

Lajvardina ware Jug 13-14C



In the early 1220s, the Mongols began to invade Seljuk Iran and it was not long before the Seljuks were removed from power altogether. Mongol leader in Iran and Iraq, Hulagu, ruled as a vassal of the Great Khan in China and had the title Il-Khan (meaning subject ruler). This established the Il-Khanid dynasty.

Large parts of Iran were ravaged and important centres of pottery production like Ray, Nishapur and Jorjan (old Gorgan), were destroyed. However, Kashan (a key centre of production for lustre wares and mina'i wares), although also destroyed by the Mongols, quickly recovered and pottery production continued and adapted to meet the taste of the new rulers.

The new style was a different kind of Mina'i. They were glazed in light blue and decorated all over with moulded designs which were gilt and outlined in black or red. This style forms a transition between the Mina'i of pre-Mongol Iran and Lajvardina ware which appeared in the late 13th century.

Lajvardina wares derive their name from the deep cobalt blue colour of the semi-precious stone Lapis Lazuli, which is called 'Lajward' in Persian. It is a form of the Mina'i technique in ceramic decoration. The whole vessel has been coated with cobalt oxide to create the blue, as Lapis Lazuli itself could not be used as its colour would burn out during the firing. Lapis lazuli is a good luck stone. Because of the dark blue base colour, Lajvardina ware has a more limited range of coloured enamels available for use - mainly white and red with gold leaf.

In 1370, Amir Timur, a warlord of Turco-Mongol (also known as Tamerlane – Timur the lame as he sustained an injury to the leg as a child) challenged and took Baghdad. He created an empire that extended from Turkey to India and even parts of China and brought an end to the Il-Khanid dynasty as well as Lajvardina wares.

Timur's legacy is a mixed one, for while Central Asia blossomed, some say even peaked, under his reign, other Arab, Persian and Turkic cities, such as Baghdad and Damascus, were sacked and destroyed, and

many thousands of people were slaughtered. So to this day he remains a hero of sorts in Central Asia whilst being vilified by many in Arab and Persian societies.

As part of his conquests, he took the artists and craftsmen from the cities he conquered to embellish his capital at Samarkand.

The Timurids were overthrown by the Uzbeks in 1507, but one of them, Babur, was able to establish the Mughal empire in India.