

The Abbasids | Abbasid Ceramics

'A whole range of ceramics now met the demands of local tastes and satisfied the desire for the Chinese style.'

It is not until the Abbasid period that a distinct type and style of ceramic ware emerged that can be distinguished technically as 'Islamic'. The first clear departure from pre-Islamic designs becomes evident from the middle of the 3rd / 9th century in the course of designing vessels to emulate Chinese porcelains. New methods of manufacture and innovative decorative and glazing techniques, combined with a new range of shapes and decorative motifs that had not previously been seen on the market, produced a whole range of ceramics that met the demands of local tastes and satisfied the desire for the Chinese style. The motifs employed during this period include palmettes and stylised-leaf motifs, and calligraphic scripts.



Name:

Bowl with radial decoration

Dynasty:

Hegira second half of 3rd century / AD second half of 9th century Abbasid

Details:

Museum of Civilisations | Museum of Oriental Art "Giuseppe Tucci"
Rome, Italy

Justification:

The smooth whiteness of this bowl imitates Chinese white porcelains and is achieved by using a lead-based glaze mixed with tin oxide. Cobalt, imported from Oman or the northern Hijaz in Arabia, has been used for the decoration.



Name:

Ceramic bowl

Dynasty:

Hegira 3rd– 4th/ AD 9th–10th century Abbasid, possibly during the Buyid Dynasty, also known as the Buwayhids

Details:

National Museum of Damascus
Damascus, Syria

Justification:

Splashed Chinese T'ang-period wares inspired a type of Abbasid blue-and-white ceramic with splashes of green; the Arabic kufic script in the centre of this bowl is, however, an Islamic innovation.



Name:

Dish

Dynasty:

Hegira 3rd century / AD 9th century Abbasid

Details:

The British Museum
London, England, United Kingdom

Justification:

Many craftsmen, such as the maker of this dish, emigrated to Fustat from southern Iraq when the Zanj Rebellion devastated the region.



Name:
Ceramic jar

Dynasty:
Hegira 2nd century / AD 8th century Abbasid

Details:
National Museum of Damascus
Damascus, Syria

Justification:
It is thought that this jar may have been a highly valued Umayyad vessel used at Harun al-Rashid's palace at al-Raqqa. The decorative scheme on it is influenced by pre-Islamic designs from the Roman and Parthian periods.



Name:
Cup with rubab player

Dynasty:
Hegira 4th century / AD 10th century Abbasid

Details:
Museum of Civilisations | Museum of Oriental Art "Giuseppe Tucci"
Rome, Italy

Justification:
The Abbasids enjoyed music, attested to by the figurative imagery depicting court life on luxury lustre vessels such as this cup which is decorated with performing musicians.
