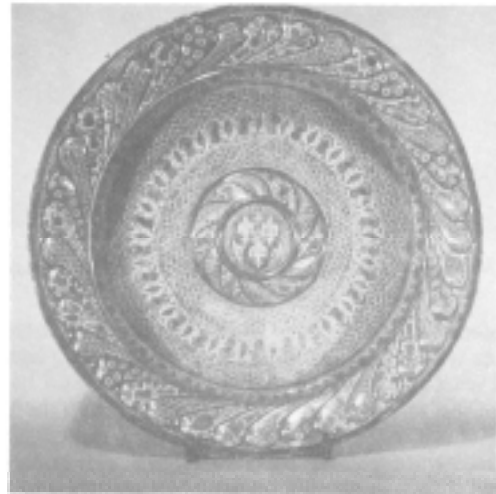


Climbing the Tea Leaf Family Tree: Early Ancestors

A Program presented by Kyle Husfloen at the
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*Left Map
tracing the
journey of
Tea Leaf's
early
ancestors*

*Right:
This 14%
d. Spanish
lustreware
charger
dates
around
1450-
1500*

7th century to the 1600's

Although we Tea Leaf collectors are all united by our love of these lustre-trimmed wares, many of you may not realize what an ancient and interesting history Tea Leaf has.

To reach back to the true roots of our family tree, we must travel back in time and space over 1000 years to the Middle East. It was the Arabic potters of medieval Egypt in the 7th century AD who first decorated pottery wares with pigments derived from *metallic oxides* which produced shimmering metal-like surfaces.

The two main metals they used were *silver* and *copper* since they discovered that a silver oxide would produce a pale brassy yellow finish while copper would produce a rich ruby red glaze.

In the years that followed, other regional potters perfected these glazes and by the 9th century, some wonderful examples were being produced in ancient Bagdad, in the land of Aladdin and Ali Baba. As the Arabs moved west across north Africa, they brought this style of pottery decoration with them where it eventually took root in 13th

century Spain, especially the city of Malaga.

This *Hispano-Moresque* (from Spain-Morocco) style of pottery remained popular for several centuries and eventually traveled to Italy by the 15th century, this route touching on the island of Majorca (from hence our term "majolica").

Eventually, the lustre glazes on pottery became popular across Northern Europe until this style of decoration faded from popularity by the late 16th century. Only in Spain and Portugal did lustre-decorated pottery continue to be produced, right up until today.

The first example of lustre decorated pottery I'm showing is a classic early Spanish-style "charger" (a large plate to 'charge' or fill other plates), which was produced around 1450-1500. It features a rich coppery lustre glaze imitating the copper and silver plates popular for display at that time.

This particular piece is from the collection of the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, Canada and shows in the center the arms of King Charles VII of France indicating it was produced for the French market. It measures 14" across.

19th century sees reintroduction of lustre decorated pottery

As I mentioned, lustre glazed wares had gone out of fashion by the late 1500s in most of Europe, and it wasn't until the early 19th century that the potters of England reintroduced this style of pottery decoration, mainly as a way to imitate more expensive true metalwares.

Expanding on the earlier palette of colors available, the Englishmen introduced several new hues which were produced with metals other than copper and silver.

For instance, they found that *platinum* (which had only been discovered in the mid-18th century) was the only material that would produce a true silver finish on pottery. could be used to obtain a gold, coppery pink or purple lustre, depending on the formula used. Copper again was used and furnished a yellowish red or deep copper lustre finish.

Keep in mind that only tiny amounts of these metals were needed to mix a very large batch of glazing material so costs were low. Illustrated here is a grouping of some early English lustre