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INSCRIPTIONS ON
FATIMID LUSTRE
WARE

NEVINE FATHY
SHAMEL FATHY

2003

2005139

The American University in Cairo
School of Humanities and Social Sciences

A thesis submitted by Nevine Fathy Shamel Fathy
to the Department of Arabic Studies
May 2005

Inscriptions on Fatimid Lustre Ware

The degree of Master of Arts
has been approved by

A Thesis submitted to the Arabic Studies Department (Islamic Art and
Architecture) in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Dr. George T. Scanlon
Thesis Committee Chairman
Professor, Department of Arabic Studies, AUC
By

Nevine Fathy Shamel Fathy.

Bachelor of Arts, Cairo University, 1966.
Master of Arts, SOAS, 1999.

(Under the supervision of Dr. George T. Scanlon)

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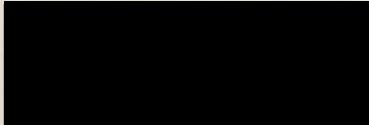
The degree of Master of Arts

has been approved by

Dr. George T. Scanlon
Thesis Committee Chair/Advisor
Professor, Department of Arabic Studies, AUC.

Dr. Bernard O'Kane
Thesis Committee Reader/Examiner
Professor, Department of Arabic Studies, AUC.

Dr. Chahinda Karim
Thesis Committee Reader/Examiner
Assistant Professor, Department of Arabic Studies, AUC.


Department Chair

30/5/05
Date


Dean

1/6/05
Date

Dedication

To my Mother.

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Abstract

The American University in Cairo

Inscriptions on Fatimid Lustre Ware

(Under the supervision of Dr. George T. Scanlon)

This thesis looks at inscriptions on lustre painted vessels in the Fatimid period as a dating criterion. Consideration is given to developments in calligraphy and its layout on vessels relative to painting. Five groups are classified each containing two or three examples, one of which simultaneously constitutes a link to the previous group and a development towards a new style. The vessels examined belong chiefly to the schools of the potters *Muslim* and *Sa'd*. To further fine tune classification, potters' signatures and inscription content on vessels are also examined, as are trademarks, painting styles and subject matter. Lastly, an attempt is made to check whether vessels are assigned to their right groups by making sure their styles of calligraphy correspond to their styles of painting and subject matter. *Tiraz* bands of the period whose inscriptions, more than those on any other media, are comparable to pottery serve as points of reference in this exercise.

In my conclusion, I attempt to show calligraphic and motival affinities between vessels of *Muslim* and *Sa'd* and between *tiraz* bands from the reign of *al Mustansir* (1035-1094) which appear to

indicate that both may have been contemporaneous at the beginning of that reign.

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Introduction

List of Figures

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Introduction

In their quest to create an empire, the Fatimids required funds to finance a network of *dā'īs* for the propagation of their faith that was heretical to mainstream Sunni Islam. A flourishing economy was a precondition to carry out their ambitions.¹ In North Africa, their initial stepping stone, and later in Egypt, both with geographically favourable intermediate locations in East West trade, they promoted conditions to encourage a spirit of enterprise that generated wealth. The wealth, created by individuals engaged chiefly in trade, allowed the government to become rich through taxation.

It is important to underline the vast amount of wealth accrued by the Fatimids, the conditions that brought it about, in both North Africa and Egypt as well as the concomitant emergence of a rich middle class of merchants.

The Fatimid dominion constituted Tunisia, Sicily and parts of Algeria and Libya in the early tenth century. The area acted as a lucrative distribution centre for oriental goods in the maritime trade between the Levant and Egypt, on the one hand, and between Western Islamic states and the Christian states of Europe, on the other. Another source of great wealth came from taxation of African

¹ Lev, Y., "The Fatimids and Egypt," *Arabica*, Vol. 35, 1988, 196.

trans-Saharan trade route termini; Sijilmasa, Tahert and Wargala, among others, were stations where taxes were levied by the government on merchandise such as the gold from west Sudan from which Fatimid dinars were made. In 951 A.D. taxes amounting to 400000 dinars were levied on Sijilmasa and its district, a figure representing half the tax revenue for that year.²

Overall the Fatimids amassed large sums in North Africa, between their intermediary role in Mediterranean maritime trade and the revenues gathered from taxation at trade route termini. Maqrizi quoting earlier sources speaks of the immense wealth that enabled the Fatimids to spend 4, 000,000 dinars on the conquest of Egypt.³

The importance of North Africa declined with the move of the Fatimids to Egypt which circumstances combined to make the hub of East West trade. Not only were commercial relations maintained with North Africa, Spain, Sicily, the Italian city- states but they were also developed with the Byzantine empire, Ethiopia, Nubia, Yemen and the region of the Indian ocean. In the mid- eleventh century, the Seljuk invasion of Iraq and Iran led to the diversion of oriental maritime trade from the Persian Gulf to Aden and the Red Sea.

Ships converged on Fustat/Cairo and merchants of all nationalities mingled as the city was transformed into a warehouse for oriental merchandise where exchanges took place and prices were

² Ibid., 195.

³ Ibid., 196.

set. Mediterranean shipping arrived from Alexandria into Fustat/Cairo to unload goods while Indian Ocean trade came upstream along the Nile from Qus having been carried by camels from Red Sea ports such as Aidhab. The cosmopolitan nature of Cairo/Fustat is evidenced by the various nationalities of merchants who operated there. Although the Geniza records show Mediterranean trade to be mainly dominated by Jewish merchants,⁴ there were Pisans and Amalfitanis, among other nationals, who were found in the *funduqs* of both cities.⁵ At times when foreigners were not allowed beyond Alexandria their merchandise would be loaded onto ships that would be taken to the capital by indigenous merchants, mainly Copts.⁶ The centrality of Cairo, the presence of merchants from many nations and the participation of the court itself in trade made it a thriving city. As a storehouse for oriental goods it became a market where prices were set and orders placed by Western Mediterranean countries and even Alexandria, to avoid long distance travel.⁷

It is evident the merchants involved made large profits for not only were goods traded at the final destination but also along the way. During ocean and sea travel, sailing would take place close to coasts where frequent stops would be made at ports to generate

⁴ Udovitch, A.L., "Fatimid Cairo," *L'Egypte Fatimide*, ed. Marianne Barrucand, Paris, 1998, 685.

⁵ Cahen, C. "Les marchands étrangers au Caire," *Colloque internationale*, Cairo, 1968, 98-99.

⁶ Ibid., 97.

⁷ Gotein, S.D. "Letters and Documents on the India Trade," *Islamic Culture*, Vol. 37, 1963, 191.

income for supplies and increase funds for purchases at the final destination. Similarly on internal waterways merchants would stop at provincial towns such as Busir paying dinars for the purchase of flax, an item of major demand in countries of the Mediterranean. In return, luxury and non-luxury items such as costly textiles, silks and mats would be sold to cover packaging and shipping expenses.⁸ The demand for goods such as silks and other textiles gives an indication of the wealth of the population in rural areas.

Evidence of the wealth of merchants and the taste they developed for luxury items is represented by the presents they sent back to their families. Besides costly textiles, spices and slave girls, Chinese porcelains, that according to Gotein appear not to have been commercially viable items at the period, were reserved for their personal use.⁹

The wealth of the population in general and that of merchants in particular together with the interest they showed in the purchase of luxury items promoted conditions for the production of decorative arts. The remarks of the Persian traveller, Nasir-I-Khosrau who visited Cairo in 1047 indicate that fine pottery was produced. " In Misr.....they make bowls, cups, plates and other vessels. They decorate them with colours like those of the woven fabric called *bakalimun*.¹⁰ According to the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*¹¹ the reference

⁸ Udovitch, 686-7.

⁹ Ibid., 684.

¹⁰ Caiger-Smith, A., *Lustre Pottery*, London, 1991, 41.

made was to a textile with a peculiar sheen. Caiger-Smith, quoting an author who had written about lustre pottery in the early twentieth century, believes the reference is to the gold painted lustre ware of the Fatimid period, the subject of our study.

This pottery originally excavated in the palace complex of Samarra, appears not to have been used at the Fatimid court. Maqrizi describing the contents of the Caliphal treasuries speaks of incised and encrusted gold platters and of chinaware *sin*¹² but does not mention lustre ware. The coarse body of Fatimid lustre ware, compared to that of Samarra, despite the fine quality of painting on some specimens,¹³ would alone have made it unsuitable for court use. Two extant examples, however, show by their inscriptions they were used by the Caliphal entourage (Plates 1a & b). On the other hand, given the taste of merchants and rich members of the population for luxury items such as Chinese porcelain, and given the representation of Christ and of priests on lustre pottery, it is highly probable that these patrons, who came from various denominations, commissioned such products.

The Fatimids, therefore, having selected geographically suitable locations as springboards from which to launch their *da'wa*, instigated a spirit of enterprise among the population. The generation of taxable wealth while benefiting the Fatimid government seems to

¹¹ *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed. Vol.1, 1960, 130.

¹² Al-Maqrizi, A., *Itti'az al hunafa*, 'Cairo, 1996, 282-285.

¹³ Caiger-Smith, 39.

have created a local demand for luxury items. Commissions were placed by newly rich patrons from various denominations who wanted to take pride in their possessions and emulate courtly art. This in turn triggered a spirit of competitiveness among craftsmen which was responsible for the emergence of signatures, trademarks and style, particularly in the field of lustre pottery.

Chapter I

Trademarks, Signatures, and Style on Fatimid Lustre Ware.

Before considering whether the calligraphic styles of inscriptions on Fatimid lustre ware correspond to painting styles as a valid method of dating vessels, a prior attempt will be made to explore whether painting alone can be indicative of chronology. Besides the two inscribed examples from the reign of *al-Ḥākim* (996-1019), namely, that of *Ghabn* who served that ruler from 1010-1013 (Plate 1a) and the one dedicated by the potter *Muslim* to another courtier, *Iqbāl al-Ḥākimi* (Plate 1b), the exact dating of Fatimid lustre ware remains problematic. However, these two examples are useful yardsticks as they demonstrate the styles of lustre painting during the reign of *al-Ḥākim* and establish the date of the potter *Muslim*.

Otherwise controversial attempts at dating have involved determining the sequence of specific subject matter. Did the depiction of vegetal motifs precede that of human beings? And when did the painting of human beings begin during the Fatimid period? Here the production of *Muslim*, the notable potter of the period, is a useful tool since his date is established by the above mentioned example and his prolific output provides a repertory for the stylistic vocabulary of his period.

The external decoration of vessels has also been regarded by some scholars as indicative of chronology. It has been suggested plausibly, that the repetitive nature of specific decoration on certain groups represents the trademark of workshops. Similarities or disparities in element and composition with those of the previous dynasty from which they were inspired appear to be useful dating devices.

Another group sometimes characterised by the introduction of frit ware in the body material, the use of a siliceous glaze and distinctive decorative features is usually attributed to the later school of *Sa'd*, if indeed that potter existed. Besides the already mentioned characteristics, the calligraphic style of *Sa'd's* signature and the dates of Italian churches into which vessels of this type were mortared during construction¹⁴ have been used as possible dating criteria.

This chapter will attempt to shed light on the rationale that promoted the status of crafts and craftsmen in the Fatimid dynasty leading to the increased importance of signatures and trademarks on lustre wares. It will further attempt to explore, by examining trademark affinities with those of the previous period, the extent to which a datable evolution occurred in the painting style of vessels. Examples given will be provided mostly from the schools of *Muslim* and *Sa'd* and a discussion will ensue on the reason why the latter's signature

¹⁴ Crowe, Y., "Elements d'introduction a l'étude des 'bacini'." *Atti III*, 1970, 265.

should be considered the trademark of a workshop rather than a decorative feature.

The rationale behind the encouragement of entrepreneurship with a view to taxing wealth for the promotion of Fatimid expansionist ambitions has been explained in the previous chapter. Reference was also made to the development of a demand for luxury products by a wealthy middle class of Muslim, Christian and Jewish merchants as well as by courtiers and possibly, though unlikely, by the court itself. This in turn triggered competition among craftsmen as a consequence of which their signatures increasingly appeared on lustre ware to distinguish their work from others. According to Grabar the signatures they placed on their products came to reflect a snobbish taste that gave importance to the maker of the item.¹⁵

It is therefore not surprising that the economic and social position of some skilled craftsmen was substantially enhanced. Under a system that promoted risk investment, a distinction came to be made between wealthy workshop owners and their apprentices on the one hand and other personnel in their employment. To be employed was humiliating while to learn a craft was worthy of respect. The wealth made by some famous workshop owners placed them on the same footing as merchants. It enabled them to enter into partnerships, trade and engage in other activities besides their craft. The social mobility of the period is reflected in the fact that

some merchants of high priced goods sometimes bore the name of 'spinner' or 'potter'.¹⁶

The dynasty's esteem for various types of manual labour, hitherto belittled, must have been a further motivation to craftsmen. Shi'ite tradition, as much out of political expediency as out of doctrinal principle, promoted the status of manual labour in the spirit of believers. In the tenth century the *Isma'ili* encyclopaedists of the *Ikhwān as-Safa* stressed the 'nobility' *sharaf*, of many types of manual labour and of artistic skill.¹⁷ It is no surprise that the tenth and eleventh centuries are replete with signed lustre ware and the signatures of *Muslim*, *Ali al-Baytar*, *Mutrif Akhu Muslim ibn al-Dahān*, *al-Tabib*, *Ja'far*, *Ahmad al-Sayyād*, *al-Sharif Abū Ushak*, *Ibn al-Sagi*, *Muhammad*, *al-Shāmi* and *Sa'd* appear on vessels.

Such names must have been those of lustre ware painters at a time where division of labour was predominant in most medieval Islamic industries.¹⁸ The painting on Fatimid lustre ware far outranked its potting. It appears that various types of glazed vessels were first purchased from the potters who made them and then were decorated with the special pigments of painters.¹⁹ In this respect the Geniza records mention several kinds of specialised potters. There was the *qaddar*, the maker of jars and receptacles, the *kuzi*, the maker of

¹⁵ Grabar, O. "Imperial & Urban Art in Islam," *Colloque internationale sur l'histoire du Caire*, 1961, 188, note 24.

¹⁶ Gotein, S.D. *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions*, 277-8.

¹⁷ Brunschvig, R. "Métiers vils en Islam." *Studia Islamica* XVI, Paris, 1962, 59.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 166.

narrow necked water jugs without a spout, the *ghaza'iri*, the manufacturer of porcelain-like translucent dishes.²⁰

Together with the signatures of craftsmen distinctive decoration on the outside of vessels characterised the production of workshops. This ornament was inspired if not sometimes copied in varying degrees from examples available in the Tulunid period. These were chiefly Abbasid products manufactured from Basra clay as analyses of fragments found at Fustat indicate.²¹ The study of Robert Mason, which uses several scientific techniques including petrographic analysis, established that the bulk of Egyptian production took place in the Fatimid period when Iraqi potters moved to Egypt²² in search of better opportunities.

It is therefore to these Abbasid prototypes that we shall turn before discussing the Fatimid examples. Although several types of external decoration were used on Abbasid vessels only two will be mentioned here as they are relevant to the purpose of this study. The first consists mainly of sets of three concentric circles in which the second is painted thicker than the rest and the central one encloses dots²³ (Plate 2a). The field between them is covered with combined dashes and dots. Another motif consists of dashes inside

¹⁹ Caiger-Smith, A., *Lustre Pottery*, London 1991, 41.

²⁰ Gotein, S.D., "The Main Industries of the Mediterranean," *JESHO*, 4, 1961, 169-189.

²¹ Haddon, R.A.W., *Abbasid Lustre Ware in the Egyptian Context*. AUC Thesis, 1991, 73.

²² Mason, R.B. "Medieval Egyptian Lustre-painted and Associated Wares," *JARCE* XXXIV (1997), 211.

and between single circles (Plate 2b). It is also notable that these vessels are completely glazed inside and out, including the area within the foot.

The extent to which potters either fully or partly replicated the designs in both element and composition or completely altered them appears to indicate how near or far in time they were situated from the previous dynasty. The potter *Muslim* is a case in point. His prolific output and signed wasters found at Fustat, are evidence of the existence of his workshop in that area and display the type of outside decoration he used. Some rare specimens of his work bear identical decoration to the first example mentioned from the previous dynasty (Plate 2a). The number of circles used is always limited to four while on Abbasid prototypes they may sometimes reach five or six. Bahgat and Massoul have wondered whether these specimens did not represent Muslim's earliest work.²⁴

Another rare specimen of *Muslim's* early outside decoration consists of plain white walls bordered with a thick lustre band (Plate 3b). It is a decorative device used on the obverse of some Iraqi polychrome lustre vessels of the ninth century (Plate 4) that became transferred to the outside borders of vessels particularly during the later period of Fatimid lustre production (Plate 10b).

The bulk of his work, on the other hand, bears another brand of outside decoration. It consists of four sets of double circles with the

²³ Bahgat, A. & Massoul, F. *La ceramique Musulmane de l' Egypte*, Cairo, 1930, 43.

innermost and intervening field being filled with dashes (Plate 5).

Again the decoration is closely related in element to that of the previous dynasty (Plate 2b) although there is a slight change in composition.

The frequent signature of *Muslim* makes his trademark recognisable. It is written in simple script either inside the foot ring, in a cartouche on the rim of the vessel, as in the example made for the courtier of *al-Hākim*, or on the obverse. His name occurs signed either as *Muslim*, *'amal Muslim*, *Muslim ibn al-Dahān*, or *'amal Muslim ibn al-Dahān*.

Varieties in outside decoration start to be perceived with *Muslim's* contemporaries and disciples. When his signature occurs on foot rings jointly with those of other potters, such as that of *Ja'far al-Basri* (Plate 6), vessels bear the same ornament for which his works are usually known.²⁵ Eventually *Ja'far* departed from *Muslim's* tradition of using dashes inside the innermost circle, to use a dot instead and employ vegetal interstices to separate the circles (Plate 7). This appears to indicate the beginning of an independent practice by a trainee.

From the sloppy rendering of his usually careful outside decoration on some vessels, it appears that apprentices would either have continued *Muslim's* workshop posthumously or, wishing to indicate affiliation to him, used it without joining their signature to

²⁴ Ibid., 59.

his. Some such examples are *al-Tabīb* and *Ahmad al-Sayyād*.²⁵ Their names occur, as with *Muslim*, inside foot rings, within circles on the outside of dishes or on the obverse and their vessels are characterised by the same style of glazing and low foot ring. As such it is possible to date them either as contemporaries of *Muslim* who worked during part or all the reign of *al-Ḥākim* (996-1019), or as disciples who continued his tradition and added to it after him.

Abdel Raouf Aly Youssuf managed to identify another workshop by reconstructing words written in a similar calligraphic style. These occurred repeatedly on numerous shards and put together they represented a phrase that read *min sun`at Rāfi` ibn al-Sāgi* (Plate 8). The phrase is placed midway between foot and rim and occurs on a white background (Plate 9). The glaze is white with a slight tint of blue and stops about two centimetres above the foot.

According to Youssuf, the colour of *al-Sāgi's* glaze and the manner it covers the vessel, stopping two or three centimetres above the foot, are characteristics shared by the potter *Sa`d* who has been dated either as *Muslim's* contemporary or slightly later. A development can be recognised in *Sa`d's* production renowned for its fine potting emulating Chinese wares. His signature (Plate 10b) is invariably carefully written in Kufic on the outside of the vessel, placed midway between rim and foot as with *al-Sāgi*, and frequently

²⁵ Youssuf, A.A., *Khazzaffūn*, Cairo, 1958, 180 - 7.

contains a floriated '*ain*. The external decoration of his vessels is plain and often fluted. Bahgat and Massoul believe the '*ain* in the signature relates to the script on tombstone no. 61²⁷ (Plate 42) at the Islamic Museum, Cairo dated to 1020. It is clear that there are differences between *Sa'd* and *Muslim's* production. The fine potting of the pieces belonging to *Sa'd*, their white glaze tinted with blue that stops short of the foot and the absence of outside decoration except for a signature would suggest that a period of time had passed before these qualitative and decorative developments had taken place.

Although workshops, the most important of which were those of *Muslim* and *Sa'd*, appear to have had characteristic external decoration, their painting styles on the obverse do not seem to have been individualised. The lack of stylistic individuality is evidenced by the fact that in *Muslim's* vessels shoulder and hip joints are reserved in white (Plate 3a) as are those of other painters such as *Ibrahīm*, *Ali al Baytār* and *Abu 'l- Ushāq* (Plates 11a,b,c). Vegetal designs on the unsigned vessel dedicated to *Ghabn* (1011-1013) (Plate 1a) are depicted in the same manner as those on the vessel signed by *Ali al-Baytār*.²⁸ Marilyn Jenkins has suggested that perhaps artists of the early Fatimid period used conventions standardised in pattern books.²⁹ Indeed this may also have come about as a result of the system of apprenticeship in major workshops such as was the case

²⁶ See Youssuf, A.A., *Khazzafūn*, Plates 22b, 30b.

²⁷ Bahgat & Massoul, 51.

²⁸ See Youssuf, *Khazaffūn*, Plate 2b.

under *Muslim* or *Sa'd* where traditions taught by master craftsmen were assimilated and new ideas were introduced. On a vessel jointly signed by *Muslim* and *Ja'far al-Basri* leaves are depicted for the first time with a white hole at their centre, multiple lobes and curling ends (Plate 12).³⁰ In fact *Ja'far*, who came from Basra, judging from his *nisbah*, could himself have been responsible for the introduction of the new motif which he continued to use later as an independent potter.

Bearing this in mind an attempt will be made to consider to what extent painting on lustre ware underwent a datable evolution in the Fatimid period and whether styles in the early part of the period influenced later ones.

Vegetation, animals, birds and human beings are common subjects on Fatimid lustre ware. The school of *Muslim*, as indicated from the outside decoration on his vessels, appears to be close in time to the previous dynasty. It displays two types of representation, one a stilted reminiscence of Abbasid examples and the other tending towards a naturalism reminiscent of Hellenistic models on Coptic textiles. However, in the most stilted an inclination towards naturalism can be perceived.

The first example is a bird painted in solid lustre against a plain background on the base of a bowl at the Islamic Museum, Cairo, (Plate 13a). It is a stiff drawing with the eyes, beak, wings, plumage

²⁹ Jenkins, M. "Muslim." *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum*, May 1968, 364.

and legs reserved in white. Although its stylised rendering is reminiscent of Abbasid monochrome lustre models, the areas reserved in white reflect an attempt at three dimensional representation.³¹ The device of reserving areas in white to represent body parts already existed in Egypt's Coptic tradition as seen on textiles of the fourth century (Plate 13 b).

Our second example is that of a griffin drawn in lustre against a white background on a vessel at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Plate 14a). The griffin has many reserved areas representing plumage on body, wings and tail which seem to convey a sense of volume. Painting techniques such as etching and crosshatching³² that seek to achieve a three dimensional effect are inadequately applied.

On a vessel with two figures in a garden setting known as the 'Banquet scene' vessel (Plate 14b), *Muslim's* signature occurs on the rim as well as inside the foot and conveys an almost full maturity in painting. Perspective is rendered in a manner not seen before. Colour contrast between the two reserved figures and the lustre background, project them to the forefront of the picture. The hand of the figure holding the cup, supposed to be closer to the viewer, is larger than the other smaller more distant one, offering a flower to the musician. Not only is an illusion of depth created but also one of height. By the placement of a vase on a pedestal reserved in white between the two

³⁰ Youssuf, 182.

³¹ Philon, H., *Early Islamic Ceramics*, 1981, 169.

³² Ibid., 170.

figures the eye is drawn to a level above them while a garden setting is simultaneously suggested. Overall the painting has a Hellenistic flavour apparent in the naturalistically rendered curvilinear lines demarcating garment folds and the lustre background onto which the two figures are set.

The issue of the representation of human beings on lustre ware is related to the wider one of its emergence in Fatimid art in general. Several theories have been put forward regarding the date of its appearance. In his discussion of motival developments in *Muslim's* school Abdel Raouf Aly Youssef has suggested that the depiction of vegetal and animal motifs preceded that of human figures.³³ Speaking of Fatimid art in general including painting on lustre ware, Oleg Grabar has proposed that figural painting would have started after 1067, the date of the dispersal of the Fatimid treasury, when works of art including sculptures and figurines were either sold to the public or looted.³⁴ The 'Banquet Scene' vessel at the Benaki Museum (Plate 14b) appears to have settled the question. Considered with its external decoration (Plate 15), almost identical to Abbasid examples (Plate 2a) it demonstrates the early appearance of figural representation in the Fatimid period.

The close copying of decoration on vessels of the previous dynasty, whether on the outside or the obverse, implies the painters

³³ Youssuf, A.A. "Tabaq 'Ghabn'," *Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts, Cairo University*. Vol.18, Part 1, 1956, 102.

³⁴ Grabar, O. "Imperial and Urban Art in Islam," in *Colloque international*, 1969, 183.

had not yet developed creative independence and were still reliant on their predecessors for inspiration. The external decoration on the 'Banquet Scene' vessel was infrequently used by *Muslim*, possibly as Bahgat and Massoul indicate, on his earliest production only.³⁵ If this were indeed the case it would follow that representation of humans started from the outset of the Fatimid period.

If *Muslim's* date, as established by his signature and dedication on the vessel of *Iqbāl al-Ḥākimi* (Plate 1b), is in the reign of *al-Ḥākim* (996-1019), a possible time frame for the commencement of his workshop could well have been the second decade of the Fatimid dynasty (i.e. 980's). At that period it would have been natural for artists to continue adopting a Hellenistic style of painting that was part of Egypt's artistic heritage, and simultaneously be receptive to Abbasid influences. It is worth noting, in this respect, that solid gold lustre backgrounds had parallels only in Byzantine art where it was in use by the tenth century.³⁶ The three above examples therefore indicate diverse modes of representation in the early Fatimid period that appear to reflect varying training backgrounds of painters³⁷ in the school of *Muslim*. It gives credence to Victoria Meinecke-Berg's

³⁵ Bahgat & Massoul, 59.

³⁶ Philon, 171.

³⁷ Meinecke-Berge, "Fatimid Painting" *L'Egypte Fatimide*, Paris, 1998. 356.

³⁷ Ibid., 356.

³⁷ Grube, E. J., *Islamic Pottery*, London 1976, 130.

theory that the sources from which *Muslim* copied or by which he was inspired would have determined the style of his painting.³⁸ It also confirms Grube's statement that a large variety of formal and stylistic modes of expression existed side by side.³⁹ Lastly it invalidates Grabar's theory that figural painting appeared in Fatimid art after 1067, the date of the dispersal of the Fatimid treasury.

Another group of lustre wares has different characteristics but unlike the previous one has no datable example. One of the main figures of that school, if not the name with which it is associated, is the potter *Sa'd*. As previously noted, *Sa'd's* signature appears on a plain white background between the rim and foot of his vessels written in careful Kufic (Plate 10b). As mentioned, from the calligraphic style of his signature Bahgat and Massoul have assigned the date of *Sa'd* to the year 1020.⁴⁰ The painting style of that school, different from that of *Muslim*, consists of scratching on lustre, whirls and punctuated spirals. New motifs appear, such as birds, fruit baskets, spade-shaped leaves and ornamental balls. The style is generally sketchier but more uniform than the previous one and is characterised, mainly, by small-scale designs. Glazes are opaque slightly tinted with blue or green and some rare examples of *Sa'd's*

⁴⁰ A discussion of the calligraphic style of *Sa'd's* signature will follow in Chapter 2.

work have a siliceous transparent or coloured glaze⁴¹ later seen on Syrian lustre ware.

Although human representation occurs it is rarer⁴² and figures tend to be flat. An example of a bowl signed on its plain back by *Sa'd* represents a priest (Plate 10a) carrying an incense burner and wearing a robe, both of which are decorated with swirls scratched on the lustre. There is no attempt at perspective and no special techniques to achieve a three-dimensional effect.

Pottery shards from Fustat show stylistic affinities with lustre painted vessels mortared in the facades of Italian churches (*bacini*) during construction. They have served to some extent as dating tools for the group under discussion. However, their provenance has been increasingly questioned since their inaccessibility has not allowed for close scrutiny. It has been suggested, for example, they could be local reproductions of Fatimid prototypes made by southern Italian city states that had started producing ceramics in the eleventh century.⁴³ It is more plausible to suppose that since the churches were built in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the vessels may have been Syrian products made in sites such as 'Tell Minis' that fell in the sphere of influence of the Crusaders at that period. Although trade was never discontinued in time of war,⁴⁴ starting from 1096 the first

⁴¹ Philon, 176.

⁴² Ibid., 181.

⁴³ Crowe, 269.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 266.

Crusade had taken place and by the twelfth century the whole Syrian Palestinian coastline was in the hands of the Crusaders.

A bowl representing a bird (Plate 16) whose wings are scratched through the lustre amid punctuated spirals decorates the Church of St. Andrea in Pisa. The Church was built at the beginning of the twelfth century.⁴⁵

Another example of 'bacini' on which a bird (Plate 17) is represented decorates the Church of San Sisto, Pisa, built between 1080 and 1130. Spiralling stems ending in half palmettes surround it. It is notable that both examples lack the marked attempts at three-dimensional rendering sought by *Muslim* and his school.

Although calligraphic decoration is abundant on this as well as the previous group, another chapter will be devoted to its discussion. In as far as *Sa'd's* signature is concerned as a dating instrument for style, Bahgat and Massoul have, as already mentioned, assigned it to around 1020. However, the signature of *Sa'd* has been the subject of much controversy. Some scholars have suggested that the name is a decorative feature rather than the signature of a master craftsman.⁴⁶ The arguments given in favour of this theory are chiefly, that the name is written in an almost drawn script; it is never preceded by the word '*amal*' (made by) or by a *Kunya* (*Abu*), nor is it followed by a *nisbah* (indication of provenance). Further factors cited

⁴⁵ Caiger-Smith, A. *Lustre Pottery*, London, 1991, 41.

⁴⁶ Jenkins, M., "Sa'd:" *Content and Context of Visual Arts in the Islamic World*, Pennsylvania, 1988, 67-88.

against considering *Sa'd* a signature, is its occurrence on the Freer Gallery bowl (Plate 10 B) spelt in reverse order and the lack of a homogenous style on vessels bearing that name.

Although the suggestion is interesting it is unconvincing. In as far as the argument claiming inconsistency of decorative style is concerned, one could point to several features common to that style. Chief among these are the scratching on lustre and the generally small scale motifs. In fact, despite the wide variety of motifs, the style tends to be more uniform than that of *Muslim*.⁴⁷

With regard to the argument that the name occurs without the word *'amal* on the obverse of the Freer bowl (Plate 18), it is clear that, in this instance alone, having been repeated five times around the vessel it is intended as a pattern rather than a signature. Moreover, the bowl does not appear to be a product of the Fatimid period. Watson and Porter have indicated that it is certainly part of the 'Tell Minis' group⁴⁸, a Syrian group of ceramics probably produced by Fatimid potters who fled deteriorating conditions in Egypt at the end of the dynasty. Hence the similarities in shapes, body material, glaze and motifs with late Fatimid vessels. It is therefore no surprise that the bowl carries the word *khāss* on the outside in the place where *Sa'd* would have normally signed his name.

⁴⁷ Philon, 181.

⁴⁸ Porter, V. & Watson, O. " 'Tell Minis' Wares' " in *Syria and Iran*, ed. James Allan & Caroline Roberts, 1987, 184.

It is also not unusual for Fatimid potters to sign their personal names alone without a *nisbah* or a *kunya*. Cases in point are *Muslim*, *Jaafar* and *al-Tabib*. As for the writing of the name *Sa'd* backwards on the Victoria and Albert Museum bowl, it appears that some of these craftsmen being illiterate, copied characters without understanding them. This is also the case on *tiraz* textiles where for the same reason writing is sometimes illegible. It is true that most potters used a cursive style to sign their work but *Sa'd* was not alone in using beautiful Kufic calligraphy. Al-Tabib signed his work in a Kufic script. In fact the almost drawn writing of the name reinforces the argument that it was a trademark since it also appeared on a glass fragment at the Benaki Museum.⁴⁹ This suggests the technically feasible possibility that the workshop was engaged in the production of both glass and pottery, as appears was the case with *Muslim* whose name also appears on a glass fragment.⁵⁰

The simultaneous connection between lustre painting on glass and pottery may have been responsible for *Sa'd* possibly being the first to introduce siliceous glazes to his workshop.⁵¹ Two fragments at the Benaki Museum indicate he experimented with lustre painting on coloured transparent glazes.⁵² According to George Scanlon siliceous glazes in Egypt appear around the late eleventh century.⁵³ Judging from

⁴⁹ Philon, 176.

⁵⁰ Contadini, A. *Fatimid Art*, London, 1998, 81-82.

⁵¹ Philon, 181.

⁵² Ibid., 176.

⁵³ Scanlon, "Fustat Fatimid Sgraffiato," in *L'Egypte Fatimide*, Paris, 1998, 266

the small ratio of *Sa'd* fragments covered with siliceous glazes at the Benaki Museum it would seem, although a more comprehensive survey is required to draw a proper conclusion, that this potter did not live to see the new trend in glazing gain its wide diffusion. If the calligraphic style of *Sa'd's* signature assigned to 1020 by comparison to tombstones means the date of his workshop may have overlapped with that of *Muslim*, the latter does not seem to have largely influenced his style. It would appear that decorative elements such as scratching on lustre largely came to replace reserved areas as a technique to portray body parts in three dimensions. Although this technique had started in the school of *Muslim* it had not taken root. A rare instance of this style appears on an example jointly signed by *Muslim* and *Ja'far*.⁵⁴ However, the effect achieved by this style was at best decorative never reaching the naturalistic rendering that wavered between Hellenistic and Abbassid influences attempted by the school of *Muslim* from the outset of the dynasty.

footnote 3).

⁵⁴ Youssuf, 182.

Chapter II

Inscriptions as a Dating Tool for Fatimid Lustre Ware

Unlike painting, Fatimid inscriptions on lustre ware can be said to have derived mainly from Abbasid epigraphic heritage before taking on a character of their own. They are, as on other types of Islamic pottery, of a decorative nature. In his discussion of inscriptions on Islamic pottery in general, Pezard describes them as, "...extremely hard to understand. Characters, very often devoid of diacritical points, may be confused with one another rendering words subject to various readings. A greater difficulty arises from the fact that the Kufic characters employed, of various archaic types, do not have the same spacing, shaft length and direction found in normal Kufic. If to these numerous sources of confusion one might add the fantasies of scribes and writing deviations pursued with the sole aim of decoration, one may realise the danger of attempting to give a coherent translation to these small texts."⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Pezard, M., *La ceramique archaïque de l'Islam*. Paris, 1920,

Indeed, this statement is an apt description of inscriptions on Islamic pottery and adequately expresses the idea of writing on lustre ware during the Fatimid dynasty, the subject of this thesis.

It is worth noting these scribes went to great lengths to develop existing forms of letters having based themselves on the calligraphic repertory of the previous dynasty, as evidenced to a large measure by extant tombstones ranging from the seventh to the twelfth centuries and beyond. In them are found devices such as foliated (Plate 19) and floriated letters and backgrounds (Plate 20), swan necks (Plate 21), thick vertical square scripts (Plate 22), with or without serifs, upward curving letters (Plate 23 & 24) and vertical shafts whose upper part is decorated with lobes. (Plate 19 & 20).

From observation of this material, the Fatimid contribution appears to have been, as will be seen, the application of these decorative devices to a wider range of letters, the exaggeration of their forms and the handling of script in a generally more fluid and ornamental manner. The Fatimids could equally be credited for devising new layout schemes on vessels in which both background and manipulated forms of letters played a significant role as space fillers.

It seems, however, that during the dynasty certain styles of inscription were favoured at particular periods. This chapter will attempt to date their occurrence by tracing the calligraphic developments that took place at every stage, explaining

transformations in their content as well as the possible origin or context that gave rise to them. Analogies will be drawn with inscriptions on ceramic production of the previous dynasty and contemporaneous *tiraz* fabrics whose writing, rather than that of monuments, appear to be the closest parallel to pottery during the dynasty.⁵⁵ Finally, a calligraphic assessment of *Muslim's* and *Sa'd's* signatures will try to establish their respective dates.

To this end five stylistic groups have been classified.

I – The Transitional Phase (c. 975 - 995 A.D.):

The two examples discussed below are important in terms of displaying variants of Abbasid script on lustre practised in Egypt. The second example of the Institut du Monde Arabe (Plate 26), because of the name of its potter *Ibn Khaldān*, is of special significance since it establishes, as will be explained later, the date lustre ware production started in Egypt.

A – In the first example, a vessel from the Tareq Rajab Museum (Plate 25), the script displays a tendency towards rounding letters. Initial, median and final letters are attached by rounded curvatures. An attempt to maintain the heights of shafts and horizontal letters at an equal level is notable. For example, in the word *liṣāhibihi*, the *lām* and *alif* are shortened to the same level as that of the '*sad*' raised by means of an overhead ornament as is the upright stroke of the *bā* (fig.1).

⁵⁵ Haase, C.P., "Fatimid Calligraphy on Textiles." *L'Egypte Fatimide*, 1998, 84.



(fig. 1)

B - Another variant style is seen on a vessel at the Institut du Monde Arabe (Plate 26). The style is close in concept to the writing on the tiles of the *mihrab* of the Great Mosque of Qairouan (Plate 27). The decorative device of continuously connecting letters, ignoring spaces between words, and alternating the rhythm of vertical shafts and hooks appears, according to Pezard, to derive from an intention to give Arabic the guise of *pehlevi* script, hence his description of it as *pseudo-pehlevi*.⁵⁶

On the reverse, the wall has a line of writing in an Abbasid script similar to that on example (A). Inside the foot ring is the signature of *Ibn Khaldān*,⁵⁷ a name whose controversial date is important in determining when Iraqi potters moved to Egypt and lustre ware production began.

His dates are subject to two hypotheses. Marilyn Jenkins mentions the name *Ibn Khāldan* as occurring on fragments of Egyptian clay found at Fustat and on a complete piece, now at the Metropolitan Museum. She mentions him as an Iraqi potter who contributed to the evolution of the palmette tree motif found on Abbasid pottery from Susa to Qairouan. On these grounds she surmises he is among the ceramists who came to Cairo in 935,

⁵⁶ Pezard, 180-181.

⁵⁷ Moulierac, J., *Céramiques du monde Musulman*, 1999, 127.

summoned by Mohammad Ibn Tugh al-Ikhshidid, the founder of the Ikhshidid dynasty, to revive the splendours of the Tulunid dynasty. She dates the vessel bearing his name at the Metropolitan Museum to 969 because of the excellence of its execution compared to the other fragments.⁵⁸ His date of production would, according to her, have ranged from 935 to 969.

Robert Mason, on the other hand, concluded in a multidisciplinary study including petrographic analysis, that lustre ware production did not exist in Egypt prior to the Fatimid dynasty. Only imports from Iraq at that period would have dominated the assemblage of fine wares.⁵⁹ His theory that the influx of Iraqi potters occurred at the beginning of the Fatimid period is based on two technical reasons. First, in no place other than in early Fatimid Egypt were the shapes of lustre pottery identical to terminal Iraqi lustre ware. Regional slip-painted copies of Basra wares produced until then, had been made in the context of local forming traditions.⁶⁰ Second, a glass component found in ten per cent of the clay content of early Fatimid lustre ware would have been an extension of a method used by Iraqi potters in Basra wares.⁶¹ The direct continuity of techniques would suggest that the movement of potters to Egypt

⁵⁸ Jenkins, "Palmette Tree," *JARCE* 7, 1968, 119-126.

⁵⁹ Mason, "Medieval Egyptian Lustre," *JARCE* 34, 1997, 233.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 212.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 216.

had taken place at the beginning of the Fatimid dynasty. Mason proposes the date 975 for the commencement of their production.⁶²

Further evidence supporting a Fatimid date for this vessel signed *Ibn Khaldan* can be made on stylistic grounds. It is clear that lines of script or merely one or two words running transversely across the centre of a vessel on a plain white background is an eastern Islamic decorative tradition. The writing medium used in the case of Nishapur wares was black slip and in that of Abbasid 'ink on snow' examples, cobalt blue. In this vessel the innovation lies in the use of the lustre pigment as a writing material. Another novel feature is the use of a thick lustre band around the border. Hitherto, borders of inscribed vessels, as the two types previously mentioned, were either without border decoration or decorated with festoons, among other motifs. This band would become a feature widely used, particularly, on the outside of the potter *Sa'd's* vessels (Plate 10b).

II – The Post Transitional Phase (c. 995 - c. 1015):

Inscriptions in this phase, as in the transitional phase, continue to be contained in narrow bands around the border of the vessel in the Iraqi tradition. The script, however, ceases to copy Abbasid lustre ware and becomes increasingly like that occurring on Egyptian tombstones (Plates 20 & 22) and woodwork (Plates 28a & b) of the ninth and tenth centuries. It is, generally speaking, an angular Kufic

⁶² Ibid., 218.

script having lost the curvilinear quality of the previous phase. Little effort is made to bring horizontal letters in line with vertical ones as a result of which the background to the script appears uncluttered by ornaments seeking to lengthen letters. Furthermore, one sees a discrete introduction of floriated letters and backgrounds. Two vessels demonstrate these tendencies.

A- A vessel dedicated to *Ghabn* (Plate 1a), a courtier of *al-Hākim*, who served that ruler from 1010-1013, establishes a date for one type of script used on lustre ware during that reign. One observes a continued attempt to write a flat angular script within a narrow band around the border of the vessel. An occasional attempt is made to upturn the normally sub-lineal end of the *wāw* into a swan neck equalling shafts in length. I should like to note in this respect that I have not observed any *wāw* with upturned ends on tombstones of the previous dynasty. It may therefore follow that raising the end of the *wāw* in the form of a swan neck became applicable at the beginning of the Fatimid period.⁶³ However, even though the swan neck appears not to have been applied to the *wāw* on Abbasid tombstones they display curvilinear handling of upturned letters starting from the early tenth century (Plate 21).

The proportions of letters in the inscription on this vessel, unlike those of the previous one, are otherwise kept at a realistic level. The

⁶³ Flury, S., "Une formule épigraphique," *Syria*, 1924, 61.

strokes of the *bā* and the *yā* in *abā' ihi*, are brought to half rather than the full length of the intervening *alif* (fig. 2).



(fig. 2)

The forked endings of some letters in the script of this vessel are reminiscent of Egyptian ninth century woodwork (Plate 28).

B- A related, if undated, script appears on a fragment of a vessel depicting a turbaned musician and a wine pouring man sitting on both sides of a tree of life (Plate 29). Here again a narrow band of angular, flat script decorates the border. In it horizontal letters placed flatly at the base of the line in no way attempt to reach up to the levels of vertical shafts. As a result, space is created which the calligrapher attempts to fill in two ways. First, by manipulating the tops of separate or contiguous shafts to terminate at right angles. Second, by making leaves grow out of letters thereby heralding the commencement of background decoration to calligraphy on Fatimid lustre ware. The use of background decoration as well as decorative letters, such as the floriated *ain* of the word *ghabta* in this example,

can be seen on Egyptian tombstones since the middle of the ninth century (Plate 19, 20).

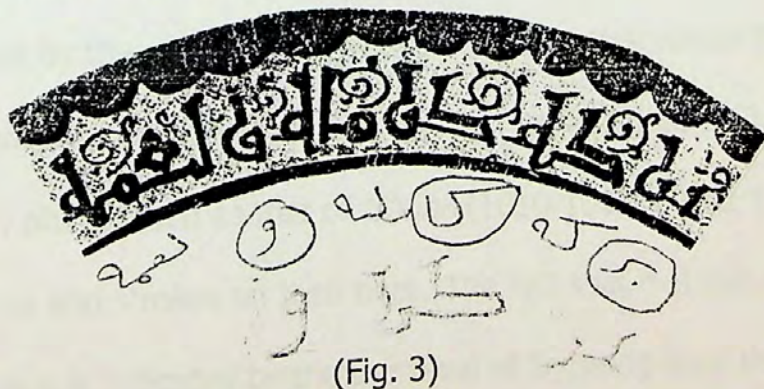
Apart from its calligraphy, its style of painting and the lustre band on the border of its plain external wall are important dating features for this vessel. With regard to the painting, it is reminiscent of the style used on *Muslim's* 'Banquet Scene' vessel, dated to the second or third decade of the Fatimid dynasty. As for the lustre band, it appears in the previous phase on the obverse to *Ibn Khaldān's* vessel, but here becomes transferred to the outside border. It is a Fatimid adaptation of an Iraqi feature that appears to be taking root on Fatimid lustre ware, as evidenced by rare examples of *Muslim's* early work (Plate 3b). These two features indicate the Fatimid potter was developing a style of his own, distancing himself from Iraqi lustre ware. The development of background decoration to the calligraphy on this vessel would probably place it slightly later in date than the previous one.

111 - Fatimid Style 1 (1015-1024):

Three examples in this section will serve to show that simple, relatively undecorated narrow bands of inscription, gave way to wider ones where letters of a more decorative nature, whose crowded forms together with the background contributed to fill the empty spaces between shafts.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Haase, C.P., 341.

A - On the bowl at the Freer Gallery (Plate 30a) a narrow band of inscription continues to surround the border, while the image of a turbaned rider carrying an eagle on his arm dominates the centre of the vessel. Here Fatimid writing on lustre ware appears to come into its own. Particular elements of script with decorative potential have been selected from the repertory of the previous dynasty. One sees the floriated *ain*, as well as downward curving letters that turn upward into shafts (Plate 23a), the latter device becoming applied to a wider range of letters. Previously restricted to the letters *ra* and *nūn* on Abbasid tombstones (Plate 23a), they become applied to the *wāw*, *ra* and *alif* which take on identical shape having been manipulated to curve first downwards into a semi-circle before again turning upwards into a shaft (Fig. 3).



(Fig. 3)

This device increasingly applied makes legibility confusing, but gives a curvilinear appearance to an otherwise square script. The shafts thus created together with fine swirling lines representing stems serve to fill the background. The trend of downward curving

letters that turn upward into oblique, curvilinear or straight shafts, becomes characteristic on Fatimid inscriptions on lustre ware from now on. They are generally rendered in a more curvilinear manner than were their rigid counterparts on tombstones of the previous dynasty.

With regard to the dating of this vessel, it would appear that its composition and lettering still betray influences from the transitional and post transitional phases. This is apparent from the presence of the narrow inscription band relative to the central drawing and the ornament over the letter *ṣād*, both characteristic of Abbasid lustre ware.

The new calligraphic development, however, would place it later in time and appears to have occurred in *Muslim's* workshop. This is borne out by the similar external decoration on this vessel (Plate 30b) and examples produced by the school of *Muslim* (Plate 5,6) in the previous phase, such as that of *Ghabn* (1010-1013) (Plate 1 'A, 2, 3'), with circle and strokes on their back. The fact that it is still at an initial stage is indicated by the presence of lingering Iraqi decorative elements. The reason it is placed at the head of the group constituting this phase is because it is a step away from the previous one and appears to be at the source of future calligraphic developments that would evolve into a distinctive Fatimid style. Analogies with *tiraz* fabrics from the reign of *al-Ḥākim* (996-1020) (Plate 31), indicate the new calligraphic developments of this style

were practised in that reign. A date slightly later than for the group of the previous phase, i.e. 1015 is proposed for it.

B - A further development can be seen on the vessel at the Islamic Museum with four spade-shaped leaves at its centre, signed by *Muslim* inside the foot ring (Plate 32). The band of inscription has grown in width compared to the motif at the centre. It is equal if not slightly larger in size. To fill it in, the calligrapher exaggerates the devices introduced previously. Letters become bigger and thicker, their downward curving semi-circular movement more pronounced, as are those of swan neck forms, and serifs tend to terminate in needle form. The remaining space is mostly filled with swirls in clusters.

By abandoning narrow inscription borders, the compositional form developed on this vessel moves it a step away from the previous one. It constitutes a tendency in which letters are manipulated to fill in large areas with the object of becoming the focus of decoration.

C - This trend continues on the vessel at the Benaki Museum with the phrase *al mu'z bi misr* (Plate 33). The swan necks of the letters *ra* and *zain* have been turned into big curls that alternate with tall vertical shafts constituting the centrepiece of the calligraphic decoration. Together with the scrolling stems in the background, they act as space fillers.

In this vessel the compositional form of the previous example has been maintained with the wider calligraphic band becoming the dominant decorative feature.

IV - Fatimid Style 2 (1025-1035 A.D.)

In the two following examples features developed in the previous phase, to accommodate wider areas of inscription, are continued. A tendency is notable to curl swan neck forms excessively and contrast tall shafts relative to horizontal letters. Analogies between scripts on lustre ware and *tiraz* bands from the reign of *al-Musatansir* (1035-1094) can be made.

A – Two lines of manipulated letters in mirror image fill the well of a vessel at the Benaki Museum (Plate 34) signed by *Muslim*. They display curling swan necks that at once echo the scrolling stem movement on the border and alternate with tall shafts. Both contrast sharply in height with horizontal letters.

This vessel bearing the signature of *Muslim* is interesting in that its fine script replicates that seen on *tiraz* bands of the reign of *al-Mustansir* (1035-1094) (Plate 35). It gives credence to the theory that *Muslim* or his workshop may have operated at least until the early years of that reign.⁶⁵

B – On a vessel at the Islamic Museum tall shafts ending in double lobes contrast in exaggerated height with horizontal letters and are interspersed by scrolling stems in a wide band of calligraphy. The repetition of the word *al-mann*, gracious bestowal, around the

vessel (Plate 36) produces a pattern as the initial *lām* and final upward curving *nūn*, appear as back to back shafts at regular intervals. Together they give the illusion of a *lām-alif* (fig. 4).



The device of decorating shafts with double and triple lobes is a fashion seen on tombstones since the middle of the ninth century (Plate 19).

Since the back of this vessel is not apparent, vessels with a similar style but of better finish (Plate 36b) display remnants of circles indicating the style may have belonged to the school of *Muslim*, possibly posthumously. By analogy with inscriptions that occur on *tiraz* bands of the reign of *al-Mustansir* (1035-1094) (Plate 37a & b), tall shafts contrast with low horizontal letters.

V – Fatimid Style 3 (c.1025-1094):

Three examples will demonstrate that, as with *Muslim*, affinities existed between the school of *Sa'd* and *tiraz* bands from the reign of *al-Mustansir* (1035-94). Overall, inscription bands become narrower and occur either as one among a succession of decorative bands or

⁶⁵ Bayani-Wolpert, M., "Inscriptions," in H. Philon's, *Early Islamic Ceramics*, 1981,

alone. Single words, most commonly, *al-yumn*, happiness, or *al-mann*, gracious bestowal, are repeated around the vessel in a calligraphic pattern.

A - A fragment at the Benaki Museum bearing *Sa'd*'s signature (Plate 38a) displays a band of inscription among a succession of other decorative ones. Only one word appears while the rest are broken off. The ornamental quality of the writing makes it illegible but it is notable that the last letter rises in an upward curve forming a curled swan neck reminiscent of the example on Plate 34 by *Muslim*, attributed to the reign of *al-Mustansir*. However, the script here is looser and the upward curve does not curl as completely as in *Muslim's* example.

B- In a second example signed *Sa'd* at the Benaki Museum (Plate 38b), the word *al-yumn*, happiness, is repeated around the vessel in one among other decorative bands. It is notable that the script is thick, the upward curve of the final letter *nūn* is always vertical while the initial *alif* of *al* is represented by a short stroke placed after, and parallel to, the initial *lām* (fig.5).



(fig. 5)

20
21

C- On an unsigned fragment (Plate 38c) at the Benaki Museum the word *al-yumn*, used in the previous example, occurs this time in a unique band of inscription with small semi-circles, dots and dashes in the background. The style of terminating upward curves in vertical shafts is seen on *tiraz* bands of the reign of *al-Mustansir* (1035-1094) (Plates 39a,b).⁶⁶

From the above examples and their affinities with *tiraz* bands from the reign of *al-Mustansir* (1035-1095), it appears that *Sa'd* and his associates were mainly operative during that reign. Bands of inscription, however, that appear alone or among others, are sketchily rendered. Their execution is less sophisticated than in *Muslim's* examples (Plate 36).

It has been pointed out since the beginning of the chapter that the primary objective of writing on lustre ware was to convey an aesthetic effect. Letters, whether used in repetitive words or in phrases, were manipulated for decorative effect very often at the expense of content. This was also the case on *tiraz* bands and some monumental epigraphy where legibility appeared to be a secondary concern.⁶⁷ This attitude together with the inclination to write unrelated letters as part of magical formulae⁶⁸ could have given rise to pseudo-inscriptions on lustre ware.

⁶⁶ Bayani-Wolpert, 299.

⁶⁷ Ettinghausen, R., "Arabic Epigraphy," *Studies in Honour of George C. Miles*, 1974, 304.

⁶⁸ Aanavi, D., "Devotional Writing," *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum*, 1961, 356.

A- On the vessel at the Islamic Museum (Plate 40a), similar forms of letters occur in succession within interlaced bands emulating square Kufic.

B- In another (Plate 40b), a script close to a scribble fills bands covering the vessel. The dating of such script is difficult but it seems that it was used on vessels signed by *Muslim* (Plate 40c).

Our discussion of inscription styles on Fatimid lustre ware has shown that an evolution in content occurred during the course of the dynasty. Initially, it consisted of maxims derived from Quranic precepts. Inscriptions wished blessings to the owner (Plates 25 & 26), *baraka li sahibih*, called upon him to depend on God for sufficiency, *tawakal takfa'*, and invited him to invoke God in order to receive from Him, *sal tu'ta*. Two of these maxims have been found to have Quranic connotations. This is particularly so with regard to the word *baraka*, that either occurred alone or in the form of the phrase *baraka li sahibih*. Flury maintains it is among the fixed epigraphic formulas that occur on various Islamic ceramics from the outset of Islam and in subsequent periods. He points out that the term had very ancient Semitic roots and was probably known to Arab tribes prior to the Islamic conquests. Having subsequently been used in the language of the *Qur'an*, 'the benediction of Allah,' was familiar to new converts in

a religious sense and they inscribed it on their arms and on various objects. Hence, its transmission to all parts of the Islamic world.⁶⁹

With regard to the phrase calling upon the owner of the vessel to depend on God for sufficiency, *tawakal takf'a*, which occurs as a proverb in *al-Maidani's* book on proverbs, *Majma' al-amthāl*, the idea too seems to be based on a *Quranic* verse,⁷⁰ *wa tawakal 'ala allāhi wa kafa billāhi wakillan* (XXX111, 3 & IV, 81), put your trust in God, and be content to let Him dispose of your affairs. In the case of the third commonly inscribed phrase, calling upon the owner to invoke God in order to receive from Him, *sal tu'ta*, the case appears to be different. Bayani-Wolpert, quoting Hammer-Purgstall, says the only occurrence of the phrase was on a seal of a brother of *al-Ma'mūn*, the Abbasid Caliph, on which it appears *sal allah ya'tika*.⁷¹

As Fatimid potters began to part with proto-Abbasid forms of writing on lustre ware, so did the content of their inscriptions. Although the phrase *baraka lisāhibihi* persisted, a general trend away from *Qur'anic* inspired maxims in favour of secular phrases becomes perceived. Bayani-Wolpert wonders whether the phenomenon of repeating single words denoting auspicious meanings, such as *al-mann*, gracious bestowal, at a later phase, was not because the vessels were offered as gifts on special occasions.⁷² Indeed, this view

⁶⁹ Flury, 54.

⁷⁰ Bayani-Wolpert, 297.

⁷¹ Ibid., 297.

⁷² Ibid., 299.

could have applied throughout the dynasty, particularly at the outset, as decorative calligraphy flourished on lustre ware (Fatimid Style 1-1015-1024) and phrases such as, complete blessings, *baraka kāmila*, all embracing favour, *ni`ma shāmila*, progress, happiness and safety, *iqbāl wa sa`āda wa salāma*, health, all embracing joy to the owner, may he be rid of evil, *`afia wa gabta shāmila li sāhibihi khalasuhu min shar*, start to appear on wide bands of calligraphy. It is possible that as the population grew more prosperous from trade and related activities, an exchange of gifts partly as a public relations exercise that included the caliphal entourage, took place since both it and the Caliph himself are known to have partaken in trade.⁷³ Nothing is more indicative of this than the inscription on the vessel made for *'Ghabn'* (Plate 1a), Commander in Chief of *al-Hākim* from 1010 -1013. The inscription wishes wealth and prosperity to the commander-in-chief and servant of the prince of the faithful, *al-Hākim* for whom and for whose pure ancestry the prayers of God are said, *'iz wa iqbāl li ustāz al-ustāzin qāid al quwād ghabn mawla amīr al-mu' minīn al-Hākim bi amrillah salawat allah`allayhi wa`ala abā'ihī al-tahirīn*.

It would seem, as previously mentioned, that by analogy with *tiraz* textiles (Plate 37 a & b), the fashion to write a script in which the heights of tall shafts contrasted sharply with horizontal letters (Plate 36), occurred around the reign of *al-Mustansir* (1035-94).

⁷³ Hrbek, I, "Egypt, Nubia and the Eastern Deserts – The Fatimids," in *Cambridge History of Africa*, Vol. 3. Chapter 1, 16.

Around this period repetitive auspicious single words on lustre vessels (Plate 36) start to appear. Virtues such as *al-mann*, 'gracious bestowal' (Plate 36) and good wishes such as *al-yumn*, 'happiness' appear most frequently on the work of *Muslim* and more frequently on fragments by *Sa 'd* and his school (Plates 38a,b, & c).

So far in this chapter I have tried to date inscription styles on Fatimid lustre ware mainly by drawing parallels with styles of writing on *tiraz* bands. I would now like to examine the signature styles of the two main potters of the period to consider whether they could serve as possible dating criteria.

With regard to *Muslim*, his customary signature (Plate 41 'A2') was in a cursive hand that would not be indicative of date. As previously mentioned, it occurred either alone or preceded by the word '*amal*' (Plate 41 'A1'). In some cases as in the fragment at the Benaki Museum (Plate 41 'A4') he signed his name in full...(*Muslim*)...*ibn al-dahān bi misr*, using an unpretentious Kufic style in which shafts terminated in serifs looking in opposite directions. The style of this signature appears to have affinities with the inscription on the *Ghabn* (1010-1013) vessel (Plate 1a). This is not surprising since the maker of that vessel, judging by its outside decoration, appears to have been a disciple of *Muslim*. Indeed, the date attributed to *Muslim* as established by his dedication inscription to *Iqbāl al-Hākimi* on the vessel at the Benaki Museum, falls within the same time frame.

The signature of *Sa`d* (Plate 41B), on the other hand, for whose work there is no dated example, is interesting for its stylistic features that recall Fatimid Style 1 in which *Muslim* was active. Indeed, though the style of *Sa`d* differs in both painting and potting from that of *Muslim*, he still appears to have been subject to the latter's influence in a minor way. In Chapter One I referred to the fact that the style of scratching on lustre, so popular with *Sa`d*, had started in *Muslim's* workshop albeit in a very limited way. The device of curling swan necks begun by *Muslim* and his associates (Fatimid Style 1 & 11) was equally continued by *Sa`d* (Plate 38a). Similarly, it appears *Sa`d's* signature, in terms of the letters that constitute it and its overall effect, reflects the influence of that particular period. It is interesting to consider, in this respect, elements such as the thick script, the floriated *'ain* (Plate 41'B1) and the forks of the *sin* (Plate 41'B2') that terminate in needle form that feature both on the Islamic Museum (Plate 32) and Freer Gallery (Plate 30) vessels.

It therefore appears from the style of calligraphy of *Sa`d's* signature, as from that of some of his inscriptions, that both he and *Muslim* would have been contemporaneous at least towards the end of the period covered by Fatimid Style 1 (1015-1024). This situation would have even lasted for some time into the reign of *al-Mustansir* (1035-1094) as evidenced by similar features of style and content in the work of both potters. These are most notably, the use of identical repetitive single words around vessels, namely, *al-yumn*, good fortune

and *al-mann*, gracious bestowal, as well as similar styles of writing found on *tiraz* bands of that reign. However, the rougher execution and less sophisticated decorative calligraphy of *Sa'd's* inscriptions probably reflect declining economic conditions at a later stage in the dynasty. Even though his inscriptions may have been initiated, to a degree, by the school of *Muslim*, they were a far cry from those in which the Fatimid calligrapher unfolded his creative abilities, to fill in increasingly wider bands with decorative lettering derived from the previous dynasty.

Chapter 111

Subject Matter on Fatimid Inscribed Lustreware

After having examined the painting and calligraphic styles of inscribed Fatimid lustre ware a discussion would not be complete without consideration of subject matter. Indeed vessels with inscriptions appear to share almost the same subject matter with other lustre ware of the period. Apart from the purely epigraphic examples, animal, figural and more rarely vegetal⁷⁴ representations occur reflecting chiefly Abbasid themes. The first two were found to have astrological connotations, a subject of interest in the Abbasid period when astronomy as a science developed based on Greek translations. Figural imagery, moreover, appears to relate to the princely cycle, an equally popular subject derived from Abbasid Sasanian heritage. However, these scenes never include seated or crowned figures,⁷⁵ and consist chiefly of entertainers such as musicians and of attendants, wine pourers, or hunters.⁷⁶

This chapter will discuss the choice of subject matter on eight examples (Plates 1a, 25, 29, 30, 36, 38, 43, 44) of inscribed lustre ware. It will consider their iconography and its evolution, from the

⁷⁴ Grabar, O., "Imperial and Urban Art in Islam," In *Colloque internationale*, 1969, 178.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 179.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 179.

outset of the dynasty until the school of *Sa'd*, examining elements that appear to point to the identity of patronage.

It is notable that a specific type of subject matter popular during the Fatimid period did not occur on inscribed lustre ware. At the outset of the dynasty a trend towards 'realism' in the portrayal of subject matter appeared. It dealt particularly with popular themes depicting men engaged in activities such as wrestling matches, cock fighting and dancing with sticks.⁷⁷ This genre has been interpreted as being the result of a taste that developed with the emergence of a new middle class of merchants and artisans in the Islamic world who, from the mid-eighth to the eleventh centuries, gradually took over the leading position that Arab warriors had occupied in society.⁷⁸ The subject matter in question is notable for its sense of movement, its lack of static scenes and for the importance of its taking place within a setting (*mise en scene*). This mode of representation is described as having been discovered or rediscovered from the themes present in Pharaonic or Hellenistic art.⁷⁹

Such a view was the object of controversy from those who, while admitting some extent of 'realism' in the draughtmanship of such scenes, attributed the activities represented to aspects of courtly entertainment.⁸⁰ However true that may be, the absence of

⁷⁷ See Youssuf, A.A. "al-Russūm al-Ādāmiya," in *Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts*, 1958, 75-86.

⁷⁸ Ettinghausen, R., *Arab Painting*, 1968, 54.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 56.

⁸⁰ Grube, E., *Studies in Islamic Painting*, 1995, 33.

inscriptions on that type of lustre ware may have been due to the incompatibility of the nature of the popular, sometimes violent, pastimes depicted with the auspicious content of the inscriptions.

Be that as it may, three out of the eight examples under discussion, that include a combination of figural, animal and vegetal themes, represent scenes relating to the princely cycle. The iconography on these vessels can be said to consist chiefly of hunting and entertainment themes. The Freer Gallery vessel (Plate 30) for example, displays a mounted hunter with a falcon on his arm. The vessel at the Benaki Museum (Plate 29) portrays two figures, a lute player and a wine pouring attendant, sitting on either side of a tree of life. A third vessel (Plate 43) at the Islamic Museum also carries a scene of entertainment suggested by a reclining musician handing her lute to a nearby person. These three figural scenes show various levels of painting skill that appear to suggest, according to Grabar, the widespread use of their subject matter.⁸¹

Astrological connotations also appear to be associated to particular motifs. In scenes of entertainment, such as the one discussed above (Plate 43), the female lute player with a naked torso is similar to a figure in an astrological manuscript of the thirteenth century, based on earlier models, representing the planet Venus.⁸² The same would appear to apply to animals and birds represented on

⁸¹ Ibid., 180.

vessels. Zick- Nissen has shown the probable relationship between constellation forms and representations on vessels in the Islamic world from the ninth to the fourteenth centuries.⁸³ Thus the image of the lion on the vessel at the Tareq Rajab Museum (Plate 25) would have represented the sign of the Zodiac 'Leo.' Similarly other animals such as the bull at the centre of vessels with radial writing would have referred to 'taurus' (Plate 44) and birds to the constellation 'Cygnus' (Plate 36). The subject of astronomy had been of interest since the Abbasid period when Greek astronomical books such as Ptolemy's catalogue of Fixed Stars, *Mathematike Synatxis*, were translated into Arabic.⁸⁴ Although not an exact reflection of science,⁸⁵ the animals represent configurations of constellations that had an occult impact on human affairs.

It can therefore be said that the bulk of images appearing on Fatimid lustre ware with inscriptions were primarily iconographic at the beginning of the dynasty. They consisted chiefly of images representing the princely cycle and animals of the zodiac, themes that had existed on Abbasid lustre ware. In content they were equivalent to the expressions of good wishes for they represented signs of good fortune or the life of kings and princes to which everyone aspired.

⁸² Rice, D.S., "A Drawing of the Fatimid Period," in *BSOAS* XX1, 1958, 38.

⁸³ Zick-Nissen, J., "Medieval Ceramic Bowl Decorations," *VI International Congress of Iranian Art & Archaeology*, 349.

⁸⁴ Wellesz, E., "An Early al-Sufi Manuscript" in *Ars Orientalis* 111, 1959, 2.

⁸⁵ Zick-Nissen, 355.

They were omens meant to bring happiness, health, joy and prosperity.⁸⁶

A different orientation may be noted in the later school of *Sa'd* and his associates in which figural representation, though still practised, became rarer.⁸⁷ Bands of calligraphy begin to appear alone, decorated with swirls and dots in the background. They express good wishes in the form of repetitive words, rather than phrases. Alternatively, calligraphic bands occur within a succession of other ornamental bands composed of zigzags and fruit basket patterns (Plate 38 a, b, c). The latter, an ornament appearing on Coptic textiles, was also probably a symbol of prosperity. Grabar's theory that iconography generally took precedence over ornament on Fatimid lustre ware⁸⁸ does not apply to this phase of inscribed lustre ware.

Iconography, particularly on earlier examples, appears to have had implications with regard to the question of patronage. The fact that one of the two extant inscribed vessels, carrying an overall vegetal design (Plate 1a), is dedicated to *Ghabn*, commander in chief of the Caliph *al-Hākim*, shows that inscriptions were certainly applied to vessels made for courtiers. It may also be significant that this example intended for a courtier does not contain figural iconography relating to the princely cycle but rather a vegetal design. The choice

⁸⁶ Grabar, 179.

⁸⁷ Philon, 181.

⁸⁸ Grabar, 177.

of motif is no surprise for it would have been inappropriate to decorate a vessel commissioned by, or offered to a courtier with iconography representing the Caliph's pursuits. A courtier was too close to the royal entourage to possess objects with imagery that could have been interpreted as courtly.

On the other hand, such iconography would have been greatly sought after by the merchant class who, as previously mentioned, had risen to high levels of affluence and political power since the mid eighth century. Ettinghausen points out that two viziers of the caliph who founded Samarra had risen from the ranks of millers and oil merchants.⁸⁹ This shows the affinity between the merchant and ruling classes and it is plausible that the former would have aspired with their wealth to attain the ranks of the latter. If not achievable in practice, this fantasy would have been visually fulfilled through iconography. Hence, the scenes of the hunt and princely entertainment that omit reference to royalty.

⁸⁹ Ettinghausen, 54.

Chapter IV

Conclusion:

Before discussing my findings I would like to point out that in view of refurbishment taking place at the Islamic Museum, Cairo, access to its unparalleled collection of Fatimid lustre ware has not been possible. In this sense my survey has been restricted to illustrations found in various catalogues of Islamic ceramics. Hence, discussion of aspects such as the colour of the lustre pigment, glazes, body material and foot shapes have either been excluded or briefly skirted over. I have attempted as much as possible to select complete examples rather than shards in order to ascertain the correspondence of calligraphy, layout, style and subject matter. Mainly attention has been given to examples signed by the potters *Muslim* and *Sa'd* and their respective schools since the date of the former is established and serves as a reference point. I do not claim that this survey on the evolution of inscriptions on Fatimid lustre ware is exhaustive but is targeted to trace, to the best of my abilities, stylistic, motival or calligraphic carryovers and parallels between the various defined groups in pursuit of chronology. This exercise would ideally have necessitated a much larger number of examples to make its results definitive.

Having said that, some general observations can be made from our discussion of trademarks, potter's signatures, painting, calligraphy and subject matter. At the beginning of the dynasty there is a general correspondence between styles of inscription and painting, vessel layout and subject matter. In the vessel at the Tareq Rajab Museum (Plate 29), for example, assigned to the Transitional Period (975-995), the style of calligraphy and painting as well as the subject matter match Abbasid lustre ware examples which Iraqi potters, as proven by Robert Mason's study, probably replicated.

The same applies to the group of vessels of the so-called Post-Transitional period (995-1015) which while repeating vessel layouts of the Transitional period, display changes in calligraphy that appear to happen simultaneously with the changes in painting styles. Both developments are inspired by local sources as is apparent from calligraphic similarities with Egyptian tombstones and from some Hellenistic renderings of subject matter (Plate 29) that survive from the Byzantine period.

The third and fourth groups, Fatimid Styles 1 and 2, which include works signed by *Muslim*, contain developments in both calligraphy and vessel layout. Some examples, however, have calligraphic and motival inconsistencies that either recall future styles or hark back to previous ones.

In the group named Fatimid Style 1 (1015-1024) for example, a vessel signed by *Muslim* at the Islamic Museum (Plate 32), carries a

motif that appears to anticipate a later period. The spade motif is generally associated with the later school of *Sa'd*⁹⁰ (Plate 45) and *tiraz* bands of the reign of *al-Mustansir* (1035-1095) (Plate 46). This raises the question of whether the vessel was really produced within the time frame assigned to it. It has been included in this group because its calligraphic style and general layout, match those of its other vessels.

The third group, Fatimid Style 2 (1025-1035), whose final year corresponds to the first year of the reign of *al-Mustansir* (1035-1094), also presents elements that appear on works that can be assigned later dates. A purely calligraphic vessel at the Benaki Museum (Plate 34) signed *Muslim*, has forms of curling swan necks that strikingly resemble those on *tiraz* bands from that reign (Plate 35). A similarly close handling of swan necks may be observed on some examples of *Sa'd's* vessels (Plate 38a). If indeed the date assigned to this group is correct then the motifs that appear simultaneously on *Sa'd* and *Muslim's* works would be an indication that they would have been contemporaneous at a given time during this period, probably around 1035.

On the other hand, a set of vessels of similar concept with almost identical radial inscriptions in this same group includes an example that displays motifs that recall Abbasid lustre ware. Their calligraphy (Plate 36 a, b) as a group, is comparable to *tiraz* bands

⁹⁰ Youssuf, "Tabaq 'Ghabn'." See note next to Plate 27.

from the reign of *al-Mustansir* (Plate 37). However, this one example by its style of painting, its choice and rendering of motifs appears to stand out from the rest (Plate 36 a). At the centre of the radial inscription is the painting of a bird with a reserved area on its tail containing writing. It is an archaic feature that recalls Abbasid lustre ware where animals and birds are sometimes depicted with reserved areas on the body filled with an inscription (Plate 47a, b). This vessel appears to be a prototype of what would probably become a series of the same vessel type (Plate 36 a, b) produced by *Muslim*. Despite the absence of a signature and our inability to access the decoration on its back, evidence of *Muslim's* production is provided by its style of painting. Characteristic of his school are the stiff painting of the bird, the reserved areas indicating its wings and the two multiple lobed flowers known to have been painted on vessels jointly signed by him and the potter *Ja'far* (Plate 12). A notable feature on this vessel is the inscription contained within cartouches, a device that would become widely used in the Mameluk period⁹¹.

Evidence of the continued production of this type is provided by an example at the Benaki Museum (Plate 36b). It is similar in concept to the one discussed above and though it does not have the flowers or reserved inscription on the central motif, it has remnants of circles (Plate 36b) on its back indicating *Muslim's* workshop. The two vessels, of which there are others (Plate 44), appear to indicate continued

⁹¹ I am grateful to Dr. George Scanlon for drawing my attention to this point.

production and evolution of a prototype, in his workshop, over a period of time (Plates 36a & b).

It is possible to conclude, therefore, that one example in Fatimid Style 1 (1015-1024), and the entire group of vessels in Fatimid Style 2 (1025-1035), both of which contain vessels from *Muslim's* workshop, share motival and calligraphic affinities with the styles of *Sa'd* and *tiraz* bands from the reign of *al-Mustansir* (1035-1094). I have attempted to show previously that *Sa'd* could have been subject to *Muslim's* influence, albeit in a limited way. This also appears to be true from our discussion of vessels with inconsistencies in the groups Fatimid Styles 1 & 2. The spade-leaf for example, employed by *Muslim* (Plate 32) is used on a jar at the Victoria and Albert Museum attributed to *Sa'd* and his school (Plate 45)⁹². The curling swan necks on the vessel at the Benaki Museum (Plate 34) signed *Muslim* may have been at the source of some of *Sa'd's* calligraphy (Plate 38). Both motifs occur on *tiraz* of the reign of *al-Mustansir* (1035-1094). The issue then is could the working lives of both potters have overlapped around the beginning of the reign of *al-Mustansir* (1035-1094) and been responsible for the transfer of influences? Or, did *Muslim's* workshop continue operating posthumously evolving old styles into that reign, (Plate 36 a & b) and possibly also receiving new influences as in the vessel with the spade-leaves (Plate 32)?

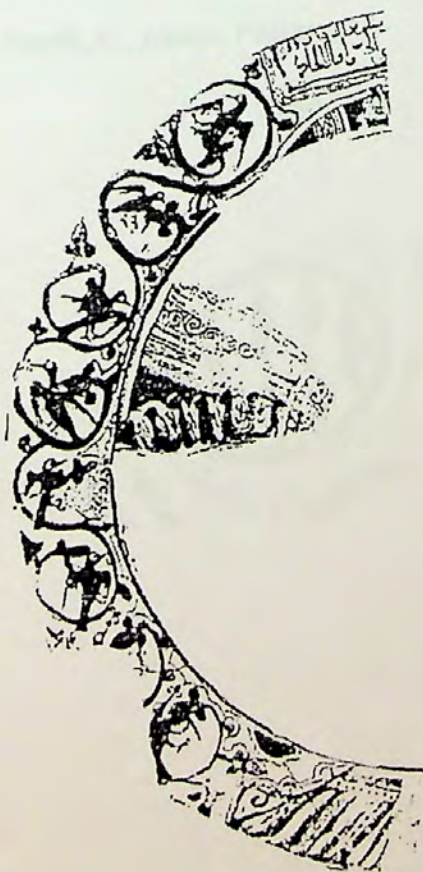
⁹² Youssuf, see note next to Plate 27 in "Tabaq 'Ghabn'."

Plate 1 (A)



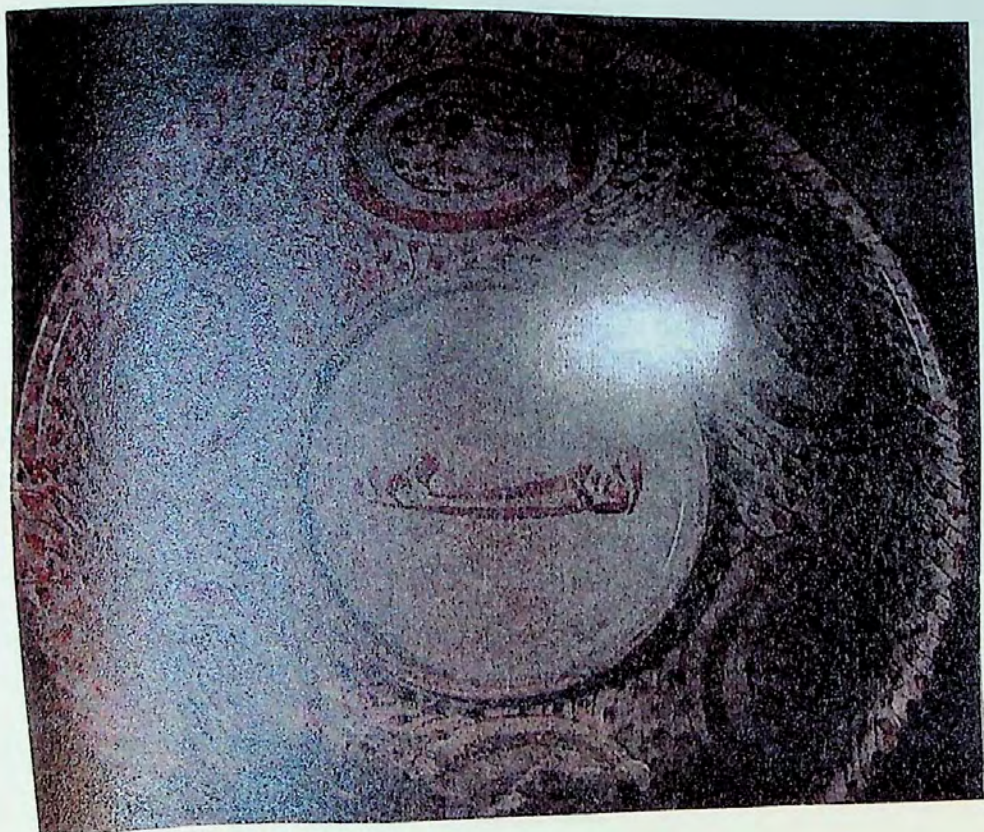
Fragment of vessel dedicated to 'Ghabn.' After al-Basha, H. & Youssuf, A.A., in "Tabaq 'Ghabn.'" *Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts, Cairo University*, 1958.

Plate 1 (B)



Fragment of vessel signed Muslim ibn al- Dahhan dedicated to Iqbal al- Hakimi. After Contadini, A., *Futimud Art*.

Examples of External Decoration on Lustre ware of the Abbasid Period.
Plate 2 (a)



After Caiger-Smith, A., *Lustre Pottery*.

Plate 2(b)



After Grube, E.J., *Islamic Pottery in the Keir Collection*.

Plate 3 (A)



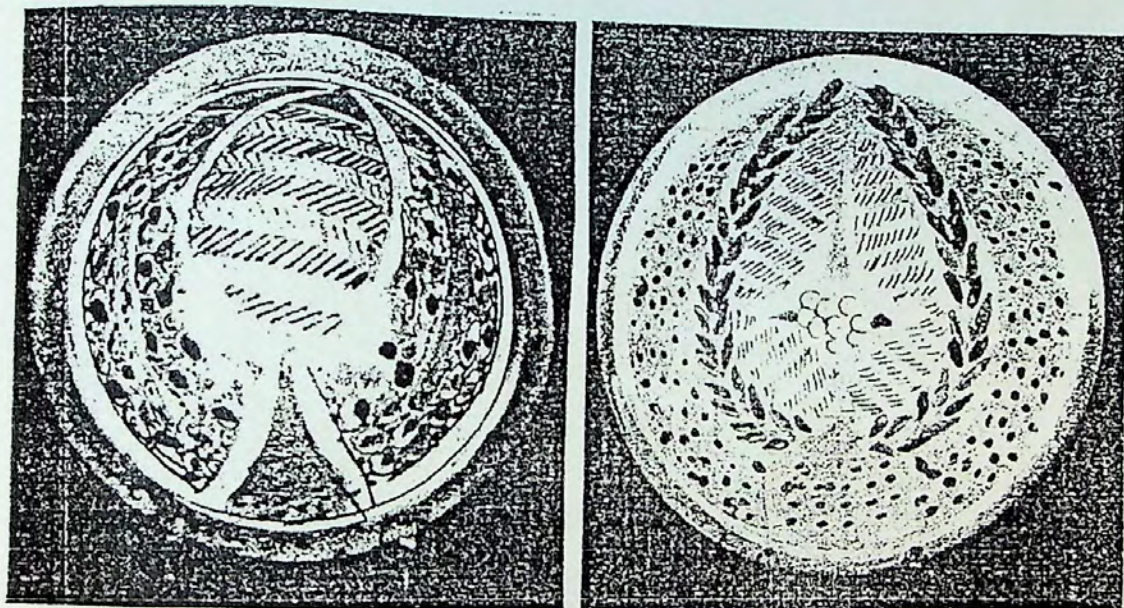
Vessel signed *Muslim* showing ribs of dog reserved in white.

Plate 3 (B)



Plain exterior of vessel with lustre band around border, signed *Muslim*.
After Youssuf, A.A., "Khazzafun." *Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts, Cairo University*.

Plate 4



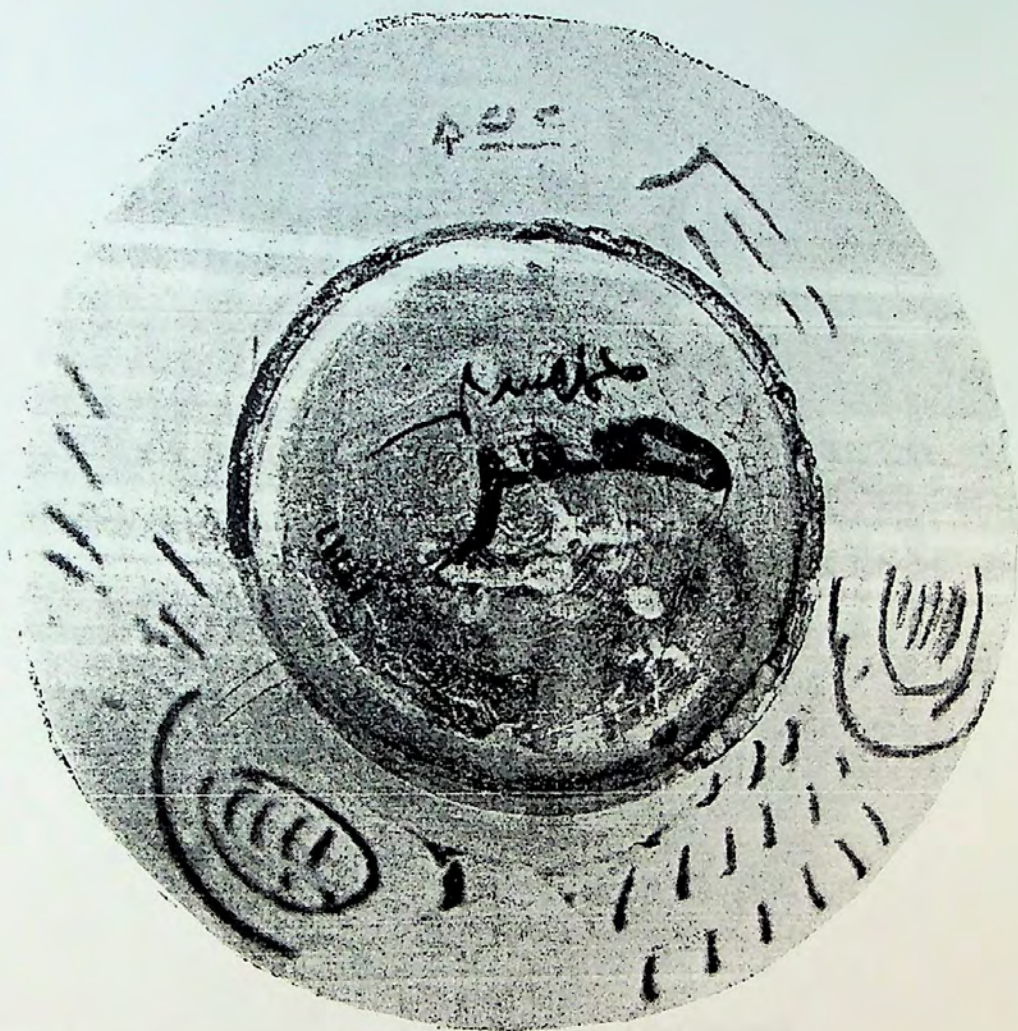
Examples of Abbasid lustre ware with lustre bands on the border.
Grube, E.J., *Islamic Pottery in the Keir Collection*.

Plate 5



Shard with the external decoration of a vessel as it occurs on the bulk of *Muslim's* work. Ashmolean Museum.

Plate 6



External decoration on vessel jointly signed by *Muslim & Ja 'far*.
After Youssuf, A.A., "Khazzafun."

Plate 7



External decoration on vessel signed *Ja 'far al-Basri*. After Youssuf, A.A., "*Khazzafun*."

بن محمد بن علي بن الساجي

Reconstruction of the signature of *Rafīʿ ibn al-Sagī*. After Youssuf, A.A.,
"Khazzafun."

Plate 9

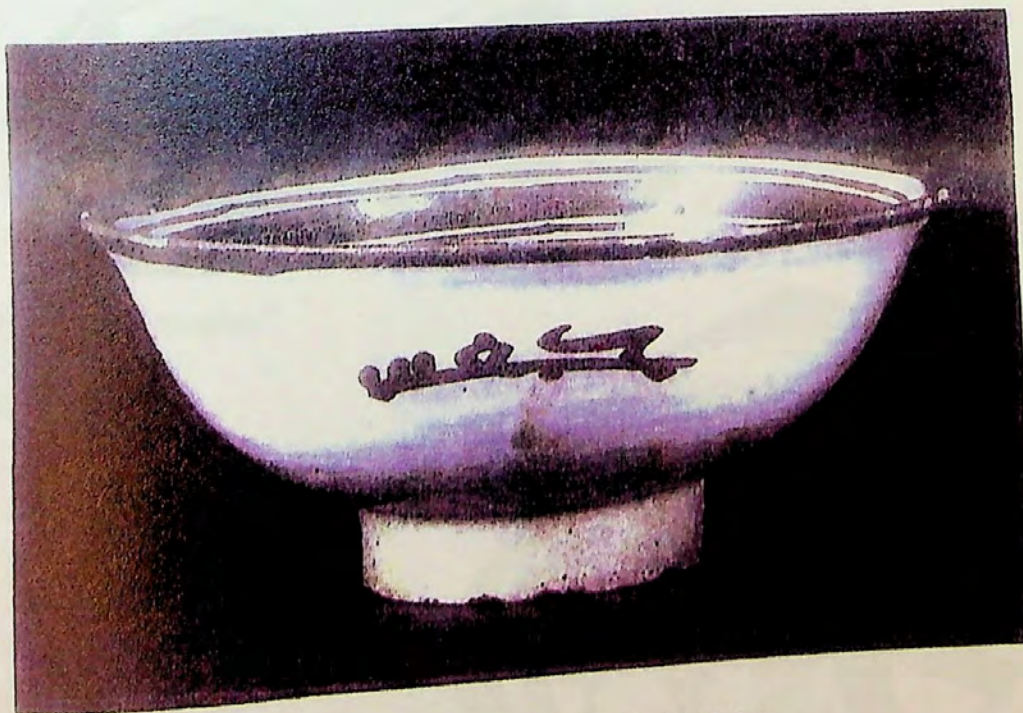


Shard with inscription *min sun'at* written on a plain white glaze with a bluish tint. British Museum.

Plate 10 (A)



Plate 10 (B)



*Sa'd's style and signature. After Contadini, A., *Fatimid Art*.*

Plate 11
Reserved Areas showing ribs and joints.

A)



Elephant signed Ibrahim. After Lane, A., *Early Islamic Pottery*.

B)



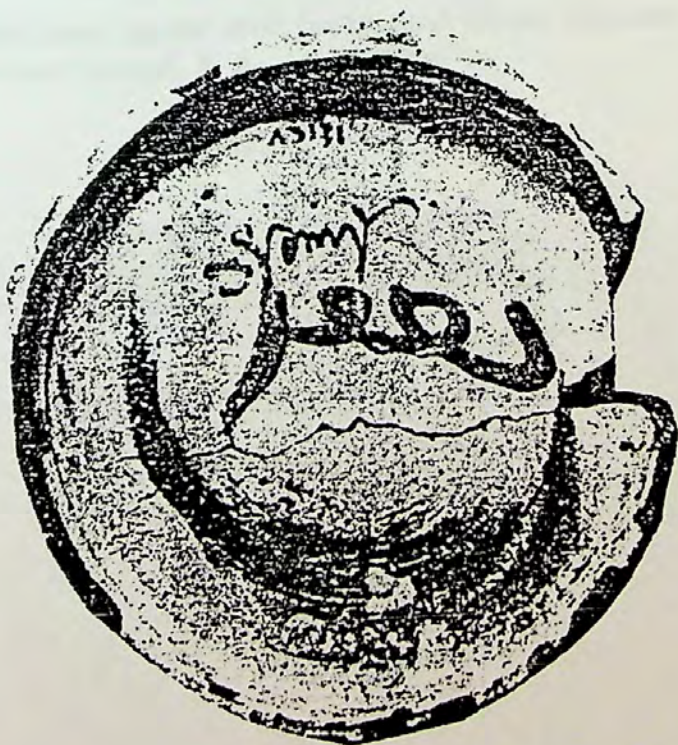
After Youssuf, A.A., "Khazzafun."

C)



After Youssuf, A.A., "Khazzafun."

Plate 12



Vessel signed jointly by *Muslim & Ja 'far* depicting leaves with holes at the centre, multiple lobes and curling ends. After Youssuf, A. A.; "Khazzafun"

Plate 13 (A)



Bird painted in solid lustre against white background. Islamic Museum.
After Youssuf, A. A., "Khazzafun."

Plate 13 (B)



Coptic Textile 3rd / 4th century. Victoria & Albert Museum.

Plate 14 (A)



Lustre painted griffin. After Jenkins, M., "Muslim." *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum*, 1968.

Plate 14 (B)



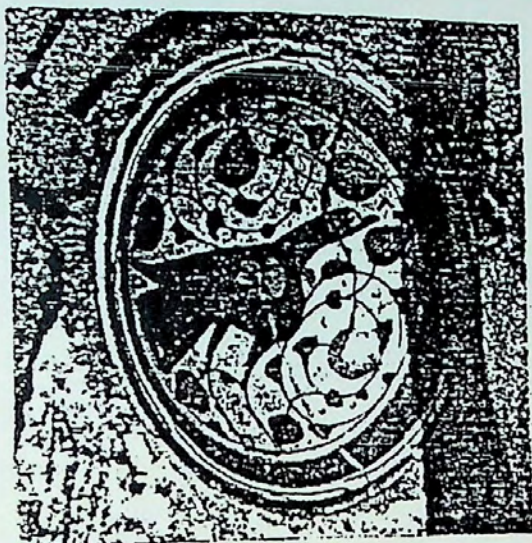
"Banquet Scene" Vessel. After Philon, H., *Islamic Ceramics 9th to late 12th centuries*.

Plate 15



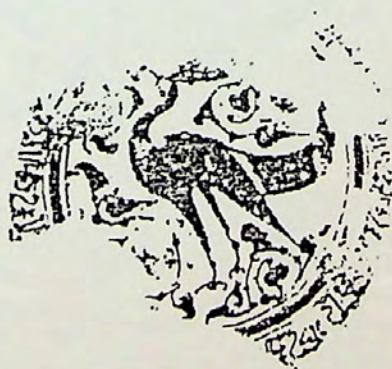
"Banquet Scene" Vessel. Obverse and external decoration. After Philon, H., *Islamic Ceramics 9th to Late 12th centuries*.

Plate 16



Lustre bowl, Church of St. Andrea, Pisa. After Caiger-Smith, A., *Lustre Pottery*.

Plate 17



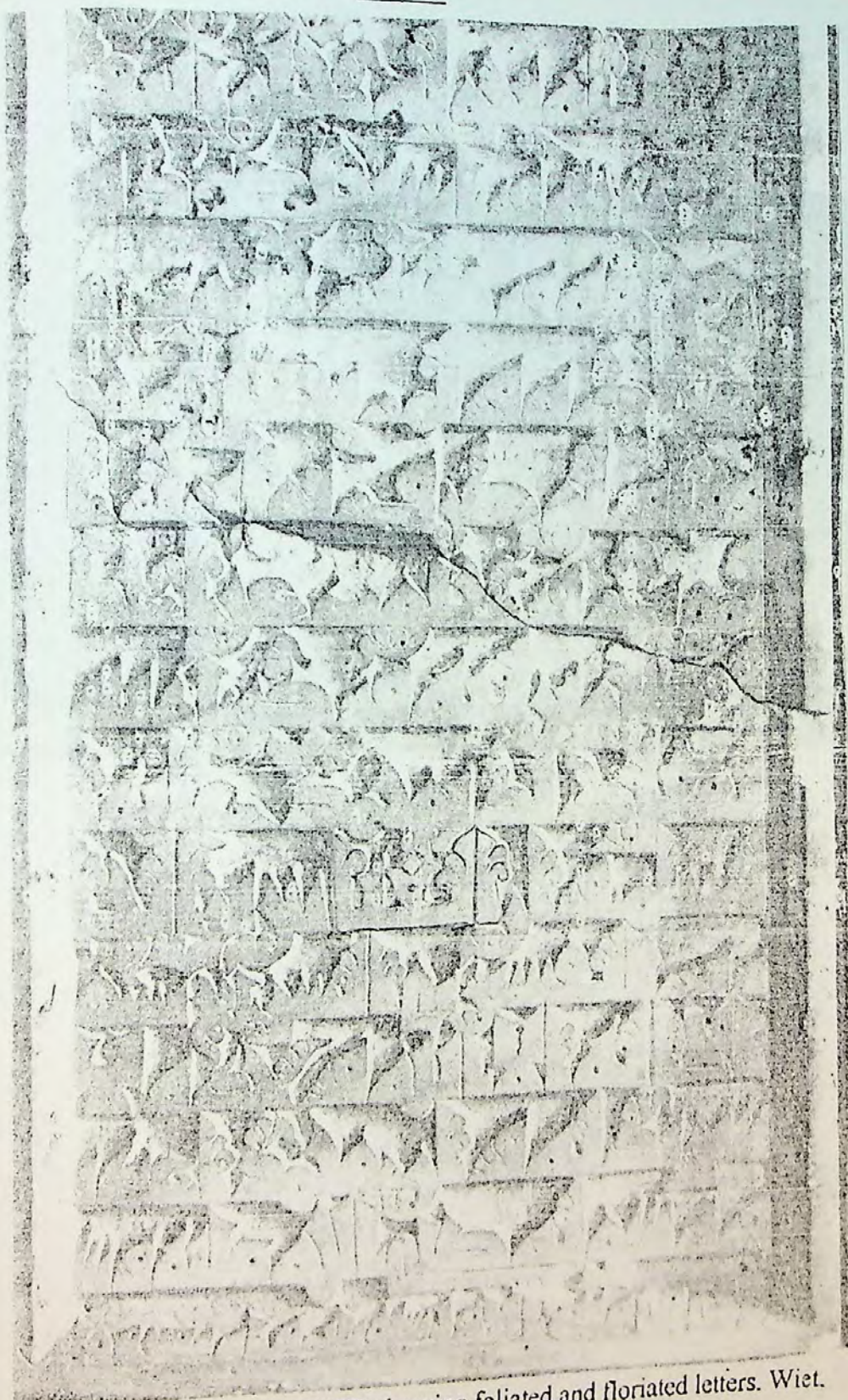
Fragmentary lustre bowl; Church of San Sisto, Pisa. Museo Nazionale, Pisa. After Caiger-Smith, A., *Lustre Pottery*.

Plate 18

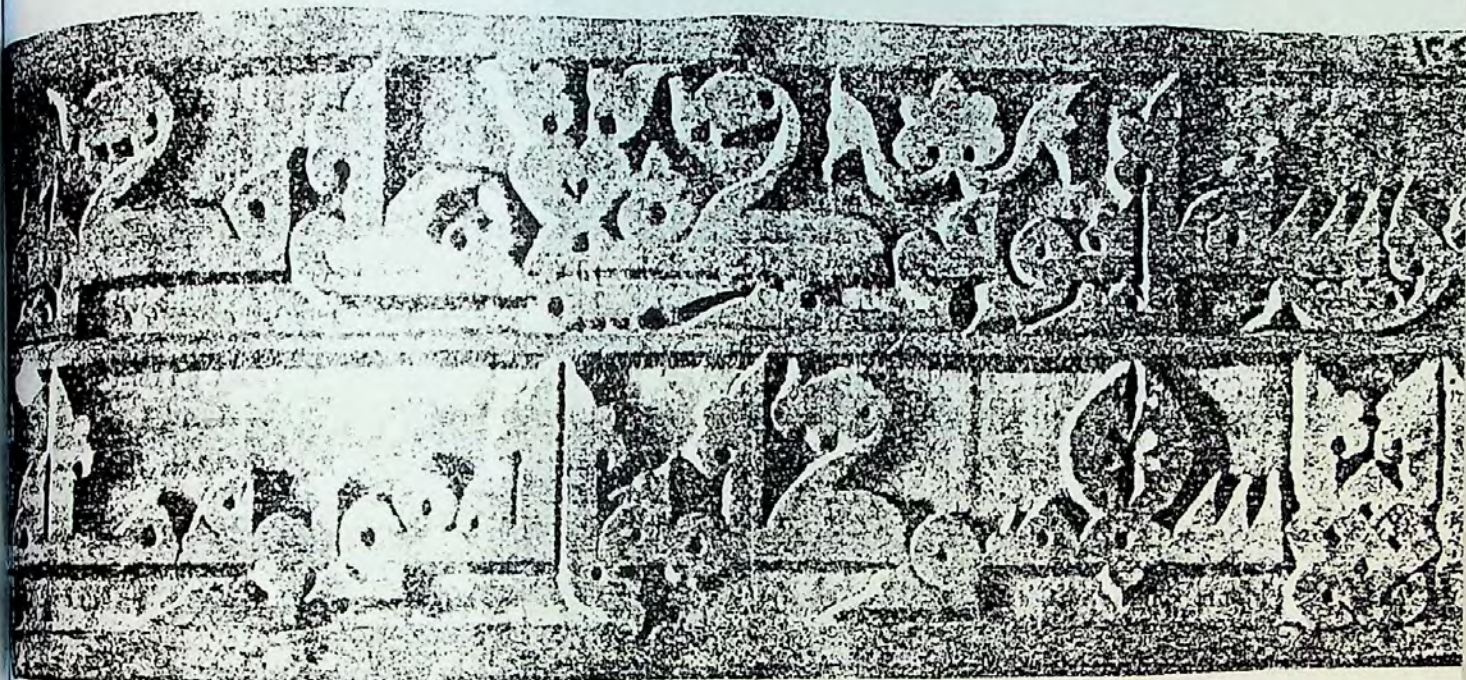


Freer Gallery bowl. After Jenkins, M., "Sa'd: Content & Context." *Content & Context of Visual Arts in the Islamic World*.

Plate 19



Marble tombstone (243/857) showing foliated and floriated letters. Wiet.
G., *Catalogue du Musée Arabe du Caire*. Pl. 1X, Vol. 2.



Marble tombstone no. 1241. Mid 11th/IX century. Wiet, G., *Catalogue du Musée Arabe du Caire*. Pl. X111, Vol. 7.

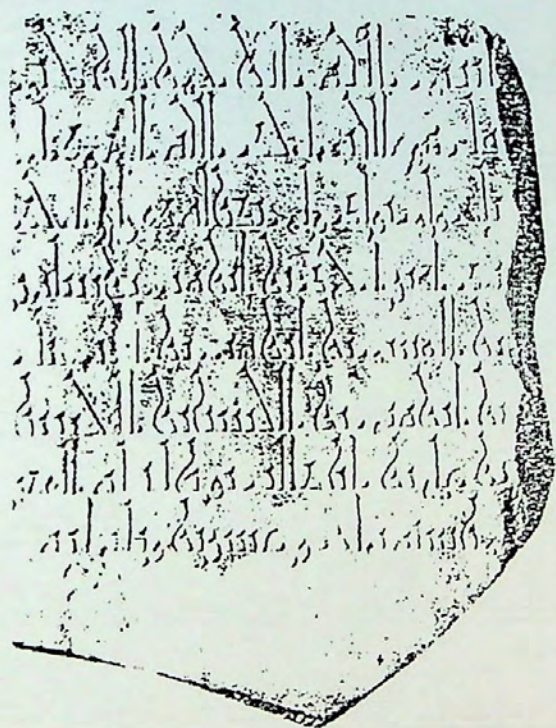


Marble tombstone no. 1228 (320/932) showing swan neck letter forms.
 Wiet, G., *Catalogue Generale du Musee Arabe du Caire*. Pl. 4, Vol. 5.

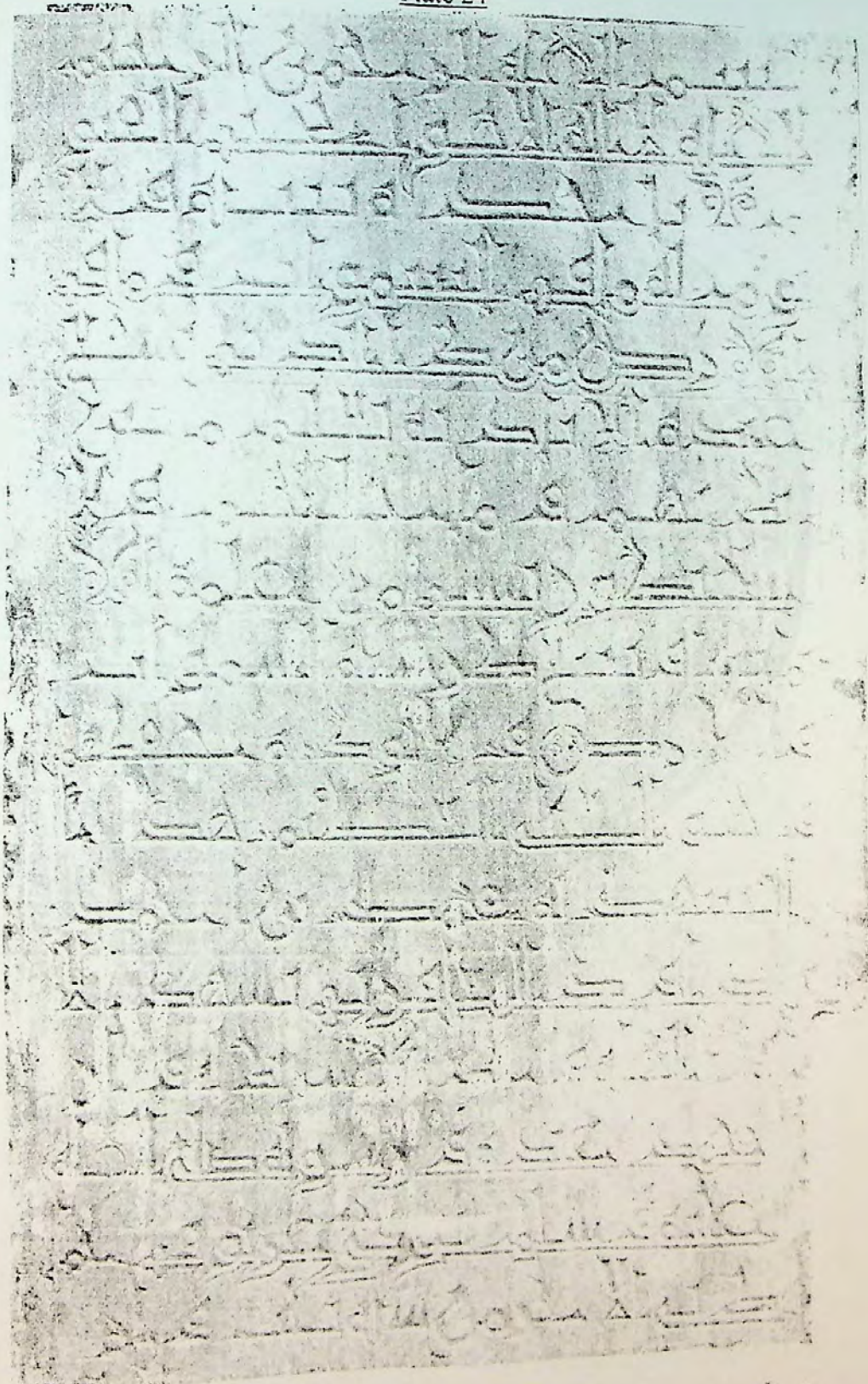
Plate 22



Marble tombstone no.2721/81 (203/818) showing thick vertical script
with serifs. Wiet,G., *Catalogue general du Musee Arabe du Caire*.
Pl.XII, Vol.10.



Marble tombstone no. 1230 (328/940) showing downward curving letters that transform into upward shafts (in this case they are oblique). Wiet, G., *Catalogue general du Musee Arabe du Caire*. Pl. XIV, Vol. 5.



Marble tombstone no. 9820 (243/857) showing curvilinear treatment of letter terminations. Wiet, G., *Catalogue general du Musée Arabe du Caire*. Pl. X, Vol. 2.

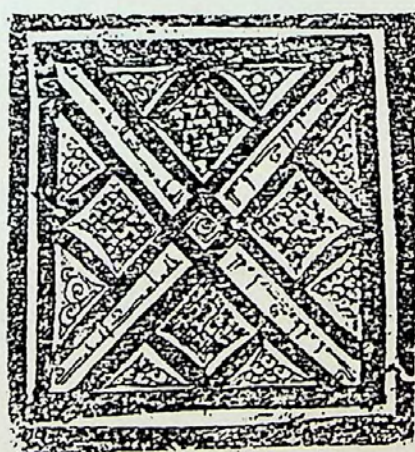
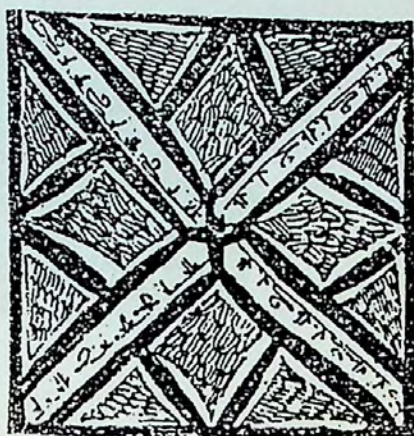
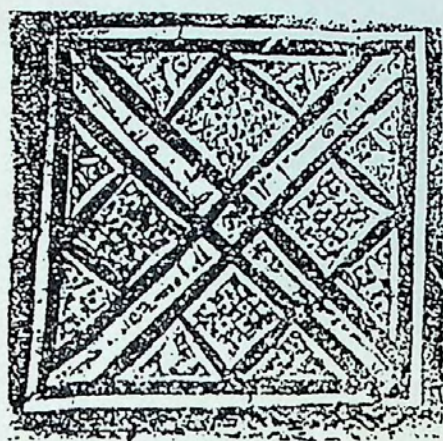


Vessel painted in lustre from the *Tareq Rajab Museum*. It bears a narrow inscription band replicating the calligraphic style on Abbasid lustre ware. Last quarter of the tenth century.



Lustre painted vessel signed *Ibn Khaldun* with a variant of Abbasid calligraphy practiced on Egyptian lustre ware. Last quarter of tenth century. Moulicrac, J., *Ceramiques du monde musulman*. Plate C- E3.

Plate 27



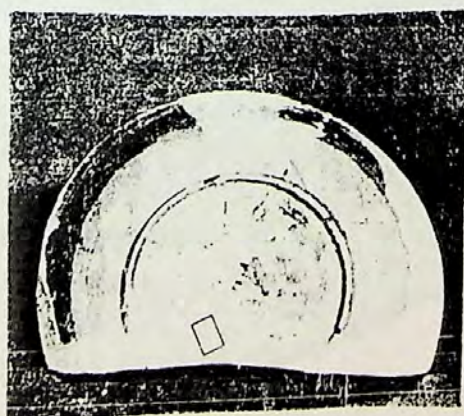
A variant of Abbasid calligraphic style as it appears on monochrome tiles of the *mihrab* of the Great Mosque of Qairouan. Third quarter of the ninth century. After Marcais, G., *Les Faiences à Reflets Metalliques de la Grande Mosquee de Kairouan*, 1928.



Egyptian woodwork of the ninth century. After Weill, Jean David M., *Les Bois a Epigraphes Jusqu'a l'Epoque Mamlouke*, 1931. No.3361, Pl.2.



B)



Fragmentary lustre painted vessel (obverse & reverse) with narrow band of inscription and two figures sitting on either side of a tree of life, Benaki Museum. After Philon, II., *Early Islamic Ceramics 9th to Late 10th Centuries*.



B)

Lustre painted vessel with narrow band of inscription representing initial stage of down curving letters that turn upward into shafts. Freer Gallery, Washington. After, Atil, E., *Ceramics from the World of Islam*, 1973.

Plate 31



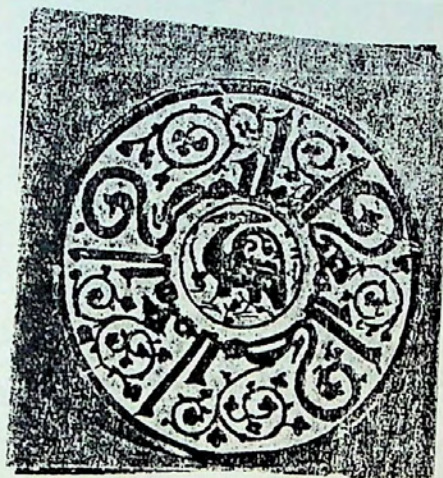
Tiraz band from the reign of the Fatimid Caliph al-Hakim (996-1020). After Kuhnel, E. & Bellinger, L., *Catalogue of Dated Tiraz Fabrics*, 1952. Pl. 31.

Plate 32



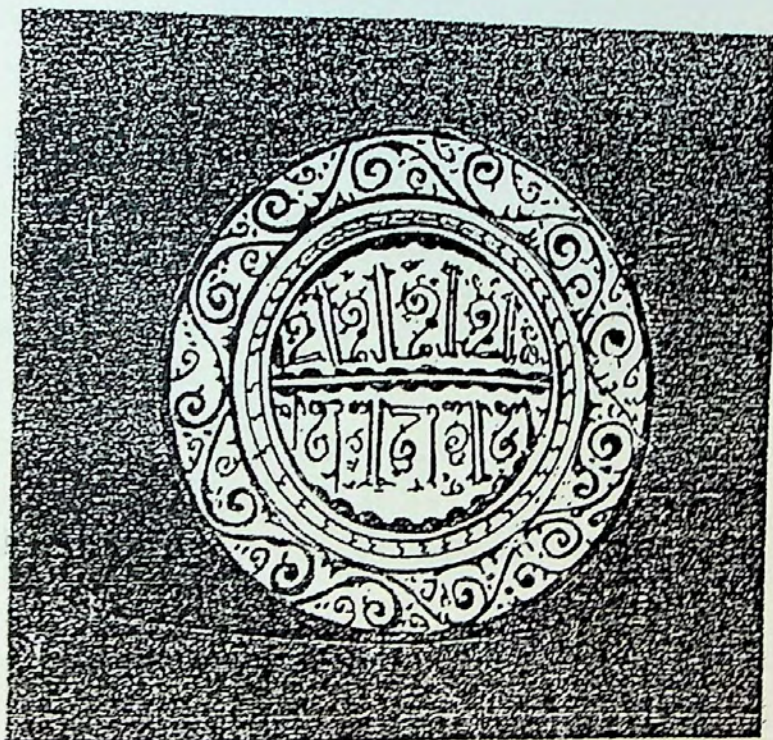
Lustre painted vessel with large inscription band (obverse & reverse).
Islamic Museum. After Al Basha & Youssuf, A.A., "Tabaq Ghavn,"
Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts, Cairo University, 1958.

Plate 33



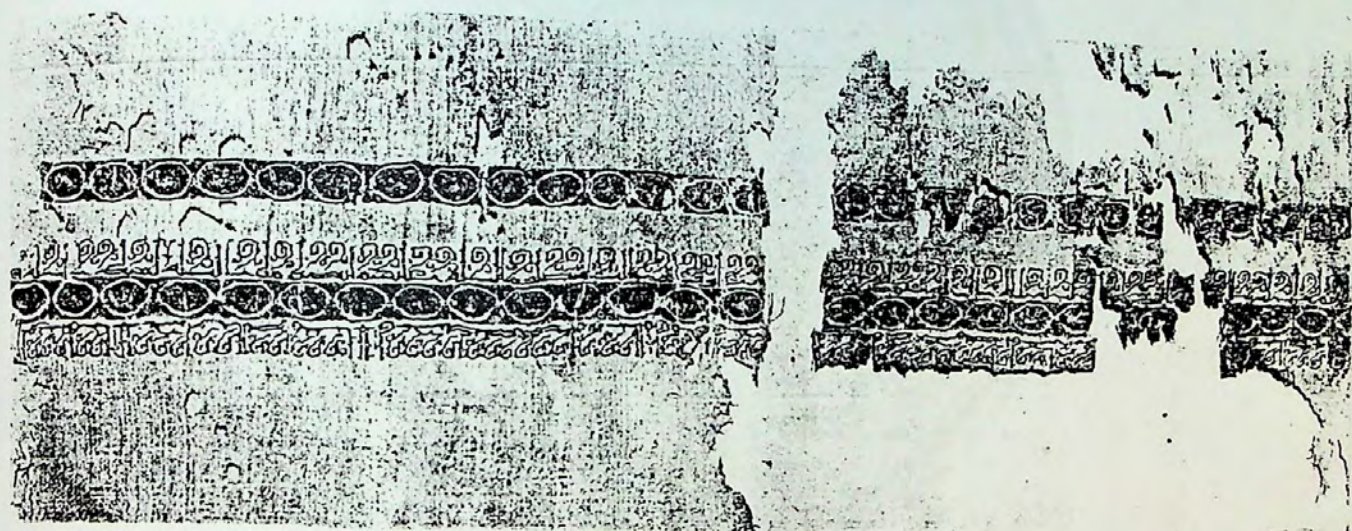
Lustre painted vessel with wide inscription band and exaggerated letter forms. Benaki Museum. After Philon, H., *Early Islamic Ceramics 9th to Late 12th Centuries*.

Plate 34



Lustre painted vessel with inscription in mirror image inside the well and exaggerated swan neck forms. Benaki Museum. After Philon, H., *Early Islamic Ceramics 7th to Late 12th Centuries*.

Plate 35



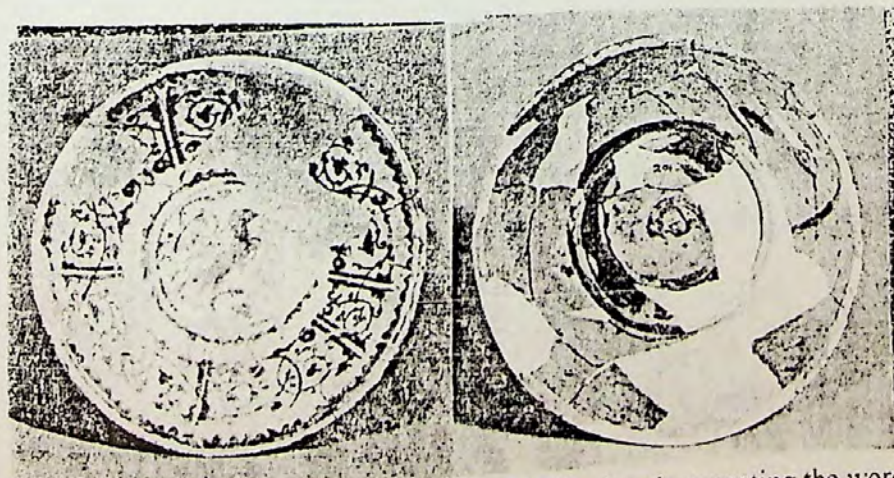
Tiraz from the reign of Fatimid Caliph al- Mustansir (1035-1094).
Kuhnel, E. & Bellinger, L., *Catalogue of Dated Tiraz Fabrics*, 1952. Pl.
35.

Plate 36

A)

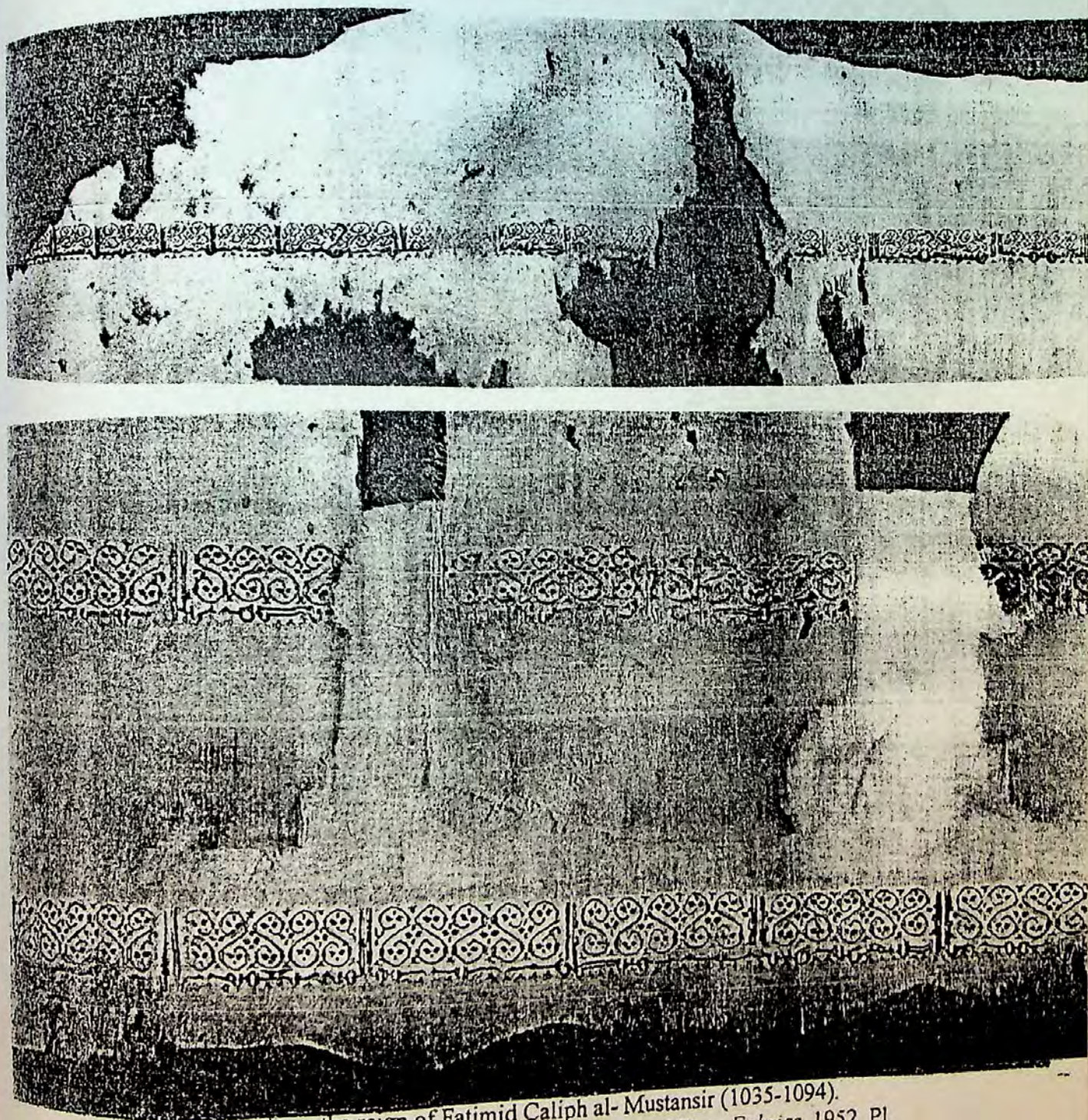


B)



Lustre painted vessels with wide inscription bands repeating the word *al-yumn* or *al-mann*. A) Islamic Museum. B) Benaki Museum (showing obverse & reverse).

Plate 37



Tiraz from the reign of Fatimid Caliph al- Mustansir (1035-1094).
Kuhnel, E. & Bellinger, L., *Catalogue of Dated Tiraz Fabrics*, 1952. Pl.
36.

A)



B)

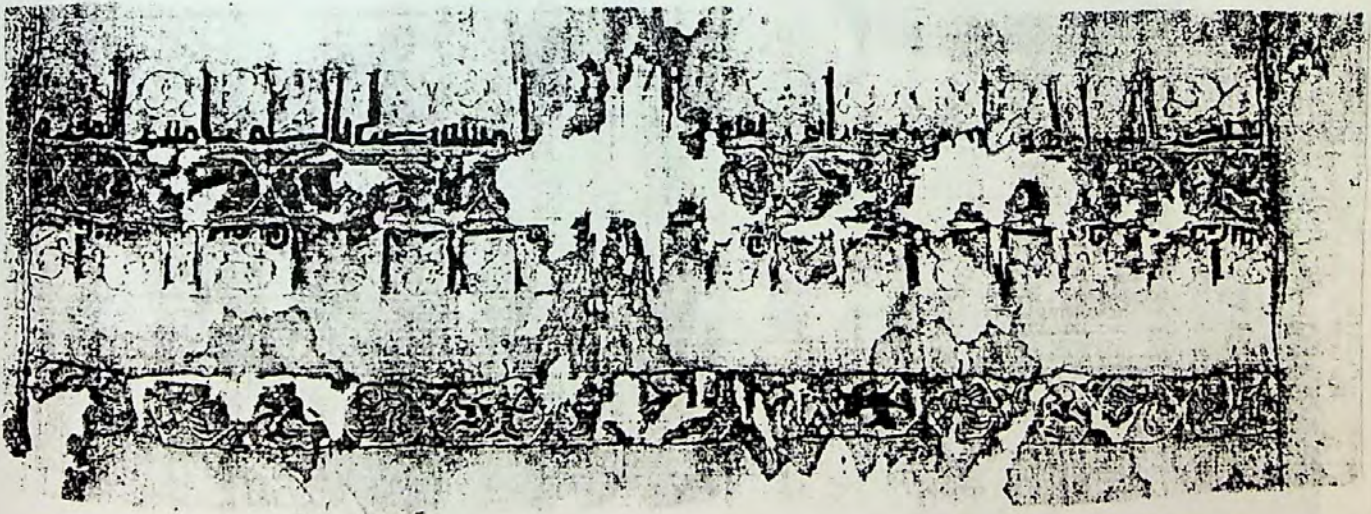
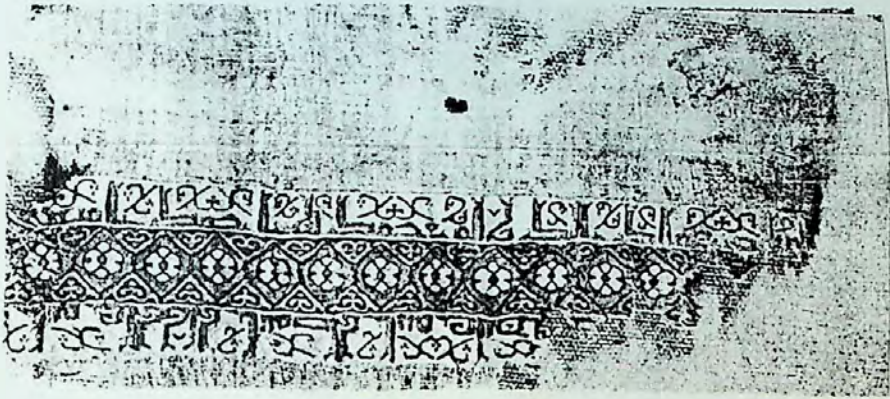


C)



Inscriptions on fragments signed by Sa'd and his school (obverse & reverse)
After Philon, H., *Early Islamic Ceramics 9th to Late 10th Centuries*. Figs.
507, 502, 504.

Plate 39



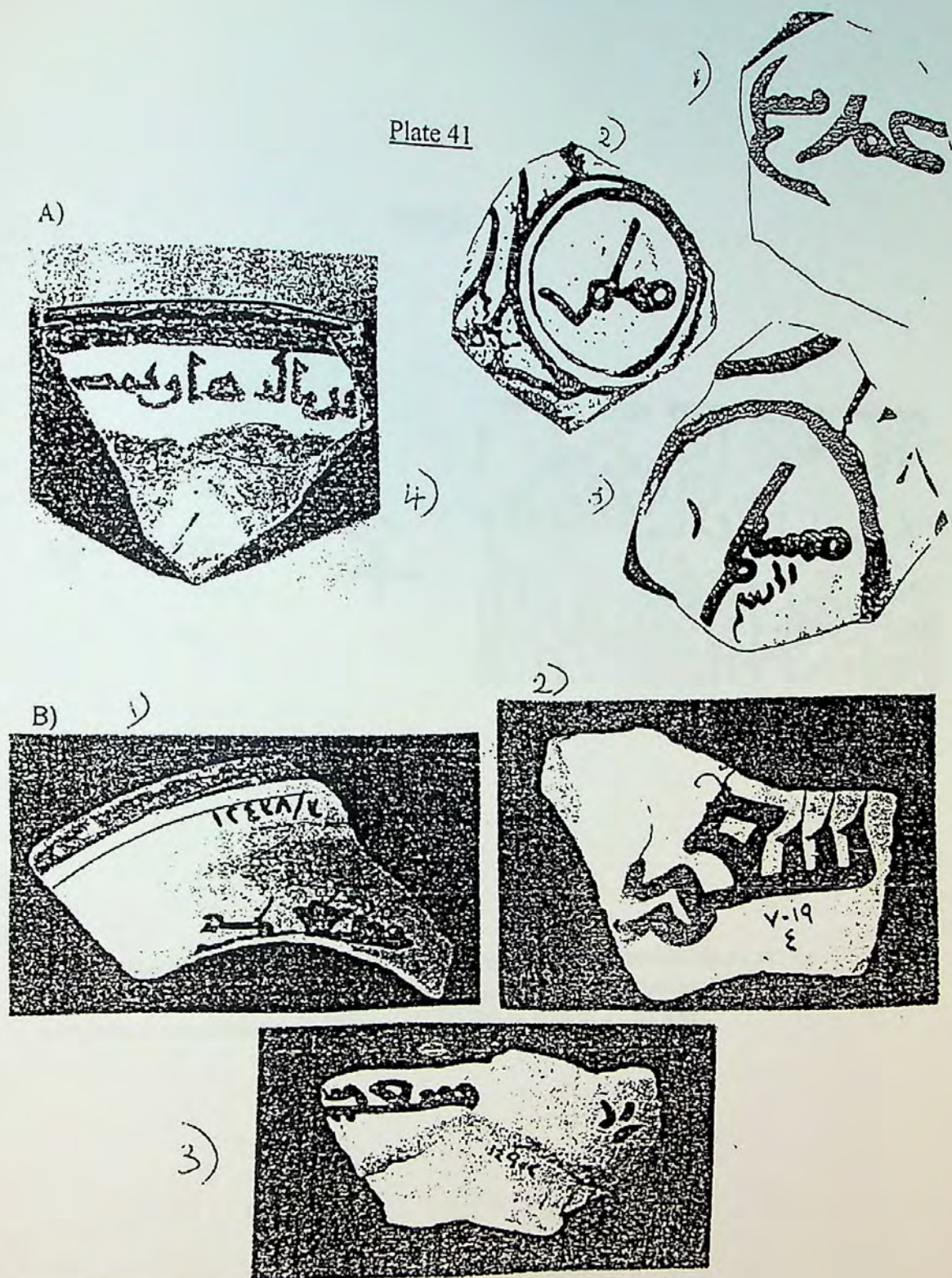
Tiraz from the reign of the Fatimid Caliph al-Mustnasir (1035-1094).
After Kuhnel, E. & Bellinger, L., *Catalogue of Dated Tiraz Fabrics*,
1952. Pl. 33.

Plate 40



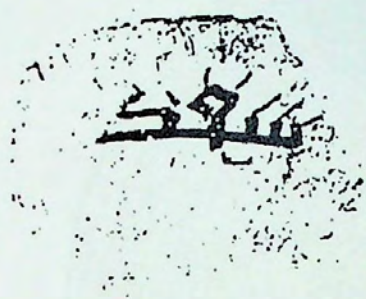
Lustre painted vessels with pseudo-inscriptions. A, & B from the Keir Collection. After Grube, E., *Islamic Pottery from the 8th to the 15th* in the Keir Collection, 1976. C, After al-Basha, H. & Youssuf, A.A., "Tabaq Gharni," *Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts, Cairo University*, 1958.

Plate 41



Examples of signature's by Muslim and Sa'd. A, 1,2,3, & B, After Jenkins, M., "Sa'd: Content and Context," *Content and Context of Visual Arts in the Islamic World*, 1988. A4, After Philon, H., *Early Islamic Ceramics 9th to Late 12th Centuries*.

Plate 42



42



43

Similarities between the *ain* in Sa 'd's signature and tombstone no.61 at the Islamic Museum dated 414/ 1020. After Bahgat, A. & Massoul, F., *La ceramique musulmane de l'Egypte*, 1930. Plate F (figs.41,42,43).

Plate 43



Lustre painted vessel depicting female lute player handing her instrument to nearby person, Islamic Museum. After A. Lane, *Early Islamic Ceramics*. Plate 27b.

Plate 44



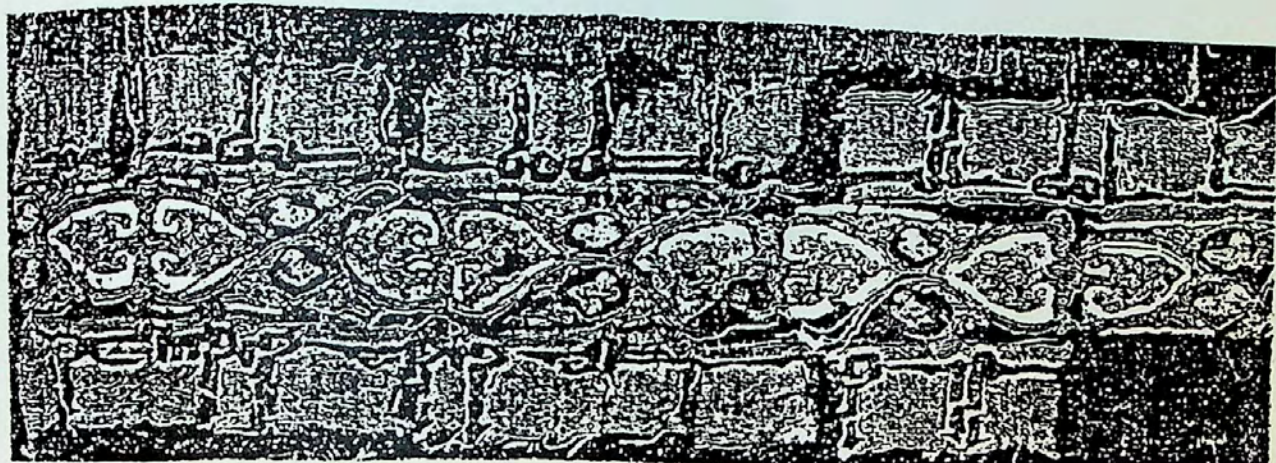
Lustre painted vessel with radial inscription enclosing probably a representation of the astrological sign of 'taurus.' After E.J. Grube, *Islamic Pottery in the Keir Collection*. No. 90.

Plate 45



Jar with spade leaf motif attributed to the school of Sa'id, Victoria & Albert Museum. After A.A. Youssuf, "Tabaq 'Ghabn,'" in *Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts, Cairo University*, Vol. 1, 1956.

Plate 46



Tiraz band from the reign of al-Mustansir (1035-1094) with spade leaf motif.
After Kuhnel, E., & Bellinger, L., *Catalogue of Dated Tiraz Fabrics*, 1952.
Plate 34.

A)



B)



Animals and birds on Abbasid lustre were depicted with reserved areas on the body containing inscriptions. A) After Grube, E.J., *Islamic Pottery in the Keir Collection*. No. 25. B) After Philon, H., *Early Islamic Ceramics 9th to Late 10th Centuries*. Fig. 334.

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