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Coloured Ceramics of the Caliphs: A new look at the Abbasid pottery finds from the old Gözlükule excavations at Tarsus

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CHAPTER 7

ABBASID CERAMICS FROM TARSUS: THE SOCIO- CULTURAL BACKGROUND

In recent years, there have been a growing number of archaeological studies dealing with food and foodways in the eastern Mediterranean, but very few have focused on the early Islamic period. This chapter seeks to find out about food consumption in Gözlükule, especially, what was eaten on a daily basis during Abbasid times and how.²³² Furthermore, we will attempt to understand the role of ceramics in this process and whether we can trace a relation between the physical attributes of pottery and their function. To this end, a multi-disciplinary approach is used combining the Gözlükule ceramic evidence with written sources, visual material and secondary literature about food culture. This chapter is divided into five.

The first part briefly surveys research on food including major historical and archaeological works dealing with the dining habits of the Islamic world. The second part looks into the origins and the characteristics of the Abbasid cuisine. The written and the pictorial evidence are presented in the third and fourth parts. The 10th century Abbasid cookbook *Kitab al-Tabikh* (*The Book of Dishes*) as well as other medieval Islamic manuscripts are examined to understand different aspects of the food culture of the Abbasid period. Finally, these literary and pictorial sources are compared with the evidence of the Gözlükule early Islamic ceramics in order to reach a preliminary understanding of the diet and eating habits of the Tarsians on the mound, in the Abbasid period.

It is noteworthy to explain the biases of the data in this discussion. Firstly, as mentioned previously, the ceramic assemblage of these old excavations do not reflect the real amount of pottery found on the hill. If the ceramic data of the new excavations were used, then some ideas presented here would have perhaps been different. Secondly, mainly Muslim sources were used for the primary and secondary literature. Considering that Tarsus was a frontier town between Byzantium and Islam, this selection might be incomplete.²³³ Thirdly, since the earliest extant illustrated medieval Islamic manuscripts date to the late 12th century, the pictorial evidence used here is not contemporary with the ceramic finds, thus, there is the risk of anachronism. In short, the proposed ideas on eating customs in Tarsus during Abbasid times constitute a work in progress which may be subject to further refinement.

1 Islamic food studies: a brief overview

Research on foodways from an archaeological perspective has been increasing, following the recent developments in food history. Historian Paulina Lewicka defines foodways as “the history and culture of human nourishment within a specific geographical location. Or, more specifically, to production, procurement, preparation, presentation, and consumption of food as practiced by a given population, as well as to environmental, cultural, social, political, and economic aspects of these activities” (Lewicka 2011, IX). When talking about the history and theory of studying food and

²³² This chapter is based on the forthcoming article: Bağcı Y. and J. Vroom, “Dining habits at Tarsus in the Early Islamic period: a Ceramic Perspective from Turkey”.

²³³ Given the historical background of Tarsus, which was bound to Byzantine rule before the Arab invasions, the Byzantine and other sources such as the Syriac would have ideally been consulted. This task will be undertaken in a future project.

foodways, the first name that comes to mind for its important contribution is the late Jack Rankin Goody (1919-2015).

Jack Rankin Goody has studied the links between cuisine and class. His anthropological analysis was widely appropriated and used as a theoretical framework by historians and archaeologists interested in the topic of food (Goody 1982). Between the 1930s and 1970s, his ideas were adopted by cultural anthropologists adhering to the idealist approach such as Claude Levi Strauss and Mary Douglas (Levi-Straus 2013, 1964; Douglas 1966). It was also taken over by social historians including Bourdieu, Flandrin and Montanari (Bourdieu 1984; Flandrin and Montanari 1996). All these new developments gave rise to the creation of the field and the journal *Food and Foodways*.²³⁴ This journal established a platform for multi-disciplinary research covering a wide range of topics in different geographical areas and timeframes.

Regarding the study of the diet and eating habits of medieval Islamic lands, much research still needs to be conducted. The pioneer in the field is Maxime Rodinson (1915-2004). The French historian is the first scholar to explore Islamic food culture by drawing on various sources such as medieval recipes, medical books and literary works among others (Rodinson 1965; Rodinson *et al.* 2001). Another important contribution regarding food is the entry of *matbakh* (kitchen) in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. David Waines, Halil İnalçık and John Burton-Page offered an overview of the notion of “kitchen” as understood in the medieval, Ottoman and Mughal periods (Waines, İnalçık and Burton-Page 1991).

More recently, historian Tülay Artan examined food consumption patterns of the 18th century Ottoman court and courtiers on the basis of imperial kitchen registers (Artan 2000). This work set a new approach to the study of foodways in the Ottoman period because it surveyed all kinds of edibles recorded in the imperial kitchens. Another important contribution is the work of the Iraqi historian Nawal Nasrallah, who in addition to translating a 10th century cookbook from Baghdad, provided an insightful view in its cultural context (Nasrallah 2007). Paulina Lewicka should not be omitted because her inquiry dealt with medieval urban food culture (Lewicka 2011). She examined food and foodways in Cairo through a diachronic perspective, from the founding of the city in the late 10th century until its 16th century Ottoman capture by combining a number of primary and secondary literature. This book not only studied what kind of edibles were consumed and how, but it explored the poorly-known topic of the drinking culture in Muslim societies.

Islamic foodways were studied by few archaeologists. Recently, zooarchaeologist Katheryn Twiss drew attention to the gap of archaeological research on this subject, in particular dealing with the early Islamic Near East and Egypt (Twiss 2012, 378). This lacuna does not however mean that later medieval periods remain unexplored. By using a diachronic and multidisciplinary approach combining pictorial and written sources with pottery evidence, Joanita Vroom examined the changes in the dining habits between the Byzantine and the Ottoman periods (Vroom 2003, 2011).

Jodi Magness used a similar diachronic perspective. Her study is important for the present study, since Magness analysed the evolution of dining habits from the 6th to the 10th centuries by focusing on different types of ceramics found in Jordan and Palestine (Magness 2010). Following Watson’s agricultural revolution thesis,

²³⁴ This journal which combined sociology, anthropology, biology and the culinary arts, was a product of the French *Annales* and was edited by Maurice Aymard, Jean-Louis Flandrin, Claude Grignon and Steven L. Kaplan.

Magness connected the changes in cooking and dining manners after the advent of Islam, with the introduction of new crops in this period, such as rice, sorghum, hard wheat, etc. (see below) (Magness 2010, 132). However, her discussion about the Islamic agricultural revolution triggering a revolution in diet and dining habits may need some revision.

First, the crops that Watson has proposed as new in his book on the Islamic green revolution do not seem to be entirely exotic, as Michael Decker recently demonstrated. In fact, Andrew Watson argued in his book *Agricultural Innovation in the Early Islamic World*, that the introduction of new crops (rice, sorghum, hard wheat, sugar cane, eggplant, spinach, artichokes, colocasia, sour oranges, lemons, limes, bananas, mango, coconut palms, etc.) doubled by effective irrigation systems such as *qanat* during early Islamic times revolutionized the Islamic world and led to agricultural expansion and a considerable population growth (Watson 1983). In a recent article, Decker has shown the deficiencies of Watson's thesis (Decker 2009). Decker pointed that Watson did not fully consider agricultural practices of the pre-Islamic period and overlooked that some crops such as durum wheat, Asiatic rice, cotton and artichoke were cultivated in the Mediterranean and Near East before the 7th century Islamic conquest (Decker 2009, 191-203). Further, he stressed that rice and cotton played a secondary role among the crops cultivated in the early Islamic period. In Iraq, rice was not a leading product of the region whilst, wheat and barley seem to have been the only taxed crops (Decker 2009, 204). In Egypt, cotton was a minor crop in contrast to flax which had a long-established tradition (Decker 2009, 205). Moreover, the underground irrigation canals called *qanat* were not constructed in the Islamic period for the first time, these existed already before (Milwright 2010a, 66).

Second, Magness' analysis of the relation between the shape and the function of pottery may have been incomplete with respect to some issues. She claimed that globular cooking pots, deep casseroles and shallow frying pans of the early Islamic period reflected Islamic meat-based cuisine since they replaced the tall-necked cooking pots of the late Roman period, morphologically unsuitable for cooking meat (Magness 2010, 138). Her direct association of meat-based cuisine (including chunks of meat) with globular cooking pots was superficial. She did not consider the technological and socio-economic factors leading to the changes in pottery forms and technology such as resistance to heat required for prolonged cooking or the increased demand for imports.

A more comprehensive study which focused on a similar topic was conducted by Joanita Vroom. Vroom examined the changes in cooking and eating habits on the basis of cooking pots (Brittle Ware) uncovered at Horum Höyük in southeastern Turkey, which spanned in date from the Roman and to the Abbasid periods (c. 2nd century B.C.E. – 3rd century C.E. and c. mid 8th – mid 10th century C.E.) (Vroom 2009, 136). In addition to the ceramic evidence, she discussed this subject by using zooarchaeological data, animal bones, found at the site as well as primary and secondary sources including cookbooks. Vroom suggested that the morphological changes of cooking containers (jars and pots) between the Umayyad and Abbasid periods were not a result of the increase of meat consumption, but rather, a result of the changes in the cooking techniques in the Islamic period (e.g., frying and, then, boiling the meat for hygienic purposes instead of the other way round) (Vroom 2009, 248). She concluded that the relation between changing pottery shapes and changing eating habits including the shifts in the consumption of meat in the early Islamic period was a complex question requiring further study (Vroom 2009, 248). Although the fundamental question of social change after the advent of Islam cannot be fully

answered by only studying foodways archaeologically, food historians showed that the culinary culture of the Abbasid period was prolific and played a major role in society.

2 Defining Abbasid food culture: origins and culinary elements

Baghdad and its cultural power

Françoise Micheau explained that when Baghdad became the caliphal capital, the heart of the Islamic dynasty switched from the Mediterranean to Iraq, lands that had an exceptional cultural and political background (Micheau 2008, 224). Food historian Nawal Nasrallah associated this newly founded capital with “*umm al-dunyā*” (“mother of the world”) and “*surat al-bilād*” (“navel of the nations”) that grew into the economic and cultural hub of the Abbasid Caliphate (Nasrallah 2013, 33).

With respect to agricultural production, lands were exploited to the maximum capacity. The improved and effective management of water and crops through *qanats* and watermills among others resulted into what was termed, the Abbasid agricultural revolution. This phenomenon set up a circle of prosperity, which manifested in an increasing productivity and population growth (Watson 1983). As seen above, Michael Decker’s review of Watson’s *Islamic Green Revolution* demonstrated that this revolution was the result of a trend starting prior. However, it was after the advent of Islam and more particularly in the Abbasid period that the growth became substantial. The density of agricultural lands of Baghdad was expressed in the appellation of *al-ard al-sawad* (the black land) because of its intense land exploitation and demographics (Nasrallah 2013, 33). This sizable food production most probably triggered an important development of the culinary culture cuisine in the Abbasid period.

Abbasid food culture: origins and components of medieval Baghdadi cuisine

Several food historians explored Iraqi foodways. Maxime Rodinson underlined the strong continuity of the Abbasid cuisine with the local traditions of Iraq (Rodinson 1949). David Waines recognized the similarities between Abbasid recipes and those used by earlier civilisations such as the Sasanians (Waines 2003, 574). Nawal Nasrallah discussed the idea of continuous tradition further by pointing to the continuity of cooking manners and certain tastes from prehistoric to medieval times. For example, the predominance of boiled/simmered dishes such as stews and some herbs and spices including cumin, coriander, dill or mint, to name a few, or fermented sauces such as the Abbasid *murri*²³⁵ and the ancient *suqqi*²³⁶ were frequently used in Abbasid and Babylonian recipes (Nasrallah 2013, 55).

One of the well-known but overstated characteristics of Abbasid dishes was the Persian element. The adjustment of the recipes as to resemble more Persian ones can be tied to the broader cultural phenomenon in Abbasid times when the Persian Barmakid family held a major political influence in the court, and when everything Persian was fashionable (Kennedy 2016, 119, 122-123). In the culinary culture this Persian trend was reflected on certain dishes and on cooking utensils. In the cookbook

²³⁵ *Murri*: Cereal-based salty liquid fermented sauce with a sour and bitter taste (Nasrallah 2007, 579).

²³⁶ Similar to the ancient Roman salty fish sauce *garum*, the *suqqi* was a fermented sauce made of mixture of salted fish, shellfish and locusts used in ancient Mesopotamia (Nasrallah 2007, 580).

of the period discussed later, the dishes with a Persian element can be easily distinguished because they end with the suffix “aj”. Some examples were sour stews like *sikbāj* (stew soured in vinegar), *nārbāj* (pomegranate stew), *zīrbāj* (delicate stew of birds) (Nasrallah 2013, 58).

Despite preferences for more exotic delicacies, see the Persian example, the medieval culinary tradition of Baghdad included Arab dishes as well. These consisted of, but were not limited to, the popular *tharīd* dish (bread sopped in broth), or the meal of travellers hays (dates mixed with clarified butter and breadcrumbs). Some dishes attributed to the Persians like *sikbāj* (sour beef stew) or the dessert *fālūdḥaj* seemed to have been invented by the Arabs as some were cited in old Arabic poetry or have parallels in Arabic dictionaries (Nasrallah 2013, 59).

The important role of food in Abbasid society and especially among the leading class is attested by the fact that cooking was considered to be an art in the court culture of the Abbasid Caliphate. Caliphs, princes, courtiers, men of learning and boon companions were interested and asked to be knowledgeable about cooking. This is reflected by the number of cookbooks written or commissioned by the members of this class (Waines 2003, 574). Moreover, cooking contests were organised and poems were written about certain dishes. For example, the step brother of Harun al-Rashid (d. 809), Ibrahim b. al-Mahdi (d. 839) who was a devoted patron of arts, invented a number of dishes referred to as “*ibrāhimīyya*”, which were praised in poems and cookbooks (Nasrallah 2013, 38). Historian Geert Jan van Gelder released a publication examining the intersection of Arab culinary culture and literature (van Gelder 2000). An important cookbook survived from this period and provides an interesting insight into the foodways of the Iraqi society in Abbasid times.

3 *Kitab al-Tabikh/ The Book of Dishes*

Kitab al-Tabikh as a historical inquiry

Arabic cookbooks (12 manuals in total from the Near East, North Africa and Iberia dated between 10th and 14th centuries) compiled or written in the medieval period outnumber any other civilisation including the Chinese, famous for being the earliest culture to create fine cuisine (Waines 2003, 574). According to Maxime Rodinson, it was particularly in the Abbasid period that Arabic cookbooks developed (Rodinson 2001, 94). He explained this phenomenon with “conspicuous consumption”, which was practiced by the wealthy class of Abbasid society for whom excessive luxury and extravaganza became the socially accepted norm for quality-living (Rodinson 2001, 94-95). Blending literature and cuisine, two forms of art dear to the higher classes, cookbooks were greatly appreciated by the Abbasid society (Rodinson 2001, 97-99).

Al-Warraq’s *Kitab al-Tabikh* constitutes one of the earliest cookbooks of the eastern world, the first one being Apicius’ *Book of Cookery* written in the 4th century C.E. (Nasrallah 2013, 40). The *Kitab al-Tabikh* was written in Baghdad in the mid 10th century by Ibn al-Sayyar al-Warraq. Although the exact date of its production is unknown, the first editors Kaj Ohrnberg and Sahban Moueh dated it to the 940s on the basis of the life and ruling dates of eminent people mentioned in it, such as the caliph al-Muktafi (d. 908) and the writer Kushjim (d. 961) (Nasrallah 2007, 10; Ohrnberg and Moueh 1987).

Dishes and utensils in the Kitab al-Tabikh

Al-Warraq’s cookbook contained around 500 recipes and a list of ingredients, and kitchen utensils among other recommendations such as body exercises before eating

(Nasrallah 2007, 42). Food recipes (entrées, main dishes and desserts) were the most numerous but there were also drinks, medicinal and hygienic mixtures for cleaning the hands (*ushnān*). The most common dishes consisted of stews (e.g. *tharīd*, *zīrbāj*), grilled meat *kabāb* and, bread, which was an important part of the meal (e.g., *ruqāq*, thin bread enjoyed by the wealthy class) (Nasrallah 2007, 39-40).²³⁷

In an effort to acquire a better understanding of the utensils mentioned in the *Kitab al-Tabikh*, a functional classification was made which can be found in the appendix.²³⁸ What follows is the summary of the most relevant categories in the cookbook in relation to an archaeological ceramic assemblage.

Storage - Most of the storage objects were for keeping liquids (water, wine, milk and clarified butter). The greatest number of these items was made from earthenware followed by glass and animal skin such as *bustūqa*, an earthenware jar with a long neck (Nasrallah 2007, 680).

Dining - Objects used during the service of foods such as trays or plates were made of wood or vegetal elements (date fronds or rush stems). Eating vessels were generally made of earthenware or wood, while drinking vessels of glass or earthenware. Among these dining utensils, Chinese table wares were mentioned several times: *zubdiyya* (Chinese porcelain bowls of different sizes) and *khāfiqiyya* (thin glistening China bowl) (Nasrallah 2007, 685, 694, 696).²³⁹

Cooking - As the list of cooking utensils is extensive, this account is limited to cooking containers. These vessels were made of various metals (brass, copper or iron), soft-stone or earthenware. Metal was the most common, soft-stone and earthenware came after.²⁴⁰ Metal cooking pots with a rounded bottom such as the cauldron called *ṭinjīr* were used for recipes requiring prolonged cooking like boiling, continuous stirring and beating. Soft-stone or iron containers were employed interchangeably for braising and frying. Braised dishes seemed to be prepared in pots with a wide body and a narrowing rim like the soft-stone pot referred to as *burma dayyiqat al-ra's* (Nasrallah 2007, 681).

Of those numerous kitchen equipment mentioned in the *Kitab al-Tabikh*, the most useful objects for understanding Abbasid ceramics were storage vessels, cooking pots and dining vessels. However, little information was offered regarding their morphology such as shape and surface treatment. In order to acquire a deeper understanding of the role of dining and cooking objects in the Abbasid society, the pictorial evidence is examined.

4 Pictorial Evidence: illustrations of the *Kitab al-Diryaq* and the *Maqamat*

²³⁷ See also table 7.1 for the most popular foods of the Abbasids.

²³⁸ The different categories consist of “cooking: tools for cooking”, “cooking: cooking containers”, “storage”, “dining”, “baking” and “miscellaneous”; see: Appendix 4.

²³⁹ The *Kitab al-Tabikh* mentions a quite exceptional object, *shawka*, a tine or prong that Nasrallah suggests to be the equivalent of a fork (Nasrallah 2007, 695). This information may set up a more nuanced picture of the dining habits of the Abbasid court commonly associated with eating with their hands. Nevertheless, it is better to stay cautious with taking sources at face value.

²⁴⁰ Because metal objects are more numerous in the cookbook, this may not be a good point of comparison with an archaeological assemblage where earthenware obviously dominates. Despite this difference of material, it may still be worth looking into the formal repertoire of these cooking equipment.

Abbasid manuscripts did not include illustrations depicting dining scenes which might be contemporaneous to the *Kitab al-Tabikh* or the ceramics. Although this approach may include some anachronistic issues, four manuscripts from the end of the 12th and the early 13th century could be useful in providing hints about the nature of the dining and cooking equipment and how these were employed. In the following part, paintings depicting scenes involving food consumption and preparation are surveyed on the basis of the activity, including daily undertakings (mostly set outdoor), feasts and drinking sessions.

The manuscripts

Oleg Grabar and Richard Ettinghausen showed that the 12th and 13th century tradition of manuscript painting in Syria and Iraq was homogenous in terms of iconography, style and subjects (Ettinghausen and Grabar 1987, 375). Regarding the stylistic and iconographic components of these paintings, Ettinghausen used the term “new realism” (Ettinghausen 1977, 83). He argued that figural art created in the 12th and 13th century represented a continuum of the realistic style in figural representations developed in the 11th century Egypt and North Africa under the Fatimid dynasty (Ettinghausen 1977, 81). Other key factors in the development of figural painting were the “stories” *Maqamat* of al-Hariri and the folk art of shadow plays, respectively emerging in the 11th and the 12th centuries (Ettinghausen and Grabar 1987, 334).

Among this overarching unity in the paintings of the manuscripts, the main difference revolved around the themes treated in these books. The manuscripts mentioned here fall into two of these themes. The first theme is referred to as an “illustration of technical and scientific subject matter as visual aids to ensure proper identification and to facilitate explanations” (i.e., medicinal treatise) and the second is more broadly classified as paintings related to literary works (Ettinghausen and Grabar 1987, 375). The *Kitab al-Diryaq* and the *Maqamat* of al-Hariri illustrated these two themes. Some illustrations of these books are examined below.

The Kitab al-Diryaq

The *Kitab al-Diryaq* of the Paris National Library which was copied in 1199, constitutes one of the earliest illustrated Islamic manuscripts (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS. Arabe 2964). It is an Arabic codex on antidotes which were made with snake venom or which were created to counteract snake poisoning (Pancaroglu 2001, 155). The anonymous writer was known as pseudo-Galen (referring to the well-known 2nd century Greek physician and pharmacologist Galen) or Pseudo-Joannes Grammatikos (Ettinghausen 1977, 83). Although the historical accuracy of this 12th century manuscript is questionable, this book holds a remarkable pictorial program (Pancaroglu 2001, 156).

Al-Hariri's Maqamat

Abu Muhammad al-Qasim b. ‘Ali b. Muhammad b. ‘Uthman b. al-Hariri al-Basri (d. 1122), who is also known as al-Hariri of Basra, was the author of the *Maqamat* (assembly, session or séance), a literary genre founded in 10th century (Margoliouth and Pellat 1986, 221-222). These assemblies consisted of 50 anecdotes written in rhythmic prose and poetry, taking place in 50 cities, during which the narrator al-Harith was tricked by the anti-hero Abu Zayd al-Saraji (Margoliouth and Pellat 1986, 221-222). The *Maqamat* was appreciated widely by the educated class due to its linguistic ingenuity using Arabic rhetoric; it was copied and illustrated at least in a dozen of manuscripts (Grabar 1984, 7; Roxburgh 2013, 179). The stories and the

protagonists such as Abu Zayd who displayed wits contrary to moral norms reflected situations and anecdotes corroborating with urban life of large cities of the Islamic world (Ettinghausen 1977, 81-82).

Some paintings used here are part of the 1237 *Maqamat* of al-Hariri known with its former owner, Schefer. The book was copied and illustrated by Yahya b. Mahmud b. Yahya b. Abi al-Hasan b. Kuwarriha al-Wasiti whose family must have originated in Wasit in southern Iraq (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS. Arabe 5847) (Ettinghausen 1977, 105; Roxburgh 2013, 178).

In contrast to the manuscript dated to 1237, other extant copies of the *Maqamat* such as the Paris Library MS. Arabe 3929 were published less extensively. This copy of the *Maqamat* housed in the same library was roughly dated to the second quarter of the 13th century on the basis of stylistic features of its paintings (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS. Arabe 3929) (Ettinghausen 1977, 83).

Furthermore, another *Maqamat* book is examined. This latter which is undated is preserved in the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences in Saint Petersburg in Russia (MS. C-23). At an unknown date, the illustrations were damaged by Muslim iconoclasts drawing lines on the throat of the human figures. This manuscript was dated between 1225 and 1240s, on the basis of the stylistic criteria and iconography (Ettinghausen 1977, 105; Petrosyan 1995, 144-145).

According to the Islamic art historian Richard Ettinghausen, it was with Hariri's *Maqamat* that "Arab painting reached its apogée" (Ettinghausen 1977, 104). Although current art historical discussions are generally reticent to ideas revolving around "apogée" or "decline", it is still noteworthy to note that the paintings in the *Maqamat* manuscripts represented an unprecedented development both in the refinement of the pictorial program and the variety of subjects it tackled (Roxburgh 2013, 179-180). In these paintings, a great deal of effort was put in the representations of the details of objects as well as some spatial elements such as interiors or outdoor flora. All these elements contributed to the realism of these scenes thus representing an invaluable insight into daily life in medieval Iraq (Ettinghausen 1977, 104). Eminent scholars such as Oleg Grabar and Shirley Guthrie associated the illustrations of the *Maqamat* with documents of the society in the medieval period (Grabar 2006, 187-89; Roxburgh 2013, 180).

Daily activities

The first painting to be examined was included in the first part of the *Kitab al-Diryaq*, a book dealing with the lives of nine physicians (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS. Arabe 2964, old page 22). This painting depicts the physician Andromachus the Younger visiting the agriculturalists on his land estate. While the physician is watching farming activities, his servant brings food and drink to the workers (Pancaroğlu 2001, 160) (Fig. 7.1).

In the painting, the two-handled large jar carried by the servant contained undoubtedly liquids. This jar is depicted in a light orange colour, very similar to fired earthenware. It is adorned with incised lines. The rounded base resembles amphora bases. The incised wavy decoration on the upper part is commonly found on Islamic Unglazed Buff Wares.²⁴¹ Regarding the vessels containing the food, these were depicted as hemispherical bowls with high foots. The common colour (e.g., yellow) could suggest that these objects were made from the same material. However, it is difficult to tell if these are ceramics or metal wares. Considering that the food is

²⁴¹ For example, François and Shaddoud 2013, pl. 5.2.

offered to agriculturalists, it may be tempting to believe that we are dealing with ceramic objects. Despite the stylized depiction of the food, it is quite clear that the meal offered to the farmers is not the large piece of meat consumed in feasts (as we will see in other paintings) but rather smaller and less costly portions of food.

The second is an outdoor scene from a painting in al-Hariri's *Maqamat* copied in 1237 which is housed in the same library (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS. Arabe 5847, fol. 139v) (Fig. 7.2). This painting illustrates food preparations for the feast in the 44th *maqama*. In this story, al-Harith recounted how Abu Zayd duped the hosts by reciting strange verses during dinner offered in a rich tent. Abu Zayd demanded presents when the hosts asked the meaning of his sayings with the promise of delivering their meaning the next morning. Without keeping his promise, Abu Zayd left secretly after everyone fell asleep (Grabar 1984, 96).

The scene shows food being cooked and served, while in the background a camel is being killed. The content of the cooking pot is transferred into large bowls carried away by a woman. The large cooking pot or cauldron was depicted with a rectangular body, slightly flaring rims in black. The shape and the colour are reminiscent of metal or soft-stone vessels, a common cooking utensil in the Abbasid period (Nasrallah 2007, 612; Vroom 2009, 247). Food is served in relatively deep medium-sized vessels bearing banded decoration on the upper part of the exterior, which might be stylized representation of an inscription. With respect to the formal repertoire, these vessels have a conical body with straight flaring rims, while those of the *Kitab al-Diryaq* display more rounded forms. Similar to the illustration in the *Kitab al-Diryaq*, these bowls are painted in yellow. It is more difficult to tell whether they are from earthenware or from metal.

The third scene is included in the copy of the *Maqamat* preserved in Saint Petersburg and depicts the camel caravan's stop during a travel to the Egyptian town of Damietta (4th *maqama*). In the foreground, camels are parked while men are resting in tents. On the upper right corner of the painting, a man is cooking. The man is preparing fire underneath a cooking pot with a globular body, two ear-shaped handles on the rim and a lid. The body of the pot is grey from contact with fire. This depiction suggests that smaller pots, possibly more suitable for travelling, were employed for smaller portions of food (Saint Petersburg Scientific Academy, MS.C-23, page 22, fol. 12r) (Petrosyan 1995, 144-145) (Fig. 7.3).

Feasts

Another painting is from the Saint Petersburg copy of al-Hariri's *Maqamat* (Saint Petersburg Scientific Academy, MS.C-23, page 125, fol. 103v) (Fig. 7.4). This indoor scene depicts a crowded wedding banquet illustrating the 18th *maqama* mentioned below. This group of men is gathered around the food. The meal is served in colourful vessels of various sizes placed on the floor from which the guests eat with their hands. The half-moon shaped forms painted in white spread along the vessels illustrate bread pieces. Two figures drinking from a bowl are portrayed on the left, while another man is drinking from a jug held by a servant on the right side. In comparison to the monochrome vessels of the previous paintings, the fact that these vessels are depicted in multiple colours increase the possibility that they might be ceramics. This painting is also interesting for the variation in the sizes of the vessels. The depictions of the different containers may help us to distinguish that large vessels contain roasted meat to be consumed commonly, while other dishes are served in medium bowls. Further, small bowls seemed to be used for drinking. The medium-sized lobbed bowl placed between two roasted meats seems to contain a white granular food.

The 1237 *Maqamat* of the Paris library includes several feast scenes. Two paintings illustrated the 18th *maqama* where Abu Zayd's exchanged the gift of a glass vessel over more valuable silver trays (Grabar 1984, 57-58; Roxburgh 2013, 202). In the story, the protagonists Abu Zayd and al-Harith were invited to a wedding feast offered by a merchant in Sinjar (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS. Arabe 5847, fol. 47b) (Fig. 7.5). The guests are sitting on the floor and eating food served in different kinds of bowls and dishes on low tables while two servants are bringing roasted meat. The bowls are of small and medium sizes with flaring walls; they are painted in different colours. The roasted animal (probably the main dish) is served in a large dish with banded decoration. The anecdote continued with Abu Zayd leaving the wedding feast when a glass bowl of sweetmeats was offered to him (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS. Arabe 5847, fol. 48a) (Grabar 1984, 57-58) (Fig. 7.6). When the hosts asked him the reason for his departure, Abu Zayd answered that he had sworn an oath of not staying near a betrayer, with this latter implying the glass bowl. According to Abu Zayd, the transparency of glass made it inadequate for keeping secrets (Roxburgh 2013, 202). Abu Zayd's answer which was mixed eloquently with moral connotations, was well-received by the hosts. They elevated him to the most honorary position and offered him ten silver trays of sweetmeats (Roxburgh 2013, 202). In addition to its impressive paintings, this story is interesting because it sheds light on the values attached to objects. From this anecdote, it appears that silver was the most valuable material, followed by glass. Probably ceramics stood at lowest scale within this set of values.

The copy of the *Maqamat* attributed to second quarter of the 13th century in the Paris National Library shows interesting dining feasts as well (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS. Arabe 3929). Two of them depict a group of men eating red meat, probably a roasted animal.

In the first painting referring to the banquet of the 18th *maqama* seen above, four men, who knelt down (one of them without beard and his headgear different from the others) eat a roasted animal with their hands (Fig. 7.7) (MS. Arabe 3929, fol. 149r) (Grabar 1984, 57-59). The meat which is surrounded by round bread pieces (painted in white) is placed in the middle of a small table or tray where a piece of cloth is hanging. The youngest man (a page or servant?) who can be discerned from his face without beard is cutting the meat with a knife, while the others are holding small pieces of bread in their hands. On the table, there are two high-footed small vessels. These could contain smaller portions of food or dipping sauces (according to the *Kitab al-Tabikh*, meat was often served with sauces). These could also be used for drinking. The yellow colour might suggest that they are made of gold or metal.

In the second painting depicting a feast from the same manuscript (fol. 120r), the 30th *maqama* is illustrated and red meat is served (Grabar 1984, 77) (Fig. 7.8). The setting is slightly different. Two bearded men are seated around the table, while two pages behind attend them. Another young servant is making fresh air with a fan. The food is served on a high footed tray. Similar to those depicted on the previous scene, three small bowls (of gold or another metal) are placed around the meat, probably used for dipping sauces. The tray is posited on a piece of cloth or leather, which is surrounded by pieces of round bread.

The third illustration depicts the feast organised by Abu Zayd in the 29th *maqama*. In this story set in a *khan* in Wasit (Iraq), Abu Zayd invited the wealthy guests of a hostel to a banquet to celebrate the fake wedding of al-Harith. Abu Zayd tricked the guests by poisoning them with food and stole their goods after they fell asleep (Grabar 1984, 75-76).

The feast is offered to a large audience (MS. Arabe 3929, fol. 179r) (Fig. 7.9). Five kneelt men are eating with their hands different kinds of foods served in three small shallow plates with high ring foots. The depicted foods are of different colours, however, these cannot be distinguished clearly. On the right, the servant holds a fan with one hand, while carrying a small tray with a two handled jug probably for serving liquids with the other.

Drinking scenes

The *Maqamat* manuscript dated to the second quarter of the 13th century located in the Paris library includes two drinking scenes. The first is an outdoor drinking scene illustrating the 24th *maqama* where a group of friends and Abu Zayd (identified as the old man) are being entertained by cupbearers and musicians (Grabar 1984, 68) (MS. Arabe 3929, fol. 165v) (Fig. 7.10). The audience is drinking wine from transparent wine cups most probably made of glass. One man on the left is drinking from a glass bottle/ewer, while others use conical glass beakers. Furthermore, in the foreground, three vessels are depicted next to the white bearded man. One large bowl with inscriptions (unreadable now but these could be associated with inscriptions including poetry dealing with wine drinking) stands in the middle of two other smaller plates. The large vessel is deep and has a high foot of a triangular shape, and a semi-hemispherical body with curving rims. It seems to be employed for wine whereas, plates contain foods such as fruits. These plates are smaller and have high-footed bases of triangular shape.

The other drinking scene in the same manuscript (fol. 34v) illustrates the tavern mentioned in the 12th *maqama* in which al-Harith and his companions crossed the perilous desert between Syria and Iraq being guided by a holy young man. After they arrived safely to the town of Anah on the Euphrates, al-Harith finds Abu Zayd in a tavern (Grabar 1984, 47) (Fig. 7.11). This scene depicts a white-bearded man drinking while being entertained by musicians. The wine beakers are painted in a similar manner to those of the previous scene, suggesting that they were probably made of glass as well. This scene includes a wide range of drinking and eating utensils. There are two large storage jars, one cream and another dark red. The light coloured large storage jar stands next to the man on the left. It is a tall jar with an elliptical body, a wide mouth and a small base. Its white-creamish colour and the banded decoration zigzag motifs contouring the upper part of the body display strong similarities with heavy utility wares jars of Unglazed Buff Wares commonly used in the early Islamic through the middle Islamic periods. The dark red coloured jar does not stand but is posited horizontally on the floor. It has an elliptical body decorated with two bands, a large mouth and a pointed base. Further, on the floor, other objects are depicted. Two small vessels bearing a similar shape to those of the other drinking scene are illustrated (high bases of triangular shape, flat rimmed shallow bowls). Another wide and shallow vessel which looks like a tray is carrying two ewers probably made of glass and a cup/beaker. The last object is a two-handled rather small jug or cup looking similar to Unglazed Buff Wares used for drinking or serving liquids.

The other scene depicting a tavern is in the 1237 copy of the *Maqamat* and illustrates the 12th *maqama* mentioned above (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS. Arabe 5847, fol. 33r) (Fig. 7.12) (Grabar 1984, 47). The painting depicts a lively tavern on two floors where Abu Zayd is drinking. On the upper floor, two men are drinking from small triangular cups (glass?). Two handled large jars in a cream colour which illustrate a stock of wine jars (amphora?) are on the right side of

the illustration, while on the left side, the servant on first floor is handing a jar to the servant on the upper floor. In the foreground, another servant is emptying the wine jar to a high-footed large drinking bowl decorated with inscriptions, by filtering it through a piece of white cloth. Another pile of four jars stand in front of the musician, next to Abu Zayd.

Despite the fact that these paintings are from a later period, they provide numerous hints about the daily usage of ceramics in the Near East. It is therefore interesting to discuss this pictorial evidence in relation to the pottery evidence and the cookbook.

5 Discussion

For the discussion section, first the utensils of the *Kitab al-Tabikh* are compared and confronted to the paintings of Islamic manuscripts and the Gözlükule Abbasid ceramics in order to investigate whether we can find depictions and descriptions of the actual pottery finds of the site in these sources. The ceramics are classified according to their function including cooking, dining and storing; the different sources and the pottery evidence are discussed in the frame of these preliminary categories. Afterwards, by carrying the previous analysis further, the focus shifts towards a more in-depth study of food consumption. Different ceramic groups of the Gözlükule pottery corpus are examined in relation to the previous texts and pictorial materials and to additional secondary literature about the Abbasid culinary culture, to put together a first proposal on every day dining habits in Tarsus from an archaeological perspective. This last issue is developed in detail further below.

Cooking

As stated above, the *Kitab al-Tabikh* mentioned various tools for cooking including cooking pots. With regards to the material, the cookbook recommended soft-stone (soapstone) or metal containers especially for braising and frying. The book referred to a kind of soft-stone cooking pot called *burma ḍayyiqat al-ra's*, characterised by a wide body and a narrowing rim and recommended it for braised dishes such as *muṭajjanāt* (braised poultry) (Nasrallah 2007, 612). The detailed description of the shape of the pot may reflect the importance of cooking methods in the Abbasid culinary customs. Further, the cookbook mentioned other metal cooking pots with a rounded bottom such as the *qidr mudawwar* and recommended these containers for boiling foods and dishes requiring stirring and beating like *khābīs* and *fālūdḥaj* (condensed puddings) (Nasrallah 2007, 693). The recurrence of metal among cooking pots mentioned in the cookbook is not so much consistent with an archaeological assemblage, where earthenware pots dominate in strong contrast to metal containers, which are recorded more rarely.

The outdoor scene from the 1237 copy of al-Hariri's *Maqamat* shows a big black cauldron made of metal or soft-stone. The cooking pot is large and has flaring rims. The cook is preparing food for a feast by stirring it. The food could be liquid or semi-liquid in consistency. According to the *Kitab al-Tabikh*, this cooking technique would require a round-based cooking pot. The form of the cooking pot on this painting does not correlate with the description of the cookbook, while the pottery material does (Fig. 7.2).

The cooking pots of the Gözlükule medieval ceramic corpus, however, correlate well with the *Kitab al-Tabikh*'s descriptions regarding the vessel shape and the cooking techniques. The Gözlükule pottery finds includes two classes of cooking

pots: Brittle Ware and Soft-stone Imitation. Although both are earthenware, their shapes are suitable for some of the cooking methods depicted in the cookbook such as boiling and prolonged cooking.

First, Soft-stone Imitation mimics the angular form and the decoration of soft-stone vessels (burnished black surface; incised geometric motifs). The complete Soft-stone Imitation cooking pot of the Gözlükule medieval ceramic corpus displays a rounded base, slightly inverting rims with four horizontal ledged handles. The form of the pot is similar to the cooking pots described in the 10th century cookbook like *burma dayyiqat al-ra's* or *qidr mudawwar* apparently suited for boiling and prolonged stirring (Nasrallah 2007, 681, 694) (cf. App. 1: Soft. Imi. Pl. 1-2).

The Brittle Ware cooking pots are more difficult to correlate with the descriptions in the cookbook. Although its globular body and slightly inverted rims are ideal for preparing slowly cooked, presumably boiled foods such as stews, the Brittle Ware does not seem to be similar to the objects mentioned in the cookbook (cf. App. 1: B. Ware. Pl. 1-3). The encampment scene from the copy of the *Maqamat* in Saint Petersburg is interesting in this respect. In the upper right corner of the painting, a man is preparing food in a cooking jar on a lively burning fire (Fig. 7.3). The cooking jar appears to be a closed ceramic form with a globular body and a short neck with two hooked handles. It is covered with a lid. The lower part has become grey/black from the contact with fire. The shape of this cooking jar looks more similar to the Brittle Ware jars.²⁴² However, it would be inaccurate to propose that Brittle Ware cooking pots were used in outdoor setting only because the evidence is limited.

Dining

The elaborate nomenclature used for dining vessels in the *Kitab al-Tabikh* demonstrated the importance of dining equipment. Table 7.2 illustrates that most of the eating vessels mentioned are qualified on the basis of the number of people they can feed. These vessels were available in several sizes (from feeding more than 10 people to one person). Further, the fashionable Chinese vessels appeared in the cookbook including Chinese porcelain bowls, *khāfiqiyya* “thin glistening China bowl” made of earthenware (Nasrallah 2007, 685). The recovery of fragments of Yue Ware at Gözlükule suggests that Chinese ceramics were indeed used as daily objects (cf. App. 1: Other Mono. Wares, Pl. 14, no: 36.1217). These imported wares shed light on the variety of table wares used by the Abbasid society and by extension, the importance of presentation for dining. This point is discussed further below.

With regards to the question of how ceramics are used in Islamic paintings depicting feasts, one of the most detailed information can be deduced from the wedding banquets painting in al-Hariri's *Maqamat* dated to the second quarter of the 13th century (Fig. 7.4). In fact, the vessels depicted in this banquet are likely to be ceramics since they are painted in different colours. These vessels consist of several rounded bowls and dishes of different sizes and contain food. Their morphological repertoire is similar to the table wares found in the Gözlükule corpus. As discussed previously, larger bowls are employed for larger portions of food such as roasted animals, while medium sized dishes contain other foods.²⁴³ From this, one could conjecture that the main dishes, predominantly the meat-based varieties (for relatively wealthy consumers), were served in large vessels, while the appetizers and sides dishes were kept in smaller ones. In this painting, the medium-sized lobbed bowl

²⁴² For examples of Brittle Ware cooking jars, see: Vroom 2009, 255-256, fig. 8-10.

²⁴³ The same observation is valid for the wedding banquet of the 1237 copy of the *Maqamat* (Fig. 7.5).

placed between two roasted meats seems to contain white granular food. This dish may depict a dish similar to *harīsa* or *ḥinṭiyya* (crushed wheat dish) both frequently mentioned in the *Kitab al-Tabikh*

Small to medium bowls were used for drinking or serving liquids such as wine. For example, the *Kitab al-Tabikh* mentions *bāṭiyya*, a big and wide bowl similar to a punch bowl where wine is scooped from (Nasrallah 2007, 680). A similar wine bowl decorated with inscriptions is depicted in the tavern scenes in the copies of *the Maqamat* housed in the Paris National Library (Fig. 7.10-Fig. 7.12). The equivalent of this wine bowl has not yet been discovered in an archaeological context but these paintings help us to consider that bowls are employed in drinking and dining settings interchangeably.

The morphological attributes of dining utensils in the *Kitab al-Tabikh* are not described with much detail. The cookbook mentions “big and wide bowls” such as *qaṣ’a* and *mi’kala* (Nasrallah 2007, 689, 693). Apparently, the term *ṭabaq* referred to plates and trays which were generally made of wood or palm fronds such as *ṭabaq khalanj* made of heath wood or *ṭabaq khūṣ* made of palm fronds (Nasrallah 2007, 696-697). In both of the Paris manuscripts several vessel shapes can be distinguished, most of them modelled on a higher foot. Conical bowls with flaring walls were probably used for serving stews (e.g., Fig. 7.2), while shallow vessels such as plates or small dishes were depicted with a rounded body and may have contained more solid foods (e.g., Fig. 7.9).

As seen elsewhere in this thesis, the Gözlükule medieval pottery corpus includes mainly glazed table wares, which were presumably used for the service and consumption of food. These vessels display various shapes: small dishes (such as Lustreware condiment dishes, c. 10 cm of rim diameter), large rounded bowls and shallow plates (c. 25-30 cm of rim diameter) among others (Fig. 7.14). These objects can be compared with the dining equipment of the cookbook and of the paintings only on a very general basis. Deeper containers may be used for more liquid dishes, whereas shallow ones for more solid edibles. These questions are discussed in more detail below.

Storing

The most common material for storage objects in the *Kitab al-Tabikh* was earthenware. Among these ceramics, a number of storage vessels were mentioned. These mostly included glazed and unglazed jars such as *jarra khaḍrā’*, a green-glazed ewer or jar without filter, or *khābiyya*, a big cylindrical jar with rounded bottom for keeping liquids (mostly wine), which was preserved partly buried in the ground (Nasrallah 2007, 681, 683, 685).

From the pictorial evidence, the drinking scenes set in taverns offer the most interesting illustration for storage objects. In two of the tavern scenes numerous amphorae/ unglazed jars are depicted for storing liquids (Fig. 7.11; Fig. 7.12). Since they were placed in taverns, the stored liquids may have been very well alcoholic beverages. The vessels in these places are painted as cream-coloured jars. Some have an elliptical body with two handles attached between the rim and the upper part of the body (e.g., Fig. 7.12) and seem to be suitable for transport and storage. Another elliptical large jar without handles had a wide mouth and a flat narrow base and a banded decoration with zigzag motifs on the upper part of the body. Judging from its size and shape, the jar may be more appropriate for storage rather than transport (e.g., Fig. 7.11). Another cream coloured, two-handled large jar similar in form and decoration (incised straight and wavy lines) appears in the paintings of the *Kitab al-*

Diryaq. The servant carrying is probably bringing drinks to men working the land (Fig. 7.1). In addition to these cream coloured objects, a dark red jar, laid horizontally on the floor is depicted in one of the tavern scenes (Fig. 7.11). It has an elliptical body decorated with lines, a large mouth and a pointed base. These features may point toward a probable use as an amphora.

Furthermore, the tavern painting (MS. 5847, fol. 33r) offers information on how wine was prepared for consumption. According to the painting, the content of the wine jar is filtered through cloth and poured into a large drinking bowl (Fig. 7.12).

These paintings and the evidence in the *Kitab al-Tabikh* demonstrate that large ceramic jars and amphorae were used in the storage of liquids. The depictions of jars bear some similarities with Unglazed Buff Wares, in terms of formal repertoire, fabric colour and decoration. Although the Gözlükule medieval ceramics do not include such large jars among heavy utility wares, the tall-necked, two-handled jars constitute one of the most common forms of Unglazed Buff Wares in the assemblage (cf. App. 1: AMP. Plate 1, no: 35.2012). Further, the dark red, bag-shaped Palestinian amphora of Gözlükule may be compared to the dark-red, large jar depicted on the floor of the tavern (cf. App. 1: AMP. Plate 1, no: 38.146).

The combination of different historical sources with the ceramic evidence provides general references to understand the form and the function of storage, cooking and dining utensils. For example, some ceramics of the Gözlükule medieval pottery assemblage such as the Unglazed Buff Wares (common wares), and to a certain extent, some table wares and cooking pots, correlate with the depictions in illustrated manuscripts and with those in the *Kitab al-Tabikh*. However, it is questionable whether these written and pictorial evidences offer information that would be a total match with the actual pottery finds of the Gözlükule corpus. Nevertheless, these various sets of data show that a distinctive taste for culinary equipment including ceramics was developed in the medieval period. This final part explores specifically the dining culture in Tarsus during Abbasid times through an archaeological window by presenting initial conclusions on the subject.

Preliminary proposal about the eating habits in Abbasid Tarsus

This first proposition on diet and dining customs in Abbasid Tarsus attempts to understand food consumption by a ceramic perspective. For this, two kinds of data are discussed, the ceramic assemblage of the villa (chapter five) and two classes of glazed table wares of the Gözlükule pottery assemblage (i.e., Polychrome Painted Glazed Ware and Lustrewares). By readapting the previous discussion about combining different sources to get a glimpse into how ceramics were used in daily life, the pottery datasets are analysed further, in relation to other studies dealing with medieval Islamic food history and other questions. Some discussion points deal with how and by whom the ceramics were used in daily life, what were the values attached to these objects, and whether the morphological properties of the Gözlükule pottery finds shed light on particular foods and eating habits.

Dining in the villa - As seen in chapter five, the pottery assemblage of the villa was dominated by glazed table wares presumably because the glazed and decorated ceramics were retained, while the unglazed material were discarded by the excavators. As a result, this ceramic corpus does not represent a normal archaeological pottery assemblage, comparable, for example, to those found during the current Gözlükule excavations. Despite the data bias, an attempt to reconstruct dining habits in the building is offered. Thus, it should be stressed that the following proposal is largely

based on speculations and should be rather seen as a mental exercise, closer to fiction rather than real facts. For the moment we accept the possibility that the ceramic assemblages are related to the use of the rooms especially in the time it was used as a residential building. However, we cannot in the end be certain about this.

The largest rooms of the house produced the most important quantities of pottery. Room 5 (“East House”) was situated in the centre of the villa, next to the kitchen; it was easily accessible via corridors, while Room 8 (“East Street”) was in the southeast of the villa (Fig. 5.19). The location of these areas and the ceramic finds may perhaps help us to associate them with living quarters where different kinds of daily activities including craft production and food consumption were practiced, although these suggestions may only be valid to a certain extent. The different functions of these rooms, the layout of the villa and the problems related to their interpretations were discussed extensively previously.

The ceramic assemblage of the Room 5 (“East House”) included mostly imported glazed table wares (different kinds of Iraqi White Opaque Glazed Ware such as Lustrewares and White Opaque Glazed Ware with cobalt blue decoration) (Fig. 5.16-18). These were primarily represented by rounded bowls with the typical Iraqi form (rounded bowl with everted rim), in small to medium sizes (Fig. 5.19). A number of sherds belonging to a jug of Unglazed Moulded Ware were found in the assemblage suggesting that this jug was used with these table wares.

Probably due to refuse, the pottery assemblage of Room 8 was more diverse, in terms of provenance and form. On the one hand, there were jars, pots and bowls of Polychrome Painted Glazed Ware and Monochrome Green Wares which were very probably local productions. On the other, there were imported bowls and plates in smaller quantities (Fig. 5.19).

The first proposition concerns the assemblage of the Room 5. The corpus was quite homogenous and contained almost exclusively imported Iraqi fine wares of different sizes. The homogeneity of the assemblage may perhaps allow us to associate it with a tableset. In fact, one may conjecture that these vessels were employed as an ensemble for dining, where various vessels were spread for various foods. In the Roman and late Antique periods, silver table wares which were made in sets, were referred to as *argentum escarium* (Knudsen 2000, 182). Even though the archaeological evidence is not so clear about these objects, these tablesets were designed to host nine to 12 guests with all the required dining utensils (different kinds of vessels, egg cups, plates, bowls, etc.) (Knudsen 2000, 182). Similarly, the Brittle Ware cooking pots, from the Roman to the early Islamic period, were presumably sold as a kit (Vokaer 2010, 624). This kitchen set contained different forms of vessels; it was generally comprised of “a tall cooking pot, a shallow pan and a jug” (Vokaer 2010, 606). In the early Islamic period, these forms corresponded to the two-handled holemouth cooking pots and pans (Vokaer 2010, fig. 1.7, 9). Drawing on these examples, there might be some chances that table wares were employed in similar ways in the Abbasid period. The Unglazed Moulded Ware jug which was used in the service of liquids and found in the same assemblage may have completed the dining set together with these more costly ceramic vessels (Fig. 7.13). Furthermore, Room 5 which was associated with a reception room in chapter five, could probably support the characterisation of these fine wares as a table set.

As for the corpus of Room 8 which was likely to be a dump, it is more difficult to come up with a pattern. We don’t know whether these objects came from the same context, probably not. In any case, the variety of ceramics recorded there

may be read in more general ways. This assemblage may show the diversified use of ceramics and the high demand for such products.

The ceramic assemblages of Room 5 and Room 8 shed light on the common use of glazed table wares among domestic objects. Although one cannot be sure if these two rooms were primary living quarters, the distribution of the pottery in Room 5, may especially reflect several trends about consumption patterns. First, the ubiquity of imported bowls and dishes in the central room of the building may perhaps help us to conjecture that these vessels were employed for the service and consumption of food in a dining room or a reception hall where prestige and display were important. Second, the diversity of the morphological repertoire of the pottery finds of this building may be related with economic and functional aspects, high demand for a wide range of forms, probably different vessels for different foods as one could observe in the pictorial and written sources. More generally, the ceramic assemblage of the “villa” may be seen as a demonstration of the socio-cultural and economic context of the Abbasid period where status and display were important values.²⁴⁴ These key issues are considered for further analysis in the following part.

Dinings compared - The second proposal on dining in Abbasid Tarsus relates to the use of Polychrome Painted Glazed Ware — most probably a local production- and of the imported ceramic class of Lustrewares that probably came from Iraq.

Lustrewares have been generally assigned to an up-scale ceramic production on the basis of its technological complexity, its long-distance distribution and its consumption in urban settlements.²⁴⁵ It was an export commodity. Representing the major group of the Gözlükule table wares, Polychrome Painted Glazed Ware displays a diversified morphological repertoire and decoration where the most common shapes belong to a medium-large rounded bowl and a dish with a flat everted rim. In comparison to Lustrewares, the fabric of Polychrome Painted Glazed Ware is coarser and its distribution limited to the Near East, in particular to northern Syria and southeastern Turkey.²⁴⁶

When one contrasts the physical properties of these two table wares, notwithstanding the differences in vessel shape, one could notice that the volume capacity of the most common vessels, the bowl and the plate, was fairly similar.²⁴⁷ Respectively, the deeper containers could be filled up to 1.9 litres, whereas the shallower forms roughly to 0.9-0.8 litres (Fig. 7.14).

Moreover, both of these wares display various decorative elements which are comparable, such as dots, split-palmettes, diamond-shaped checkerboard patterns, or almond-shaped motifs. As such, these designs show a common decorative vocabulary which may reflect a shared taste in the Middle East, when the Abbasid Caliphate had control over a vast geography (Fig. 7.15, Fig. 7.16). As mentioned elsewhere this cohesive cultural *koiné* was underpinned by economic and socio-cultural factors such as the intensification of trade activities in the 9th - 10th century and the dissemination of common values, to mention a few. Historian Maxime Rodinson noted that Abbasid society was characterised by conspicuous consumption, creating a demand for

²⁴⁴ Recently, Hugh Kennedy has argued that the Abbasid society was a society of display and status. This is a personal communication with Prof. Kennedy (2015).

²⁴⁵ For further information, see: chapter four.

²⁴⁶ For further information, see: chapters four and five.

²⁴⁷ The vessel volume was calculated by a special application developed by CRéA-Patrimoine (Research Centre in Archaeology and Heritage, Université libre de Bruxelles). I am grateful to Prof. Agnès Vokaer for sharing this application with me.

expensive goods, which were used among others as symbols of social and economic hierarchy (Rodinson 2001, 94-95). When these luxury products could not be purchased, less costly alternative of these objects were obtained. For ceramics, this process may have triggered the spread of certain decorative styles and pottery technologies, which were duplicated or readopted on various wares of different qualities. Lustreware and Polychrome Painted Glazed Ware may illustrate good examples of this kind of activity. Polychrome Painted Glazed Ware might in fact probably constitute a cheaper variation of the more widely distributed and more costly table ware Lustreware.

In order to understand Abbasid food culture, the *Kitab al-Tabikh* was discussed above. Along a large list, the manual included peculiar names for dining vessels (Table. 7.18). We have seen that these objects cannot be directly attributed to the glazed table wares of the Gözlükule assemblage, however, the different qualifications of these eating and serving equipment may illustrate that commensality – the practice of eating together – held a crucial position in the socio-politics of the period.²⁴⁸

Some underlying factors of the custom of dining as a group were obviously cultural. Communal meals were reflections of the fundamental values of Islam, generosity and hospitality (Perry 2001, 228). To demonstrate this idea, historian Charles Perry cited a famous saying of the prophet Mohammad: “Food for one is enough for two, food for two is enough for four, food for four is enough for eight” (Perry 2001, 228).

In addition, the sharing of food included a socio-political character. This practice helped to establish and strengthen social bonds, and to win respect and approval in the Muslim community. Another term that tells much about social assimilation through eating is *adab* of dining, an Arabic word referring to “proper conduct and etiquette” (Heine 1988, 8-9). The *Kitab al-Tabikh* holds interesting examples related to *adab* and food presentation: “the consummate companion eats his food using two fingers only, gently and quickly”, “the accomplished companion does not sip the stew in the main bowl or inspect to see what it is in”, “he should not look at the communal dish...” (Nasrallah 2007, 509-10). These indications bear witness to the peculiar decorum one was expected to act with and the use of communal a vessel to consume food.

After discussing the values attached to ceramics and food consumption, it is tempting to find out more about how these objects were used on a daily basis, in particular, what kind of foods was eaten. What are the relations between the shape and the function of the table ware groups under study? Can the dietary practices of Abbasid times mentioned in texts be traced on these pottery classes ?

In addition to the cookbook, Muhammad Ahsan’s book *Social Life under the Abbasids* might help us improve the picture of Abbasid culinary culture. The table offers an overview of the common dishes of the Abbasid period and their consistency (e.g., soft or hard) (Tab. 7.17). On the basis of this table, one can deduct that liquid dishes which were easily chewable were more customary in Abbasid society (Nasrallah 2007, 34). The texture of these foods might have necessitated deeper vessels to avoid overflowing. In the Gözlükule pottery assemblage, the rounded bowl was one of the most common ceramic shapes among both Lustrewares and Polychrome Painted Glazed Wares. The overwhelming presence of this vessel form

²⁴⁸ In fact, banquets constitute one of the most prevalent settings in which the “gatherings” of the 11th century Arab society took place. This can be observed in the episodes narrated in the 11th-century Arabic literary text, *Maqamat*. For the stories see: *Les séances de Hariri* (Amer 1964) *passim*.

may be explained by its function, serving juicy foodstuffs such as stews and pulses. Furthermore, these deeper and wider vessels may also be more useful for communal dining, because the food parts did not fall easily from the broad concave container. Plates or other shallow shapes might be used for chunkier edibles, including meat or fruit (Ahsan 1979, 133).

In the Abbasid period, polychrome glazing was widely used and covered generally the interior of vessels. This technological innovation enhanced the functional properties of ceramics by making them resistant to liquids and thus by better conserving watery foods. The use of glazes on pottery seems compatible with more liquid meals of Abbasid times: juicy dishes would be easily consumed from glazed table wares. Joanita Vroom's research on the Brittle Ware cooking pots had a similar proposition, saucy dishes were presumably more popular in the Abbasid period (Vroom 2009).

Functional use may not be the only reason behind the appearance and the wide use of table wares in the Abbasid period. These vessels might have been significant socio-culturally, by conveying social prestige and by expressing generosity and hospitality, especially during communal meals. Food was intricately connected to power: it would offer space to show off by throwing large feasts or to gain respect and to build a more cohesive community by providing free meals to the unprivileged classes. The paintings of the Islamic manuscripts show these customs as well (e.g., Fig. 7.4; Fig. 7.5).

The visual sources examined above have shown that dining was communal. In banquets, the guests gathered around several bowls filled with food and ate with their hands. Bread was an important part of the meal, as was the roasted meat for the wealthy class. The main dish (e.g., meat) was served in a large bowl, while side dishes and appetizers were served in small to medium vessels. Small bowls and juglets circulated among guests for drinks.

One for all and all for one? - Lustrewares are renown to be one of the most elaborate table ware classes of Abbasid times. Requiring technical complexity, these luxury ceramics were associated with a more privileged class (e.g., the elite or rulers, bureaucrats, merchants, scholars and military men). Hence, one could speculate that Lustreware pottery may have been used for the consumption of edibles which were comparable to the foods mentioned in the *Kitab al-Tabikh*.

The common decorative vocabulary and the close parallels of the vessel capacities between Lustrewares and Polychrome Painted Glazed Ware may lead us to conclude that bowls and plates of both these wares may have been used similarly. On the one hand, the deeper vessels such as the bowls would allow the consumption of more juicy dishes including stews, porridges and pulses. On the other hand, shallower vessels would be more practical to serve chunkier edibles, such as *kabāb* and other foods. Moreover, the medium sized to large vessels which are common in the formal repertoire of these table ware groups seem to be suited for semi-liquid and soft dishes, which were consumed by two or more people – as one could notice in the texts and the visual materials. Further, the flashy decoration of these ceramics enhanced their display value, probably demonstrating power and allowing to fit in and stand out in the Abbasid society.

This multi-disciplinary approach using archaeological evidence, texts and pictorial sources, is worth trying, in particular if one sets to explore the under-studied topic of food consumption in Abbasid times. However, it may not be so simple to analyse these datasets in a similar way. Concerning the visual materials, one needs to

be careful of not misinterpreting an established model of painting of a more idealised nature with a more realistic illustration: for instance, a continuously duplicated feast illustration with a painting accurately depicting the different parts of daily objects. This situation seems to be more recurrent among religious scenes painted in medieval Christian books, though (Vroom 2012, 350). For texts, instead of taking the information of the cookbooks at face value which may be misleading, it may be more accurate to examine the socio-cultural role of the various kitchen equipment and the general dining culture in their cultural context.

Ultimately, this multi-disciplinary approach was useful in gaining a fuller understanding of food consumption in Gözlükule. There is still a lot to explore about this subject. For instance, the analysis of the faunal and floral remains of the Islamic phase have a good potential of broadening our knowledge about the dietary practices of the site, residue analysis on the pottery finds may also shed light on how ceramics were used in the food preparation and consumption processes.

CHAPTER 7: FIGURES

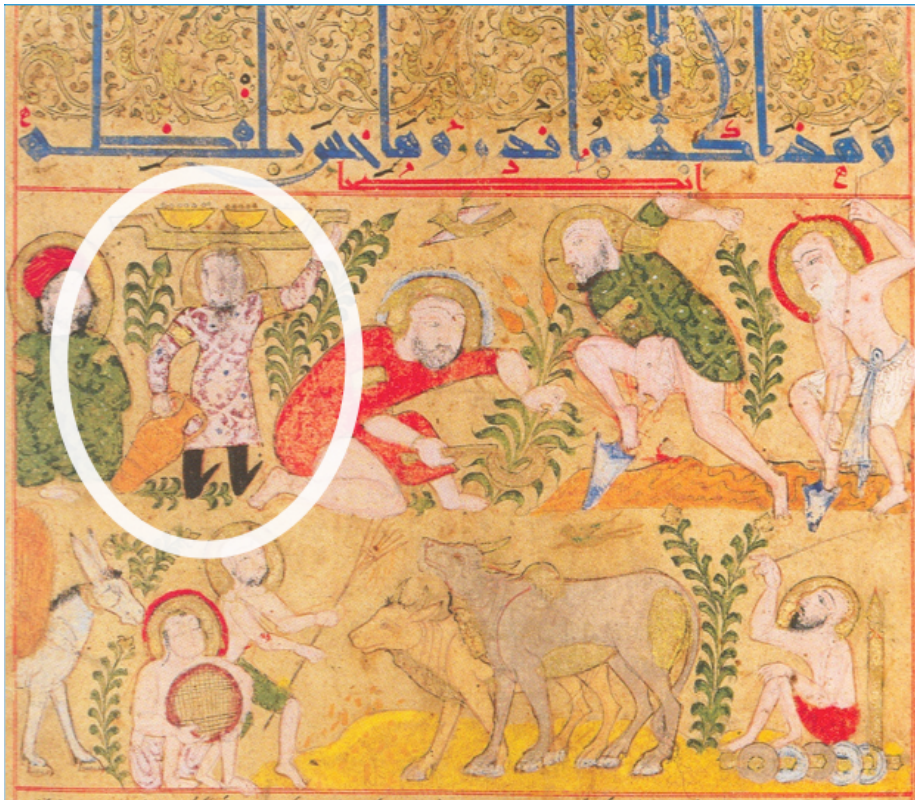


Fig. 7.1 Pseudo-Galen, *Kitab al-Diryaq*, Iraq, 1199 (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS. Arabe 2964, old page 22) (from Ettinghausen 1977, 84)



Fig. 7.2 Al-Hariri, *Maqamat*, Iraq, 1237 (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS. Arabe 5847, fol. 139v) (from Grabar 1984, 96)



Fig. 7.3 Al-Hariri, *Maqamat*, Baghdad?, c. 1225-1240 (Saint Petersburg Scientific Academy, MS.C-23, page 22, fol. 12r) (from Petrosyan 1995, 144-145)



Fig. 7.4 Al-Hariri, *Maqamat*, Baghdad?, c. 1225-1240 (Saint Petersburg Scientific Academy, MS.C-23, page 125, fol. 103v) (from Petrosyan 1995, 151)



Fig. 7.6 Al-Hariri, *Maqamat*, Iraq, 1237 (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS. Arabe 5847, fol. 48r) (from Grabar 1984, 57-58)

فَصَادَفَ نَزُولًا تَجَارَازَ أَوْ قَمِ بِهَا أَحَدُ التَّجَارِ قَدِيمًا
 إِلَى مَا دُنِيَ الْجَفَا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْخِضَارِ وَالْفَلَاحِ حَتَّى سَرَتْ
 دَعْوَتُهُ إِلَى الْقَافِلَةِ وَجَمَعَ فِيهَا بَيْنَ الْفَرِيشَةِ وَالنَّافِلَةِ
 فَلَمَّا لَجَبْنَا مُنَادِيَهُ وَجَلَّ لَنَا نَادِيَهُ أَحْضَرَ مِنْ أَطْعَمِهِ الْبَدِ
 وَالْبَيْتَ نَزْمًا حَالِيًا لَيْفَ وَحَلَى بِالْعِزِّ **صُورَةُ السَّمَاطِ**



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Fig. 7.7 Al-Hariri, *Maqamat*, Iraq, 1240s (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS. Arabe 3929, 149r) (from Grabar 1984, 57-59)



Fig. 7.8 Al-Hariri, *Maqamat*, Iraq, 1240s (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS. Arabe 3929, fol. 120r) (from Grabar 1984, 77)



Fig. 7.9 Al-Hariri, *Maqamat*, Iraq, 1240s (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS. Arabe 3929, fol. 179r) (from Grabar 1984, 75-76)



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Fig. 7.10 Al-Hariri, *Maqamat*, Iraq, 1240s (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS. Arabe 3929, 165v) (from Grabar 1984, 68)



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Fig. 7.11 Al-Hariri, *Maqamat*, Iraq, 1240s (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS. Arabe 3929, 34v) (from Grabar 1984, 47)



Fig. 7.12 Al-Hariri, *Maqamat*, Iraq, 1237 (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS. Arabe 5847, fol. 33r) (from Grabar 1984, 47)

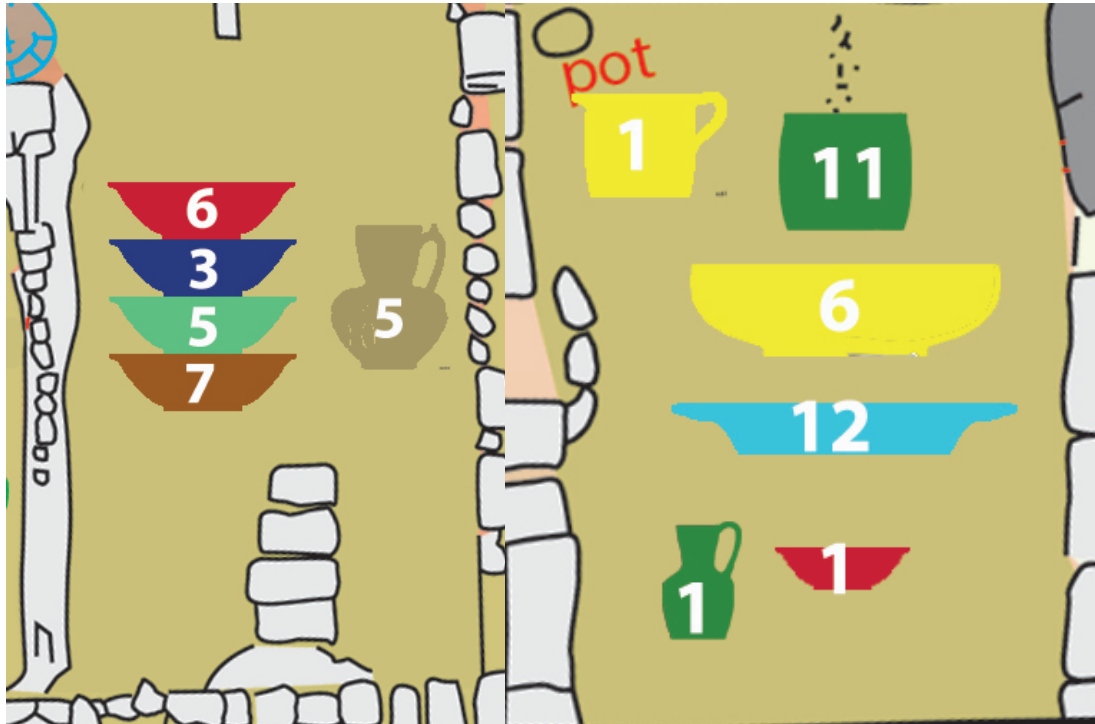


Fig. 7.13 Pottery assemblage of “East House” (left) and of “East Street” (right)

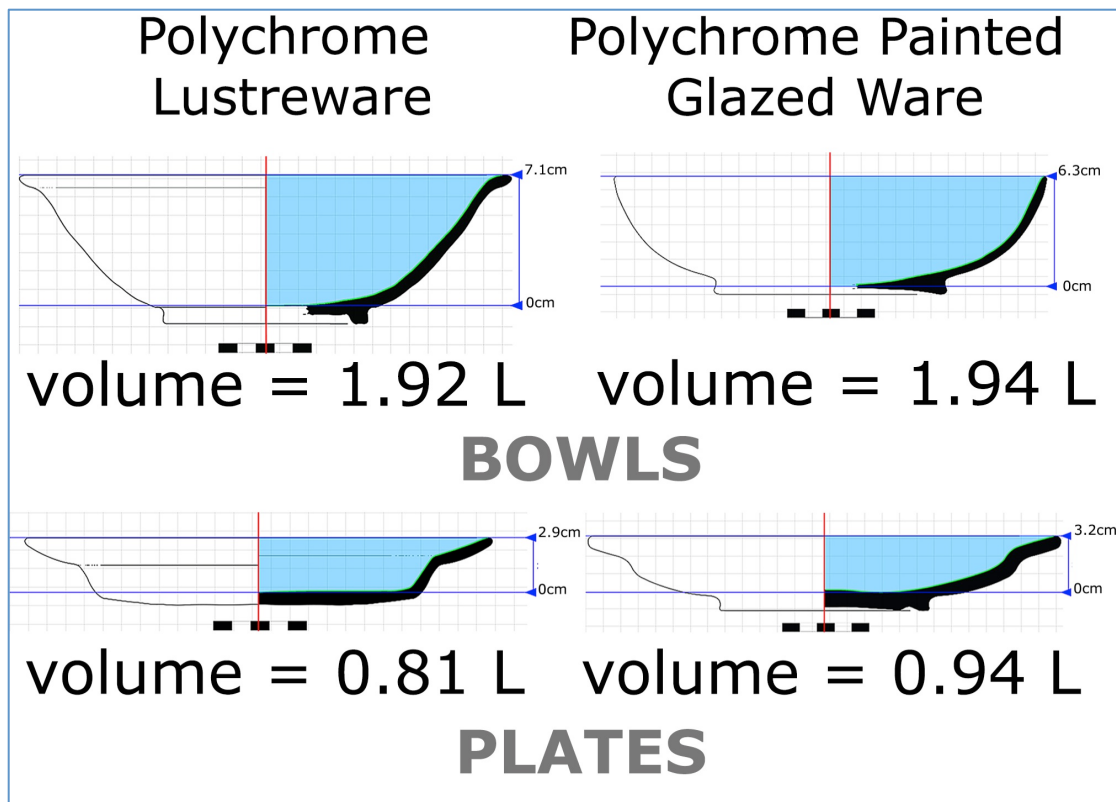


Fig. 7.14 Vessel volume comparison Lustreware and Polychrome Painted Glazed Ware bowls and plates

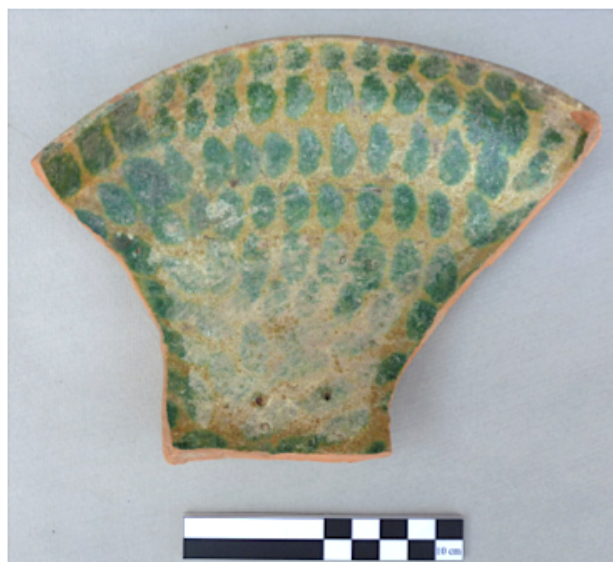


Fig. 7.15 Lustreware bowl from the Harvey Plotnick Collection University of Chicago (left) (from Pancaroğlu 2007, 46, fig. 5); Polychrome Painted Glazed Ware bowl from Gözlükule, Tarsus (right)



Fig. 7.16 Lustreware tile from the Great Mosque of Kairouan, Tunisia (left); Polychrome Painted Glazed Ware bowl from Gözlükule, Tarsus (right)

Name	Consistency	Ingredients
<i>harīsa</i>	soft, semi-liquid	porridge cooked with meat and grains such as rice or wheat, it requires continuous cooking and beating
<i>ḥinṭiyya</i>	soft, semi-liquid	porridge cooked with crushed wheat
<i>adassiya</i>	soft, semi-liquid	dishes of lentil cooked with or without meat and vegetables, especially chard
<i>‘aṣīda</i>	soft, semi-liquid	a kind of dense soup, the main ingredients are flour, fat and water, when mixed mashed dates and butter, it is also served as a dessert
<i>jūdhāba</i>	soft, semi-liquid	a kind of bread pudding sometimes served with meat
<i>sawīq</i>	soft, liquid	crushed grains mixed sugar and water or milk
<i>sikbāj</i>	soft, liquid	stew made of fat meat and vegetables such as carrot, eggplants and vinegar
<i>tharīd</i>	soft, semi-liquid	broken pieces of bread sopped in broth with boned meat and vegetables; vegetarian and cheaper versions exist where meat is substituted with chickpeas or fava beans
<i>kabāb</i>	hard, solid	sliced meat that is grilled (on burning coal) or pan-fried and salted
<i>pācha</i>	hard, solid	animal heads and trotters, cut in pieces, boiled served with salt and sumac

Table. 7.1 Popular dishes of the Abbasid period (from Ahsan 1979 and Nasrallah 2007)

Name	Morphology	Function
<i>jafna</i>	big and wide bowl (mainly from metal or wood), some are qualified as being as large as a child could drown in them	feeding more than ten people, man could eat from them in a standing position
<i>qaṣ'a</i>	big and wide bowl (mainly from wood or ceramic)	feeding ten people, used for <i>tharīd</i> dishes
<i>ṣahfa</i>	big, wide and shallow serving bowl	feeding five people
<i>mi'kala</i>	serving bowl	feeding two or three people
<i>bāṭiyya</i>	big and wide bowl similar to a punch bowl	serving wine, a smaller bowl is scooped in the drink for serving
<i>ṭayfūr</i>	big serving bowl	serving meat dishes such as <i>qadīd</i>
<i>mikabba</i>	domed bowl lid	covering the serving bowl while carrying it to the table
<i>ṣuḥayfa</i>	single-serving bowl	feeding one man
<i>ghaḍar</i>	green glazed earthenware bowl	used during the preparation and service of different kinds of dishes
<i>sukurruja</i>	small bowl for serving dips; small ones equal half a cup, larger ones equate to one and half cups	serving condiments such as <i>kawāmīkh</i> and dipping sauces

Table. 7.2 Serving vessels mentioned in the *Kitab al-Tabikh* (from Nasrallah 2007)

