overall dimensions 110  
x 220 cm; tin-glazed  
earthenware with cobalt  
and manganese decoration  
Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty  
Museum, inv. 84.DE.747

1, Anthony Ray, *Spanish Pottery 1248-1898*, London, 2000, p. 317. An old label attached to the underside of one of the tiles corroborates this provenance, and reads "from the old Dominican convent of the city of Valencia (today the "Capitania General", a military building)".

2, For a reconstruction of the design with a large group of these rose tiles see María Paz Soler Ferrer, *Historia de la Cerámica Valenciana*, Vol. II, Valencia, 1988, p. 213.

3, Catherine Hess, *Italian Maiolica: Catalogue of the Collections*, J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, 1988, pp. 12-13.

4, Edwin Atlee Barber, *Catalogue of Hispano-Moresque pottery in the collection of the Hispanic Society of America*, New York, 1915, Cat. 130, pl. LXXXVI, pp. 213-215; Ray, 2000, p. 317.

## 21 A tile with a catapult motif, from the Palacio de los Almunia, Valencia



This large, square floor tile was made as part of a commission for the Palacio de los Almunia, a now-demolished house built in 1455 by the Valencian judge Bernardo Almunia and formerly located on the Calle Avellanas in Valencia. The inscription wrapped around the central motif of a catapult reads 'lo guardo vostra virtut de mos merits' (I guard your virtue by my merits). Emblems, mottoes and *imprese* like these were developed by patrons right across Europe during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as a form of visual shorthand able to communicate status and steadfastness of character. This was, in part, a response to the historic use of such forms at the royal courts, and they were thus exploited for their ability to bestow anyone wealthy enough to have or create an emblem of their own with the suggestion of having right and title – things normally gained only through ancient and noble lineage. Guilds, confraternities, and individuals all boasted their own and used them as potent visual adverts; the frequent struggles for power and influence between the upper echelons of Valencian society led to the emergence of a number of these emblems, which were plastered across commissions of all kinds but especially in architectural settings affiliated with their owners. Despite their largely civilian identities, some of the city's social elite adopted the kinds of pseudo-militaristic imagery typified by the catapult on our tile as an allusion to strength beyond mere words.

Only a small group of the original tiles made for the Palacio de los Almunia have come down to us, and are today split between the world's museum collections, including the Museo Nacional de Cerámica (inv. CE1/02259), which was established in the late 1940s to house the collection of the great ceramics historian Manuel González Martí (1877-1972).

Spain, Valencia, probably Manises  
c. 1455

13 x 13 x 2.2 cm; Tin-glazed earthenware with cobalt blue decoration on a whitish buff body. Some glaze losses (mainly around the edges of the tile), but otherwise excellently preserved.

Provenance  
Made for the Palacio de los Almunia, Valencia;  
Private collection, Valencia

## 22 A large lustreware charger emblazoned with 'IHS' among parsley leaves and bryony flowers



This magnificent charger is formed with shallow, conical sides entirely covered in a basket- or trellis-work pattern of alternating bryony flowers and parsley leaves picked out in cobalt blue on a white ground and interspersed with delicate vine tendrils in copper lustre. The sides of the dish slope down into a large central roundel emblazoned with the sacred Christogram of the letters 'ihs' inscribed using copper lustre in ornate *textura quadrata* letterforms and topped by a florid Arabesque curlicue that bisects the ascender of the central 'h'. Further lusted vine tendrils project from the letterforms across the white background glaze. The reverse of the dish is also embellished with lusted decoration, applied using a loaded brush that the painter held in their hand while the dish was turned on the wheel, and slowly moved from the centre to the rim to create a single continuous spiral design.



The skill of the Moorish potters in medieval Spain was unrivalled in fifteenth-century Europe. We still do not know how they managed to do it, but the artists working in the Kingdom of Valencia during this period successfully safeguarded the technique of producing copper lustre from their competitors in other centres for over a century, such that Italian potters throughout the 1400s attempted, and repeatedly failed, to master the technique in their own workshops.<sup>1</sup> Florentine potters seeing Valencian ceramics imported in large numbers via the Arno river came closest to copying the distinctive design that covers the front of our charger, a pattern known to have been in use by 1427 when it appears in Italian documents as 'fioralixi' ('fleur-de-lys'), but they were forced to settle on an enriched antimony yellow glaze in imitation of the more highly prized copper sheen used by their Spanish rivals.

Spain, Valencia, Manises  
c. 1430-60

43.5 cm diameter; tin-glazed earthenware on a buff-coloured clay, with copper lustre and cobalt blue decoration. Some very small chips to the glaze around the rim and foot ring, some rubbing and firing scars to the central well. A single repaired break through the centre of the dish. The 'IHS' letter forms subtly strengthened in places where they have become abraded. The dish pierced twice near the upper edge for suspension.

#### Provenance

Fernandez collection, Paris;  
George and Florence Blumenthal, New York, by 1926;  
Bequest of George Blumenthal to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1941, inv. 41.100.308;  
Collection of Paul W. Doll Jr. (1926-2020), acquired directly from the museum by exchange in 2011

#### Published

Stella Rubenstein-Bloch, *Catalogue of the Collection of George and Florence Blumenthal*, 1926, vol. III, pl. XXXIII.

<sup>1</sup> Marco Spallanzani, *Maioliche ispano-moresche a Firenze nel Rinascimento*, Florence, 2006.

So revered was the Valencian potters' ability to almost magically transform raw materials into precious metallic surfaces, that contemporary patrons and writers prized it as though it were gold; the Franciscan Friar Francesc Eiximenes, in his 1383 treatise on civic duties, praised 'the beauty of golden Manises wares, masterfully painted [...that] popes and cardinals and princes of the world seek it specially and are amazed that such an excellent and noble work can be made from earth'.<sup>2</sup> The inclusion of 'popes and cardinals and princes' in Eiximenes' praise of Valencian ceramics attests to their rarefied status as objects of extreme luxury and expense. The European noble and religious elite commissioned sets of Valencian table wares according to particular requirements. Our charger would most likely have been produced either as the centrepiece of a larger domestic commission, or just as plausibly for liturgical use, since its sacred 'ihs' trigram would have been particularly suited to the symbolism of the Eucharist. Examples of Valencian chargers incorporating the same motif can still be found in religious settings, including in the treasury at Xanten where it has been in use as an altar object since at least 1500 (fig. 1). Nevertheless, the fact that our vessel's upper rim is pierced twice for suspension via a rope or ribbon shows that it was also made to be hung for display, rather than put to service as a purely functional object.



**Fig. 1**  
Valencian monogrammed lusterware charger with the head of John the Baptist  
The charger c. 1450, the head carved in 1500 by Dries Holthuys  
Xanten, Cathedral Treasury



**Fig. 2**  
Hispano-Moresque lusterware charger with the 'IHS'  
Spain, Valencia, probably Manises  
c. 1430-60  
tin-glazed earthenware with copper lustre and cobalt blue decoration  
Paris, musée du Louvre, inv. OA4032

Only a tiny handful of chargers comparable to this example in form and decoration survive anywhere in the world. Examples closely matching ours in both respects are preserved in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Burrell Collection in Glasgow, the British Museum in London, and the Cluny and Louvre museums in Paris. Several of these are so close in execution that they must have been produced in the same period and artistic orbit as ours, and perhaps even by the same group of master potter-painters (see figs. 2-3). Almost without exception, they incorporate the same large, shapely curlicue of lustre that bisects the ascender of the central letter 'h'. This motif, put to use within the Christian context of the sacred trigram, has its roots in Arabic script introduced to Spain during the long period of Islamic rule over the Iberian Peninsula, which lasted until the Reconquista in 1492.<sup>3</sup> Its complete integration into the aesthetic repertoire of the Valencian potters speaks to the intensely complex and dialogic relationship between the two cultures during the Middle Ages, and the influence it exerted on Spanish art right up until the close of the Middle Ages and beyond.



**Fig. 3 a & b**  
Hispano-Moresque lusterware charger with the 'IHS', detail of the front and back, the latter showing the same continuous spiral design as that on the reverse of our charger  
Spain, Valencia, Manises  
c. 1430-60  
45 cm diameter; tin-glazed earthenware with copper lustre and cobalt blue decoration  
Paris, musée du Cluny, inv. CL2090

2, Regiment de la cosa publica, cited in G.J. de Osma, *Apuntes sobre ceramica morisca. Textos y documentos valencianos no.1: La loza dorada de manises en el año 1454 (Cartas de la Reina de Aragón a Don Pedro Boil)*, Madrid, 1906, p. 12.

3, I am grateful to Marcus Fraser for his help exploring the origins of the motif in the ornament of Muslim Spain.



# 23

## A lustred charger with ribbed decoration



A grand, relief-moulded charger decorated entirely in golden copper lustre. At its centre is a shield-shaped heraldic escutcheon emblazoned with a rampant goat. Spreading outwards from this central shield across the conical sides of the dish is a dense repeating pattern of 'nail head' or *puntas de clavo* ornament organized into radiating ribs and dotted here and there with occasional thistle-head motifs. A relief-moulded pattern of long peta-like ribs, often described in Spanish by the name *cordoncillo* after the slender catkin-like seed pods of the pepper plant, extend like the spokes of a wheel from a central ring enclosing the heraldic shield to the rim where they connect to one another with a continuous series of bouncing arcs. The underside of the dish is painted with concentric rings punctuated at intervals by thicker bands.

Manises, a pottery-producing satellite town of Valencia near Spain's eastern seaboard, is responsible for many of the greatest lustred ceramics ever to have been produced in Europe. Its kilns were developed into powerhouses of production by Muslim potters moving north from the Nasrid court in the years after 1300, and over the course of the subsequent two centuries it helped the region of Valencia dominate the international market for luxury ceramics. Our large charger is a perfect example of the high quality, ambitious scale, and extraordinary technical refinement reached by the town's community of potters, who despite having Muslim identities were working in an increasingly Christian-dominated cultural and political context. The family of wares to which our example belongs

Spain, Valencia, Manises  
c. 1470-1500

45.5 cm (diameter) x 6.5 cm (depth); Tin-glazed earthenware with copper lustre decoration on a buff-coloured clay. A repaired break running across the middle of the charger, and a further much smaller hairline crack extending into the body from the rim near the 5 o'clock position. Abrasion to the glaze layer along the ribbed mouldings and the rim of the dish. Original suspension holes drilled near the top of the rim, and a further suspension hole, non-original, drilled through the body on the reverse face.

Provenance  
William Randolph Hearst (1863-1951);  
Sotheby's New York, 5th December 1967, lot 205, 'The Property of D. Ward Esq';  
Private European collection

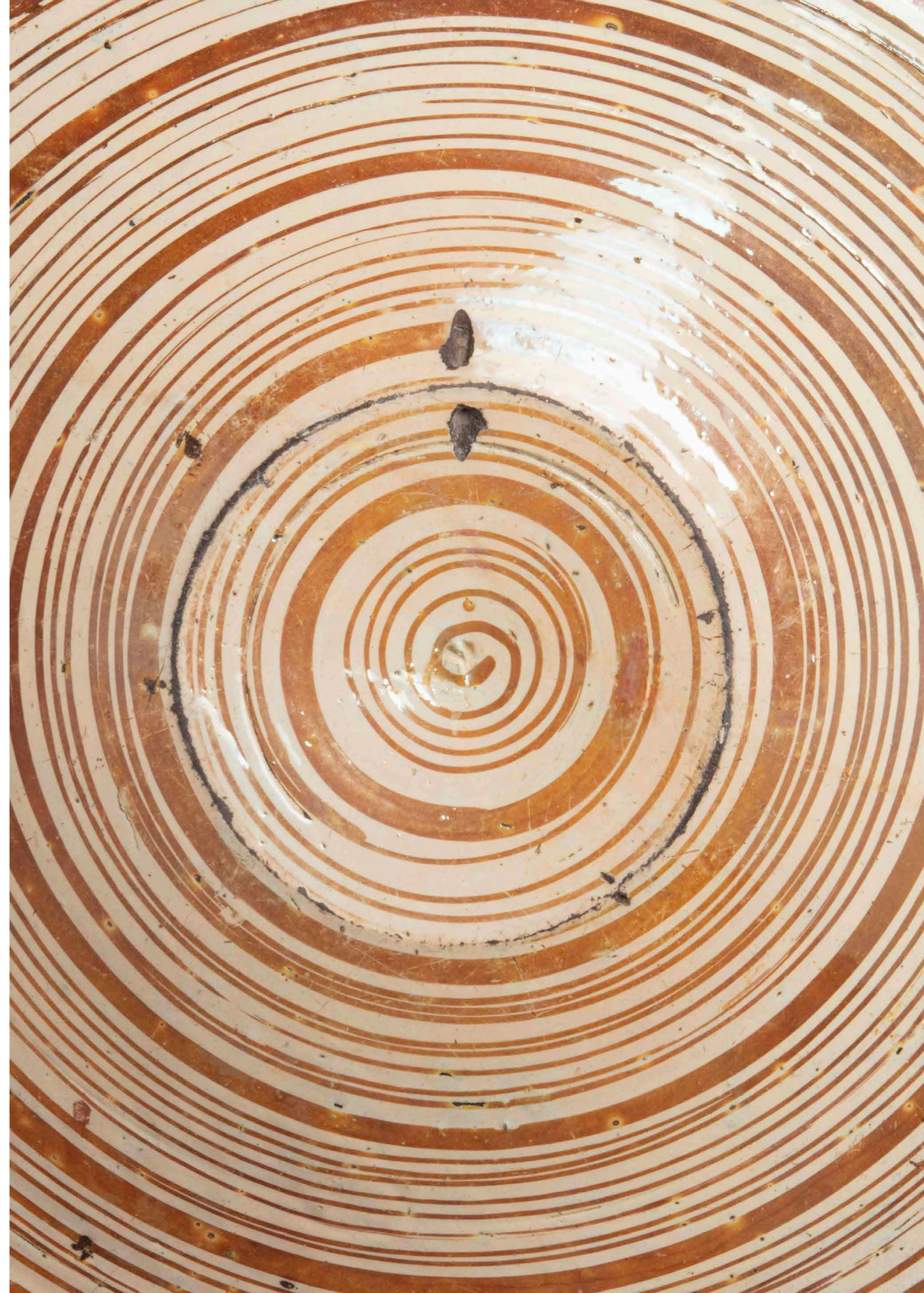


has been dated by most modern scholars to the final decades of the fifteenth century, one of the last great moments of innovation in Hispano-moresque ceramics. Other examples with *cordoncillo* reliefs and the same lexicon of painted motifs can be found in a number of the world's museum collections, with particularly close analogs in the musée de Cluny in Paris (fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> Alongside the discovery of fragments in local kiln sites, a charger in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York decorated with the coat of arms of the Buyl family, lords of Manises, offers important evidence for localising the known group of such vessels to that centre (fig. 2).



**Fig. 1 (above)**  
Charger with the 'IHS' trigram  
Spain, Valencia, Manises  
c. 1480-1500  
45 cm (diameter); tin-glazed earthenware with copper luster decoration  
Paris, musée de Cluny, inv. Cl.2241

**Fig. 2 (below)**  
Dish with the arms of the Buyl family, lords of Manises  
Spain, Valencia, Manises  
c. 1475-1500  
38.1 cm (diameter); tin-glazed earthenware with copper luster decoration  
New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 94.4.362



1. Xavier Dectot, *Céramiques hispaniques (XIIe-XVIIIe siècle)*, Paris, musée de Cluny, 2007, pp. 66-68.



# 24 A 'socarrat' ceiling tile depicting Saints Cosmas and Damian



A large earthenware ceiling tile showing two male figures identified by their attributes and the florid inscription beneath their feet as the surgeon saints Cosmas and Damian, the Arab physicians and early Christian martyrs who lived in the Roman province of Syria and were executed during the persecutions of the Emperor Diocletian. They are depicted not in archaicizing dress but in elaborate, contemporary fifteenth-century attire with alternating panels of decoration on their long, belted garments and voluminous sleeves. Evoking their studious dedication to the medical profession, Cosmas holds a urine sample up to the light in a bulbous glass jar. Their heads are framed by circular haloes reserved against a background of dense wriggling swirls and palmette motifs.

The term *socarrat* (from the Valencian term for 'scorched') refers to large fired-earth tiles manufactured using slabs of clay that are smoothed and left to air dry, before being rubbed with a white clay slip and decorated using black and red pigments derived from manganese and iron oxides.<sup>1</sup> They were fired once in order to fix their pigments in place and produce their striking red and black tonality, but otherwise left unglazed. They have historically been linked to the pottery-producing town of Paterna on the outskirts of Valencia, since a number of them are stamped in places (normally on their front face) with the town's coat of arms (fig. 1).<sup>2</sup> They were made to decorate ceilings, slotted between the rafters in apparently random arrangements – the effect being reliant more on their bold strength of colour and visual diversity than any form of narrative program. The vast majority of surviving tiles are decorated with Islamic-inspired vegetal forms or animals in profile, and only a vanishing number display figures with the complexity and sophistication of our saints.

Spain, Valencia, Paterna  
c. 1450-1500

43 x 35 x 3.5 cm (height x width x depth at thickest point); Earthenware with manganese and iron oxide pigments over a white slip on a reddish clay. Some chip losses to the extremities of the tile, including two larger chips along the lower edge, perhaps incurred during its removal from a ceiling structure.

Provenance  
Private collection, Spain



**Fig. 1**  
Socarrat tile with a ship in full sail  
Spain, Valencia, Paterna  
15th century  
41 x 33.5cm, fired earthenware  
Madrid, Museo Arqueológico Nacional, inv. no. 60399

1, F. Amigues & G. Mesquida García, *Les ateliers et la ceramique de Paterna (XVIIIe-XVe siecle)*, Exh. Cat., Beziers, Musée Saint-Jacques, July-October 1993; Á. Mata Franco, 'Socarrat', *Aragón, Reino y Corona*, Exh. Cat., Saragossa, 2000; Á. Mata Franco et. al., 'La Documentación de las Cerámicas Valencianas Medievales en el Museo Arqueológico Nacional', in *La Cerámica de Paterna. Reflejos del Mediterráneo*, Exh. Cat., Valencia, 2002.

2, Anthony Ray, *Spanish Pottery 1248-1898*, London, 2000, pp. 322-4; Balbina Martínez Caviro, *Cerámica Hispanomusulmana: Andalusí y Mudéjar*, Madrid, 1991, pp. 216-9; Manuel González Martí, 'Azulejos', 'Socarrats' and 'Retablos', articles in *Cerámica del levante español, Siglos medievales*, Vol. III, Barcelona 1952

# 25 Four floor tiles with eagle and tower motifs, the arms of the Torres y Aguilar family



The forceful geometry and strong, polarised palette of these four heraldic floor tiles remain as mesmerising today as they would have been to medieval viewers, undinted by the passage of time. The concave spaces left at the centre of each tile by its chequerboard quarter-discs in each corner are emblazoned with the emblems of the Torres y Aguilar family, which alternate between clustered castles and rampant eagles with outstretched wings.

It is clear from the variety of heraldic designs and other emblems which populate surviving tiles incorporating the strong geometric corner designs of our four that the Valencian potters responsible for their invention had struck on a brilliant, winning formula, and they received orders for entire floors of them from the highest echelons of contemporary society.<sup>1</sup> A large group of them, with various iterations of the same motifs as those appearing on our set, can still be found in situ at the Castillo de Alaquàs, near Valencia, for many years the seat of the noble Torres y Aguilar family.<sup>2</sup> Originally built in the fourteenth century, the castle passed into the ownership of Berenguer Martin, the treasurer to Maria of Castile, Queen of Aragon (1401-1458) who enjoyed considerable favour at court. When he died heirless, the castle was acquired through his daughter by Jaime García de Aguilar, who strengthened the status of the two families by marriage. In his authoritative 1944-1952 survey publications on Spanish medieval pottery, Manuel Gonzalez Martí first brought to light a group of tiles to which our four belong in another of the Torres y Aguilar family's residences, which was located on the Calle Padre de Huerfanos in Valencia.<sup>3</sup> The building has since been demolished, but it is highly likely that our group and others of the same design were made to decorate its rooms in the final decades of the fifteenth century.

Spain, Valencia, Manises  
c. 1475-1500

13.8 x 13.8 cm x 1.7 cm each (height x width x depth); Tin-glazed earthenware with cobalt blue decoration on a pale buff-coloured clay. Sporadic chips to the glaze, particularly around the edges of each tile, and some light abrasion to the surface.

*Provenance*

Most likely made to decorate the family home of the Torres y Aguilar family at 1, Calle Padre de Huerfanos, Valencia; Private collection, Valencia



1, Cf. variants of the design with 'Moors' heads' in the Victoria and Albert Museum; Anthony Ray, *Spanish Pottery 1248-1898*, London, 2000, no. 627, p. 318.

2, María Teresa Ferrando Martí and María Teresa Planells Ibor, 'Los Azulejos del Siglo XV del Castillo-Palacio de Alaquàs. Descripción y Clasificación' in *Quaderns d'Investigació d'Alaquàs*, 1983, pp. 9-22, p. 13 ff.

3, Manuel Gonzalez Martí, *Cerámica del Levante Español*, Vol. 3: *Azulejos, Retablos y Socarrats*, Barcelona, 1944-1952, pp. 69-70; see also Martí and Ibor 1983, p. 14.

# 26 A Hispano-Moresque gadroon-moulded lustreware charger



A boldly decorated Hispano-Moresque lustreware dish with a rampant hare facing *a dexter* in a central armorial boss raised above an encircling basin in which the words 'INSURG[E] DOMIN[I]' appear three times in a continuous running band. A broad rim of broad, tapered gadrooning encloses the imagery, decorated with fielded panels in alternating foliate sprays, lace/fish-scale motifs, and solid lustrated grounds. The whole is delicately offset by fine concentric bands of a bright cobalt blue framing the central escutcheon and the inner and outer lips of the raised rim. The underside is decorated with a series of large arabesque palmette motifs encircled by swirling vines against a bright white ground.

Far from the more typical form of fictive lettering designed for decoration rather than literary content, the inscription in the central well of this lustrated earthenware charger is easily decipherable and constitutes an abbreviated form of a Latin prayer that translates as 'Rise Lord to free us'. Its inclusion on Hispano-Moresque earthenware has led some scholars to argue that dishes like our example were intended for use in Eucharistic ritual. It can be found on several surviving examples of Spanish lustreware in various forms, but its precise origins in this context are unclear. It was popularised greatly by its use as the title of an important Papal bull, issued at Worms on 15th June 1520, condemning the errors of Martin Luther, and it is tempting to associate the phrase in its use on this and related dishes with support for the stance of the Catholic church in that controversy. However, the phrase is also used in several of the Biblical Psalms, and was not coined specifically for the Papal Bull, suggesting an earlier application in line with our understanding of the development of lustre wares in Valencia before 1520.

In the late fifteenth century a shift in taste led to the introduction of new forms to the Valencian potters' repertoire, chief among them being dishes like ours, with a raised and undulating surface known as gadrooning. It is a design borrowed from contemporary metalwork, which often comprised raised decorative elements of exactly this form and scale. The composition of our example is heavily indebted to the Islamic tradition, notably so for the design of the underside, in combination with a central Christian heraldic medallion at the centre. It can be dated to the turn of the sixteenth century and was likely a special commission for celebratory occasions. Two dishes with a comparable decorative scheme and a markedly similar decoration on their undersides are now held in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.<sup>1</sup> A somewhat similar gadrooned dish, with the same use of cobalt decoration running in concentric bands around a central armorial boss, can be found in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (fig. 1), of only marginally smaller size.



Spain, Valencia, Manises  
c. 1500-1520

39.5 cm (diameter) x 5.7 cm (height); Tin-glazed earthenware with cobalt blue and copper lustre decoration on a deep buff-coloured clay. Some rubbing to the lustrated decoration in places, and a small section of the rim restored. An original piercing hole near the upper rim for suspension.

*Provenance*

Private collection, France;  
Their sale, De Baeque Encheres, 10<sup>th</sup> November 2018, lot 172

*Inscriptions and markings*

'INSVRG[E] DOMIN[I]' encircling the central boss



**Fig. 1 (above)**  
A Hispano-Moresque lustreware dish with the arms of Aragon-Sicily  
Spain, Valencia, Manises  
c. 1500  
38.4 cm (diameter); Tin-glazed earthenware with cobalt blue and copper lustre  
London, Victoria and Albert Museum, Inv. No. 168-1893

<sup>1</sup> Inv. nos. 56.171.160, and 68.215.2.

## A round-bodied ewer emblazoned with the Cross of Santiago and the Ave Maria



This magnificently rotund and generous form of ewer is emblazoned on its front face with the Cross of Santiago, demarcated in ochre yellow against a white ground bisected by richly patterned bands of foliate sprays in alternating colours of green, blue and yellow. The body of the ewer is separated from its neck by a blue band. A large inscription with the first two words of the Angelic Salutation 'ave maria' in Gothic miniscule script encircles the shoulder. The back of the ewer has the remnants of a delicate blue handle, now missing.



Spain, Seville  
c. 1500

27 cm (height) x 22 cm (diameter); Tin glazed earthenware with yellow ochre, manganese, copper green, and cobalt blue decoration on a dark buff-coloured clay. A cross motif (perhaps a workshop mark) left in reserve on the foot, almost directly below the handle stump. The rim filed down at some point in its history, perhaps to take a metalwork attachment since removed. The foot likewise reduced and with a punctured hole through its centre. The handle missing.

Provenance  
Private collection, south-eastern France;  
Their sale, Pierre Berge, Paris, 1<sup>st</sup> June 2017, lot 46

The dominant palette of blue, green and deep, yellowish brown on a beige background is typical of the so-called *cuerda seca* technique perfected in the pottery workshops of Seville during the Middle Ages.<sup>1</sup> Its effect is achieved by applying a linear design directly on to a clay vessel using a liquid mixture (such as molten wax) in order to demarcate and contain separate fields of coloured glaze, which are applied in the subsequent stage of production. When heated in the kiln, these liquid lines burn away, leaving a dry, unglazed outline (*cuerda seca* translates as dry cord) and creating a bold and legible design where the different colours of glaze are kept separate or purposely blended within contained fields. This technique has Islamic origins and was first introduced to Spain in the dominant Caliphal period of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. It came back into fashion in the late fifteenth century, during the reign of the Catholic monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella, but remarkably few fully three-dimensional vessels exploiting the technique have come down to us from this period.<sup>2</sup>

1, 'La Cerámica Sevillana', in Balbina Martínez Caviro, *Cerámica Hispanomusulmana: Andalusí y Mudéjar*, Madrid, 1991, pp. 257-303.

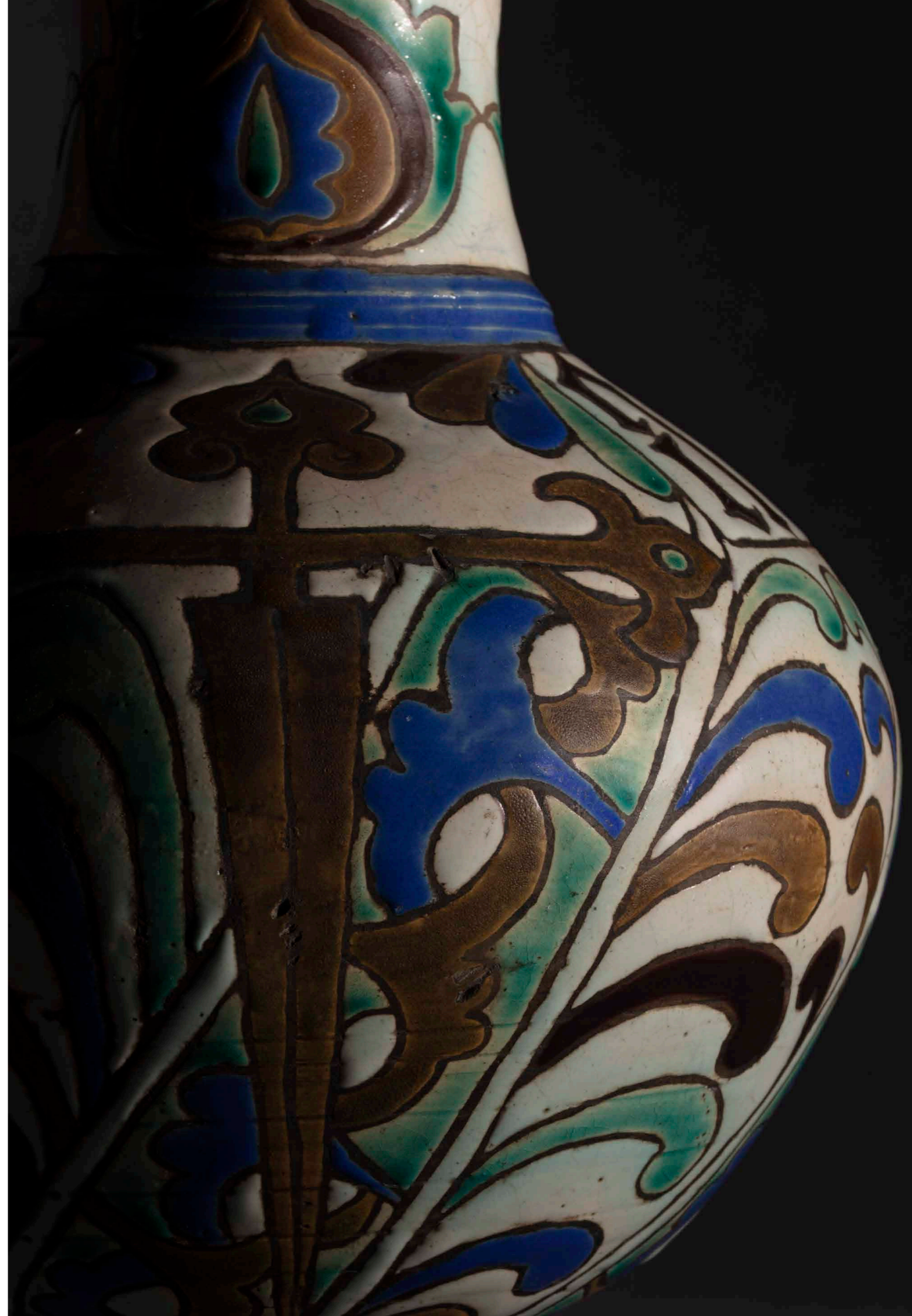
2, Martínez Caviro 1991, p. 301, figs. 338, 339; see also Martínez Caviro, *Catálogo de Cerámica Española*, Madrid, 1968, nos. 126, 127.

Given its iconography, it is likely that our ewer was made for a member of the Order of Santiago, or for a wealthy convent or monastery situated on the Camino de Santiago that bisects northern Spain and directs pilgrims to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. Similarly ambitious vessels incorporating the same closed palmette sprays visible on the neck of our vessel include a pair of bowls now in the collection of the Hispanic Society of America, and another in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (figs. 1-2). However, the form and iconography of this particular ewer appears to be unique among the surviving corpus of medieval  *cuerda seca*  pottery.<sup>3</sup>



**Fig. 1 (above)**  
Dish decorated with a harpy in  *cuerda seca*   
Spain, Seville  
c. 1500  
39.5 cm (diameter) x  
6.3 cm (height); Tin-  
glazed earthenware with  
manganese, copper green,  
cobalt blue and ochre  
yellow decoration  
New York, Hispanic Society  
of America, inv. E502

**Fig. 2 (below)**  
Dish decorated with a  
design in  *cuerda seca*   
Spain, Seville  
c. 1500-30  
44.9 cm (diameter)  
x 7 cm (height); Tin-  
glazed earthenware with  
manganese, copper green,  
cobalt blue and ochre  
yellow decoration  
London, Victoria and Albert  
Museum, inv. 300-1893



3, Martínez Caviro 1991,  
p. 299 ff.



Italy

# 28 A bowl with a lion rampant amongst foliage



A small, footed bowl featuring a lion rampant turned in profile to the left against a background of crosshatched decoration punctuated with large, heart-shaped leaf sprays. In places the foliage overlaps the lion's profile. Encircling the inside of the vertical rim is a double band of green within thin manganese borders.

A number of early wares with abstract ornament have come down to us, but far fewer with any figurative decoration have survived, and, in turn, lions are some of the rarest animals to appear. They were used variously for their heraldic, monarchic and symbolic significance, and often as emblems of strength and courage. A larger dish from the Mortimer Schiff collection, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, shows two such beasts on either side of a central sprouting branch, an arrangement Timothy Wilson has suggested may have been derived from imagery of the Tree of Life, where pairs of creatures are commonly shown flanking flowering plants.<sup>1</sup> The design of the lion on our bowl is likely to have been influenced by Islamic ceramics, metalwork and textiles, as is particularly evident in details such as the decorative compartment on his left foreleg.<sup>2</sup> Such sources also help to explain the convention of cross-hatching the background with manganese that so characterizes our bowl and a number of similar vessels attributed to Orvieto potters.<sup>3</sup> Certainly, great care was taken in composing its tight, skilfully organized design. Aside from two areas where the foliate sprays overlap the lion's body, their bold, heart-shaped leaves are otherwise carefully trained into the spaces surrounding his profile. And, while the background is thrown into depth and shade by the meticulous manganese cross-hatching, a running border of brown lines and broader green brushstrokes around the interior of the vertical rim are equally suggestive of shadow, and accentuate its curved cross-section.

Italy, Umbria, probably Orvieto  
c. 1300-1350

24 cm (diameter) x 8.7 cm (height); Tin-glazed earthenware with manganese brown and copper green on a dark buff body. The reverse was lead-glazed by pouring the liquid glaze over the clay, the foot is unglazed. Reassembled from multiple fragments with some in-painting to the losses. Two short sections of the rim replaced. Thermoluminescence analysis undertaken by Oxford Authentication in March 2022 confirms a date of firing between 600 and 900 years ago. Report by Helen Mason, 28<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

Provenance  
Elia Volpi, Davanzati Palace, Florence; his sale, American Art Galleries, New York, 25 November 1916, lot 646

Published  
*The rare and very valuable art treasures and antiquities formerly contained in the famous Davanzati Palace, also those contained in the Villa Pia, Florence, Italy*; Sale Cat., American Art Galleries, New York, lot 646

Elisa Sani, Matthew Reeves, and Justin Raccanello, *Maiolica before Raphael*, Exh. Cat., London, 2017, no. 2, pp. 48-51



1, Timothy Wilson, *Maiolica. Italian Renaissance Ceramics in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, New York, 2016, p. 50.

2, Cf. incense burners in the form of lynxes, illustrated in Mikhail B. Piotrovsky and John M. Rogers, *Heaven on Earth: Art from Islamic Lands*, Exh. Cat., London, Somerset House, 2004, nos. 36-37, pp. 86-87.

3, Catherine Hess, *Italian Maiolica, Catalogue of the Collections*, Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, 1988, p. 20; cf. Piotrovsky and Rogers 2004, no. 19, p. 69.



The form and decoration of our bowl, as well as the light colour of its clay, compare closely with material known to have been excavated in Orvieto and preserved in the town's museum.<sup>4</sup> Early photographic records taken of the pottery dug up in Orvieto during the first decade of the last century, which feature wares with the same stylistic and iconographic elements as our bowl, further help to confirm this localization.<sup>5</sup> In particular, the placement of the lion in space, with his paws just making contact with the outer border of the design, the heart-shaped leaves filling the surrounding areas, the compartmented design on his foreleg, and the stylized spear-like flourish at the end of his tail, are all characteristic of documented examples of Orvieto pottery dated to the first half of the fourteenth century.<sup>6</sup> Also analogous is the use of manganese and green together, particularly in the delineation of the animal's mane.

The loss of its glossy surface indicates that, like most early pottery of its type, our bowl spent a large part of its history underground.

4, See Carola Fiocco and Gabriella Gerardi, *Ceramiche umbre dal Medioevo allo Storicismo, Catalogo generale del Museo Internazionale delle Ceramiche in Faenza*, Vol. 5 (two parts), Faenza, 1989; cf. a jug with a lion rampant in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo in Orvieto, illustrated in Maria Selene Sconci, *Museo dell'opera del Duomo di Orvieto. Ceramiche*, Florence, 2011, no. 113.

5, See in particular a jug with a lion formerly at the Palazzo Davanzati, illustrated in Lucio Riccetti ed., *1909 tra collezionismo e tutela. John Pierpont Morgan, Alexandre Imbert e la ceramica medievale orvietana*, Exh. Ca., Perugia, Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria, 2010, p. 92, fig. 23a-b.

6, For the use of heart-shaped leaves in Orvietan wares see in particular a jug in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo in Orvieto, in Giuseppe M. Della Fina and Corrado Fratini, *Storia di Orvieto. Vol. II - Medioevo*, 2007, p. 577, fig. 14. For the figure's placement see, for example, a larger dish in the Deposito comunale, Orvieto, in Alberto Satolli ed., *La ceramica orvietana del medioevo*, Exh. Cat., Milan, 1983, no. VII, p. 45, and another in the Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest, illustrated in Riccetti 2010, p. 466 no. 8.1.13; see also a bowl in the V&A decorated with a bird, in Bernard Rackham, *Catalogue of Italian Maiolica*, London, 1940 (1977 ed.), pl. 2, no. 14.



## 29 A two-handled bowl with geometric decoration



A deep, two-handled bowl of tin-glazed earthenware with copper green and manganese brown decoration. On the interior, a rudimentary chain motif runs around the narrow, almost vertical section of the side walls, with a quartered design of abstract triple bands against a hatched background on the shallower raking section of the bowl. In the small central well is a petalled rosette of eight leaves in alternating designs of hatched manganese and green chevron brushstrokes.

This handsome bowl, one of the earliest Orvieto wares in this catalogue, is an unusually large survival for its type. It is characteristic of the earliest form of maiolica made in Italy – often called archaic maiolica – whose decoration is applied with a limited palette of copper green and manganese brown over a greyish tin glaze. This class of maiolica predominated in north-central Italy roughly between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Its patterns were influenced by imported textiles, ceramics and metalwork, but there is also likely to have been a degree of artistic convention in the choice of motifs; those elements that worked visually in this medium would obviously be repeated by workshops a number of times.

The discovery of vast quantities of vessels and fragments with similar decoration during excavations in Orvieto in the early twentieth century caused something of a fever amongst maiolica collectors.<sup>1</sup> It was a moment of great discovery for pioneering museum curators of the age, such as Wilhelm von Bode and his protégé Wilhelm Valentiner, who moved quickly to acquire Orvieto pottery. Such was the frenzy with which it was bought up by private and public collections alike, and the concurrently poor regulation of the many excavations being undertaken, that there exists scant documentary or physical criteria for any precise reconstruction of the chronology or development of Orvieto ware.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, various aspects of our bowl's design are so analogous to those used on early vessels preserved in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo in Orvieto – which number amongst the very few fully documented objects to have been excavated in the town – that it can almost certainly be classified as a product of that centre.<sup>3</sup> Alongside the characteristic use of a



Italy, Umbria, Orvieto  
c. 1280–1300

9.5 cm (height) x 28.3 cm (diameter including handles); Tin-glazed earthenware with copper green and manganese brown decoration on a buff-coloured body, with a flanged rim and a flat foot-ring. Two strap handles applied below the rim on either side of the body. A clear lead glaze coats the exterior and has splashed on to the underside of the foot in places. Reassembled from multiple fragments with some in-painting.

*Provenance*  
Elia Volpi, Davanzati Palace, Florence, c. 1930; John Philip Kassebaum (1932–2016); circular printed Kassebaum collection label on the underside of the foot

*Published*  
The John Philip Kassebaum Collection, I, 1981, p. 53, fig. 56

Elisa Sani, Matthew Reeves, and Justin Raccanello, *Maiolica before Raphael*, Exh. Cat., London, 2017, no. 1, pp. 44–47.

1, Lucio Riccetti ed., *1909 tra collezionismo e tutela*. John Pierpont Morgan, Alexandre Imbert e la ceramica medievale orvietana, Exh. Ca., Perugia, Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria, 2010, especially pp. 64ff.

2, Timothy Wilson, *Maiolica. Italian Renaissance Ceramics in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, New York, 2016, pp. 48–50.

3, For the most authoritative recent overview of Orvieto ceramics at the Orvieto museum see Maria Selene Sconci, *Museo dell'opera del Duomo di Orvieto. Ceramiche*, Florence, 2011.

chain motif in green around the rim, the central rosette on our bowl seems to have been highly popular amongst Orvietan potters, since a number of smaller bowls to have survived show versions of the same, often forming the sole decorative element of their design.<sup>4</sup> The bold, tripartite ribbon motifs that occupy each of the four quartered segments of the interior have far scarcer parallels, but reappear on a jug localized to Orvieto in the Fondazione Horne, Florence.<sup>5</sup> A variant combination of all these motifs was used in the decoration of a bowl of comparable scale to ours, possibly attributable to the same potter, from the Pelo Pardi collection now at the Palazzo Venezia Museum.<sup>6</sup> Our bowl was potted during a period in which Orvieto enjoyed perhaps its most productive and prosperous chapter of history, when the town was a populous centre and it held a position of political importance within the wider region. Its prominence was boosted in 1262, when Pope Urban IV stayed in the city, and it was subsequently home to the papal court for long intermittent periods and, in 1268 and 1272–73, to the court of Charles of Anjou.<sup>7</sup> The city's financial and political buoyancy began to erode, however, during the second quarter of the fourteenth century, when internal strife occupied its government and the outbreak of the Plague decimated its population.<sup>8</sup> The prominent Florentine collector-dealer and connoisseur Elia Volpi (1858–1938) used our bowl as part of a wonderful display of early Orvietan wares that he put together at the Davanzati Palace, which functioned as a showroom for his commercial activities in Florence, and where he sought to recreate the domestic interior of a rich Renaissance palazzo for twentieth-century audiences (fig. 1).

4, Alberto Satolli ed., *La ceramica orvietana del medioevo*, Exh. Cat., Milan, 1983, no. 82, p. 78, no. 90, p. 80.

5, *Ibid.*, no. 92, p. 81.

6, Illustrated in Maria Selene Sconci, *Oltre il Frammento: Forme e decori della maiolica medievale orvietana*, Luca, 2000, no. 159, p. 200.

7, Julia Poole, *Italian Maiolica and incised Slipware in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge*, Cambridge, 1995, p. 4.

8, For an overview of Orvieto's changing fortunes during the period see Satolli 1983.



**Fig. 1 (above)**  
Display of Orvieto maiolica at the Palazzo Davanzati, Florence, c. 1930

30&31

Two-handed serving bowls decorated with  
geometric and vegetal motifs





Italy, Umbria, Orvieto  
c. 1300-1350

29 cm (diameter including handles) x 10 cm (height); Tin-glazed earthenware with copper green and manganese brown decoration on buff-coloured clay, with thick rim, slightly carinated collar, deep well, and broad, flat foot ring. Two strap handles applied below the rim on either side. A clear lead glaze coats the exterior. Reassembled from multiple fragments with some in-painting.

Provenance  
Private collection, Siena

Both of these comparably proportioned serving bowls, a type of vessel often described as a 'catino', are decorated with a bold lexicon of geometric motifs applied using a combination of pale turquoise green derived from copper, and deep manganese brown. They are typical of a family of glazed tablewares produced in the Umbrian town of Orvieto during the fourteenth century and which have come to be known as 'Proto-maiolica'. Orvietan pottery from this period is marked by its graphic free-spiritedness, with motifs and decorative flourishes that spin like whirligigs and hum with a frenetic immediacy. The vegetal and geometric schemes employed on both of our vessels are perfect examples of this forceful energy, and were evidently successful and popular iterations of their type since they can be found on a number of related examples that have been localized to Orvieto by find spot or provenance.



Italy, Umbria, Orvieto  
c. 1400

29.4 cm (diameter including handles) x 10.5 cm (height); Tin-glazed earthenware with copper green and manganese brown decoration on buff-coloured clay, with thick rim, slightly carinated collar, deep well, and broad, flat foot ring. Two strap handles with pronounced central fluting applied below the rim on either side. A clear lead glaze coats the exterior. Reassembled from multiple fragments with some in-painting. A small section of the vessel infilled with fired ceramic, almost certainly an early twentieth-century repair of a type found on other early Orvietan wares restored in the years around 1910.

Provenance  
From the collections of Signor Avvocato Arcangelo Marcioni and Cavaliere Capitano Ferdinando Lucatelli, Orvieto (before 1914);  
With Alessandro Imbert (1865-1943), Via Condotti, Rome;  
William Ridout collection, London and Toronto;  
John Philip Kassebaum collection, by 1981;  
His sale, Brunk Auctions, 21<sup>st</sup> September 2013, lot 28

Published  
J. V. G. Mallet, *The John Philip Kassebaum Collection, Vol. I*, Kansas City, 1981, p. 52, no. 55

Knotted or lobed circle motifs (often described as 'a nodi' in the Italian literature on such wares<sup>1</sup>) have been found on both serving bowls and, in a variant form, on jugs and other wares dated to the first half of the fourteenth century, which suggests that our example of this type can be similarly dated.<sup>2</sup>

Its counterpart, decorated with four inward facing trilobed leaf sprays arranged around a central cross motif below a frieze of cusped green diamonds arranged on their points, belongs to a subsequent generation of wares. Vessels of a similar form and decoration include examples in the Orvieto museum<sup>3</sup>, and a bowl with a fish in its central well now preserved in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (fig. 1), which has been dated to the beginning of the fifteenth century.<sup>4</sup> A large strap-handled jug decorated with the same arrangement of trilobed leafsprays in each quadrant of a central cross motif is in the British Museum. Fascinatingly it was restored in the same way as a small section of our vessel, using carefully matched fired-ceramic infills that scholars now think must have been added by art dealers in the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>5</sup> Thanks to its appearance in a photographic survey of early collections of Orvietan pottery amassed by Arcangelo Marcioni and Ferdinando Lucatelli, undertaken in 1909-10 prior to their public sale at Sotheby's in 1914, it is overwhelmingly likely that our bowl was discovered in that town in the years around 1900 and can therefore be localised with confidence (fig. 2). Marcioni and Lucatelli's early documentation, created at a time when few attempts were yet being taken to systematically record or categorise these newly rediscovered ceramics properly, has made it a precious time capsule of discovery and of the burgeoning interest in medieval and Renaissance maiolica's vernacular roots.



Fig. 2  
The later of our two vessels (middle row, far left) pictured as part of the privately produced survey of the collections of Signor Avvocato Arcangelo Marcioni and Cavaliere Capitano Ferdinando Lucatelli, Orvieto Before 1910  
London, British Museum



Fig. 1  
Two-handled serving bowl with a fish  
Italy, Umbria, Orvieto  
c. 1400-1430  
10 x 33.2 x 30.2 cm;  
tin-glazed earthenware with copper green and manganese brown decoration  
New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 10.18.1

3, Alberto Satolli ed., *La ceramica orvietana del medioevo*, Exh. Cat., Milan, 1983, no. 187, p. 113, no. 191, p. 114.

1, Gian Carlo Bojani et al., *Ceramiche medioevali dell'Umbria: Assisi, Orvieto, Todi*, Exh. Cat., Spoleto, 1981, figs. 20-23, p. 57.

2, Cf. Guido Mazza, *La Ceramica Medioevale di Viterbo e dell'Alto Lazio*, Viterbo, 1983, no. 69, p. 59; see also a jug incorporating elements of the same scheme in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, inv. C.67-1991.

4, Cf. also Maria Selene Sconci and Alberto Satolli, *Oltre Il Frammento: Forme e Decorazioni della Maiolica Medievale Orvietana, Il Recupero della Collezione del Pelo Pardi*, Tarquinia, 1999, p. 195, no. 154.

5, inv. 1913,1117.2; see Dora Thornton and Timothy Wilson, *Italian Renaissance Ceramics: A catalogue of the British Museum collection*, London, 2009, no. 38.

# 32 A large two-handled bowl decorated with a lobated leaf



This unusually grand two-handled bowl, with its huge green and purple leaf spray almost entirely covering the vessel's interior surface against a finely cross-hatched ground encircled just below the rim by a running chain motif in manganese green, is among the most fully realised examples of large-leaf design in the entire surviving corpus of Orvieto 'archaic maiolica' pottery. It represents the last great flowering of this beguiling family of wares, the production of which waned dramatically in the years after 1400 concurrent with the downturn of the town's fortunes following a century of financial turbulence and intermittent bouts of Plague.<sup>1</sup> The rich use of tin in its decoration – an eye-wateringly expensive material imported to Italy from abroad – help points to a date of manufacture in the fifteenth century, when its availability for Italian potters had widened and its comparative cost reduced. A late date is further supported by its design, which very likely draws on the influence of contemporary textiles. Such a link would have been newly possible for Orvietan potters of the early fifteenth century given the burgeoning popularity of broad leaf-patterned cut velvets being produced in a number of the larger Italian centres, including Florence and Venice, at exactly this date.<sup>2</sup> The use of large-leaf motifs in Orvieto is well precedented, and can be found on a small handful of contemporary vessels including examples in the Museo Internazionale delle Ceramiche in Faenza<sup>3</sup>, and the Kunstgewerbemuseum in Berlin<sup>4</sup>, though on neither of these examples do their scale reach that deployed on our vessel.<sup>5</sup> Other features of its design, such as the characteristic use of a chain motif in green around the rim, and the moulded undulations to its handles, were highly popular amongst Orvietan potters, the latter feature especially marked on fifteenth-century wares.



Italy, Umbria, Orvieto  
c. 1420

11.7 cm (height) x 36.5 cm (diameter including handles); Tin-glazed earthenware with copper green and manganese brown decoration on a pinkish buff clay, with a broad, flanged rim and a flat foot-ring. Two undulating strap handles applied below the rim on either side of the body. A clear lead glaze coats the exterior. Reassembled from multiple fragments with some in-painting and small infilled sections. Thermoluminescence analysis undertaken by Oxford Authentication in October 2021 confirms a date of firing between 530 and 800 years ago. Report by Helen Mason, 1<sup>st</sup> November 2021.

Provenance  
Cheffins, Cambridge, 25<sup>th</sup> May 2016, lot 95;  
Private collection, UK

1, For an overview of Orvieto's changing fortunes during the period see Alberto Satolli ed., *La ceramica orvietana del medioevo*, Exh. Cat., Milan, 1983.

2, Cf. a similar lobed-leaf design on a Venetian velvet of the 1420s in the Victoria and Albert Museum, for which see Lisa Monnas, *Renaissance Velvets*, London, 2012, no. 4, pp. 60-61. Another parallel is in the Schnütgen Museum, Cologne, produced in Venice in the first quarter of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, for which see Gudrun Sporbeck, *Museum Schnütgen: Die Liturgischen Gewänder 11. bis 19. Jahrhundert*, Cologne, 2001, no. 62, pp. 238-9.

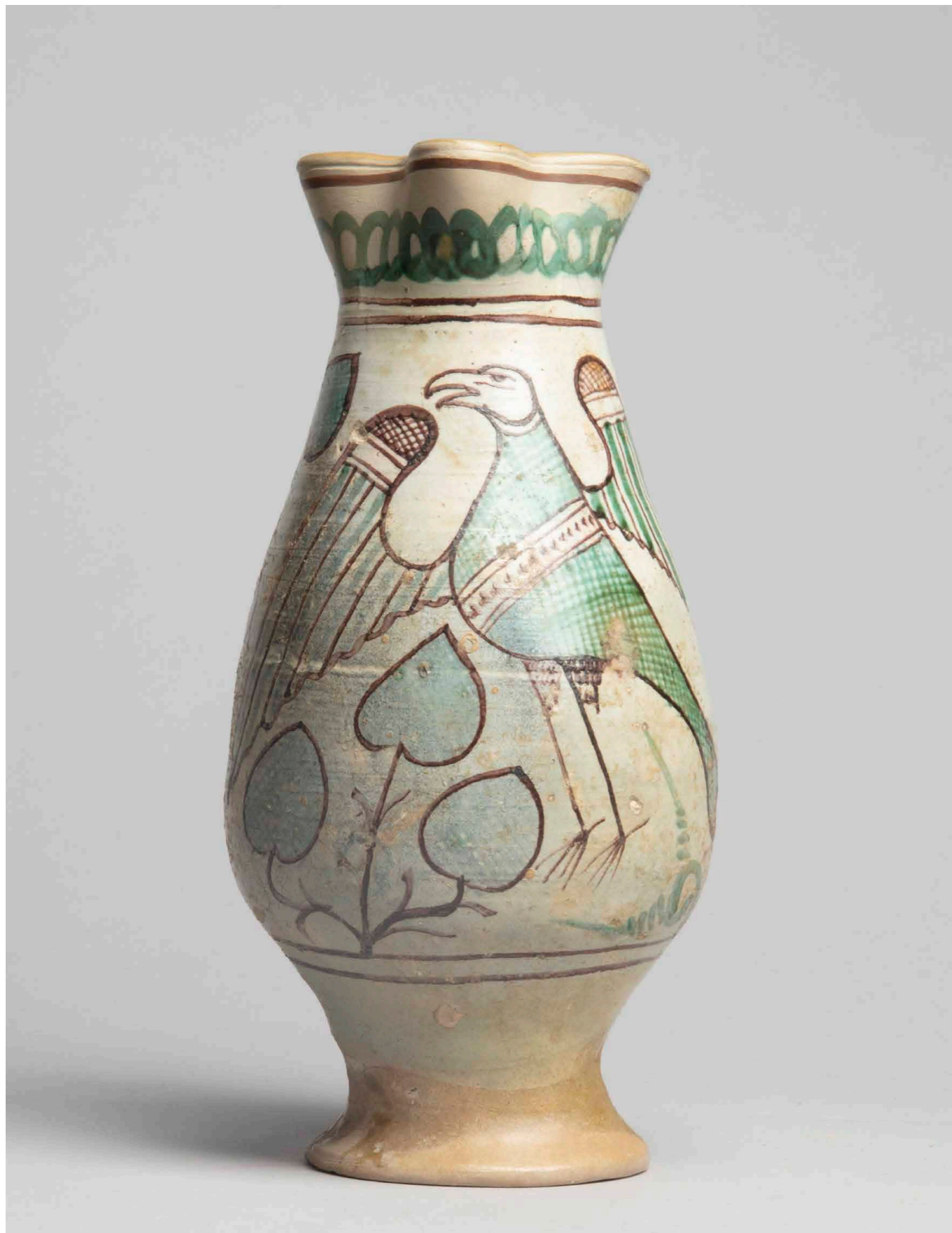
3, Satolli 1983, no. 76, p. 76.

4, Lucio Riccetti ed., *1909 tra collezionismo e tutela. John Pierpont Morgan, Alexandre Imbert e la ceramica medievale orvietana*, Exh. Ca., Perugia, Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria, 2010, no. 6.11.12, p. 426.

5, An example with a large pinecone is in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, for which see Julia Poole, *Italian Maiolica and Incised Slipware in the Fitzwilliam Museum Cambridge*, Cambridge, 1995, p. 69; Cf. also a smaller two-handled bowl with a lobated leaf design illustrated in Gian Carlo Bojani et al., *Ceramiche medioevali dell'Umbria: Assisi, Orvieto, Todi*, Exh. Cat., Spoleto, 1981, p. 150.



# 33 A baluster-shaped jug with an eagle in flight



**B**aluster-shaped pouring vessels with a slender concave profile between the body and foot were a popular product of the hilltop town of Orvieto during the fourteenth century, and were traded widely from there across the Umbrian region.<sup>1</sup> They have been found in some numbers both in excavations undertaken in Orvieto itself<sup>2</sup>, and at other sites including the convent of Saint Francis at Assisi, where they were used in the refectory by its monastic inhabitants.<sup>3</sup> It is clear both from recent finds (as at Assisi) and from contemporary medieval depictions in other media that such wares were highly-prized tablewares; a Siene scene from the predella of Duccio's 1308 masterpiece the *Maestà*, showing the *Marriage Feast at Cana* reveals how vessels like ours may have been used in ceremonial occasions (fig. 1a). In its foreground vignette, wine arriving in large wooden barrels is first decanted into terracotta jars, before being served to the diners themselves in small jugs and ewers finely decorated in a palette of manganese purple and copper green. Although potted with a steep, conical neck rather than an outward flaring one (a likely sign of its earlier manufacture), the example

Italy, Umbria, Orvieto  
c. 1400

27.7 cm (height) x 13.5 cm (width) x 16 cm (depth including handle); Tin-glazed earthenware with copper green and manganese brown decoration on a buff-coloured clay, with a pinched, trilobe spout, thick strap handle and pear-shaped body raised on a concave foot with an everted foot ring. The vessel's rim and handled restored. Thermoluminescence analysis undertaken by Oxford Authentication in October 2021 confirms a date of firing between 400 and 600 years ago. Report by Helen Mason, 1<sup>st</sup> November 2021.

Provenance  
Private collection, Siena



**Fig. 1a**  
*The Marriage Feast at Cana*, predella panel from the *Maestà* altarpiece, by Duccio di Bouninsegna 1308  
Siena, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo

1, For a discussion of this type of ware see Timothy Wilson *Ceramic Art of the Italian Renaissance*, London, 1987, no. 6.

2, Early excavations in Orvieto were poorly recorded but more recent discoveries have been far more systematically assessed. See for example Alberto Satolli ed., *La ceramica orvietana del medioevo*, Exh. Cat., Milan, 1983.

3, For the Assisi excavations see Gian Carlo Bojani et. al., *Ceramiche medioevali dell'Umbria: Assisi, Orvieto, Todi*, Exh. Cat., Spoleto, 1981; Cf. similarly potted vessels (though with relief decoration) in the Bargello museum, illustrated in Manuela Bernardi, *Ceramica Medievale umbro-laziale*, Florence, 1987, nos. 7-8, pp. 27-29.

held by the attendant near the centre of the image's lower register is painted with what appears to be an eagle in flight, its wing outstretched in a manner identical to that of our version (fig. 1b). Alongside vegetal forms and abstract ornament, eagle motifs seem to have been especially popular on Umbrian ceramics of this period, and a wealth of parallels on slender-footed 'archaic maiolica' pouring vessels localised to Orvieto have survived (fig. 2). Many depict such birds almost exactly as it appears on our jug; wings outstretched as if in flight with its left-facing body traversed by stripes or other geometric designs and its wings tipped with manganese at the point of its carpal joint.<sup>4</sup>



**Fig. 1b**  
Detail of the archaic maiolica jug  
in the foreground scene of the  
*Maestà* altarpiece, by Duccio di  
Bouninsegna



**Fig. 2 (above)**  
Jug with two eagles  
Italy, Orvieto (or possibly  
Siena)  
Late 14th century  
28 cm (height) x 13.5 cm  
(diameter); Tin-glazed  
earthenware with copper  
green and manganese brown  
Paris, musee du Louvre



4. Cf. Bojani 1981, p. 26,  
and nos. 3-4, p. 96.





Unlike its figurative counterpart in this catalogue (Cat. 33), the forceful patterns emblazoned across the front of this slender jug make it a masterpiece of pure geometric abstraction. A large central cross divides its bulbous, pear-shaped body into four, with alternating fields of green checkerboard motifs and hatched manganese bands in each quadrant. A running band of chain link motifs encircles the rim.

Perhaps above all other pottery-producing centres in medieval Italy, the potters of Orvieto produced their greatest achievements and innovations not in figurative decoration but in abstract, geometric schemes of the type exemplified by this example, which sings with fantastic immediacy. Similar vessels have been found in sites at Orvieto but also in Siena during excavations undertaken in the 1970s on the site of the Contrada del Nicchio.<sup>1</sup> Surviving sister pieces elsewhere include a similarly potted jug in the Faenza museum<sup>2</sup>, and two jugs preserved in the treasury of the convent of Saint Francis at Assisi - a jug with a comparable approach to its striped and diamond-form decoration, and another with an eagle whose body is decorated using the same bold checkerboard design as that appearing on our example.<sup>3</sup>



Italy, Umbria, Orvieto  
c. 1400

27.7 cm (height) x 13.5 cm (width) x 16 cm (depth including handle); Tin-glazed earthenware with copper, green and manganese brown decoration on a buff-coloured clay, with a pinched, trilobe spout, thick strap handle and pear-shaped body raised on a concave foot with an everted foot ring. The vessel's rim and handle restored. Thermoluminescence analysis undertaken by Oxford Authentication in October 2021 confirms a date of firing between 400 and 600 years ago. Report by Helen Mason, 1<sup>st</sup> November 2021.

Provenance  
Private collection, Siena

1, S. Nepoti, 'La maiolica arcaica nella Valle Padana', in *La Ceramica Medievale nel Mediterraneo Occidentale*, Siena and Faenza, 1984, pp. 409-19; Riccardo Francovich, 'La Ceramica medievale a Siena e nella Toscana meridionale (secc. XIV-XV). Materiali per una tipologia', *Ricerche di archeologia altomedievale e medievale*, 5/6 (1982).

2, Alberto Satolli ed., *La ceramica orvietana del medioevo*, Exh. Cat., Milan, 1983, no. 32, p. 61.

3, B. Montuschi Simboli, in Gian Carlo Bojani ed., *Ceramica fra Marche e Umbria dal Medioevo al Rinascimento*, Bologna, 1992, pp. 31, 35; see also a jug with a diamond checkerboard pattern executed with a similar weighting of manganese to copper illustrated in Maria Selene Sconci and Alberto Satolli, *Oltre Il Frammento: Forme e Decor della Maiolica Medievale Orvietana, Il Recupero della Collezione del Pelo Pardi*, Tarquinia, 1999, p. 92, no. 52.



# 35 A double handled albarello with Florentine lily



A squat, two-handled jar with a cylindrical body and applied twisted handles. On one side is painted a large fleur-de-lis and on the other the symbols or letters 'f A E' in reverse, both appearing in frames with green and brown decoration consisting of alternating brushstrokes or brushstrokes and oval shapes. Alternating lines on the shoulder.

This handsome albarello represents a rare survival of a class of early fifteenth-century maiolica classified by the eminent pioneers of maiolica studies Gaetano Ballardini and later by Galeazzo Cora as 'famiglia verde' (green family).<sup>1</sup> The decorative vocabulary of these wares, executed purely in green and brown, was popular across Tuscany but also at Orvieto and in northern Lazio.<sup>2</sup> Included in this group are large deep basins, jugs and two-handled jars painted with designs outlined in manganese brown and filled with copper green. Some have the same high-quality greyish-white glaze; this feature, combined with the undamaged state of the present albarello, suggests that it has never been buried, unlike the majority of early maiolica.

Italy, probably Tuscany  
c. 1420-1440

21 cm (height) x 22.5 cm (width including handles) x 14 cm (diameter); Tin-glazed earthenware with copper green and manganese brown on a reddish clay. The interior glazed in a lead glaze with a slight addition of tin to make a milky hue. Excellent condition barring some wear to the interior.

*Provenance*

Bak collection, New York; sale Sotheby's, London, 7 December 1965, lot 14; with Alfred Spero, London; with Cyril Humphris, London; Sackler collection; his sale, pt II, Christie's, New York, 1 June 1994, lot 1 (Sackler inv. no. 79.5.2 in red on underside of the foot)

*Published*

Elisa Sani, Matthew Reeves, and Justin Raccanello, *Maiolica before Raphael*, Exh. Cat., London, 2017, no. 5, pp. 60-63; the present catalogue entry is taken from Elisa Sani's original discussion of this object as published there.



1, Gaetano Ballardini, *La maiolica italiana dalle origini alla fine del cinquecento*, Florence, 1938, p. 24; Galeazzo Cora, *Storia della maiolica di Firenze e del contado: Secoli XIV e XV*, Florence, 1973, pp. 71-73; cf. comparable fragments in pl. 25.

2, For an example from Tuscany or Umbria with similar glaze see Julia Poole, *Italian Maiolica and Incised Slipware in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge*, Cambridge, 1995, no. 145; also no. 146 has certain similarities of decoration.

The depiction of a lily, with tendrils and pods between the petals carefully rendered in the 'bottonato' style, is typically associated with the city of Florence. After appearing for the first time on the golden florins from the mid thirteenth century that spread throughout Europe (fig. 1), the Florentine lily became a powerful symbol of wealth and personal success, often found on late medieval works of art. Because of this, it often appears on early maiolica.<sup>3</sup> The prominent placement of the fleur-de-lys on our albarello may help to connect it to that city or a nearby workshop, and indeed a comparable motif appears on a large dish in the Louvre decorated with a lion holding a standard with a lily, which has been confidently attributed to Tuscan potteries.<sup>4</sup> Or it may have served as the emblem of a pharmacy in Florence; an apothecary called 'lo speziale del Giglio' (the apothecary of the Lily), for example, is documented in the city during the period.<sup>5</sup>

Judging by a number of surviving vessels as well as excavated fragments, the use of a pattern somewhat reminiscent of egg and dart moulding both above and below the fleur-de-lys seems to have found currency in both north and south Tuscany at this date.<sup>6</sup> A light tone of green is visible on late medieval maiolica from Siena, for instance that found in the Convento del Carmine in the city.<sup>7</sup>



**Fig. 1a (above)**  
Gold florin, struck for the  
Republic of Florence  
Late 15<sup>th</sup> century



3, Cf. Satolli in Romualdo Luzi and Carmen Ravanelli Guidotti eds, *Nel Segno del Giglio. Ceramiche per i Farnese*, Exh. Cat., Viterbo, 1993, pp. 36–54, showing several examples of archaic maiolica with a lily from Orvieto and Viterbo.

4, See Timothy Wilson, *Maiolica. Italian Renaissance Ceramics in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, New York, 2016, p. 58; Jeanne Giacomotti *Catalogue des majoliques des musées nationaux*, Paris, 1974, p. 10 no. 27.

5, See Evelyn Welch, *Shopping in the Renaissance: Consumer cultures in Italy 1400-1600*, New Haven and London, 2005, p. 156.

6, See Cora 1973, pls. 45–46, 50–52.

7, See Riccardo Francovich and Marco Valenti eds, *C'era una volta: La ceramica medievale nel convent del Carmine*, Exh. Cat., Siena, Santa Maria della Scala, 2002.

# 36 Basin with a fantastical beast



A shallow-sided basin with two horizontal loop handles applied under the rim. In its broad central well the figure of a human-headed dog stands in profile amongst slender, uprooted plants whose branches terminate alternately in berries and leaves. Encircling the animal on the near-vertical sides of the basin is a design of blue palmettes strung on a thin manganese vine.

This is a rare and important survival of fifteenth-century polychromatic maiolica. It is one of a small group of vessels and other fragments found at sites across Tuscany that Galeazzo Cora first classified as '*famiglia tricolore*' to describe their luminous three-colour palette of manganese purple, copper green and cobalt blue.<sup>1</sup> For many years the only known examples of three-colour maiolica have been a large dish with an undulating rim depicting two lovers in the Musée des Antiquités in Rouen (fig. 1), and a reconstructed basin in the British Museum (fig. 2), but recent excavations and stratified finds in the pottery-producing towns of Montelupo, Bacchereto, and San Salvatore a Viano near Florence have greatly added to the known corpus of material and have helped to confirm Cora's dating of the *tricolore* group to a period roughly spanning the first third of the fifteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Many of the class of wares to which our basin belongs – also traditionally described as 'archaic maiolica' – depict fantastical figures drawn from medieval bestiaries and Romanesque sculpture. Our grandly-scaled example attests to the refinement that such creatures underwent in *tricolore* maiolica production, the beast's elegant profile here wittily embellished with the attributes of a collar and hat. Similar beasts can be found on other examples of three-colour



Italy, Florentine region, probably Montelupo  
c. 1420-1440

38.4 cm (diameter) x 6.4 cm (height); Tin-glazed earthenware painted with green, blue, and manganese brown on a buff-coloured clay, the reverse unglazed. Reconstructed from multiple fragments. Flake losses to glaze around the rim, with some areas of inpainting.

Provenance  
Frizzi Baccione Collection, Florence;  
Private collection, Lastra a Signa, Florence

Published  
Marini, Marino, *Passione e Collezione: Maioliche e ceramiche toscane dal XIV al XVIII secolo*, Exh. Cat., Florence, pp. 66-67 no. 28



Fig. 1 (above)  
Tricolore plate  
Italy, Florentine district  
c. 1420-1440  
Rouen, Musée des Antiquités

1, Galeazzo Cora, *Storia della maiolica di Firenze e del contado: Secoli XIV e XV*, Florence, 1973, I, p. 71.

2, Cora 1973, I, p. 71, II, fig. 42, pls. 41c, 43, 44a; For recent scholarship on excavated material see Alessandro Bettini, *La sala delle ceramiche di Bacchereto: nel Museo archeologico di Artimino, dal 27 giugno 1992*, Florence, 1992, pp. 52-55 nos. 95-105.

maiolica, including a fragmentary jug, one other bowl of comparable type, and several sherds found in Montelupo and Bacchereto.<sup>3</sup> Also common to three-colour maiolica in particular is the rather charming use of uprooted plant motifs, which represent a very different conception of foliate decoration to the type more commonly found on the more or less contemporary blue *zaffera* wares from Tuscany and Lazio. A number of fragments reproduced in Fausto Berti's authoritative five-volume study and now in the Museo Archeologico e della Ceramica in Montelupo, were found in 1994 during excavations in a kiln under a house on the Piazza dei Gelsi. Consistent aspects of their design are the inclusion of elegant circular garlands that serve to frame the imagery within, blue berries encircled by smaller manganese dots, and uprooted plants that appear to float against the background.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, such is the aesthetic homogeneity of the *tricolore* family as a whole, that it seems likely they were made either in a single workshop or by a group of potters working in close and sustained contact with each other. A closely comparable dish to ours in the British Museum, which is one of a number of Tuscan wares dug up in Florence, certainly supports the notion that outlying workshops specializing in three-colour maiolica found patronage amongst the city's merchants and inhabitants.<sup>5</sup>

The size and profile of our vessel perhaps indicate that it was intended for use as a hand-washing basin for cleansing the fingers between the courses of a meal. It would be brought to the table and filled with water scented with the addition of rose petals or herbs, poured from a jug. Sets of vessels consisting of a jug and basin together are referred to in contemporary inventories as '*bacini con mesciroba*' and often formed part of a sophisticated social ceremony for the diners. They also mark the beginning of a move towards more and more elaborate dining services – often made of many different vessels – that would come to define some of the finest maiolica production of the following century.



**Fig. 2 (above)**  
*Tricolore* basin  
 Italy, Florentine district  
 c. 1420-1440  
 British Museum, inv.  
 1908,0729.6



3, For recent discussion of the group and the 'sister' bowl mentioned here, see Elisa Sani, Matthew Reeves, and Justin Raccanello, *Maiolica before Raphael*, Exh. Cat., London, 2017, nos. 3-4, pp. 52-59.

4, Fausto Berti, *Storia della ceramica di Montelupo*, Montelupo, 1997-2003, Vol. I (1997), p. 156; for a number of parallel vegetal motifs on other three-colour material see Cora 1973, pls. 41b and c, 42, 44a.

5, Dora Thornton and Timothy Wilson, *Italian Renaissance Ceramics: A catalogue of the British Museum collection*, London, 2009, p. 43 no. 21.

# 37 A small jug with relief blue decoration



Four horizontal bands of geometric shapes in blue cobalt glaze, each band alternating from those above and below in being composed of either triangles or lozenges, almost completely fill the paintable surface of this beautiful little jug. Only the uppermost band, which encircles the neck, reaches as far as the handle on the reverse, the others are separated from it on both sides by vertical panels of manganese lines, grouped in threes around a central serpentine chain motif. Double lines of manganese are also used to separate the motifs in blue and enclose the whole design at the top and bottom.

A manuscript in Bologna dating from the early fifteenth-century describes a blue 'raised in the Florentine manner', which undoubtedly means the thick, relief blue used to decorate this precious jug and other wares of its type.<sup>1</sup> *Zaffera* as it is today known, derives from the Arabic *alsafra*, either meaning brilliant, or originating from the Arabic term for the cobalt mineral from which the pigment was made. This astonishing colour had been introduced to Tuscan potters in the late 1300s and would become the dominant decorative idiom in maiolica design over the next seventy-five years or so.

Italy, Florentine region, probably Montelupo  
c. 1420-1440

14.5 x 14.4 x 12.8 cm; Tin-glazed earthenware with cobalt blue and manganese purple on a light buff body. Potted with a strap handle, bulbous body and narrow neck giving onto a flaring rim with a sharply pinched spout. The interior lead glazed. A single firing scar on the front of the body, some running to the glaze and splashes on the underside of the foot. Broken and repaired across the body.

Provenance  
Private collection, Bari, until;  
Their sale, Hampel, Munich, 27<sup>th</sup> June 2013, lot 557

Published  
Elisa Sani, Matthew Reeves, and Justin Raccanello, *Maiolica before Raphael*, Exh. Cat., London, 2017, no. 7, pp. 68-69



1, 'azzurro rilevato a mode fiorentino', cited in Dora Thornton and Timothy Wilson, *Italian Renaissance Ceramics: a catalogue of the British Museum collection*, London, 2009, p. 47.

*Zaffera* is the earliest class of maiolica that has survived in large quantities above ground, but even so no earlier examples of intact vessels of this type have come down to us. Its squat shape is a characteristic feature of jugs believed to have been made in Montelupo during the first three decades of the fifteenth century, of which a related example with extensive restoration to its spout is in the collection of Cesare Ugolini.<sup>2</sup> Ours is especially remarkable for the abstract, geometric nature of its ornament, which is comparatively rarer than the so-called 'oak leaf' decoration common to the majority of early *zaffera* maiolica to have survived (see the following object in this catalogue). Perhaps influenced by Islamic art-forms such as geometric intarsia work and woven carpets, its ingenious and sophisticated pattern is a perfect expression of how early potters exploited the balance and contrast between the deep blue of the cobalt and the white tin-glaze beneath. Its decoration, but not its shape, is perhaps most comparable to an example in the Museo Nazionale in Florence, which was acquired for the museum by the early connoisseur of pre-Renaissance maiolica Charles Fairfax Murray, in 1890.<sup>3</sup>

The acute pinching of the spout was evidently made using a thin tool or stick rather than the more rapid and approximate method of depressing the rim with the fingers alone, suggesting that its potter took great care in its production.

2, Fausto Berti, *Capolavari della maiolica rinascimentale. Montelupo 'fabbrica' di Firenze 1400-1630*, Exh. Cat., Florence, Palazzo Medici Riccardi, 2002, p. 53, no. 1; for dating, and for the jug in the Ugolini collection see *Ibid.*, pp. 51-3; For the shape in Tuscan pottery see Fausto Berti, *Storia della ceramica di Montelupo*, Montelupo, 1997-2003, Vol. 1 (1997), p. 348, no. 68.

3, Giovanni Conti et al., *Zaffera et similia nella maiolica italiana*, Viterbo, 1991, p. 59, cat. 1; Galeazzo Cora, *Storia della maiolica di Firenze e del contado: Secoli XIV e XV*, Florence, 1973, 104b.





# 38 Large relief-blue storage or pharmacy jar with leopards



This imposing two-handled storage jar (orciolo) is among the few large and finely potted examples of early Tuscan maiolica dominated by the use of vivid cobalt blue decoration to have survived, and is an important document of one of the most important developments in Italian ceramics of the whole fifteenth century. Its ridged, ear-shaped handles divide the jar into two scenes, each of which is decorated with a single leopard passant outlined by a tight-fitting 'contour panel'. The animals' profiles are delineated with manganese purple and filled in using a dark grey-blue confined to discrete zones whose wriggling edges are also described in manganese. Their mouths open to reveal curling tongues below a row of teeth, and their necks and forelegs are embellished with linear patterns, also in manganese. Around both cartouches, thin branches project inwards from the framing borders on either side of the scene, sprouting large blue 'oak leaves' and occasional floating dots. There is a design of chevrons alternating with dots running around the neck, and long sinusoidal lines with further dots running vertically down the outside of each handle; below the point at which the handles spring from the body is the mark of a ladder with concave sides.

The raised surface of the blue glaze, also known by the nomenclature *zaffera a rilievo*, was created by mixing lead with large amounts of imported blue cobalt pigment, which, during firing, did not melt fully into the tin glaze below but instead remained proud of the surrounding surface. As with our example, the majority of wares decorated with this technique incorporate broad, leafy decoration whose design defies classification but would seem to draw on orientalizing patterns and contemporary textiles, of which the famous Perugia tablecloths offer striking parallels (fig. 1).<sup>1</sup>

Italy, Florentine region, probably Montelupo  
c. 1420-1440

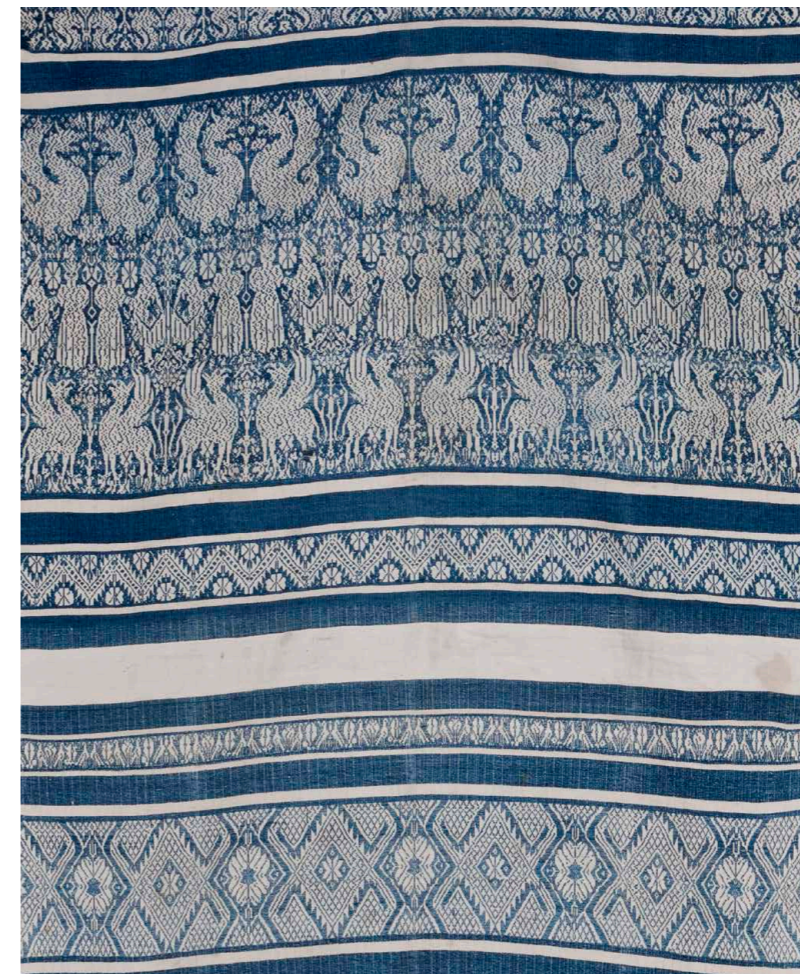
27 cm (height) x 30.8 cm (diameter including handles); Tinged earthenware with cobalt blue and manganese purple on a reddish body, with a short flaring neck and a flat base. A thick lead glaze lines the interior. The handles restored, repainting to flaked losses across the body.

*Provenance*

Stefano Bardini collection, Florence; his sale, Christie, Manson and Woods, London, 26-30 May 1902, lot 471 (see fig. 2); Private collection, Bari, until; Their sale, Hampel, Munich, 27<sup>th</sup> June 2013, lot 547

*Published*

Elisa Sani, Matthew Reeves, and Justin Raccanello, *Maiolica before Raphael*, Exh. Cat., London, 2017, no. 6, pp. 64-67



**Fig. 1**  
Detail of a so-called 'Perugia tablecloth' decorated with wyverns, griffins and figures  
Italy, Umbria  
15th-16th century

**Fig. 2 (next spread)**  
Our jar photographed at top centre of a group of Italian maiolica vessels at the time of its sale from the Bardini collection in 1902

1, Anna Moore Valeri, 'Florentine "zaffera a rilievo" maiolica: a new look at the "Oriental influence"', in *Archeologia medievale*, Vol. II (1984), pp. 477-500.

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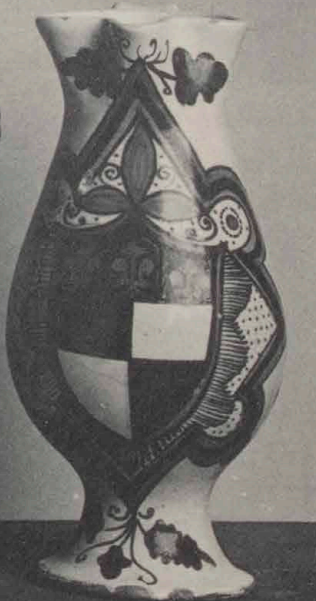
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One of the first studies devoted to blue-glazed maiolica, a pioneering 1903 publication by the English Pre-Raphaelite painter and collector Henry Wallis (fig. 3), first categorized these vegetal patterns as 'oak leaf', a term that, whether accurate or not, has remained useful in describing them ever since.<sup>2</sup> Jars intended for use as storage vessels and pharmaceutical containers were decorated with these 'oak leaf' designs across north-central Italy, but especially in Tuscan workshops, from the late fourteenth century up until the middle of the fifteenth. Their tin glazes, applied both to the interior and the exterior of the vessels, are impermeable to dirt and moisture, and are therefore perfectly suited to the preservation of foodstuffs and remedies. Contemporary depictions in paintings and on maiolica wares themselves show that they were stopped with paper or oiled cloth tied around the neck and held from slipping off by the flanged profile of the rim.<sup>3</sup>

The large, strutting leopards decorating either side of our jar were the speciality of a workshop which identified itself with a ladder-like mark painted in manganese pigment beneath the handles of their vessels.<sup>4</sup> This workshop was almost certainly based in Montelupo, since other wares firmly attributable to that centre through stylistic comparison to excavated material also incorporate the ladder mark.<sup>5</sup> In his 1973 survey of early Tuscan maiolica, Galeazzo Cora brought together a small number of jars with leopards in their designs, all of which incorporate the same workshop mark and relate closely on stylistic terms. Two such jars with blue decoration of a similarly large scale and shape are known; one resides in the Victoria and Albert Museum, and the other was published by Cora when it was in the Osma collection.<sup>6</sup> Besides these, there are also three much smaller jars that incorporate analogous leopards and ladder marks under their handles, two in museums and a third in a private collection.<sup>7</sup> A number of elements in the decoration of each of these vessels bear close comparison to our jar and suggest they were all made by a single potter or a workshop using shared patterns. Especially suggestive of this is the way in which the animals' bodies are painted in zones of blue and white that in places describe a trefoil or lobed motif. This is not confined to those vases incorporating leopards, but can also be found on another surviving example from the same workshop decorated with a bird on each side, also from the Osma collection and of similarly substantial size.<sup>8</sup>

In their ambition, their fineness of potting, and their elegantly shaped form, the grandest of the surviving leopard jars, including ours, parallel the very finest zaffera wares to have survived from any workshop of the period.

2, Henry Wallis, *Oak-Leaf Jars*, London, 1903, p. xx.

3, See for example a tile from the floor of the Convent of San Paolo in Parma, illustrated in Lucia Fornari Schianchi, *Ai piedi della Badessa*, Parma, 1988, pl. 37.

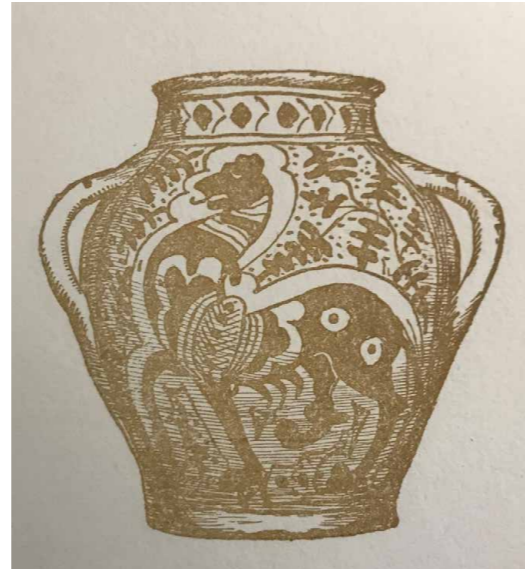
4, Alinari and Berti in Giovanni Conti et al., *Zaffera et similia nella maiolica italiana*, Viterbo, 1991, p. 45.

5, Cf. Galeazzo Cora, *Storia della maiolica di Firenze e del contado: Secoli XIV e XV*, Florence, 1973, pls. 141b, 352, M 240-43. Cora hypothesized that the ladder mark related instead to the Florentine district of Scala, situated on the left bank of the river.

6, Cora 1973, pls. 72, 74

7, For the large jars see Bernard Rackham, *Catalogue of Italian Maiolica*, 1940 (1977 ed.), no. 35, and Cora 1973, pls. 72 and 73a and c. Of the small jars one is at the MIC, Faenza, for which see Conti et al. 1991, p. 255 no. 67, and another is in a Florentine private collection, for which see Cora 1973, pl. 73b. The third is in the National Museum in Dublin, and I am grateful to Timothy Wilson for his having brought this example to my attention.

8, Cora 1973, pl. 67.



**Fig. 3 (above)**  
One of Henry Wallis's drawings for his 1903 publication on 'oak-leaf' jars, showing a closely comparable vessel (probably from the same pharmacy set) then in the Osma collection





An early two-handled *scodella* – a form of porringer or small serving bowl – with ear-shaped handles and vertical sides, the interior painted in blue and manganese with an oak-leaf spray, and the exterior with false ribbing in manganese.

The absence of impasto and the fact that the coloured decoration was applied at the same time as the white glaze supports a suggestion made by Bernard Rackham when he discussed the present vessel with its then owner on 16<sup>th</sup> September 1960 that it is unlikely to be Tuscan, and might therefore originate from Faenza. Certainly, the radiating arcs of manganese glaze in the well of our *scodella* are dissimilar to the decoration normally displayed on the majority of Tuscan wares of this early date, and its round berry-like motifs swaying on slender stalks are closely analogous to a group of early vessels and sherds found in Faentine contexts (fig. 1).



Italy, Emilia-Romagna, possibly Faenza  
c. 1430

11.5 cm (diameter) x 5.5 cm (height including handles); Tin-glazed earthenware with manganese brown and cobalt blue on a pale buff body; potted with a short, everted foot. The handles restored. Repaired chips to the rim.

*Provenance*

John Scott-Taggart collection, by 1960 and until;  
His sale, *The Collection of Italian Maiolica formed by the late Wing-Commander John Scott-Taggart, M.C.*, Christie's London, Monday April 14<sup>th</sup>, 1980, lot 3;  
English private collection;  
Sworders 9<sup>th</sup> September 2014, lot 1



**Fig. 1**  
*Boccale*  
Italy, Emilia-Romagna,  
Faenza  
First half 15<sup>th</sup> century  
13 cm (height) x 10 cm  
(diameter)  
Faenza, Museo  
Internazionale della  
Ceramiche, inv. 5101

# 40 A 'Santa Fina' jug inscribed with the letters YHS



A small jug with a robust, pear-shaped profile, a broad strap handle splashed with green, and a refined central spout framed by pronounced depressions on either side that make tangible the push and presence of the potter. On the front of the body, a large circular medallion of yellow sun rays encloses the letters *YHS*, which appear against a white ground amongst a grid of fine dots. Around the medallion is a dense background of 'parsley leaf' decoration, consisting of blue hexfoil leaf motifs that emanate from vertical branches amidst manganese tendrils dotted here and there with orange. Above the foot and below the rim of the jug is a double border of green and yellow that visually hold the rest of the design in place.

The profuse vegetal ornament on this densely ornamented jug, composed in regular bands punctuated by thin vertical 'stems', show the complete integration and imitation of Valencian motifs in Tuscan pottery production during the second half of the fifteenth century. It represents a local attempt to replicate the extraordinary lusted trelliswork decoration found on Manises-made vessels of the type exemplified by the grand 'IHS' charger in this catalogue (see Cat. 22). Contemporary records indicate that such designs were known in Italy as '*fioralixi*' (a name derived from the French '*fleur-de-lys*').<sup>1</sup> While Tuscan potters clearly strove to compete with the import market for Spanish lusted ceramics by copying their designs so closely, they had to do so without the knowledge or skill to produce their prized metallic surfaces; one of the first collectors of early Italian maiolica

Italy, Florentine region, probably Montelupo  
c. 1480

19.5 cm (height) x 12.9 cm (diameter) x 15 cm (depth including handle); Tin-glazed earthenware painted with green, purple, blue and yellow on an off-white body. Repairs to the handle and spout, and chips to the body and base. The interior is lightly tin-glazed.

Provenance  
Private collection, Bari, until;  
Their sale, Hampel, Munich, 27<sup>th</sup> June 2013, lot 515

Published  
Elisa Sani, Matthew Reeves, and Justin Raccanello, *Maiolica before Raphael*, Exh. Cat., London, 2017, no. 14, pp. 94-97



Fig. 1  
Detail of *The Immaculate Conception* by Carlo Crivelli  
1492  
194.3 x 93.3 cm; Tempera on wood  
London, National Gallery, inv. NG906

1, Marco Spallanzani, 'Maioliche di Valenza e di Montelupo in una casa pisana del 1480' in *Faenza*, Vol. 72 (1986), pp. 164-70.

in England, the artist Henry Wallis, noted of the style of decoration typified by our jug that 'One of the special interests of the ware is that it shows the Italian way of imitating a fine Moresco pattern, which shows that they belong to a time when the potters had not found out the lustre secret'.<sup>2</sup> They were nevertheless clearly regarded as important objects of luxury status; a jug of similar type to ours is prominently depicted in Carlo Crivelli's 1492 painting of *The Immaculate Conception* in the National Gallery, London (fig. 1).

Most Tuscan vessels incorporating *fioralixi* (or 'parsley leaf' ornament as it is often called today) in a combination of manganese, blue and yellow were probably made in Montelupo, and occasionally for Florentine patrons who had their coats of arms emblazoned on the front.<sup>3</sup> The forms and design of the leaves, the rays of the medallion and the vivid green glaze of the handle, rim and foot on our example are closely related to a fragmentary jug in the Fitzwilliam Museum, as well as to numerous other vessels attributable to Montelupo on the basis of mark or findspot.<sup>4</sup> However, excavations in that town have suggested that 'parsley leaf' designs were not common amongst the potters' repertoire before about 1480, and thus it came into vogue as its prototype ornament on Valencian lustreware had already begun to fall out of fashion in Spain.<sup>5</sup> Galeazzo Cora categorized a number of related examples as 'Santa Fina' ware, since a quantity of albarelli and other vessels incorporating this pattern were commissioned for the Ospedale di Santa Fina in San Gimignano in the late fifteenth century, and remained there until the early 1900s (some are now in the Museo Comunale in the same city).<sup>6</sup>

The central feature of our jug is the medallion of yellow flames encircling the sacred trigram of YHS across the front of the body. The combination of the two motifs was adopted by San Bernardino of Siena (1380-1444), a priest and Franciscan missionary who is said to have used them as a visual guide to his preaching. The form of the trigram as it appears on our jug, with the cusped flourish bisecting the downstroke of the 'H' may have evolved from earlier attempts to copy the calligraphic, and at times pseudo-Kufic, contraction marks visible over the trigram on some Valencian wares from the first half of the fifteenth century (including Cat. 22), and can be found on a large quantity of 'parsley leaf' maiolica from Montelupo.<sup>7</sup>

The manner in which the green glaze was allowed to extend far below our jug's handle, somewhat comparable in nature to Crivelli's depiction, is rare amongst surviving Tuscan 'parsley leaf' jugs. There seems to have been no set rule, however, for the fashioning of this detail, and it may have been one of the ways in which workshops personalized their products. Poole has suggested that the signing of a contract by 23 potters to supply Francesco Antinori with vessels for the Florentine market in 1490 may have acted as an impetus for the practice of marking their wares (a prominent feature of late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Montelupese pottery).<sup>8</sup> The hypothesis is a plausible one, not only since the co-signatories of a shared contract would undoubtedly have sought any way possible of safeguarding themselves from the repercussions of collaborative failures, but also because it is possible that they shared kilns so as to spread the high costs of production: therefore marks would have provided a failsafe way to keep track of each potter's vessels. While its decoration changed over time, this shape of jug remained popular for many years, since its broad handle, deeply pinched spout, sturdy shape and comparatively thick, heavy base made for easy handling and pouring. \_\_\_\_\_

2, Transcribed in Dora Thornton and Timothy Wilson, *Italian Renaissance Ceramics: A Catalogue of the British Museum Collection*, 2 vols, London, 2009, p. 55.

3, Timothy Wilson, *Maiolica. Italian Renaissance Ceramics in The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, New York, 2016, p. 80 no. 14; cf. Galeazzo Cora, *Storia della maiolica di Firenze e del contado: Secoli XIV e XV*, Florence, 1973, pls. 159b, 166b; Thornton and Wilson 2009, pp. 53-54 no. 28; Timothy Wilson et al., 'Italian Renaissance and Later Ceramics', in *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts*, Vol. 87 (2013), pp. 38-39 no. 9.

4, For a list of analogous 'parsley leaf' wares in public collections, see Julia Poole, *Italian Maiolica and Incised Slipware in the Fitzwilliam Museum*, Cambridge, 1995, p. 114; see also Thornton and Wilson 2009, pp. 51-55 nos. 27-28.

5, Chronology has depended in large part on the excavation of the communal Pozzo dei Lavatoi in Montelupo between 1973 and 1976, for which see Guido Vannini, *La Maiolica di Montelupo. Scavo di uno scarico di fornace*, Montelupo, 1977. For an overview of the development of this type of ware see Fausto Berti, *Storia della ceramica di Montelupo*, Montelupo, 1997-2003, Vol. I (1997), pp. 75-78, 210, 326-29. See also Wilson 2016, p. 80; Fausto Berti, *Capolavari della maiolica rinascimentale. Montelupo 'fabbrica' di Firenze 1400-1630*, Exh. Cat., Florence, Palazzo Medici-Riccardi, 2002, pp. 133, 138; and Poole 1995, pp. 113-14. A number of fragments with almost identical designs, believed to have been found in the Montelupo area, are reproduced in Cora 1973, pls. 176-77.

6, Cora 1973, p. 134; Berti 1997-2003, III (1999), pp. 56-57.

7, Compare with a small bowl in Detroit, illustrated in Wilson et al. 2013, no. 39, p. 88; see also a bowl in the Rattou collection illustrated in Lucio Riccetti ed., *1909 tra collezionismo e tutela. John Pierpont Morgan, Alexandre Imbert e la ceramica medievale orvietana*, Exh. Cat., Perugia, Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria, 2010, no. 3.18, p. 342.

8, Poole 1995, pp. 114-15.





# 41 A lusted dish decorated with a repeating pattern of flowers and arabesques



This broad, shallow dish is decorated with a symmetrical repeating pattern of arabesques radiating with flowerheads spaced at intervals around a gold central disc. It is a design that echoes, and may have been inspired by, the decoration of contemporary inlaid metalwork, especially the repeating geometric motifs, vegetal sprays and knotted bands typical of Mamluk brassware, which was imported into Europe by Venetian merchants in large quantities during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The blue flowerheads which punctuate the design are thought to have derived ultimately from Valencian lusterware<sup>1</sup>, and reveal the indelible legacy of Spain's ceramic tradition on Italian potters.

Vessels covered with the same pattern were produced at scale in the workshops of Deruta, an important pottery-producing town situated around 10 miles south of Perugia in Umbria, and enjoyed huge popularity for a few short years between about 1520 and 1540. A range of forms have survived on which this design predominates, including ewer and basin sets, two-handled vases, bowls of various sizes, and larger shallow dishes like our example.<sup>2</sup> A few more elaborate survivals also combine its sumptuous ornament with representations of bust-length figures, but dishes like ours which delight purely in the possibilities of its infinite repeatability are no less beguiling and creative.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, it can be considered one of the last great moments of pure ornamental abstraction in lusted maiolica before the famed figurative *istoriatio* wares of the sixteenth century took over the market for good.



Italy, Umbria, Deruta  
c. 1530

38.2 cm (diameter) x 8 cm (height); Tin-glazed earthenware with copper lustre and cobalt blue decoration, raised on a short, cylindrical foot ring, with visible 'chatter' marks from the throwing process on the vessel's light tin-glazed underside. Repaired breaks across the body, with further reattached sections around the rim and areas of in-painting across the breaks. Losses to the foot ring.

Provenance  
Collection of Dr. Steffen Berg, Germany

1, Timothy Wilson, *Italian Maiolica and Europe*, Oxford, 2017, p. 254.

2, Bernard Rackham, *Victoria and Albert Museum: Catalogue of Italian Maiolica*, 1940 (1977 ed.), nos. 767, 768.

3, Cf. an example in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, inv. 04.9.23, which is painted with a classicizing head at its centre.



# 42 A two-handled vase with lustrated decoration



This handsome lustrated vase, its pear-shaped body raised high from the ground on a flaring foot, belongs to a celebrated family of vessels made by Deruta potters during the first half of the sixteenth century. They are often referred to as *vasi nuziali* (wedding vases) and were used during wedding banquets and at other festive occasions.<sup>1</sup> They vary in the complexity of their decoration, with the fabulous shaggy acanthus sprays on this example making it among the most refined of its type, and their broad necks were probably almost always covered with shallow conical lids when originally produced (fig. 1).<sup>2</sup> Many of the surviving examples were evidently proud objects of display, since they are adorned, like ours, with large coats of arms, dedicatory inscriptions, or marital and familial emblems prominently emblazoned between their handles. The two snails depicted within bound laurel-wreath frames on both sides of our vessel may relate to one of several Italian noble families whose coats of arms incorporate such creatures in their central fields, such as the Bullo family of Chioggia (Venice), or the Lumachi of Florence, although the identity of our patron is yet to be identified.

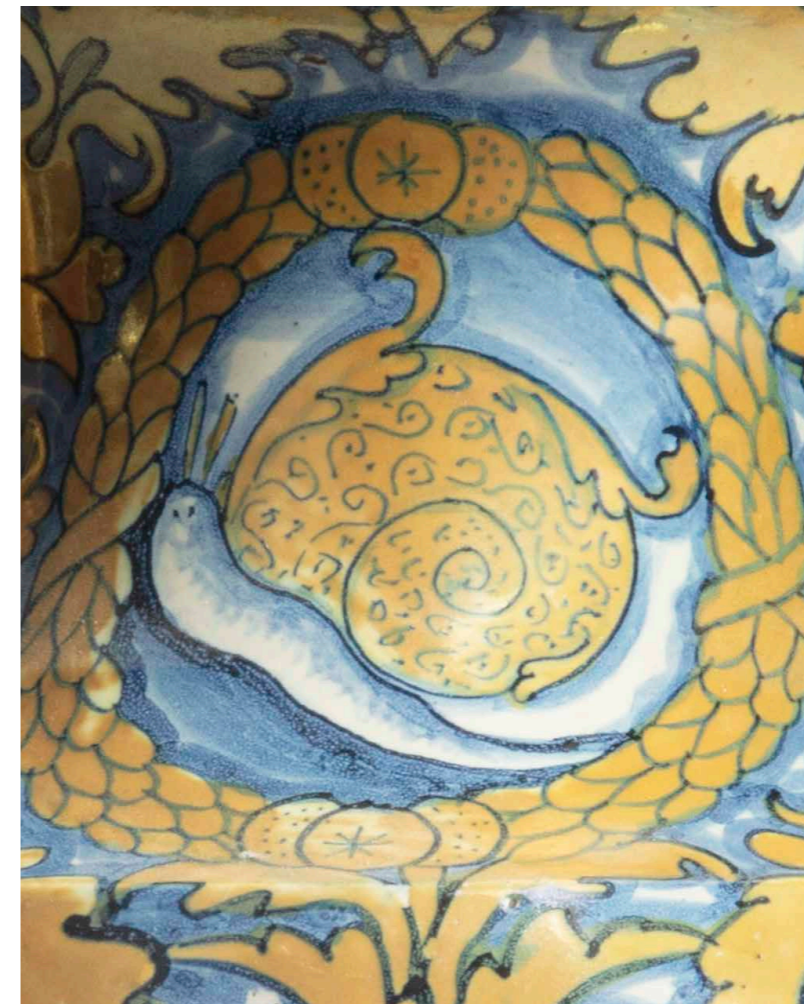
Deruta potters seem to have been the supreme and unchallenged experts in the production of this type of two-handled vase, creating far more of them than any other maiolica-producing centre during the period and utilizing their renowned control of the lustre technique to full and dazzling effect. Indeed, their skill at crafting such complex vessels is emphatically underscored by the inclusion of a bulbous, footed vase inscribed with the word 'DERUTA' within the initial 'D' of the heading on the town's 1489

Italy, Umbria, Deruta  
c. 1515-1535

27.5 cm (height) x 24.5 cm (diameter with handles); Tin-glazed earthenware with cobalt blue and copper lustre decoration over a dark buff clay. The foot restored. Some minor inpainting and glaze chips to the body and rim.

*Provenance*

Private collection, Bari, until;  
Their sale, Hampel, Munich, 27<sup>th</sup> June 2013, lot 532



**Fig. 1**  
Two-handled vase  
Italy, Umbria, Deruta  
c. 1530s  
London, Victoria and  
Albert Museum, inv.  
C.2188&A-1910

1, Jörg Rasmussen, *Italian Majolica in the Robert Lehman Collection*, New York, 1984, p. 71.  
2, Bernard Rackham, *Catalogue of Italian Maiolica*, London, 1940 (1977 ed.), nos. 472-3; Jeanne Giacomotti, *Catalogue des majoliques des musées nationaux*, 1974, nos. 633-4.

tax return, suggesting a community synonymous with ambitious forms of pottery (fig. 2). The beauty and elegance of such vases meant that they remained a favoured class of vessel for several decades, and it is therefore difficult to date them precisely. Nevertheless, lustrated Deruta ceramics decorated in a stylistically analogous manner (several incorporating coats of arms that allow them to be linked to specific patrons and dates) have allowed scholars to suggest a core period of production spanning the period from the late 1510s to early 1530s.<sup>3</sup>



Fig. 2  
Heading of the Deruta  
catasto for 1489  
Perugia, Archivio di Stato,  
ASP, ASCP, II gruppo, 43,  
C.5R

3, Rasmussen 1984, no. 40, pp. 70-71; Carola Fiocco and Gabriella Gherardi, *La ceramica di Deruta dal XIII al XVIII secolo*, Perugia, 1994, nos. 127-128.



# 43 A pear-shaped lustred jug with Saint Francis kneeling in Prayer



A slender pear-shaped jug, or cruet, decorated with the image of a tonsured saint, most likely identifiable as Saint Francis, kneeling in prayer before a Crucifix with rays of sunshine emanating from the sky above his head. The scene takes place in front of a small hermit's hut in a hilly landscape strewn with flowers in bloom. Above and below this central scene, geometric and classicizing ornament encircles the jug in thick horizontal bands divided by rings of cobalt blue. Rich, gold-hued copper lustre is used to fill in many of the design's large details, but smaller and masterfully applied accents of vivid red lustre pick out motifs including the saint's 'widow's peak' tonsure, his thick disc-like halo, and the hillock on which he kneels.

The secret of the lustre technique, first introduced to European kilns via Spain during the early Middle Ages, was fiercely guarded by Muslim potters who, in shortly after 1300, moved north from the Nasrid centres of Malaga and Almeria to the wealthy trading port of Valencia. From there, they ingeniously cornered the market for luxury ceramics in Europe for over a hundred years until Italian potters, who had travelled to Spain as spies to learn the recipe, successfully started to use it on local wares in the second half of the fifteenth century. Artists in the Umbrian town of Deruta were the first in Italy to successfully harness the technique at a large scale, and in the years around 1500 both they and their contemporaries in the nearby town of Gubbio augmented the gold hue of traditional lustre with an even richer blood-red variant. It is in these towns that the story of Italian Renaissance lustreware finds its greatest narrative.

A small number of very similarly shaped vessels preserved in collections including the Victoria and Albert Museum and the musée du Louvre have in most instances been localized to Deruta.<sup>1</sup> However, the town's potters seem to have more or less abandoned the use of red lustre by the time our vessel was produced in the 1520s, and it is much more likely therefore to have been manufactured in Gubbio.<sup>2</sup> Saint Francis was a popular subject for potters in both centres since his home and the site of his veneration – Assisi – is only a few miles away.

Italy, Umbria, probably Gubbio  
c. 1525

12.1 cm (diameter) x 21.3 cm (height); Tin-glazed earthenware with red and copper lustre and cobalt blue decoration over a dark buff clay, with a pear-shaped body raised on a short, everted foot ring cut away with a tight cavetto at its base. The interior lightly tin-glazed with evident throwing marks. The strap handle connecting the neck to the lower body, and 3.5 cm of the outward flaring rim restored.

*Provenance*

The Cyril Humphris Collection, Sotheby's New York, 10<sup>th</sup> January 1995, lot 44;  
A. Alfred Taubman (1924-2015), acquired at the above;  
His estate sale, Sotheby's New York, 13<sup>th</sup> April 2016, lot 321

1, Bernard Rackham, *Victoria and Albert Museum: Catalogue of Italian Maiolica*, 1940 (1977 ed.), no. 467.

2, Timothy Wilson, *Italian Maiolica and Europe*, Oxford, 2017, p. 241; for a recent study of Gubbio lustre see Elisa Sani, 'Reflections on early Gubbio Lustreware' in Elisa Sani and J. v. G. Mallet, *Maiolica in Italy and beyond: Papers of a Symposium Held at Oxford in Celebration of Timothy Wilson's Catalogue of Maiolica in the Ashmolean Museum*, Oxford, 2021, pp. 82-94.





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