

Herat from the 10th to the 14th Century Catalogue

Cat. No. L1

HNM 88.089, see Fig. 11

Base of a lustre dish, Iran/Kashan, early 13th CE

Fritware (pinkish white, fine)

Treatment i/s & o/s: opaque glaze (white)

Decoration i/s & o/s: lustre-painted

Size (cm): l. 8.5

Fragment of a ring base of a large dish with lustre-painted decoration. It shows the partly preserved, finely drawn head of a bearded noble man or ruler with braided hair, a typical cap and halo as central figure



on the right. A second, beardless figure is presented on the left, with a hand in front of the body. The background is densely filled with small spiralling shapes and some thicker lustre strokes. The tooth-edged execution of parts of the halo is unusual, but occasionally present (e.g. Watson 2004, cat. no. Q.1).

The painting style, the high quality of the material and style and the presumably large size place this small sherd in line with well-known objects in other collections.

It may be noted that two vessels published by Watson (2004), a Kashan miniature style

bottle (cat. no. O.12) and a sphero-conical vessel (cat. no. O.13), an unusual lustre ware shape, both dated 1170 – 1220, are attributed to Herat as place of provenance. Comparisons: see Fehérvári 2000, cat. no. 139. – Curatola 2006, cat. nos. 110; 111. – Froom 2008, cat. no. 27 (motif only).

Cat. No. L2

HNM 88.090

Body sherd of a lustre dish, Iran/Kashan, early 13th CE

Fritware (white, fine)



Treatment i/s & o/s: opaque glaze (white)

Decoration i/s & o/s: lustre-painted

Size (cm): w. 4.6; l. 6.6; d. (base) 23.5

Body sherd of a large dish, from close to the rim; both sides with lustre painting.

The faint decoration on the inner wall shows the right part of a roundel. The drawing in the roundel is badly preserved, it shows an illegible figurative depiction, and a lattice ground with scrolls to the right.

Two concentric inscription friezes run along the rim, the lower one, perhaps in Ruq'a script, is painted on a white ground. The upper very flexible script, executed in a reserved style, in white on a lustre ground, is Ta'liq (?).

Dr Shams Anvari Alhosseyni suggests that the verse is from a popular *ruba'i* in *Hazaj* metre and reads it as:

'[bakh]t chu mani abay-e mard-e tarabam dar kham neg[ar]...'

'How [lucky] am I – as follower of a singer ('merry-maker'), look on the (unrefined, raw)...'

Outside: a series of vertically aligned forms. Identical elements are seen e.g. on a stylistically close jar in the Asian Art Museum (Froom 2004, cat. no. 27) and other vessels (Watson 2004, cat. no. O.18, cup. – Fehérvári 2000, cat. no. 150, lower body of a ewer).

Cat. No. L3

HNM 88.095, see Fig. 12

Underglaze painted sherd with inscription, Iran (?), 14th CE

Fritware (white, fine)

Treatment i/s & o/s: transparent glaze (colourless), pitted

Decoration i/s & o/s: underglaze painted (cobalt-blue, black)

Size (cm): w. 3; l. 4.2

Fragment of a bowl with underglaze painting in black and cobalt-blue.

Inside: two bands with blue infill between black borders, an illegible epigraphic (?) frieze below.

Outside: the lower frieze is illegible, above follows an epigraphic band showing a black inscription reading '...Malik Sulṭān Ghiyāth ...'. Two bands with blue infill framed by black lines above.



The titular indicates that either *Mu'izz al-Dīn Ḥusayn ibn Ghiyāth al-Dīn* (r. 1332–1370) or *Ghiyāth-al-Dīn Pīr 'Alī* (r. 1370–1389) is addressed here since *Ghiyāth al-Dīn ibn Rukn al-Dīn*'s titular was only 'malik' (r. 1308–1329). A 14th-century date of the sherd is well possible, considering the quality of the fabric, decoration and glaze, but the sherd is too small to date it more precisely stylistically. Yet, a 12th- or early 13th-century date appears unlikely, and the titular of the Ghurid rulers *Ghiyāth al-Dīn Muḥammad* (r. 1163–1203) and *Ghiyāth al-Dīn Maḥmūd* (r. 1206–1212) was 'sulṭān'.

Cat. No. L4

HNM 88.095, see Fig. 13

Underglaze painted bowl, Iran (?), 14th CE

Fritware (white; gritty)

Size (cm): h. 15; d. (rim) 25; d. (base) 6

Treatment i/s & o/s: transparent glaze (colourless), almost completely eroded

Decoration i/s & o/s: underglaze painted (cobalt-blue, black, purplish-aubergine)

The thin-walled hemispherical bowl is embellished with a delicate decoration painted with a fine brush. The inner centre shows two overlapping triangles painted in manganese black and blue, forming an eight-pointed star. The spandrels are filled with dotted resp. hatched bands. The frieze surrounding the mirror shows a partly eroded black zigzag band and hatched triangles. On the wall, eight pointed panels are separated by sets of five vertical lines,



14th century, also with pseudo-calligraphic panels). The same purplish colour is used on the tiles of the cenotaph from Fushanj, dated 1378 (see Haase/Franke, Cenotaph, this volume), and on 12th-century glazed fritware (see Fig. 4). The exterior shows more sloppily painted arched panels filled with a vertical line, and small triangles in the spandrels.

The bowl was broken into many sherds, but has been repaired. It is partly covered with a silicone-like substance.

Comparisons: see Fehérvári 2000, nos. 286; 287; the latter is an earthenware example with similar pseudo-calligraphy in the panels. It is compared by Fehérvári to an example from Ghubayra, proposedly made in Kerman and dated to the late 13th/early 14th century. Cat. no. 288 has a similar star pattern in the centre. Cat. nos. 309 and 310

two aubergine and three blue lines. The panels are painted in black only, but the edges of the pointed tops are additionally framed by thick purplish lines. The fields show alternately split-leave scrolls and pseudo-calligraphic (?) friezes, two in each panel, separated by horizontal lines. All of them repeat the same letters. A black band on the rim borders the decorative zone.

The use of a purplish or aubergine red, deriving from manganese, is rarely seen on this pottery type, although it is the next common pigment after black, blue and turquoise (Watson 2000, cat. no. Q.20,

are examples from Mamluk Syria, 13th to 15th century, also with a similar star pattern, resp. calligraphic panels.

Watson (2004) has published a number of objects comparable in shape and decoration, but with different techniques, in his Iranian Mongol pottery group Q, particularly cat. nos. Q.18 and Q.20 (calligraphic panel), but without central star. Comparable elements can also be found in the Syrian group R (e.g. cat. no. R.6, 14th century). See also Froom 2008, cat. no. 38, late 13th century (shape and exterior panel-motif, with reference to Chinese models).