

The Abbasids | Abbasid Ceramics

'The caliph al- Musta'in sent 139 square lustre-painted tiles for the renovation of the mihrab.'

During the early Abbasid period, the refined and luxury-loving ruler and imperial court got directly involved in sponsoring new innovations in the ceramics industry, especially the development and manufacture of lustre wares. When an earthquake damaged the Great Mosque of Kairouan in 247 / 862, the caliph Musta'in sent 139 square, lustre-painted tiles for the renovation of the mihrab, and sent with them a tile-maker from Baghdad to make more tiles. He also donated money, marble panels and teak wood for a new minbar. In 338 / 950 the Arab geographer, Ibn Hawqal, visited Tunisia and praised the beauty of the locally made lustre ceramics, equating them to those manufactured in Iraq.



Name:
Great Mosque of Kairouan

Dynasty:
Hegira 221 / AD 836 Umayyad, Abbasid

Details:
Kairouan, Tunisia

Justification:
On the wall of the mihrab in the Great Mosque, polychrome lustre tiles from Iraq alternated with simpler locally made bichromatic lustre tiles.



Name:
Great Mosque of Kairouan

Dynasty:
Hegira 221 / AD 836 Umayyad, Abbasid

Details:
Kairouan, Tunisia

Justification:
General view of the courtyard and minaret of the Great Mosque of Kairouan.



Name:
Great Mosque of Kairouan

Dynasty:
Hegira 221 / AD 836 Umayyad, Abbasid

Details:
Kairouan, Tunisia

Justification:
Interior view of one of the arched and columned areas of the Great Mosque of Kairouan.



Name:
Vertical-sided bowl

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

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

Justification:

The yellow-gold sheen is achieved on lustre ceramics by applying silver oxide, the most expensive of all the pigments. On this bowl, cobalt blue has also been used.



Name:
Dish with imaginary animal

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

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

Justification:
Arabic kufic inscriptions blessing the owner, accompany the elaborately painted bird on this dish.



Name:
Bowl with wing-shaped palmettes

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:
Two lustre pigments have been employed on this bowl. The highly decorated wing-shaped motifs in the centre are inspired by both contemporary designs in stucco and by Sassanian art.



Name:
Plate with metallic glaze

Dynasty:
Hegira, late 3rd–early 4th centuries / AD 9th–10th centuries Aghlabid

Details:
Museum of Islamic Art
Raqqada, Kairouan, Tunisia

Justification:
The combination of lustre decoration and splashes of green under the glaze is characteristic of North African lustre ware.
