

THE COMPOSITION OF THE INSCRIPTIONS ON SAMANID SLIPWARE*

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From the 3th to the 5th Hijri Century (9th to 11th A.D.)

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The consequence of Samanid's economic, cultural and political growing embodied in Samanid slipware represents Persian Arts in Early Islamic time completely. Furthermore the vast variety of survived pieces tempts the attention of artists, scholars and collectors until the present. In this era, the invention of slip painting -new technique of underglazed painting- paves the way for the spectrum of decorative motifs such as abstract, inscribed and figurative design. Among this variety of patterns which introduces the diversity of view during the Samanid era, the calligraphic design conveys new expressions and has extreme contribution in Art's prestige of these vessels. Samanid epigraphic pottery displays the consociation of two major Islamic art; the new art of calligraphy with all its delicacy and precision were used among the decorations of ceramic vessels and on the other hand, achieving the real place in society, the art of pottery making also causes calligraphy to flourish. This companionship with subtle harmony between decoration and vessel's form enriches the ceramics' heritage. It indicates not only the cognition and domination of calligraphers and potters in use of new element for expressing the society's ideas, needs and values but also some part of visual principles of Persian Art. In spite of the importance of Samanid epigraphic pottery in understanding of the visual elements of Persian calligraphy, most researchers studied the potteries according to other characters such as the color and technique, the form and design and the producing center. In this way the

visual elements have always been noticed under the influence of the others. The importance of this earthenwares in the history of Islamic calligraphy and also the special concern of contemporary world, make us pay attention to the vacancy of visual study more than last. In this article the composition of inscription is studied in Samanid slipware; meanwhile, for the first time their prevalent patterns are offered and categorized. At first, the importance of pottery and especially the Samanid pottery are described briefly and also the standard manner of classifying this ceramics are outlined. In the main section, three general styles of this composition are purposed by surveying 500 round earthenwares. In addition, eleven kinds of composition under the influence of these styles are exploited by considering the states of using the script's ability, which Each kind of them are divided into several types in terms of utilizing the delicacy and basic rule of calligraphy such as different type of Kufi, baseline variation, the positive and negative form of letters (sawad o bayaz), etc. Finally this categorization is illustrated in a table schematically that is not only useful in perceiving of Persian visual principles, but also effective in developing of new researches. As a whole this article encourages artists to analyze the ancient heritage according to their experience and to advance their practice and research simultaneously as well.

KEYWORDS: Islamic Ceramics, Nishapur and Samarqand Pottery, Samanid Epigraphic Pottery, the Inscription's Composition.

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