

## Lustre ware bowl and bottles from Kashan, Iran 12-13C



Here we have a range of examples of lustre ware on a fritware body. The primary site for the manufacture of these wares was at Kashan in Iran. Lustre ware pottery is complex and expensive to produce, so these were high quality luxury goods.

During the Seljuk period between the mid 11th and the mid 13th centuries, prosperous middle class Muslims would collect pottery in much the same way the Dutch middle classes avidly collected portraits and genre paintings in the 17C.

Fritware (or stonepaste) is made from predominantly quartz with the addition of small quantities of clay, ground glass and fluxes. A typical mixture would be 1 part potash, 10 parts quartz, 1 part glass, 1 part white clay. It was invented as an alternative to Chinese porcelain. Nobody outside the potters of in China knew how to make hard paste porcelain. In fact, it was made using Kaolin (china clay) and petruse (China stone) which is a feldspathic rock. The Islamic potters actually did not have these materials available (even if they knew what was required) and were still not able to achieve the very high temperatures required for it, but the translucent porcelain looked so much like glass that they assumed that glass must be an important constituent – just as the European potters did in their struggle to produce Chinese porcelain.

The lobed shape used on the neck of the bottle (second from right above) was also used on dishes and other vessels – any significance is now lost. The prototype for the lobed neck bottle was a metal vessel. Faces on metalwork would be in silver inlay. They are probably a good luck symbol.

Lustre ware has to some extent the look of expensive metals such as gold, but without the cost. On the issue of Gold being prohibited in Islam, it is particularly the wearing of gold (and silk) by men that is prohibited. Women are permitted to wear gold and silk. Muhammad took some silk in his right hand and some gold in his left, declaring,

"These two are haram for the males among my followers but halal for the females."

"Do not wear silk, for those who wear it in this life shall not wear it in the Hereafter."

"This is the dress of a man who has no character."

But despite this, various Islamic dynasties used both gold and silk in their dress and ornament such as the Ottoman sultans of Turkey, the Safavid of Qajar, Shahs of Iran and the Mughal emperors of India, and all their client states and rulers.