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Review Article

An Investigation of the Similarities between Iranian and Egyptian Cultures Based on the Study of Lusterware Potteries in the Islamic Middle Ages

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Abstract

With the spread of Islam in the Middle Ages and Iran's strategic geographic position, interregional communications between Iran and other countries, including Egypt, expanded through trade routes, both overland and maritime. This expansion not only facilitated trade but also led to a significant migration of individuals between Iran and Egypt, fostering regional cultural interactions and exchanges. Pottery is one of the most important and abundant material artifacts in archaeology, and among the significant types of pottery produced in the Islamic Middle Ages is lustreware pottery. This type of pottery, due to its decorative nature and extensive use of intricate patterns in its decoration, has often captured the attention of people and served as a commodity for exchange. Therefore, by studying its iconography, one can discern the extent of cultural interactions between the two regions. This study, conducted through a descriptive-analytical approach using library sources and information from museums worldwide, aims to answer the following question: What similarities exist between Egyptian and Iranian lustreware pottery, and how can we justify the political and cultural exchanges between Egypt and Iran? The findings indicate that many of the patterns found on lustreware pottery in Egypt and Iran are similar, with some common elements resulting from two factors: 1) trade and 2) migration of potters to Iran. The production of lustreware pottery initially served as a luxury item influenced by political factors and tied to governments. Over time, it became accessible to the middle strata of society and enjoyed relative abundance. Therefore, the abundance of this pottery in a region reflects the commercial power and economic prosperity of the government.

Keywords: *Clay, Lustreware, Egypt, Islamic Era, Pottery.*

Introduction

The Fatimids were a Shiite dynasty that ruled over parts of southern Italy, North Africa, the Levant, and certain regions of Arabia for more than two and a half centuries. They represent one of the finest examples of cultural and multicultural interaction in the history of Islamic art. With

the establishment of Cairo as the capital of the Fatimid Caliphate during the reign of Al-Mu'izz Ad-Din Allah, the fourth Fatimid caliph, Egypt gained enduring and comprehensive political independence for the first time after the advent of Islam. This led to cultural expansion, economic growth, and dominance over the trade routes of the Red Sea and the Mediterranean (Elahi & Samanian, 2021, 51).

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Considering Iran's geopolitical position, trade relations with Egypt throughout the Islamic Middle Ages were consistently facilitated through the Silk Road, maritime routes, and accessible ports. The trade between Egypt and Iran is not exclusive to the Fatimid era; it had been ongoing even before that period, but it reached its peak during the Fatimid rule due to their policies. The Fatimid caliphs made efforts to redirect the privileges of Eastern trade from the regions between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea, Egypt, and its coasts. As a result of the shift in the maritime trade route from the ports and coasts of the Persian Gulf to the ports of the Red Sea, Iranian merchants also moved to the ports of the Red Sea. The amicable relations of Muslims with other nations in these regions provided a fertile ground for the growth and expansion of maritime and commercial exchanges (Barani & Malekipour, 2020, 227-231). Furthermore, Iran was located along the Silk Road, the main artery of which began in China, passed through Iran, and ultimately reached Egypt. Iran served as a hub for the movement of numerous traders and merchants. Caravans and merchants, who were the most important factors in exports and imports during that era, played a significant role in the artistic exchange through the importation of Chinese and Egyptian goods to Iran (Khanpour & Enzai, 2015, 108). One of the export goods to Iran was lustreware pottery. Lustreware is a type of pottery with painted designs on a glaze, and due to the variety of colors that occur through changes in the kiln, it is considered an attractive and luxurious type of pottery. Because it resembled Chinese porcelain, Iranians welcomed this type of pottery and sought to adopt its production techniques. Towards the end of the Fatimid rule, due to political instability and neglect of the artisans, many potters and craftsmen migrated to surrounding regions, including Iran, resulting in witnessing the production of lustreware outside of Egypt, particularly in Syria and Iran (Fehervari, 2000, 114). It is likely that Iranian potters, influenced by Egyptian potters who migrated to Iran after the decline of the Fatimid dynasty, created a clay body composed of various materials found near Kashan (Grube, 2005, 129). Nonetheless, the luster

glaze suddenly appeared in Iran in the late sixth century AH (12th century CE), and Iranians welcomed these potters due to the resemblance of this pottery to Chinese porcelain and its exquisite and prestigious designs (Watson, 2003, 22; Allen, 2004, 12). Therefore, by studying and examining the surviving artworks from previous eras, such as pottery works that have a direct connection to people's lives, to some extent, the social and cultural conditions of a period can be reconstructed. It can also lead to an understanding of cultural similarities between the two countries and shed light on the extensive social life of that period. The question raised in this study is: What similarities exist between Egyptian and Iranian lustreware, and how can we justify the political-cultural exchanges between Egypt and Iran? One way to understand these similarities is to examine the patterns and iconography of pottery vessels between the two countries, which can reconstruct social developments, prevailing thoughts and beliefs in society, people's tastes, and the extent of the influence of migration in a region. Therefore, in this study, the author has employed a descriptive-analytical and exploratory approach to examine and compare the lustreware pottery from the Middle Ages with similar patterns in museums around the world. Alongside a general study of the history of lustreware production in Egypt and Iran and its production techniques in the Middle Ages, the author has also investigated the commercial situation with Iran to compare the similarities of the produced pottery between Egypt and Iran and review the social classes during this period.

Research Background

Numerous studies have been conducted in the field of lustreware pottery, and among the most important ones are the research works of Mohammad ibn Abi al-Barakat Juhari Nayshaburi (2004) in "Javāher Nāme-Ye Nezāmi", Abu al-Qasim Abdullah Kashani (2007) in "Arais al-Jawaher wa Nafa'is al-Ata'ib", Nasser Khosrow (2008) in "The travelogue of Nasser Khosro Qabadiani Marouzi", which provide explanations about lustreware objects in the Middle Ages. Additionally, researchers such as Caiger-Smith (1985), Allen (2004), Matin (2008), Rahimi (2003), Rouhfar

(2009), and Mohammadzadeh Mianji & Qasai (2011) have studied various aspects of lustreware production techniques. In the book by Olivier Watson (2003) and Mohammadzadeh Mianji (2013), the origin of lustreware pottery is mentioned as Egypt, and it is believed that lustreware pottery was imported from Egypt to surrounding regions such as Syria and Iran. In his master's thesis, Raof (2012) examined the lustreware pottery from three periods found in the museum and analyzed their decorative patterns. Most of the studies conducted focus on iconography and the origins of lustreware pottery, and there has been no comparative study of the decorative patterns of lustreware pottery from these two countries to investigate the cultural interaction between the two regions. Therefore, this study can be considered novel in this regard.

Egypt's Lustreware Pottery in the Middle Ages

Islamic art historians have different views on the emergence of the lustreware style. The general belief is that this style was invented by Egyptian glassmakers shortly before or after the Muslim conquest of Egypt (Allen, 2004, 20). Others argue that Iraqi potters discovered the techniques of this art and that the industry was likely transferred to Egypt by Ahmad ibn Tulun (Golijani Moghadam, 1991, 155). Based on the published archaeological findings from excavations in Fustat, Egypt, the earliest datable examples of lustreware that have been discovered date back to 722-723 AD. However, these examples are glass objects decorated with luster painting (Grabar, 2000, 28). Fatimid art demonstrated that the artistic ideas of Fustat craftsmen were not solely focused on the lands of the East and Eastern traditions (Caiger-Smith, 1985, 38). They were also influenced by Greece, the Byzantine Empire, Spain, and the Maghreb. Figurative imagery in the Islamic world has become much more important than it had been in the past, undergoing significant transformations in its characteristics. However, in Eastern traditions, figurative images were the earliest and most ancient symbols and signs. The taste and sensibility of the Fatimids led them to appreciate the characteristics of the peoples of the Eastern lands in their way of life, activities, emotions, temperament, and disposition, which

is evident in the remaining works, including lustreware pottery (Mohammadzadeh Mianji, 2013, 42). Furthermore, Fahrevari states that this decorative style was initially used on glass by the Copts in Egypt and later applied to pottery in the 3rd century AH (Fahrevari, 2009, 11). Lustreware vessels were widely spread, and the trade of these products was not uncommon in the past. These vessels emerged and became popular in Iraq in the first half of the 9th century (Frierman et al., 2019, 85). The early lustreware potteries of the Fatimid period resembled the lustreware potteries of the Abbasid period, which were brought as imported goods from Iraq to Egypt through trade by the Tulunids (Ahmad ibn Tulun) in the 9th and 10th centuries, and Egyptian potters attempted to imitate them (Golijani Moghadam, 1991, 155). The patterns of this type of pottery were influenced by the Abbasid period, and over time, with changes such as naturalism and the use of figurative elements in the patterns, this type of pottery became distinct from Abbasid examples. Human and animal figures are fundamental elements in the decoration of Fatimid lustreware, and among them, plant branches and leaves, which are secondary elements, accompany the main subject that occupies a significant portion and indicate their importance (*ibid.*, 160). Depictions of humans, animals, and in general, living creatures, are among the most important features of the painted decoration on lustreware vessels in Cairo. These paintings were executed in various styles and qualities without any predetermined limits. They ranged from exaggerated images to perfectionist facial expressions and narrative motifs (Caiger-Smith, 1985, 44). Another characteristic of Egyptian lustreware pottery is the presence of inscriptions and signatures on them, which can be used for dating this type of pottery. Additionally, specialization emerged in the production of such pottery vessels. Some notable names in this industry include Muslim, Sa'd, Tabib Ali, Ibrahim al-Misri, Saji, Abu al-Faraj, Ibn Nazif, Dahan, Yusuf, Lotfi, and Hussein, who saved the pottery industry of Egypt from decline (Golijani Moghadam, 1991, 158). In this regard, Smith states that while Iraqi lustreware vessels were all made of consistent material, they laid the ground for transformations with different works in


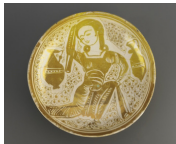

sculpting. The Fatimid lustreware vessels were diverse in design and material, indicating the involvement of multiple groups of artisans catering to various demands, ranging from elaborate gift items with inscriptions and signatures to small flasks and affordable jewelry produced separately (Caiger-Smith, 1985, 37–39). More than 90 percent of the decorated potteries in Cairo during this period were lustreware. These vessels were not typically used for everyday purposes but were reserved for special occasions and celebrations. Ordinary potteries were not given a luster glaze at the time. The quality of lustreware vessels varied, with the best examples being produced for those in courtly circles and certain merchant houses (Mohammadzadeh Mianji, 2013, 50). The manufacturing process of lustreware cannot be determined based on their appearance, and due to the craftsmanship complexities of lustreware production, these pottery ceramics were usually produced in limited quantities under exclusive family conditions (Watson, 2003, 19). Due to their beauty and specialization in their production, lustreware became one of Egypt's export commodities. Based on Table 1, the shared presence of these vessels in Egypt and Iran can be attributed to factors such as trade or migration of skilled artisans, a concept referred to as "immigration theory" in previous studies on the history of lustreware. According to this theory, the rise and decline of lustreware products in different Middle Eastern countries can be explained by the movement of potters who carried the secrets of this craft with them, rather than simply imitating imported goods by local potters. Factors contributing to the migration of Egyptian potters to Iran include economic difficulties, social unrest, famine, the fire of Fustat in 1168, and ultimately, the fall of the Fatimid rule at the hands of Salah ad-Din and the establishment of the Ayyubid dynasty in 1171. However, during the second half of the sixth century, the production of lustreware pottery in Egypt came to an end and began in Syria and Iran (Watson, 2003, 24).

Iran's Lustreware Pottery in the Middle Ages

The use of glass-paste clay, which was preferred in combination with fine clay, allowed the potter to achieve

a significant improvement in their technical skills. The combination of glass-paste clay, a mixture of crushed quartz with a small amount of white clay and glaze, was first observed in Egypt in the 7th century AH or perhaps earlier, in the 6th century AH. This material was borrowed from Egyptian faience, and the technique used to create it was likely employed in the production of small inexpensive items such as beads or other ornaments in pre-Islamic times (Watson, 2003, 14). The original name for Iranian lustreware pottery was "du'aatash" which is referred to as "Lustreware" in translation. However, Iranian potters in the 6th to 8th centuries AH referred to this type as "liqqa" and were familiar with it (Rahimi, 2003, 36). In Iran, the production of lustreware began simultaneously with Syria in the second half of the 6th century AH. The sudden onset of lustreware production in Iran and Syria led to the widely accepted theory that the migration of Egyptian pottery masters to Iran, following the fall of the Fatimids, was the main factor in the spread of this technology in Iran (Nasri & Salehi Kakhaki, 2021, 35). Initially, Iranian pottery artists accepted these materials for one main reason: to imitate the excellent white-colored Chinese porcelain known as "Song" or "Porcelain", which was exported in significant quantities to the Middle East during that time (Watson, 2003, 13). Iranian lustreware was produced in various centers during three periods: early, middle, and late periods, with its peak occurring especially in the middle period (Karimi & Kiani, 1985, 44). The peak of the political power of the Seljuks and Khwarazmshahs and the resulting social stability had a significant impact on this flourishing, in addition to the government's support for this art (Raof, 2012, 127). On the surface of the Middle Ages lustreware vessels, motifs and a wide range of themes have been identified that manifest in the field of lustreware. The themes of pottery from this period include human figures, bird motifs, animals, composite creatures, inscriptions, and arabesque patterns (Pope & Ackerman, 2008, 1785). The colors of lustreware vessels from this period display various shades of golden green, dark brown, blue, turquoise, golden yellow, copper, and purple placed on a white background. These colors are achieved by the

Table 1. Identical and same motifs between Iran and Egypt. Source: Authors.

Motif	Egypt	Iran
 <p>Source: www.qantara-med.org. Musician playing the Rabab, Place of Production: Egypt, Diameter: 40 cm, Place of Preservation: Museum of Islamic Art.</p>	In addition to pottery, some woodworks are inspired by the Abbasid period.	The spread of this motif in the Mongol period
 <p>Source: www.qantara-med.org. Veil Dance, Place of Production: Fatimid Egypt, Diameter: 1.26 cm and Height: 7.6 cm Place of Preservation: Smithsonian Freer Gallery of Art.</p>	One of the luxurious vessels in golden color that draws inspiration from the art of the Abbasid period's imagery, symbolizing the courtly culture.	A similar sample was found in Neishabur
 <p>Source: www.qantara-med.org. Vase with Inscription and Plant Motifs, Place of Production: Egypt or Syria, Base: 5.11 cm, Diameter: 2.1 cm, Height: 32 cm, Place of Preservation: Louvre Museum, Islamic Arts Department.</p>	The existing example in Egypt is identical to the samples found in Sultanabad, northwest Iran.	The decorations are inspired by the Ilkhanid style, combined with Egyptian motifs such as the frieze of Romanesque leaves.

liberation of colored oxides during the firing and revival process. The shapes of the lustreware pottery from the Middle Ages period are also diverse and include various types of bowls, plates, jars, bottles, narrow-necked vessels, and pitchers (Nasri & Salehi Kakhaki, 2020, 36). From the late 5th century to the mid-8th century AH, the production of lustreware pottery in Iran, like many other artisanal traditions, was passed down through families. It appears that pottery-making was an exclusive privilege of a few distinguished Shiite families residing in centers such as Kashan. This is because most of these families were descendants of Shiite Sayyids (Blair, 2012, 394).

The Technique of Making Lustreware Pottery in Egypt

Lustreware is a type of glazing technique applied to the surface of pottery. It involves painting the cooled-glazed vessel with a luster composition and then re-glazing it. Subsequently, during a secondary firing in a kiln at a lower temperature and reduced pressure, which involves a

mixture of carbon monoxide and a decrease in airflow or oxygen deprivation, the heat is applied. As a result of this process, oxygen is released from the metallic oxides, and a thin, invisible layer of pure metal deposits onto the glaze, forming a shiny, gold-like layer. After exiting the kiln and being polished, it shines like red gold (Kashani, 2007, 347; Porter, 2002, 16; Watson, 2003, 27). Lustreware ceramics can be categorized into two types based on their decoration: polychrome lustreware and monochrome gold lustreware. Polychrome lustreware vessels are colored in sapphire, brown and light green (Porter, 2002, 24). The Abbasid period potteries were made from coarse earthenware clay, which is hardly comparable to ancient Samarra clay, and most Abbasid vessels have a rough texture for the same reason. The skills of lustreware painters were unmatched, depending on the quality of the vessels they worked on. These painters may not have been the actual makers of lustreware vessels but rather purchased glazed vessels and embellished them with special materials. This may explain the variety of clay bodies and glazes found on

Egyptian lustreware vessels. Most examples are made from yellowish clay, but there are also vases made from red clay with white or colored glaze, and some are made from clay strengthened with insoluble glass in water (frit) (Mohammadzadeh Mianji, 2013, 47). Petro fabric experiments conducted on early Islamic lustreware pottery in Fustat, from the early Islamic period to the late 5th century AH, also confirm the use of clay with a percentage of quartz and glass frit in their composition (Mason & Tite, 1994, 84-86). The production of lustreware vessels using the new technique of creating a body with fritware clay and matte lead glaze became prevalent from the 6th century AH (12th century CE) onwards. Initially, it emerged in Fatimid Egypt and then simultaneously gained popularity in Iran and Syria. The application of metal decoration on ceramic bodies was first seen in the 12th century in Iran and Syria, and it seems to be related to the destruction of the pottery district in Fustat in 1168 CE and the famous event of the wandering potters in Egypt. According to archaeological evidence, the earliest historical evidence of dated examples of lustreware pottery was found in Egypt between the years 1110 and 1115 CE, including a monochrome pottery piece with an alkaline glaze. However, the first Iranian fritware vessel dates back to 1166 CE. Since, the first unquestionable example of Iranian metal decoration is a lustreware jar dating back to Muharram of 575 AH, which is preserved in the British Museum, it appears that these two technologies, metal decoration, and fritware, are related and were brought from Egypt to Iran (Grube, 2005, 137). There is a possibility that the Zarrin-fam (lustreware) makers in Egypt were buying pre-glazed vessels, as Egyptian lustreware rarely includes other colors such as blue and green, which were later used in Syria, Iran, and Spain (Mohammadzadeh Mianji, 2013, 47). The golden hues used in these lustreware pottery are a combination of silver and copper metals, which were favored for their warmer tones during the medieval period. The value of golden colors may be attributed to the value placed on precious jewelry and talismans. Due to the belief in the auspiciousness of Zarrin-fam (lustreware), this art form extended throughout history and left its traces in all social

strata, especially among the people of Cairo during the Fatimid period, who inclined astrology and mystical forces (*ibid.*, 50).

The Technique of Making Lustreware pottery in Iran

The production of lustreware vessels has been a highly intricate and time-consuming process. In his book “Arais al-Jawaher wa Nafa’is al-Ata’ib,” Abu al-Qasim Kashani explains that during the firing of the pottery in the kiln, specifically in the third stage of firing, or the glaze firing stage, three consecutive nights were devoted to the process. He states, “And again they would place it in the second pit, where they would create it for this purpose, and they would let it smolder for three consecutive nights until it acquired do-Atashe (deep-dyed) color, and when it cools down, they would remove it and cover it with wet dust so that a gold-like pigment appears” (Kashani, 2007, 347). Shrouh believes that the composition of the lustreware material consisted of copper sulfate, silver nitrate, gold chloride, and bismuth nitrate, and sometimes copper carbonate and silver carbonate were also used. Copper compounds produced red, copper-colored, golden, or bright orange hues, while silver compounds resulted in yellow or ivory colors. Additionally, bismuth compounds created iridescent colors. The general formula involved mixing the luster glaze material with three parts of ochre mud and Arabic gum, applying it to the cooled glaze, and then painting on it (Shrouh & Anushfar, 2006, 160). During mentioned periods, one of the most beautiful and high-quality types of pottery known as “Zarrin-fam” “Golden Pottery” or “lustreware pottery” was produced in the Islamic eras. It gained fame due to the brilliance and transparency of its glaze and the use of a combination of purple and brown glazes. Although evidence suggests that this type of pottery was prevalent in the art of pottery and glassmaking since the 3rd century AH, its peak production occurred during the Seljuq, Khwarazmian, and Ilkhanid periods (Towhidi, 2000, 274). The production of lustreware in Iran experienced a gradual decline due to reasons such as the Mongol invasions and the destruction of many cities and important centers of

that era (Pradell et al., 2008, 2652). These pottery ceramics generally bear a resemblance to the forms and patterns of the Seljuq period, but they also have some differences that distinguish them from Seljuq examples. For instance, some Zarrin-fam bowls from the Ilkhanid period have raised rounded edges. The base of the vessel relies on an open circular ring and has a distance, which is derived from the metalworking art of this period (Shayestehfar, 2007, 24). It is worth mentioning that the two-stage heating process to achieve the best and most vibrant colors in Zarrin (golden) and Lajvard (Cobalt) lustreware, which exist in the form of vessels and tiles, was experimented with since the 9th century AD and reached its perfection in the late 12th century. These colors were exclusively employed by Iranian potters and were never experienced in Syria, Egypt, or Baghdad (Iraq). The prominent complementary colors included shining black, chestnut (castaneous), red, white, and gold foils (Tahori, 2002, 72).

Reviewing the social classes in Egypt and Iran based on pottery

The lifestyle and social classes of a government are manifested in its artistic works, making the study and examination of the remaining artworks crucial for reconstructing the social classes of a particular period. One of the most significant artistic works directly related to human life before recorded history is pottery. Indeed, the material, type, color, and patterns of pottery can provide precise information about the social, cultural, political, and economic aspects of a particular era, serving as tangible evidence of a government. During the Middle Islamic centuries, a new social class emerged in urban areas (Ravandi, 1978, 367). The middle class holds great importance in societal transformations and has led researchers to pay special attention to it in their studies, categorizing it into various types such as bourgeois, modern, traditional, technocratic, working class, etc. (Nikkhah et al., 2011, 113). The identity of the middle class necessitates the presence of at least two other social classes, namely the ruling class and the lower social class. The middle class primarily refers to the emergence of a new society and newly emerging social strata that are primarily associated with urban characteristics and new occupations (ibid., 114).

Max Weber and Alexis de Tocqueville argue that with the growth of a free-market economy, a new class emerges that has various opportunities in market relations. They occupy a position between the upper and lower classes and share similar levels of education, income, lifestyle, and social awareness (Max Weber & Alexis de Tocqueville quoted in Fouzi & Ramezani, 2009, 5). Based on the studies of the decorative motifs of lustreware vessels in Egypt, this style of decoration became more popular in the Middle Islamic centuries, indicating the expansion of the middle class in society. Due to the prohibition of using gold and silver vessels in Islam, lustreware pottery, which closely resembled goldsmithing, attracted the attention of the royal court and became a prestigious vessel. Its motifs, such as banquets, hunting scenes, and equestrian activities, reflect this aspect (Fig. 1).

All court arts, which also encompassed a wide range of handmade artistic creations, reflected the taste of the ruling elite, which influenced the taste of the common people (Nikkhah et al., 2011, 118). Over time, the middle class of society experienced significant growth. They were individuals who appreciated luxury but couldn't afford the expensive courtly vessels. Consequently, there was an increased demand for the production of similar vessels to courtly ones. This led to the dissemination of the Fatimid court lifestyle among the people, and lustreware vessels were produced with similarities to courtly vessels, albeit with less intricate designs. Gradually, lustreware patterns transformed into a popular art form that reflected the lives of ordinary people (Fig. 2). In other words, middle-class people gained economic power, leading to transformations in trade and commerce. Popular art, being genuine, reflects the daily lives of people within a specific timeframe and is closely related to public sentiments. It is not greatly influenced by political, social, and economic changes. However, in elitist art, such as the art of the nobility, artists inevitably become dependent on the tastes of buyers and supporters, namely the rulers and the aristocracy. Consequently, the arts are subject to the political changes of that period (Nikkhah et al., 2011, 119). Ultimately, towards the end of the Fatimid rule, due to unstable political and economic conditions such as war, famine, fires, etc.,

Egyptian potters migrated to neighboring regions like Iran and Syria (Fig. 3). Since a significant percentage of the population belonged to the middle class and due to the resemblance of such pottery to Chinese porcelain, for increased trade, Iran embraced these types of pottery, and Iranian motifs were depicted similarly to Egyptian motifs (Table 2).

Conclusion

The main objective of this study is to investigate the similarities between Middle Eastern and Iranian Zarrin-fam (lustreware) pottery, which has been examined in two tables. Considering the diversity of motifs, at least 14 groups of pottery have been selected in this study that share many similarities with Iranian pottery. These similarities are primarily found in pottery with Chinese-like clay, and additionally, three instances of Egyptian lustreware pottery have been found in Iran. Based on comparative studies and iconography conducted on Iranian and Egyptian lustreware vessels, the following results have been obtained: The use of gold and silver vessels is prohibited in Islam; therefore,

the Fatimid court embraced lustreware pottery due to its resemblance to goldsmithing vessels. Workshops were established to produce lustreware pottery, and the initially depicted motifs were courtly scenes, including hunting scenes, courtly pastimes, musicians, dancers, etc., which symbolized respect for courtly life. Gradually, with the rise of the middle class in society, which aspired to a luxurious courtly lifestyle, there was a higher demand for lustreware pottery. Iconography shifted towards popular art, and potters moved away from government monopolies. Ultimately, this type of pottery entered the market, indicating the growth of the middle class and desirable economic prosperity during this period. In addition, the people and artisans enjoyed a certain degree of freedom, and religious biases were absent during this era. Based on Table 1, several Egyptian lustreware pottery pieces with distinctive motifs have been found in Iran, indicating two factors: Iran was considered a transit region for trade, and lustreware pottery, as a prestigious commodity, was involved in trade. Therefore, merchants who passed through Iran via sea and land routes contributed to the transfer of lustreware pottery to Iran, or it



Fig. 1. Lustreware pottery with Court Motifs. Left: Banquet Scene, Source: www.benaki.org; Middle: Giraffe Motif, Source: www.collections.dma.org; Right: Court Entertainment, Source: www.qantara-med.org.

















Fig. 2. Lustreware pottery with Egyptian Folk Motifs. Left: Bowl with Coptic Monk Motif, Source: www.qantara-med.org, Middle: Bowl with Oud Player Motif, Source: Mohammadzadeh Mianji, 2013: 60; Right: Bowl with Ordinary People Motif, Source: www.collections.dma.org.

















Fig. 3. The Path of Transfer of Zarrin-fam (lustreware) pottery in the World. Source: Matin, 2008, 11.

Table 2. Similar motifs in Iran and Egypt. Source: Authors.

Row	Motif	Egypt	Iran	Similarities
1	Human figure	 <p>Source: www.benaki.org. -Form: Plate -Diameter: 0.277 meters -11th century</p>	 <p>Source: www.clevelandart.org. -Form: container -Dimensions: 7.5 x -39 cm -11th century/ Kashan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The image of a young woman -The human figure facing to the left -Realistic image -The presence of headscarf -Dress with a skirt -Around plant motifs -The motif of a woman in the middle
	Rabbit	 <p>Source: Wilson's personal collection; Wilson, 1998, 51. -Form: Bowl -Diameter: 19.5 cm</p>	 <p>Source: British Museum, London; Wilson, 1998, 51. -Form: Bowl -Diameter: 20.5 cm</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Rabbit motif in the middle and around plant motifs -On the move -Located to the left -Naturalistic motif
	Panther	 <p>Source: www.benaki.org. -Form: Bowl -Diameter: 0.204 meters -11th century - It is one of the Fatimian court motifs</p>	 <p>Source: www.collections.dma.org. -Form: Plate -Diameter: 35.2 -12th century - Large relief style</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -From Egyptian court motifs -A panther is drawn next to a human -Filling the space with plant motifs -The calm face of the panther
2	Animals gazelle	 <p>Source: www.clevelandart.org -Form: Bowl -Diameter: 25.4 cm</p>	 <p>Source: Victoria and Albert Museum; Pope & Ackerman, 2008, plate 774 A -Form: multi-colored bowl - Sultanabad -Diameter: 18 cm</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The animal in the middle -Filling the space with plant motifs -On the move -Located to the left -Naturalistic motif
	Goat	 <p>Source: www.collections.dma.org. -Form: Bottle -Dimensions, 73.4 cm</p>	 <p>Source: Dar al-Atar al-Islamiya, National Museum of Kuwait; Watson, 2003, 151. -Form: Plate -Diameter: 18 cm</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Moving animal -The pattern is drawn to the left -There is a design on the body -Combination with plant motifs
	Eagle	 <p>Source: www.agakhanmuseum.org. -Form: Bowl -Diameter: 25.4 cm</p>	 <p>Source: www.trmkt.org. -Form: Bowl - Nishabur -Diameter: 19.5 centimeters -Height: 5.5 cm</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -It is a symbol of power and one of the courtly motifs of Egypt. -Naturalistic drawing. -Combination with geometric patterns
3	Equestrian scenes	 <p>Source: www.asia.si.edu/collections. -Form: Plate -Dimensions: 38.4 x -7.5 cm -12th century</p>	 <p>Source: www.clevelandart.org. - Form: Plate -Dimensions: 35.5 x -7.2 cm -11th-12th century -Kashan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Horsemanship is one of the Egyptian court motifs. -A moving horse -The pattern is drawn to the left -Filling the space with plant motifs -Male motif -Hands-on the head -Face -Long and patterned dress

Rest of Table 2.

Row	Motif	Egypt	Iran	Similarities
4	Mythical creatures	 Source: Cairo Islamic Museum; Ettinghausen & Graber, 1999, 28. -Form: Bowl	 Source: www.clevelandart.org.	-Rooted in the mythology of Iran, Egypt -Combination with plant motifs -Griffin motif in the middle
		 Source: www.vam.ac.uk. -Form: Bowl -Dimensions: 22.2 x 7.2 cm -7th century	 Source: National Museum of Iran; Bahrami, 1988, 103. -Form: Bowl -7th century	-Rooted in Greek mythology -Crowned -Image of a woman -Combination with plant motifs
5	Musicians	 Source: www.benaki.org. -Form: Plate -Edge diameter: 0.38 m	 Source: Berlin State Museum; Pope & Ackerman, 2008, plate 633. -Form: Bowl -Edge diameter: 23 cm	-One of the court motifs of Egypt -Female motif -Combination with plant motifs -Face -Has a headband -Short hair, continuous eyebrows -Long and patterned dress
6	Vegetal	 Source: www.miaegypt.org. -Form: Plate -Plant motifs with inscriptions -11th century	 Source: www.clevelandart.org. -Form: Bowl -Plant motifs with inscriptions -12th century/ Kashan	-Combination with geometric patterns and inscriptions -Leaf motifs that symbolize life.
7	Religious	 Source: www.qantara-med.org. -Form: Plate -Length: 11.3 cm -Height: 7.2 cm	 Source: Ashmolean Museum Oxford; Watson 2003. -Form: Plate -Diameter: 47.3 cm	-It is one of the Egyptian folk motifs. -Filling the field with plant motifs -The presence of a halo around the face of Christ, which shows that it is holy
8	Inscription	 Source: www.benaki.org. -Form: Plate -Diameter: 0.21 m -11th century	 Source: www.collections.dma.org. -Form: Bowl -Dimensions: 43.5 cm -11th-12th century	-Combination of inscriptions with animal motifs -Inscription with pseudo-Kufic script
9	Geometric	 Source: www.collections.dma.org. -Form: Bowl -Diameter: 23.8 cm	 Source: McIney-Pope collection, 2007, plate 648. -Form: Plate -Diameter: 35.5 cm -6th-7th century/ Ray	-Radial patterns -Use of two colors -Combination of plant and animal motifs -Divide the space into 8 sections

entered Iran as war spoils. Hence, it can be concluded that Iranians were familiar with lustreware pottery before the migration of potters.

During the late Fatimid rule, due to political and economic turmoil caused by the Crusades, the burning of pottery workshops in Fustat, the neglect of potters, weak economic conditions, and reduced demand for lustreware pottery in Egypt, some potters migrated to surrounding regions for safety and economic reasons. Iran, located on the Silk Road and acquainted with lustreware pottery, was one of the chosen destinations for potters, and Iranians welcomed them to benefit from their production techniques for increased trade. Iranians drew inspiration from lustreware pottery, indicating similarities between Iranian and Egyptian patterns (Table 2).

According to the diagram (Fig. 4), Egyptian and Iranian lustreware pottery share approximately 82% similar motifs and 18% identical motifs. Therefore, during the Islamic Middle Age period, Iranians had the most significant utilization of Egyptian lustreware pottery. Through the conducted iconographic studies, it is evident that Iranians did not borrow all Egyptian motifs but rather utilized distinctive motifs such as female figures, rabbits, panthers, gazelles, goats, eagles, equestrian scenes, griffins, harpies, musicians, plants, religious symbols, inscriptions, and geometric patterns. The results obtained are as follows: Mythical creatures, animals, and plants also existed in the pre-Islamic era. For example, the rabbit symbolizes good fortune, and the plant motif represents blessings. However, in this period, they were combined with Egyptian characteristics such as inscription painting, etc. Additionally, there are certain motifs like musicians, equestrian scenes, female figures, panthers, and Egyptian inscriptions that represent the Fatimid court's artistry, which was also adopted in Iran. The depiction of Jesus Christ on Iranian lustreware pottery indicates the extent of the influence of Egyptian lustreware pottery and Fatimid culture during the Islamic Middle Age period in Iran.

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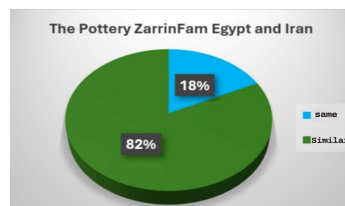


Fig. 4. Percentage of motifs based on Tables 1 and 2. Source: Authors.

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