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## Fatma's ceramic collection

by Michele C. Ziolkowski

### Introduction

This study aims to bring together a ceramic collection from the twentieth century and biographical details about the owner, Fatma Al Kindi. The collection left by Fatma is from the emirate of Fujairah, United Arab Emirates (UAE). Fatma's life and the ceramics are inextricably linked to the social and cultural history of the UAE and of the Arabian Gulf in general. The international trade in ceramics and porcelain has a long history in the Gulf. Whilst this collection is not exceptionally rare or old, it does provide a glimpse into local usage of prestige items obtained from international trade networks.

### Fatma Al Kindi

Fatma bint Mohammed Abdulla Al Kindi was born in Wadi Al Hayl, Fujairah, United Arab Emirates in 1922 (Figures 1, 2

and 3). Life in a mountain village of Fujairah during the early twentieth century was challenging. Food was often scarce; people worked hard to cultivate the land and tend to their animals. Family and tribal ties were essential for survival. Both her parents were from the village of Al Hayl, and her father, Mohammed Abdulla Al Kindi, was a farmer. Fatma's mother passed away when she was only two years old. Her father's wife, Moza Mohammed Al Mazroui, cared for Fatma after she lost her mother. From an early age, Fatma displayed an inner strength and tenacity. On one occasion she refused to be told by one of the men from their village that she was incapable of carrying a heavy parcel of tobacco over a considerable distance. Fatma proceeded to lift the sack of locally-grown tobacco on her head and walk the circa four kilometres from the farms to the village. This display of resilience and the ability to endure harsh conditions, formed in her early years, remained with Fatma until her passing.

Sheikh Abdulla bin Hamdan Al Sharqi had relocated from his family's home in Fujairah (Al Hara Al Qadeema) (Figure



Figure 1. UAE locations



Figure 2. Fujairah locations



Figure 3. Fatma bint Mohammed Abdulla Al Kindi with her grandson Suhail

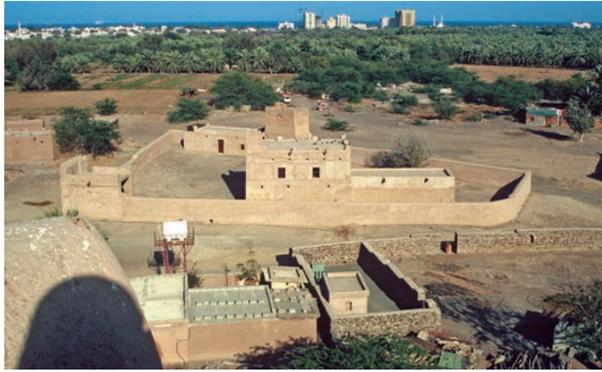


Figure 4. Bayt Sheikh Abdulla bin Hamdan Al Sharqi, Fujairah, Al Hara Al Qadeema

4) to the village of Al Hayl with his brother Sheikh Suhail bin Hamdan Al Sharqi around 1932 (Ziolkowski & Al Sharqi 2008: 120–121). Sheikh Abdulla built a large, fortified courtyard house in the pre-existing village, which was predominantly inhabited by the Kunud Tribe (Al Kindi, singular) (Ziolkowski & Al Sharqi 2006: 5, 9; Ziolkowski & Al Sharqi 2008: 121)<sup>1</sup> (Figure 5). Fatma married Sheikh Abdulla when she was seventeen years old, and moved into the main courtyard house. She resided in a *khaimah* room with an attached 'arish-built courtyard located near the front entrance of the courtyard house. Her marriage to Sheikh Abdulla ended in divorce, and she married his brother Sheikh Suhail<sup>2</sup> (Figure 6). Fatma and Sheikh Suhail continued to live in Wadi Al Hayl for a few years. Around 1950, they moved to Al Fara', located six kilometres directly north of Wadi Al Hayl, and



Figure 5. Bayt Sheikh Abdulla bin Hamdan Al Sharqi, Fujairah, Wadi Al Hayl

established their own home and community (Ziolkowski & Al Sharqi 2005a: 104; Ziolkowski & Al Sharqi 2005b: 184; Ziolkowski & Al Sharqi 2006: 9) (Figures 7 and 8)<sup>3</sup>. Together they built their own fortified courtyard house, *majlis* and village<sup>4</sup>. A *ghayl falaj* system in the nearby wadi provided water for the settlement and terraced gardens<sup>5</sup>. At the eastern end of the village, a deep well was dug to supply water for the date palm garden and the crops grown in the shade of the plantation.

As their village grew, it was clear to many people that both Sheikh Suhail and Fatma cared deeply for their community at Al Fara'. Fatma is described by many as a strong, independent and determined person. She managed the farm at Al Fara' and worked tirelessly to ensure that there was enough food for everyone. As her husband took in a lot of

families to live in their mountain village, it was Fatma who looked after the ever-growing community. She was not only the heart of the community but a hard-working and compassionate individual. Fatma's work included managing and tending to the farm and the animals, which included goats, cows and chickens. She organised for food to be delivered to families in Al Fara' and the neighbouring villages. When her husband was absent, it was Fatma who hosted guests for meals in the *majlis*. These included official guests, family members and friends. According to Fatma's family, she was the figurehead who held the community at Al Fara' together.

Fatma's seven children were born in the villages of Wadi Al Hayl and Al Fara'<sup>6</sup>. In 1965, Fatma and her children moved to the coastal suburb of Ghorfa in Fujairah, where Sheikh Suhail purchased a house for them. In 1972, Sheikh Suhail was appointed Deputy Ruler of Fujairah by Sheikh Mohammed bin Hamad Al Sharqi (former ruler of Fujairah)<sup>7</sup>, and he divided his time between Al Fara' and Ghorfa, until his passing in 1976. Eventually, in 1982, the family settled into their new houses located on the coast, half a kilometre north of where the old Hilton Hotel once stood. Fatma passed away in 2009, surrounded by her close family.

#### The ceramic collection

During the twentieth century in the United Arab Emirates, imported factory-made porcelain and refined white earthenware bowls, plates, cups, etc. were seen as luxury items. The plates were known as *doorie* and bowls were called *mahla*. This porcelain and refined white earthenware did not form part of a woman's dowry. However, these ceramics were



Figure 7. General view of Al Fara'



Figure 8. Bayt Sheikh Suhail bin Hamdan Al Sharqi, Al Fara'



Figure 6. Sheikh Mohammed bin Hamad Al Sharqi (former Ruler of Fujairah) (seated right) and Sheikh Suhail bin Hamdan Al Sharqi (former Deputy Ruler of Fujairah) (seated left)

Table 1. The ceramic collection

Reg. No.	Description	Dimensions	Origin
P1 (Figs. 9–11)	A footed porcelain bowl. Underside of base: 'PEACE CHINA' Maker's mark: a dove (?) within a circle. 'MADE IN JAPAN' Interior: no decoration. Exterior: two horizontal bands of gold metallic paint (below the rim and above the base). Dispersed between the two horizontal bands are floral motifs with leaves; wavy lines; and curved lines consisting of dashes. Colours include brown, blue, green and red. The author has noted a collection of similar shaped and decorated bowls at the historical site of Taqah Castle, Dhofar Province, Oman (Fig. 12).	Height: 100 mm Rim diameter: 200 mm Base diameter: 98 mm Wall thickness: 5 mm	Japan
P2 (Figs. 13, 14)	A footed porcelain bowl. Underside of base: Maker's mark: four Chinese characters (translation: Made in Liling China). 'MADE IN LILING CHINA' Interior: no decoration. Exterior: Transfer print decoration. Three horizontal bands of gold (lustre) colour, interspersed with geometric motifs (simplified Goudkust pattern). The geometric motifs include an interlocking meander (Greek Key) pattern in reddish-brown outline. Reddish-brown coloured vertical and horizontal lines; bands of alternating circles and dots; triangles and lines with attached circles in a zig-zag pattern. The author has noted a collection of similar shaped and decorated bowls at the historical site of Taqah Castle, Dhofar Province, Oman (Fig. 12).	Height: 120 mm Rim diameter: 228 mm Base diameter: 10 mm Wall thickness: 3.5 mm	China

Table 1. (continued)

Reg. No.	Description	Dimensions	Origin
P3 (Figs. 15, 16)	A shallow plate with a low rounded foot. Underside of base: Maker's mark: A crown with a cross on the top and wings (?) on either side. 'Corona' Two overlapping branches. 'IRONSTONE WARE' 'MADE IN JAPAN' Estimated age: ca. 1950–1960. Interior: Transfer print decoration (Tancrede pattern). Brown coloured patterns and background fill. The plate is transfer printed in brown, and highlighted on the rim and centre with lustre. A combination of geometric, floral and architectural motifs. A band of triangles in a zig-zag pattern located around the rim interior. Below this are horizontal lines enclosing a running pattern, which includes: a band of connecting Gothic type arches; interspersed with acanthus leaf (?) and Greek acroterion motifs. The centre, base of the bowl contains a floral motif in brown. Exterior: no decoration.	Height: 50 mm Rim diameter: 232 mm Base diameter: 120 mm Wall thickness: 4 mm	Japan
P4 (Figs. 17, 18)	A shallow plate with a low rounded foot. Underside of base: Maker's mark: A crown with a cross on the top and wings (?) on either side. 'Corona' Two overlapping branches. 'IRONSTONE WARE' 'MADE IN JAPAN' Estimated age: ca. 1950–1960. Interior: Transfer print decoration (Tancrede pattern). Brown coloured patterns and background fill. The plate is transfer printed in brown, and highlighted on the rim and centre with lustre. A combination of geometric, floral and architectural motifs. A band of triangles in a zig-zag pattern located around the rim interior. Below this are horizontal lines enclosing a running pattern, which includes: a band of connecting Gothic type arches; interspersed with acanthus leaf (?) and Greek acroterion motifs. The centre, base of the bowl contains a floral motif in brown. Exterior: no decoration.	Height: 50 mm Rim diameter: 232 mm Base diameter: 120 mm Wall thickness: 4 mm	Japan

often gifted to women after marriage. It was not available everywhere, and not every household owned a collection. Traders brought this material to the coastal town of Fujairah from the Iranian Fars Coast and Baluchistan. It was sold in the old *souq*, which was located in Ghorfa, close to the beach<sup>8</sup>. These types of luxury wares were predominantly used during *Eid* celebrations, weddings or upon the arrival of a special guest into the home. To own a collection of imported porcelain (or refined white earthenware) was seen as a sign of wealth and prestige. These items would have taken pride of place and were placed on display in homes for guests to see. They were usually positioned inside niches set into the walls of a *majlis* or sitting room. Meals cooked daily were generally served on tin or copper platters. If a person could not afford to buy porcelain coffee cups (*finyan* singular/*finayeen* plural), they would use cups produced from locally made earthenware or even seashells.

Fatma's ceramic collection is from the twentieth century. P3, P4 and P5 (Figures 15–20) from Japan all bear 'crown' makers' marks<sup>9</sup>. The pattern used on P3 and P4 is the "Tancrede" pattern found on nineteenth and early twentieth century refined white earthenwares from Europe, as depicted

in Carter & Sundblad (2011: 63)<sup>10</sup>. QNM.664.CE.19 from the Qatar National Museum collection is an example of transfer printed white ware, produced by Société Céramique in Holland (Carter & Sundblad 2011: 204)<sup>11</sup>. However, P3 and P4 represent Japanese production from the second half of the twentieth century, most likely circa 1950–1960<sup>12</sup>. Japanese imitations of Maastricht ceramics are common throughout the Arabian Gulf (Otte 2019: 25).

P5 (Figures 19–20) from Fatma's collection contains comparable motifs and composition to a couple of examples from the Qatar National Museum collection: QNM.699.CE.54 and QNM.703.CE.58<sup>13</sup>. Both pieces from Qatar were produced in Japan between 1922 and 1940 (Carter & Sundblad 2011: 237, 241)<sup>14</sup>. The Maker's Marks on P5 differs from the two examples from the Qatar National Museum collection, and most likely represent a slightly later version of the 'Lion and Palm Tree' design produced in Japan, circa 1950–1960. P5 was produced by the Ide Brothers, established by Ide Zentaro (1878–1929) at Nomi, Ishikawa Prefecture in 1900 as Kuntani Ceramics. The name changed to Ide Ceramic Manufacturing in 1906<sup>15</sup>.



Figures 9–11. P1, profiles and base



Figures 13–14. P2, profile and base



Figure 12. Ceramic collection from Taqah Castle, Oman

QNM.646.CE.1 from the Qatar National Museum collection is an example of transfer printed refined white ware produced by Société Céramique in Holland, and dated from 1900–1920 (Carter & Sundblad 2011: 188). The design on QNM.646.CE.1 is known as 'Goudkust' (Carter & Sundblad 2011: 188) and is comparable to P2 (Figures 13–14) from Fatma's collection. However, the Liling produced porcelain bowl from China (P2) dates from the 1960s, as noted by Fatma's family, and corroborated by various online sellers and auction sites. Liling is located in the Hunan Province of China and contained numerous kilns dating back as far as the Han Dynasty (Nilsson 1996–2020)<sup>16</sup>.

### Summary

This research paper aimed to document the ceramic collection left behind by Fatma Al Kindi. However, as the ethnographic interviews progressed, it became clear that her story needed to be told. Fatma's strength and compassion



Figures 15–16. P3, interior and base



Figures 17–18. P4, interior and base



Figures 19–20. P5, interior and base

for her family and community should not be forgotten, but preserved. Women are often written out of history, and their roles almost entirely lost. Everyone interviewed for this ethnographic study commented on the crucial role Fatma played within the village at Al Fara' and the broader community of Fujairah. What remains of Fatma's extensive ceramic collection is only a small sample of what she accumulated during her lifetime. According to her daughters, she had amassed a substantial collection of imported European refined white earthenware, Chinese and Japanese porcelain over the years. Fatma's ceramic collection is a reminder of the value placed on certain imported items, which were considered to be prestige pieces.

#### Ethnographic Information

Ethnographic interviews conducted by:

- Sheikh Abdulla Suhail Al Sharqi, May–June 2020.

Interviewees:

- Sheikha Noorah Suhail Al Sharqi
- Sheikha Fahrah Suhail Al Sharqi
- Sheikha Mariam Suhail Al Sharqi
- Moza Rashid Al Kindi
- Ali Khamis Naser Al Kindi.

#### Acknowledgements

I must express my sincere gratitude to Fatma's family for allowing me to study her ceramic collection, and for the opportunity to share her story. My husband, Abdulla Al Sharqi, conducted all the ethnographic interviews and I am grateful for his help on this research project. I would like to thank Les and Christina Ziolkowski, Abdulla Al Sharqi, Carol Hyland, Jaap Otte and Seth Priestman for reviewing earlier drafts of this paper and for their valuable comments. Thanks also to Tim Power for steering me in the direction of some very useful research publications, which definitely helped with this project. Jaap Otte very kindly provided the author with relevant information on Japanese porcelain production, publications, and invaluable feedback. All photos are by the author except Figure 6 (photographer unknown).

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## Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup>For detailed information concerning Bayt Sheikh Abdulla bin Hamdan, see Riley (1988).
- <sup>2</sup>Sheikh Suhail bin Hamdan was born in 1922 (Hawley 1970: 362).
- <sup>3</sup>Fatma's brother Ali and his family moved to Al Fara' with them. Fatma's brothers: Obaid, Khalfan and Ali (Mother from Wadi il Hilu).
- <sup>4</sup>In 1966 Sheikh Suhail started to build a new house at Al Fara' on the plain below the old one (Ziolkowski & Al Sharqi 2005a: 251).
- <sup>5</sup>An above ground water channel set up to collect water flow from the wadi systems and direct it to the settlement.
- <sup>6</sup>Fatma's children: Born in Wadi Al Hayl: Aisha (d); Butti (d); Mariam; Qayed (d); Fahrah. Born at Al Fara': Hamdan; Saeed.
- <sup>7</sup>On the 17<sup>th</sup> of January 1972, Sheikh Mohammed bin Hamad Al Sharqi Ruler of Fujairah, issued a decree appointing Sheikh Suhail bin Hamdan Deputy Ruler of Fujairah and Sheikh Suroor bin Saif as Assistant Deputy Ruler (Abed *et al.* 1996: 17; Al Blooshi 2007: 47). On the 14<sup>th</sup> of May in 1969, Sheikh Suhail was appointed as the first Chief of Justice and Courts in Fujairah by Sheikh Mohammed bin Hamad (Al Blooshi 2007: 43).
- <sup>8</sup>The old *souq* in Ghorfa was located on Rughaylat Road, opposite the current outdoor *souq*.
- <sup>9</sup>According to Sasaki, Japanese porcelain production can be dated from the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Sasaki 2015–2016: 37).
- <sup>10</sup>"A very common pattern seen in the assemblage can be identified as Tancrede (Fig. 51: 5–7, 15–17, 25–26), which was made by both of the two major Dutch potteries in Maastricht, Petrus Regout & Co. and Société Céramique, and probably also other companies. Comparable examples from the QNM collections date to 1871–1932 (Petrus Regout & Co.) and 1880–1910 (Société Céramique)" (Carter & Sundblad 2011: 63).  
"From the 1920s a variety of manufacturers are represented, with countries of origin including Japan (for example, a deep earthenware plate made by the Nippon Koshitu Company and imitating the hand-painted decoration of the Maastricht wares, in Sabah Museum)" (Grey 2011: 353).
- <sup>11</sup>According to Power, Late Islamic Period 2b, which includes excavated and surveyed material from Al Ain, contains European white wares [Refined White Earthenware] dated from 1870–1920 (Power 2015: 23–24). Harrison has dated European white wares from the late nineteenth to twentieth centuries (Harrison 1995: 96–98).  
"Refined white earthenware and ironstone-type ware did not appear on the Gulf coast sites until the later nineteenth century. These wares were imported into the region well into the twentieth century, by which time transfer prints of geometric motifs in brown and gold lustre-style were popular, including 'Greek Key' and other motifs" (Grey 2011: 352). For example, the Dutch wares of the 1930s (Grey 2011: 352).  
According to Otte, the factory of Petrus Regout/Sphinx in Maastricht used this pattern from 1871 to 1932 (Jaap Otte pers. comm., 2020).
- <sup>12</sup>Material finds recovered from Al Ain place the appearance of Japanese produced coffee cups to the Late Islamic 2c assemblage, dated from 1920–1970 (Power 2015: 26). According to Grey, by the early twentieth century small, fluted, porcelain coffee cups without handles and often bearing painted leaf sprigs or wavy vertical lines are much in evidence. Marked examples revealing the cups were made in China, Japan and France (Grey 2011: 353).  
"After Japan opened to foreign trade in the 1850s, companies began in earnest to mass-produce and export decorative vessels and Western-style tableware decorated in combinations of Asian and Western art styles" (Ross 2012: 4).  
"From the 1920s, a variety of manufacturers are represented, with countries of origin including Japan..." "and imitating the hand-painted decoration of the Maastricht wares..." (Grey 2011: 353).
- <sup>13</sup>For photographs of QNM.699.CE.54 and QNM.703.CE.58 see Carter & Sundblad 2011: 237 & 241.
- <sup>14</sup>QNM.699.CE.54: Transfer printed refined white ware produced by Yamasho, in Yokkaichi Japan. Design name: 'Lion and Palm Tree.' Date range: 1922–1940. Stamped with Yamasho, Iron Stone China, Made in Japan, with a crown motif (Carter & Sundblad 2011: 237).  
QNM.703.CE.58: Transfer printed refined white ware produced in Japan by S. S. Crown (Sasai Ceramic Manufacturing in Yokkaichi). Design name: Lion and Palm. Date range: 1922–1940. Stamped with The Ironstone China, S.S. Crown, Made in Japan, with 3-pointed crown motif flanked by S and S (Carter & Sundblad 2011: 241).  
This pattern copies a French pattern from Sarreguemines: "Lion brun peint lustre" (Jaap Otte pers. comm., 2020). The pattern is represented in a 1925 catalogue from Paris for the Sarreguemines company (Plate 13). 'Fayenceries de Sarreguemines Digoin et Vitry-Le-Francois, Paris.'
- <sup>15</sup>Ide Brother also established a branch in San Francisco in 1908. The company came under the control of Nihon Toki (later Noritake) in the late 1910s (Jaap Otte pers. comm., 2020).
- <sup>16</sup>After 1930, the Liling polychrome underglaze porcelain essentially ceased production. The production was restored in 1956 when the State Council established the Liling Porcelain Company by advancing 8 million yuan towards the restoration and expansion of the production of polychrome underglaze at the Liling kiln. Under government protection, the production seems to have continued until today (Nilsson 1996–2020).

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## First record of the family Elmidae from Oman with identification of *Potamodytes subrotundatus* Pic, 1939

by Ali A. Al-Jahdhami & Said Al-Rashdi

### Introduction

The family Elmidae, also known as riffle beetles, is one of the most diverse families of aquatic beetles. They are a moderately large cosmopolitan family with about 1498 species in 147 genera (Jäch *et al.* 2016). Both adults and larvae are generally found living in flowing waters, although occasionally in lakes or ponds (Jäch 1998). The family include two subfamilies: Larainae LeConte, 1861 and Elminae Curtis, 1830 (Jäch & Balke 2008).

In the Arabian Peninsula, three species of Elmidae are recorded from Saudi Arabia, two of them apparently undescribed females, and one species, *Potamodytes subrotundatus* Pic, which is also recorded from the former South Yemen (Jäch 1988) and the United Arab Emirates (Mascagni 2009). The latter species is also known from Egypt and Israel. *P. subrotundatus* Pic is here recorded for the first time from the Sultanate of Oman.

Riffle beetles are recognised in the scientific literature as effective bio-indicators of water quality (Brown 1972, Garcia-Criado & Fernández-Aláez 2001, Elliot 2008). There is little knowledge about the family in Oman, in particular on their ecology and importance in the dynamics of aquatic ecosystems.

Only a limited amount of information on *P. subrotundatus* Pic in Oman is presented here, because of limitations on collection methods and the limited number of locations, in both north and south Oman, examined. The species was only identified at locations in northern Oman.

The record is, however, the first for the family in Oman. It is hoped that this note may prompt further research into the presence, or otherwise, of other species and genera within the family.

### Materials and methods

The lead author sampled seven locations in northern Oman, including streams and pools in dried-out mountain wadis, with sparse vegetation along the water's edge. Specimens were collected by light trap. The specimens are deposited in the private collection of the lead author.

### Systematic account

Subfamily Larainae LeConte, 1861  
*Potamodytes subrotundatus* Pic, 1939  
(Figures 1, 2)

**Specimens examined:** Oman: Wadi beni Khalid, 22.560°N, 59.109°E, 2.iv.2017, in water, leg. Ali Al-Jahdhami; Wadi



Figures 1–2. Female *Potamodytes subrotundatus* Pic, 1939; lateral and dorsal aspects (photos by Ali A. Al-Jahdhami)



Figure 3. Collection localities in northern Oman: ● Wadi beni Khalid, ■ Wadi Tiwi