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ALBARELLO, FRITWARE PAINTED IN BLUE AND BLACK UNDER THE GLAZE

SYRIA, DAMASCUS?; 14TH CENTURY

H: 34.1 CM

This elegant albarello – a pharmacy jar with concave sides – has a form that was developed in Iran and Syria and became popular in Europe via Spanish-Moorish majolica.

The jar's decoration was derived from the Persian Sultanabad style, which spread in the course of the 14th century to Syria and Egypt. The four birds are amusingly depicted – each opening its beak a little more than that of its neighbor as the song unfolds. The albarello is unusually large and was consequently made up of two parts that were joined horizontally in the center of the body.

The well-preserved jar was not excavated, and might very well have been exported to Europe back in the Middle Ages.

Published in:

Rosalind A. Wade Haddon: “What is Mamluk imitation Sultanabad?” i  
*Al-Râfidân*, 2011, 32, pl. 9a, p. 291;

Institute of Ismaili Studies: *Encounters in Muslim History, Student  
reader 1*, London 2017, p. 161;