

Lustre ware Hispano-Moresque Dishes 17C



HISTORY

When the Abbasids massacred the Umayyads in 750, one Umayyad prince escaped to Southern Spain where he and his descendants succeeded in founding an independent principality and set up their court in Cordoba, which became a magnificent centre of learning and the arts. However, by the 11th century, the dynasty was crumbling and power passed to a succession of local dynasties known as the Taifas. Meanwhile, in North Africa, the rulers erected the Great Mosque of Karawan in Tunisia. They decorated the walls of the mosque with lustre painted tiles, and to achieve this, they invited potters to set up workshops locally. This, and the Fatimid palace at nearby Raqqada form the beginning of lustre manufacture in the western parts of the Islamic world. The fall of the Fatimid dynasty saw great numbers of artists flee to the west, including Spain.

These Muslim potters introduced lustre wares as well as white tin glaze into Moorish Spain and started the first period of lustre in Spain which lasted up to the fall of Granada and the defeat of the then ruling Nasrid dynasty in 1492. The majority of lustre ware at this period was from the famous potteries in Malaga and it is probable that these potteries were set up at the start of the Nasrid dynasty. This also coincides with the import of cobalt ore and so vessels are painted both in lustre and underglazed blue. In 1289, Eleanor of Castile, wife of King Edward I of England (hammer of the Scots) is recorded as receiving 42 bowls, 10 dishes and 4 earthenware jars of strange colour brought from Malaga (lustre ware dishes).

The second major period, where the wares are known as 'Hispano-Moresque', starts with the reconquista after the fall of Granada, when a mass movement of artists and craftsmen took place from Andalusia to the north east. This migration had started earlier but to lesser extent. The production of lustre wares ended at Malaga but continued at several centres based around Valencia, Manises and Paterna. The shape and style of the vessels changes and Moorish decoration is replaced by European coats of arms, ships, animals and birds and human figures. The lustre, used on its own, becomes a more coppery red. With these changes, lustre ware still flourished until 1609, when the Muslims in Spain were either required to convert to Christianity or were forcibly deported to North Africa.