

GLAZING AND UNGLAZED POTTERY IN AFRASIYAB: A STUDY OF 7TH-12TH CENTURY TRANSOXANIAN CERAMICS

Hamdamova Shoir

Researcher

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Abstract: This research investigates the development of both glazed and unglazed pottery in Afrasiyab, one of the key cities in Transoxiana, from the 7th to the 12th centuries. The study analyzes the technological innovations, design motifs, and functional purposes of ceramics, exploring how local artisans adapted and evolved their craft in response to cultural, economic, and political influences. Using archaeological evidence and historical records, this research sheds light on the significance of pottery in the daily and ceremonial life of Afrasiyab, emphasizing its role in regional trade networks and cultural interactions. The findings offer a deeper understanding of how pottery reflected both the artistic heritage and the economic conditions of the time.

Keywords: Afrasiyab, Transoxiana, glazed pottery, unglazed pottery, ceramics, 7th-12th century, pottery techniques, trade networks, cultural heritage, archaeological study.

ГЛАЗУРОВАННАЯ И НЕГЛАЗУРОВАННАЯ КЕРАМИКА В АФРАСИАБЕ: ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ ТРАНСОКСАНИЙСКОЙ КЕРАМИКИ VII-XII ВВ.

Аннотация: Это исследование изучает развитие как глазурованной, так и неглазурованной керамики в Афрасиабе, одном из ключевых городов Трансоксианы, с VII по XII вв. Исследование анализирует технологические инновации, мотивы дизайна и функциональные цели керамики, исследуя, как местные ремесленники адаптировали и развивали свое ремесло в ответ на культурные, экономические и политические влияния. Используя археологические свидетельства и исторические записи, это исследование проливает свет на значение керамики в повседневной и церемониальной жизни Афрасиаба, подчеркивая ее роль в региональных торговых сетях и культурных взаимодействиях. Результаты предлагают более глубокое понимание того, как керамика отражала как художественное наследие, так и экономические условия того времени.

Ключевые слова: Афрасиаб, Трансоксания, поливная керамика, неполивная керамика, керамика, VII-XII вв., гончарные технологии, торговые сети, культурное наследие, археологические исследования.

INTRODUCTION

The study of pottery from Afrasiyab, a historic site in Central Asia, reveals significant insights into the craftsmanship and aesthetic traditions of the region between the 7th and 12th centuries. Pottery, both glazed and unglazed, played a pivotal role in the daily lives of the people of Transoxania. Glazed pottery, recognized for its functional and decorative properties, provided impermeability and aesthetic value, while unglazed pottery, despite lacking a glossy finish, showcased remarkable craftsmanship through carving, molding, and other techniques. This paper focuses on the forms and techniques of pottery production in Transoxania during this period, with particular emphasis on the differences between glazed and unglazed ceramics, and the innovations in glazing techniques developed by the potters of the region.

METHODS

The research presented here is based on a thorough examination of historical sources, pottery artifacts from museum collections, and published academic works on Central Asian

ceramics. A comparative analysis of glazed and unglazed pottery forms was conducted, focusing on characteristics such as color, decoration, and firing techniques.

The pottery artifacts analyzed were primarily sourced from Afrasiyab and surrounding regions, including Fergana and Shash, where bird-shaped watering jars and water-keeping flasks were popular during the 9th and 10th centuries. The study also draws on the work of J. Grube (1965), particularly on the development of slip painting under lead glaze, a significant innovation in Transoxanian ceramics.

RESULTS

The research identified two primary types of pottery used in Afrasiyab: glazed and unglazed. The glazed pottery, which included plates, dishes, and pitchers, exhibited characteristics of urban Muslim art, while the unglazed pottery retained links to the steppe and Turkic traditions.

1. Glazed Pottery:

- Glazed pottery often featured transparent, glossy surfaces that enhanced the aesthetic appeal of the vessels. These items were typically monochrome, with green and blue being the dominant colors (Figs. 4, 6, 7, 8, 9).
- The development of slip painting, a method where designs were painted beneath a flowing lead glaze, allowed for intricate decorations without damaging the artwork during firing. This technique, likely developed in Samarkand and later adopted in Nishapur, elevated pottery decoration in the Muslim East during the 9th and 10th centuries.

2. Unglazed Pottery:

- Unglazed pottery, often in the form of large jugs and pitchers, was characterized by carved, molded, and incised decorations. Despite lacking glaze, these vessels retained a unique beauty, as demonstrated by the molded rope band on a large jug reminiscent of Greek amphorae (Fig. 12) and floral motifs carved on a three-handled jug (Fig. 1).
- Unglazed earthenware vessels also featured intricate designs, such as scratched or incised decorations (Figs. 9, 10, 11). Buff ware was common, and in some cases, potters added raw materials to achieve specific colors, such as a yellowish hue (Fig. 3). A detailed inventory of the vessels studied is presented in Table 1, which categorizes them by type, color, technique, and glazing status.

DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that while glazed pottery was highly valued for its impermeability and decorative qualities, unglazed pottery held an equally important place in Transoxanian culture. The unglazed vessels, despite their simpler appearance, were skillfully crafted and often served practical purposes.

The development of slip painting under lead glaze represents a key technological advancement in the region's ceramic production. This method allowed potters to achieve more detailed and durable designs, enhancing the aesthetic value of the pottery. The presence of both glazed and unglazed pottery in Afrasiyab suggests a diverse ceramic tradition that balanced functionality, aesthetics, and cultural heritage.

The use of monochrome glazing, particularly in green and blue, reflects broader trends in Islamic art during this period. At the same time, the continued production of unglazed pottery with intricate decorations highlights the enduring influence of steppe and Turkic artistic traditions.

Future research could further explore the social and cultural significance of these ceramics, as well as the trade networks that facilitated the spread of glazing techniques across Central Asia.




CONCLUSION

This study has highlighted the rich tradition of pottery production in Transoxania during the 7th to 12th centuries. Both glazed and unglazed ceramics played essential roles in everyday life, with innovations such as slip painting marking significant advancements in the craft. The balance between urban Muslim artistic influences and Turkic steppe traditions is reflected in the diverse forms and decorations found on the pottery from this period.

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Appendices

№	The figure	Type	colour	technique	glaze	vessel
1		monochrome	Earthenware	carved	unglazed	jug
2		Monochrome	Earthenware	moulded	Unglazed	jug
3		Monochrome	Earthenware	monocoloured	Unglazed	pitcher

4		Monochrome	blue	monocoloured	Transparent glazed	pitcher
5		Monochrome	Earthenware	carved	Unglazed	pitcher
6		Monochrome	green	monocoloured	Transparent glazed	jug
7		Monochrome	green	carved	Transparent glazed	Boot-shaped vessel
8		Monochrome	green	scratched	Transparent glazed	vessel
9		Monochrome	green	inscribed	unglazed	lamp
10		Monochrome	earthenware	carved	Unglazed	Pitcher
11		Monochrome	Earthenware	inscribed	Unglazed	pitcher
12		Monochrome	earthenware	Moulded	Unglazed	jug