

Imitation Celadon Dish 13-14C



This green dish is a remarkably close copy of a Chinese celadon dish decorated with just two fish swimming clockwise in pairs. Popularly described as 'imitation celadon', this dish is decorated with five fish. While in Chinese art fish symbolize fertility and often appear in pairs, in Islamic art, fish usually symbolize devout believers or Sufi mystics who are seeking knowledge of God, depicted as fish swimming in water. Water represents God's infinite and abundant divine grace.

Sufism is to be 'in the world, but not of it' – the Sufi ideal is to be free from ambition, greed, intellectual pride, blind obedience to custom, or awe of persons in higher rank. There is joy and laughter in the Sufi heart. The core of Sufism is to leave ordinary life and be closer to God, truth and knowledge. There are various routes the Sufi may follow to bridge the gap between God and himself, love being intrinsic to each. Techniques vary, but they have three things in common—rhythm, repetition and endurance. This is manifest in the use of chants, music and dance.

Islamic celadon is Greener than Chinese – Chinese is usually a grey green colour but has quite a large colour range.

Celadon had a special attraction to Islamic rulers. Murder was a common way of gaining power and poison was a favourite method. It was believed that celadon would protect the eater in two ways: The plate would crack if the food was poisoned or the celadon glaze would neutralise the poison in the food!

Three suggestions for the origin of the name "Celadon":

- The character Celadon in Honore d'Urfé's novel 'Astree' always wore pale green ribbons. D'Urfé for his part is said to have borrowed the name from the Latin poet Ovid.
- Corruption of Salah-ed-din (Saladin), the Sultan of Egypt, who sent forty pieces of this ware to the Sultan of Damascus, in 1171.
- Celadon derives from the Sanskrit words for "green" and "stone".

These wares are not called Celadon in China – the name is a European problem!