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GLAZED CERAMICS WITH EPIGRAPHICAL ORNAMENT  
FROM KUTAI SI HISTORICAL MUSEUM

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**Abstract.** Research objectives: An analysis of vessels decorated with epigraphic motifs preserved in the glazed ceramics collection of the Kutaisi Historical Museum and, based on the analysis of similar material, determining the collection's origins.

Research materials: The artifacts found during the 1984–2010 archeological research of the medieval city of Kutaisi, which are preserved in the archeological fund of the museum, were used.

Results and novelty of the research: The tradition of ornamenting ceramics with Arabic calligraphic inscriptions was widespread in the Eastern world since the 10th century. Arabic letters were considered a sacred image in the Middle Ages and had a semantic meaning. The inscriptions were aphoristic in content (religious sayings from the Qur'an, admonitions), blessed and benevolent (blessings, wishes for success), or consisted only of words (names of God and prophets), syllables, or single letters. Later, the epigraphic ornament developed in two directions. First, the letters were transformed into plant flowers and flowers as a result of stylization; that is, the process of floriation developed. Secondly, the epigraphic ornament turned into a stylized pseudo-epigraphical motif imitating the Arabic script. As a result of the comparison of the Kutaisi samples with their foreign counterparts and the analysis of the inscription, it was determined that one of the bowls is decorated with a pseudo-epigraphical ornament, in particular, with separate letters and signs of the word "ikbal" (success) made in imitation of Kufic calligraphy. It may be either an imported product or a local imitation. The second bowl is undoubtedly an oriental-style Kashan ware imported from the Muslim world, the epigraphic ornament of which represents the Arabic word "ikbal" written in Kufic letters. The question of its origin is still controversial (Lower Volga Region, Khorezm, Nishapur) and requires additional research. It is a novelty that, for the first time, an imported item of glazed ceramics decorated with an epigraphic ornament from the Kutaisi collection was brought into scientific circulation.

**Keywords:** Golden Horde period, glazed ceramics, archeology of Kutaisi old city, epigraphic ornament

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## Introduction

Among the cultural heritage monuments protected in the archeology fund of the Kutaisi Historical Museum, the collection of glazed ceramics is an interesting material. The samples included in it, along with other important artifacts, were discovered in the territory of the Kutaisi Castle during the archaeological expeditions led by Professor Omar Lanchava in 1984–2010. Archaeological studies of Kutaisi's old city Castle revealed that there were smelting houses and workshops in the area, in the vicinity of which various artifacts representing production, items for preparing glaze powder and ornamented fragments of glazed ceramics were discovered, the number of which reaches 1000 items [18, p. 130]. The dating of these samples according to stratigraphic data was determined from the 9th–18th centuries [28, p. 304]. This is the period when, thanks to the perfection of manufacturing methods and the discovery of glazing techniques, the production of ceramics reached a significant flowering. Of course, the Kutaisi potters did not lag behind this process of growth, as evidenced by the samples of glazed ceramics made by local artisans. The collection also includes materials imported from other regions and designs based on foreign traditions. This is not surprising – medieval Kutaisi was the capital of unified Georgia (1008–1122) and an advanced center. The development of socio-economic, trade and political relations was a contributing factor to the development of various branches of craftsmanship, including the production of glazed ceramics, to the formation and introduction of the system of principles of its decoration, composition, style and drawing.

The collection of glazed ceramics from Kutaisi is noteworthy for the fact that it can fully answer many questions related to the problem of identifying analogies and characteristic features of glazed ceramics, the study of historical, cultural and socio-economic relations with foreign countries near and far, etc. Despite the above, the Kutaisi part of the glazed ceramics is almost not included in scientific circulation, the peculiarities of its ornamental decor are completely unstudied and thus unknown to researchers interested in similar issues and the general public. In order to solve this urgent issue, a grant project “Stages of development of glazed ceramic ornament and its scientific cataloging” was presented to the Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia by the Kutaisi Historical Museum research group, which received funding and is currently being implemented. The final result of the project will be a means of solving the above-mentioned problem, namely the analysis of the ornamentation of glazed ceramics.

For the current stage of project implementation, it was revealed that Kutaisi glazed ceramics of the middle ages are characterized by all the main features, which are generally characteristic of ceramic products spread over a wide area of the East and West.

In the Kutaisi collection of glazed ceramics, fragments of vessels decorated with various ornaments are collected. There are geometric (stripes, rings, concentric circles, ovals), vegetal (stylized leaves, flowers, branches, fruits); plant-geometric; Fragments of pottery decorated with zoomorphic (various birds, fishes, predatory animals), epigraphic (words or individual letters), abstract ornaments and various symbols (religious, solar disk and leprechaun).

Historical-cultural and artistic research, structural-typological analysis of the ornamental decor of glazed ceramics was carried out by the designers; The stages of evolution were determined. A comparative analysis and search for parallels of glazed ceramics and other artifacts (stone reliefs, monumental and miniature paintings, textiles, etc.) decorated with plant and zoomorphic ornament was discussed [35; 16; 17], the influences of Western and Eastern art were revealed.

In general, the issue of ornamentation of various monuments of decorative and applied art is actively studied by Georgian researchers, and accordingly in publications they discuss the semantic, artistic or stylistic significance, aspects of compositional research of the ornament depicted on various samples (stone reliefs, engraving, enamel, monumental and miniature painting, jewelry, textiles, etc.). Among the recent Georgian publications remarkable are – L. Lursmanashvili and others [32], G. Kvantidze and others [27], G. Kvantidze [26], the works of M.Tevzaia [36] and other researchers.

Publications devoted to the study of glazed ceramic ornaments are abundantly presented in foreign scientific literature, which, unfortunately, cannot be said about the Georgian reality. In our country, unfortunately, we still do not have important scientific publications dedicated to the study of glazed ceramic ornaments, while in Georgia there is quite diverse and interesting material, which is less studied in this direction. This article is an attempt to eliminate this deficiency. The aim of the paper is to analyze the differently decorated, in particular, the artifacts ornamented with epigraphic motifs preserved in the glazed ceramics collection of the Kutaisi Historical Museum, and to determine their origin based on the analysis of similar material.

In foreign works, quite a lot of attention is devoted to the study of epigraphic ornaments of glazed ceramics, and their deciphering has been a subject of special study by researchers for many years. To this issue even in the 20th century were devoted the works of O. Bolshakov [2], A. Krachkovskaya [23], N. Grazhdankina [9], Ch. Wilkinson [37] and others. Among the recent publications, interesting are the works of N. Lisova [31], M. Ekhtiari [7], S. Ilyasova [12], J. Ilyasov [11], E. Giuli [10], B. Kurbanov [24], A. Iskanderova [13] and others. Of those named, the following are particularly noteworthy:

- N. Lisova's monograph "Ornament of glazed dishes from the Golden Horde cities of the Lower Volga region". In the work, the features, characteristic elements, motifs and composition of the ornament of the Golden Horde period are thoroughly analyzed. The researcher has searched for analogues of the Golden Horde ornament in other countries, types of influence and its stylistic features.

- B. Kurbanov's article "Epigraphics on Medieval Glazed Ceramic Products from the Collection of the Bukhara Museum-Reserve", in which the epigraphic motifs of medieval glazed ceramics preserved in the collection of the Bukhara State Museum-Reserve of Uzbekistan are analyzed.

- Iskanderova and M. Sultanova's work "Ornamentation on Glazed Ceramics of Khorezm (13th–14th cc.)", in which types of ornamental motifs of glazed ceramics of Khorezm 13th–14th centuries are discussed and epigraphic ornaments are analyzed, thus it is interesting according to the research topic.

### **Materials and Methods**

Fragments of glazed ceramics decorated with epigraphic ornament preserved in the Kutaisi Historical Museum, found during the archaeological researches of the medieval Kutaisi city were used as research material.

The following modern methods were selected as the main criteria for studying the issue: the principle of historical materials analysis; Visual-descriptive, statistical, typological, formal classification, technological, comparative analysis and analogies.

### **Results**

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The tradition of decorating ceramics with calligraphic inscriptions has spread widely in the Eastern Muslim world since the 10th century. This was facilitated by the fact that in the vast territory conquered by the Arab Caliphate, especially in the cultural space and art of the Eastern countries, Arabic calligraphy (calligraphy – Greek – “beautiful writing”) was thoroughly established. It is true that the Arabs were not the first to use epigraphy for decorative purposes, but unlike others, they significantly expanded the scope of the usual use of calligraphy and, thanks to the decorative capabilities of the Arabic script, created a special artistic form – an independent ornament. It should be noted here that putting an inscription on a ceramic product should not have been a foreign tradition for Georgian potters, as the inscription on a pitcher found as a result of archaeological research in the area of old city settlement cellar of Nekresi [4, p. 7], Georgian inscriptions scratched on the polished surface of small vessels [1, p. 8] and the inscribed building ceramics found during the excavation of various settlements in Georgia [19, p. 58, 75; 15, p. 21; 3, p. 24; 38, p. 43] testifies. However, inscriptions and artist's painting are more rarely found on Georgian artistic ceramics, which makes it sharply different from oriental products of a similar style [1, p. 14].

Arabic calligraphic ornament played an important cultural role in Muslim countries and was intensively used for the purposes of fine art, in particular, for the decoration of various artistic products – ceramics, porcelain and metal products, carpets and other fabrics, coins, and also architectural monuments (mainly cult buildings) [14].

In complex compositions, epigraphic elements based on Arabic script enlivened the ornamental scheme. On ceramic products – jars, bowls, jugs and other vessels, the inscription was placed concentrically, close to the edge. Inscriptions were mainly completed in two styles: “Kufi” – with straight, clear, angular outlines of letters and “Naskhi” – with more rounded letters. The inscriptions were in the form of aphoristic (religious sayings from the Qur'an, exhortation), blessing and benevolent (barakah, success), or only in the form of words (names of God and prophets), syllables, or individual letters. Arabic letters in the Middle Ages were considered a sacred image and had a semantic meaning, so, for example, the letter ن (“nun”) means the word “nusrat”, i.e. “success”, “victory”. [8, p. 25; 6, p. 662].



Fig. 1. Epigraphic ornaments: 1 – fragment of the Kutaisi bowl;  
2 – outline of individual letters and signs of the Kutaisi bowl;  
3 – ornamental inscription – word “ikbal” made in Kufic calligraphy, Golden Horde



Fig. 2. Bowl decorated with epigraphic ornament  
from the Kutaisi historical museum collection

Later, the epigraphic ornament underwent certain changes: the first direction – the letters of the Kufic ornament, as a result of stylization, were transformed into plant flowers and flower spikes (floriation process); The second direction – the epigraphic ornament turned into a stylized pseudo-epigraphic motif imitating the Arabic script. At this time, the image is devoid of meaning, is not readable and is used only for decoration. It is likely that the emergence of such ornaments was facilitated by ignorance of the Arabic alphabet, when master potters created imitation epigraphic decorative compositions imitating calligraphic ornaments and were unfamiliar with the Arabic language and script. It is through such imitation of calligraphic ornament that pseudo-epigraphic ornaments were created.

Most likely, one of the pieces from the glazed ceramics collection of the Kutaisi Historical Museum represents an interesting product decorated with pseudo-epigraphic ornament.



Fig. 3. Kashan pottery with polychrome painting and ornament relief modeling:  
1 – from Khorezm territory [20, p. 819]; 2–6 – from the Lower Volga region  
of the Golden Horde period [31, p. 185, 187, 195, 199]

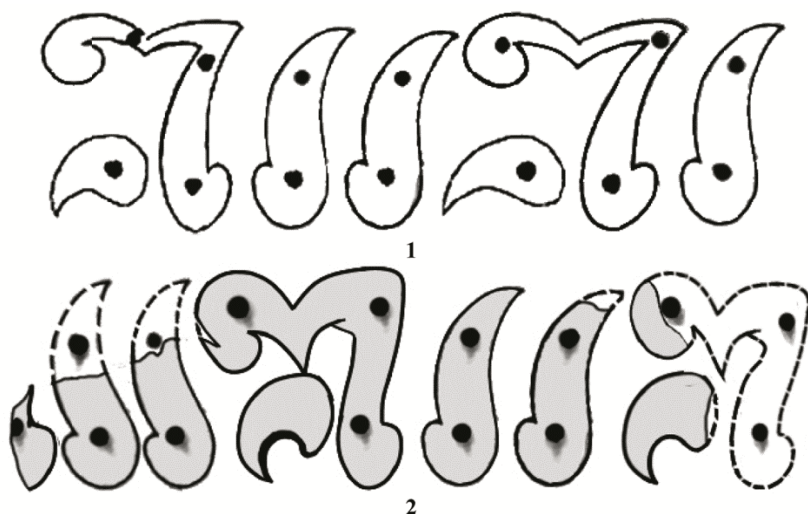


Fig. 4. Epigraphic ornaments. Ornamental inscription – word “ikbal” made  
in Kufic calligraphy: 1 – made on the Golden Horde period bowl;  
2 – made on the fragment of the Kutaisi bowl

**Bowl – fragment of side, mouth and base** (s. 9539 AAAA-764. c.t. no. 4073; 4011.85), reddish-colored clay. Well settled clay. Restored. The inner edge is covered with a white engobe. The decoration is done with scratched lines filled with swamp paint. Two concentric circle lines made by scraping are placed on the mouth in the form of a belt, and on the inner surface of the skirt, at the beginning, a wide belt-ring is made of two similar concentric circles, which is divided into segments. Closely spaced radial lines are scratched in every second segment. Various signs similar to Arabic letters are inserted in the segments free of lines. In the middle, on the base of the bowl, there is a spiral ornament, which represents the symbol of the sun. The bowl is covered with transparent glaze. The half part of outer side is engobed and a colorless crystal glass is applied to it. The mouth of the bowl is thickened and spread out, the mouth is folded, the heel is pulled out, hollow. Dimensions: heel diameter – 7 cm; heel height – 1 cm; thickness of the fold – 0.4 cm; The thickness of the mouthpiece is 0.6 cm; total height – 6.5 cm; It was discovered: Kutaisi old city settlement, at the foot of the castle located in the northeast of the Bagrat temple (Fig. 1, 1).

The outline of individual letter-signs of the ornament inserted in the segments of the bowl (Fig. 1, 2) resembles the outline of the letters of the epigraphic ornament of Kashan ceramics of the Golden Horde period, about which in her monograph N. Lisova explains that it represents a word written with a broad brush in the Kufic script – “ikbal” (success) (Fig. 1, 3) [31, p. 72; 31, p. 154 tab. No. 21]. After careful observation, one gets the impression that the letters are made by an unwashed hand.

As a result of analyzing the obvious similarities between the ornament of the Kutaisi bowl and the Kufic calligraphic inscription, various tentative opinions can be expressed:

- On the Kutaisi bowl, the letters of the word “ikbal” are inserted in each segment;
- each sign may represent a ligature (letter-sign representing two or more graphemes);
- Each symbol in a segment is a compressed scrambled word, or a kind of cryptogram (encoded word).

As we mentioned above, medieval masters often depicted benevolence, blessing, aphoristic or other inscriptions on their products. In some cases, craftsmen resorted to ligatures and cryptograms to depict long phrases in a relatively limited area. Such inscriptions are often left unread. In addition, as we mentioned above, epigraphic inscriptions were transferred from one sample to another – through copying, by those people (master's apprentices, disciples) who did not know the true meaning of the inscription and letters, which led to the loss of meaning and turning the text into a pseudo-epigraphic ornament. Obviously, this circumstance also complicates the deciphering of the inscription.

Based on the above, the glazed ceramic jar, from the collection of the Kutaisi Historical Museum, is decorated with a pseudo-epigraphical ornament depicting the Muslim world, namely, the word “ikbal” (success), made in imitation of Kufic calligraphy, with separate letters and signs. This allows us to assume that the mentioned sample is an imported oriental product, however, it is also possible that it is a local copy of a foreign glazed vessel.



In the Kutaisi collection, there is another fragment of a bowl decorated with epigraphic ornament from a relatively later period, which attracts attention with a different style of artistic decoration.

**Bowl – fragment of a side** (sh. 9539 AA-764. ts. sav. №2749.84), white clay. The decoration is made with light relief modeling. The upper edge of the inner side is decorated with a blue-white ornamental narrow strip. Calligraphic ornaments are painted with black contours below the strip – Arabic letters, on which large dots of dark blue color with light blue spots are applied; One of the repeated letter-signs, which has the shape of an inverted punctuation mark – a comma, has sharp turquoise spots. Surrounding each ornament is a continuous row of black, fine dots. Below them are a pair of black lines (concentric circles), between which there is a large dark blue dot with a light blue spot. Below the black outline are stylized tear-drop-shaped Figures arranged in a grid, with a large blue dot in the middle (also dotted). A bead of small black dots surrounds the Figures. On the edge of the fragment, radially, in relief modeling, a black line shows flower-rose petals, on top of which an arched ornament is inserted. A chain of vertical dashed lines is drawn in the middle of the sides, and two large blue dots are placed at the edges – vertically. The bowl is covered with colorless, transparent glaze. Dimensions: thickness of the fold – 0.4 cm; Found: Kutaisi old city settlement, west of Bagrat temple (Fig. 2).

Parallels of this kind of glazed vessels can be found in Georgia. According to the decoration technique and similar material, similar vessels are considered to be Sultanabad products and dated to the first half of the 14th century [33, p. 60].

Analogues of the Kutaisi bowl (we can say exact analogues) are found in a large number in a geographically quite wide area, which includes the Crimea, the Azov region, the Moscow Kremlin [22, p. 742], Belarus [29, p. 618], Lower Volga Region [34, p. 688; 31, p. 196; 30, p. 781; ], North Caucasus [9, p. 128], Khorezm (Central Asia) [21, p. 798; 20, p. 819; 13, p. 63] and others. The materials obtained as a result of archaeological research confirm this (Fig. 3). The named samples date back to the Golden Horde period. All of them are polychrome and made with relief modeling of the ornament. There is no doubt that for this period we are dealing with the formation of a different tradition and a new artistic style of decorating glazed ceramics with epigraphic ornaments.

The analysis of completely preserved bowls reveals that a certain typical, generalized form of decoration of glazed vessels has been developed and the principle of decoration is the same in all cases, namely: the outer surface of the bowls is decorated with a relief rose decorated with blue dots and an arched ornament attached to the upper edge of the vessel. Rose petals are divided into two parts by a chain of vertical short lines; The interior design scheme is different. It can be said that it is too decorative and overloaded, but this does not prevent it from being harmonious and balanced at the same time. The inner rim is characterized by the uniformity of the ornamentation of the skirts (ornamented belts, concentric circles), while the base of the vessel is distinguished by a different compositional solution (Fig. 3). The inner surface is divided into zones by alternating concentric circles, decorated belts and a central composition. In each zone, the elements are arranged according to a certain rhythm:

- In a wide belt near the edge an epigraphic ornament is drawn in large, “thick” letters. The mentioned motive has been carefully discussed by the researchers – A. Iskanderova [13, p. 10], O. Kuznetsova [25, p. 173], n. Grajdankina [9,



p. 128] and O. Bolshakov [2, p. 35]. N. Lisova [31, p. 196] and Iskanderova [13, p. 62] in their works is noted that the ornament represents the Arabic word “ikbal” (luck?), written in Kufic letters, repeated several times (Fig. 4, 1);

- The next, relatively narrow, belt is made with the motif of stylized drops (tears) decorated with a large blue dot. The drops are depicted in the form of extremely schematic Figures, which is why they have a rather interesting interpretation, namely: some researchers refer to such a motif as “diving (watching) fish” [22, p. 741, 743], with another interpretation this motif is called “peacock eye” [22, p. 741; 31, p. 84, 64]. The peacock eye in Islamic symbolism is associated with the “eye of the heart” and inner vision, which is why they were used quite often in Islamic aesthetic culture.

- Each belt is separated from each other and from the central composition of the base of the vessel by a ring surrounded by black concentric circles, in which a large blue dot is inserted here and there.

- The bottom of the vessel – the center is accented with a different decor, which at the same time is also a compositional center. The central composition, in contrast to the typical, uniform decoration of the sides of the bowl, is distinguished by a variety of ornamentation (Fig. 3, 2–6): there is a plant motif, a six-pointed star, a floral motif combined with a geometric one. Sometimes zoomorphic (duck, peacock, fish, predatory animals) or abstract Figures, etc. are represented. For example, one of the bowls shown in the picture has a small blue circle in the center, surrounded by white and black concentric circles; outside of them, a six-pointed star obtained by intertwining two equilateral triangles (Fig. 3, 2); The base of the second bowl is decorated with a stylized lotus flower (Fig. 3, 3); There are compositions of ducks (Fig. 3, 4), abstract forms similar to “rolling clouds” (Fig. 3, 5), a rhombic grid enclosed in a circle and alternating stylized drops (Fig. 3, 6) and many others.

Similar to foreign bowls, the principle of dividing the inner side into decorated belts is clearly visible on the Kutaisi fragment, in particular, a wide epigraphic belt is located near the edge – the very fragment on which the Arabic word “ikbal” written in Kufic letters is read (Fig. 4, 2); And after it, a relatively narrow belt – with a stylized “peacock eye” motif (Fig. 2).



Fig. 5. Graphic reconstruction of the bowl

As we can see, according to the comparative analysis, despite the fragmentation of the Kutaisi ceramics, their identity is visible, which means that the foreign ceramics are direct analogues of the Kutaisi ceramics. The mentioned fact, despite the absence of a central composition, allows the graphic reconstruction of the fragment of the Kutaisi bowl (Fig. 5).

The comparative analysis of Kutaisi and foreign materials reveals that we are dealing with samples of the same origin and that the ceramic ware from the Kutaisi museum collection is not locally made, but imported, oriental-style Kashan pottery, decorated with Kufic letters and the Arabic word – “ikbal”.

The similarity of the decoration characteristic of the Kutaisi and foreign samples, the identity of the relief modeling of the ornament, the uniformity of the calligraphic inscription, the same compositional structure, form, motifs, and colors allow us to conclude that all of them were made in the same area with the same traditions and possibly in the same workshop. It is quite difficult to specify a specific place. Most of the authors name the place of origin of Kashan vessels with such a compositional solution, decorated with epigraphic ornaments, in the Lower Volga region of the time of the Golden Horde, some in Khorezm regions (Central Asia), and others in the city of Nishapur (Iran, Khorasan). Lisova writes that exactly the same inscriptions are on the well-known “Sultanabad” type Iranian bowls and Syrian vase necks [31, p. 71]. The researcher notes that in Khorezm, the ornamentation characteristic of Kashan pottery did not occur earlier than in the Lower Volga Region [31, p. 116]. Contrary to this assumption, in a recent publication [13, p. 68] the opinion is expressed about the great role of Khorezm masters in the formation of the ceramic crafts of the Golden Horde, which is explained by the tradition of bringing ceramic craftsmen from the conquered countries to the Golden Horde; It is also noted that many decorative elements and relief ornaments of Kashan ceramics of the Golden Horde originated in pre-Mongol Iran – Central Asia, in particular, they include the “peacock eye” motif, epigraphic ornament – “ikbal”, lotus flowers or zoomorphic images [13, p. 68]. This opinion was expressed by the authors in the publications – Bulatov N., Soviet Archaeology, M., 1968 and Kdymiyazov, Issues of History, archeology and ethnology of Karakalpakstan, Nukus, 1990. Therefore, the question of the origin of the above-described samples is still controversial, therefore, the question of the attribution of the Kutaisi glazed ceramic vessel remains unclear and only assumptions can be made about its origin. The mentioned problem needs additional study – including the full array of existing sources.

It should not be surprising to find foreign-made Kashan pottery decorated with epigraphic ornament in the territory of medieval Kutaisi old settlement. Of course, it is impossible to prove for sure – in what way it should have got to Kutaisi old city. The period to which similar Kashan pottery dates, i.e. the turn of the 13th and 14th centuries, is the period of Mongol rule in Georgia. At that time, our country had close political and socio-economic relations with the Eastern world – because of political considerations, Georgian kings and princes often traveled to the territory of the Mongols (Ilkhans); Georgian nobles received valuable gifts from the Mongols. The Georgian army took part in all Mongol campaigns [5] and returned with trophy; In this period, despite the fact that the trade routes around Georgia were somewhat reduced, the tradition of giving and receiving continued with the Eastern world. Therefore, the possibility of bringing Kashan pottery to Kutaisi old

settlement is not ruled out. One thing can be said for sure: the existence of a bowl decorated with Arabic epigraphic ornaments in the territory of Kutaisi old settlement is an indicator of cultural contacts and mutual relations between Georgia and the Eastern Muslim world.

Therefore, from the bowl of the two types of glazed ceramics of the above-mentioned oriental style, if there is an opinion about the first sample that it may be a local copy, the second is undoubtedly an imported product of the Golden Horde period and represents a fragment of the oriental-style Kashan ware imported from the Muslim world (Lower Volga Region, Khorezm, or Nishapur). As for medieval Kutaisi, it was undoubtedly a city where various types of glazed ceramics were made in ceramic workshops and foreign products were imported through trade or socio-political relations with foreign countries.

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## ПОЛИВНАЯ КЕРАМИКА С ЭПИГРАФИЧЕСКИМ ОРНАМЕНТОМ ИЗ КУТАИССКОГО ИСТОРИЧЕСКОГО МУЗЕЯ

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**Резюме.** Цель исследования: Анализ сосудов, орнаментированных эпиграфическими мотивами, из коллекции поливной керамики Кутаисского Исторического Музея, и определение их происхождения на основе обзора аналогичного материала.

Материалы исследования: Используются артефакты, найденные в ходе археологических исследований средневекового города Кутаиси (Накалакари) с 1984 по 2010 гг., которые хранятся в археологическом фонде музея.

Результаты и научная новизна: Традиция, декорирования керамики арабской каллиграфической надписью получила широкое распространение в восточном мире с 10 века. Арабские буквы считались священными в Средние века и имели смысловое значение. Надписи были по содержанию афористичными (религиозные выражения из Корана, наставления), благословенными и благожелательными (благополучие, ус-

пех), или состояли только из слов (имена Бога и пророков), из слога или отдельных букв. В дальнейшем эпиграфический орнамент развивался по двум направлениям: первое – буквы в результате стилизации превратились в растительные завитки и цветы, то есть развивался процесс флоризации; Второе – эпиграфический орнамент превратился в стилизованный псевдоэпиграфический мотив, имитирующий арабскую письменность.

В результате сравнения Кутаисских образцов с зарубежными аналогами и анализа надписи установлено, что одна из чаш украшена псевдоэпиграфическим орнаментом, в частности, словом «ikbal» (успех), выполненным отдельными буквенными знаками, имитирующими куфическую каллиграфию. Вторая чаша, эта, несомненно, кашанская посуда золотоордынского периода, импортированная из мусульманского мира, эпиграфический орнамент которой представляет собой тот же самое арабское слово, изображенное на вышеописанной чаше – «ikbal», написанное куфическими буквами. Вопрос о его происхождении до сих пор остается спорным (Нижнее Поволжье, Хорезм, Нишапур) и требует дополнительных исследований.

Новизна заключается в том, что впервые в научный оборот введена импортная поливная керамика, украшенная эпиграфическим орнаментом из Кутаисской коллекции.

**Ключевые слова:** золотоордынский период, глазурованная керамика, археология старого города Кутаиси, эпиграфический орнамент

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