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Rainbow Valley on Hormuz Island, a dream place for geologists and nature lovers

Rainbow Valley is a geologist's dream and an inspiration for artists and nature lovers. Imagine a narrow valley with multi-hued earth, sand, and colorful mountains in shades of red, purple, yellow, ochre and blue — the result of the uneven cooling of molten rock. On all sides, patches of color form geometric patterns. This awesomely photogenic natural site is at its best in late afternoon, lonelyplanet.com wrote.

Rainbow Valley is somewhere in the middle of Hormuz Island, Hormuzgan Province, and its access

route is from the west coast road of the island. This valley is one of the famous tourist places in the province. In the heart of this valley, when walking, you can see a wide variety of colors in the mountains, the ground, and the walls of the valley.

The soil and rocks of Hormuz Island are a combination of salt deposits on volcanic and sedimentary rocks. Sedimentary rocks of Hormuz Island are generally made of iron oxide compounds. The reason for the diversity and luster found on this island is the concurrence of volcanic, salt, clay and iron rocks.

The mineral colors of black, white, yellow, red and blue make a stellar landscape, which no visitor would want to miss. To preserve the invaluable geological beauty of this island, it is strongly recommended that visitors not take any soil or rocks from the valley.

The distance of Rainbow Valley from the center of Hormuz Island is about seven kilometers, which can be covered in a short time by car or motorcycle.

For walking in the valley, you can use the existing paths to enjoy sightseeing in this colorful environment.



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Underglaze-painted and lustre wares



Despite the decline in the economy of the Safavid state, demand for Chinese porcelain reignited with the reopening of the kilns at Jingdezhen under official supervision in 1683. Many new types of superb porcelain reached Iran, compelling local potters to compete by reproducing the new fashions or by creating something even more spectacular. They did both.

Underglaze-painted wares

Underglaze painting continued in this period as a prominent decorative technique. A grey palette was favoured for several styles, and even the blues are muted. One class is characterized by its strange landscapes, dominated by thick trunks or roots that wind their way through the scene. The dishes have square seal-marks, although at least one does have a tassel-mark. Some of the dishes are quite large. Another group depends heavily on "Kraak" designs from the early seventeenth century but introduces other features, such as a band of blossoms and vines framing the tondo (a circular painting or sculpture). These wares tend to have character-marks. The dishes are relatively small.

Probably somewhat later are two styles that have associations with the Armenian community: A reserve background made up of "tight scrolls," and a geometric design of palmette leaves and four-lobed medallions or florets appearing in white.

Bowls painted in this style have been excavated at Nyssa and are displayed in the museums at Ashgabad. However, it is not evident that these are imports from Iran. They may be local imitations of a fashionable import (from Iran).

No vessels painted in this style bear Armenian monograms, but the ground of spirals was used for filler on another type of ware

that has such markings.

This style employs a motif that appears on Kangxi porcelain, the "cone," which is a teardrop shaped medallion, generally arranged in groups of four, radiating out from a central medallion.

Not all compositions based on the cone use the tight spiral filler. Others create a network of tiny leaves as filler. A sand pot with the cone motif bears the monogram of the head of an Armenian trading company, Paron Saffraz. Notable also is the occurrence of this monogram on a dish that has lightly carved petals around the cavetto.

Toward the end of the century, two more styles appear. The "luscious flower" style is named for a ubiquitous bloom that is characterized by multiple rows of small round petals, like a chrysanthemum.

The large platters in this style often have a cartouche or a cross-shaped or other medallion spreading out over the surface, and standing out against a background of dense foliage with hardly any white surface showing. Within the cartouche the "luscious flowers," accompanied by leaves and occasionally an animal, are painted in reserve.

The design on the back is borrowed from Kangxi dishes. Sherds from two of the vessels in this category were sampled and proved to have a Mashhad provenance. The second style is directly copied from Kangxi imports.

This group also has associations with the Armenian community of Isfahan.

Lustre-wares

The most remarkable phenomenon in this period was the re-discovery or re-invention of lustre-painting. This technique had produced some of the most extraordinary works of the twelfth to fourteenth centu-

ries in the city of Kashan. The lustrous effect is obtained by painting a pigment with a metallic oxide, such as silver or copper, on a fired glazed surface and then firing the vessel again in a kiln deprived of oxygen (a reducing kiln). The metallic substance is deposited on the surface and refracts light, giving the illusion of being a precious metal. The production of lustre-wares during the twelfth through fourteenth centuries was enormous, but fifteenth-century lustre-wares are rare. It is not until the late seventeenth century that lustre-ware production is fully in evidence again. The lack of surviving lustre-wares in the period between the mid fourteenth and late seventeenth centuries is considered to be a hiatus. Either the potters with the specialized skills and knowledge for making lustre-ware moved elsewhere, or tastes simply changed. Why and how this technique was revived by the Safavid potters are questions whose answers still elude us. Nevertheless, the enormous quantity of surviving Safavid lustre-wares the beauty of the coloration, and the general quality of the designs call for special attention. The Survey of Persian Art used the word "opulence."

Unfortunately, little scholarly attention has been focused on this genre within Safavid pottery. Even a cursory study of the vast number of objects suggests that the production of lustre pottery was an industry unto itself. The quality of the potting (very finely ground quartz, hard, white body), the limited dimensions of the dishes and bowls (perhaps dictated by the constraints of the special kilns), the large number of cups and pouring vessels, and the style and subject matter of the painting all point to a highly specialized atelier or group of ateliers, dedicated to lustre-ware production.

The above is a lightly edited version of part of a chapter entitled, 'Dominant Fashions and Distinctive Styles' from a book entitled, 'Persian Pottery in the First Global Age', written by Lisa Golombek, Robert B. Mason, Patricia Proctor, Eileen Reilly, published by Brill. The photos were taken from the book.