

## Halal and Non-Halal Ceramic Products: Exploring the Distinction between Bone China and Fine China in Malaysia

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### Abstract

Ceramic products are widely utilized in various applications, including interior and exterior decoration, sanitary wares and tableware. In the context of Malaysia as an Islamic country, the distinction between halal and non-halal products holds great significance. This classification extends to ceramic products, with the National Fatwa Council's Committee prohibiting the use of bone china, a ceramic material derived from animals not slaughtered according to Islamic methods, for Muslim individuals. This article aims to explore the differentiation between bone china and fine china focusing on their materials in relation to their status within Islamic law. A comprehensive literature review was conducted, analysing research articles, online newsletters, and company websites, to identify patterns, gaps, and inconsistencies. The review employed a systematic search strategy, incorporating specific inclusion and exclusion criteria outlined in the article. By adopting a qualitative research approach, this study drew upon previous writings and expert opinions. The findings of the research aim to inform the public and serve as a valuable reference for future investigations.

**Keywords:** Halal, Non-Halal, Bone china, Fine china, Tableware, Muslim

### Introduction

Clay, a natural earthy material composed primarily of hydrated aluminium silicates, exhibits plasticity when wet and is widely utilized in the production of bricks, pottery, and various other items (Dictionary.com, n.d). The composition of a clay body involves a mixture of clay and other minerals, tailored to achieve specific purposes in ceramics production. The key ceramic properties typically include kaolinite, illite, quartz, and feldspar (Muhamad, 2017). Through a process of heating and solidification, clay is transformed into ceramics, an inorganic material. Additionally, clay is used in the production of porcelain, which requires higher firing temperatures compared to ceramics. The origins of porcelain can be traced back to China around 1600 BC, and the term 'fine china' gained popularity, referring to porcelain to which

ground animals bone had been add for enhanced durability (Pottery, Ceramics, Stoneware and Porcelain - A Brief Explanation, n.d). Both porcelain and ceramics find wide spread used in construction and pottery, driven by their aesthetic appeal. Notably, bone china, also referred to as English porcelain, emerged in 1794 and rapidly gained prominence in the porcelain industry, owing to its unique qualities and widespread demand. Bone china, a highly sought-after type of tableware, processes distinctive characteristics (mention specific qualities subsequent sections). On the other hand, fine china, fired at a lower temperature of approximately 1,200° (2,200° F), exhibits softer composition than porcelain, making it suitable for applications such as plates and cups (*Perbezaan Antara Seramik dan Porcelain Perbezaan Antara - Yang lain 2023, n.d*).

The term "Halal" derived from Arabic, denotes permissibility in accordance with Islamic principles. While primarily associated with dietary practices, it extend beyond food to encompass actions that align with Islamic guidelines. Conversely, Haram, also known as non-Halal, refers to anything forbidden within Islamic teachings. Although often used in the context of food, Haram applied to various prohibited behaviours in Islam, including theft, corruption, and more (Crescentrating, 2022). Due to the incorporation of bone ash into the composition of bone china, concerns arose in Islamic countries, leading to a ban on products made from this material. In order to dispel doubts among Muslims about the product, the Malaysian Islamic Council addressed this issue and established a ruling, (to be discussed in the subsequent section). However. In other countries, the respective Islamic councils relied on their interpretation of Islamic law, known as Mazhab, as a significant reference in formulating their regulations regarding this matter.

### **Research Objective**

- To determine bone source in bone china and fine china and the characteristic.
- To investigate the perceptions and regulations regarding the use of bone china in Islamic
- To focuses on understanding the concerns raised in Islamic countries regarding the use of bone ash in bone china.

### **Literature Review**

Porcelain, a type of ceramic material, is produced by firing refined clay at high temperatures ranging from 1,200 to 1,450°C. This process results in a hard, shiny, often white, and translucent material. The term "porcelain" is derived from the Italian word "porcelino," meaning "piglet." Legend has it that the name was inspired by the small and plump cowry shell, resembling a piglet or porcelino, which has a shiny, transparent finish similar to porcelain. The invention of porcelain dates back to the 10th century during the reign of Emperor Hou Zhou Shi Zong in China. Thomas Frye, a British ceramic manufacturer, later modified the porcelain body at the Bow porcelain factory in London in 1748 (Zakaria & Haron, 2013). The earliest evidence of ceramics resembling porcelain was found in the Shang Dynasty region of China, near Zhengzhou in Henan Province. Porcelain is believed to have been invented around the time of the Eastern Han Empire (Ceramic History - The Origin and how it has come to Europe, n.d.). The firing process distinguishes porcelain from fine china. When the temperature is raised to approximately 1,455°C (2,650°F), the resulting product is highly durable and referred to as porcelain. Porcelain exhibits strength and resilience, making it

suitable for various industrial applications, including electrical insulators (How porcelain is made, n.d.).

The initial design of bone china was attributed to Thomas Frye, but the quality of the product at that time did not match the porcelain products from China and Europe. Josiah Spode, a British potter, made significant improvements to bone china between 1789 and 1793 by combining porcelain materials from China with the addition of cow bone, resulting in a high-quality pottery product known as bone china (Zakaria & Haron, 2013). Josiah originally used bone ash derived from buffalo (ox) bones, as it imparts whiteness and strength to the material. Other animal bones, such as camel, horse, cow, and hog bones, are also used, although most large Chinese companies specify that bone china products do not contain hog bones. The bone ash used in certain porcelain tableware does not come from hog bones (Rosli & Mohamadin, 2016). Bone china is a hybrid material that combines the hardness of porcelain with the addition of bone ash. Josiah Spode introduced bone china around 1800, and it gained recognition for its superior visual quality compared to stoneware, earthenware, and porcelain. The subjective aesthetic appeal of bone china tableware contributes to its higher cost compared to other materials.

Bone china, composed of bone ash, kaolin, and Cornish stone, is highly regarded for its quality. The presence of animal bone ash in bone china raises concerns among Muslims about its use. Bone china is known for its strength and resilience, with an opaque texture, snow-white color, and excellent durability. It is commonly used for tableware and tea ware, including plates, bowls, mugs, and teacups. Despite its thinness, bone china is resistant to chipping and can be used in the microwave and dishwasher (IKEA, n.d.). Bone china is made by combining china clay, china stone, and bone ash derived from animal bones (Wedgwood, n.d.). The firing process of bone china involves multiple stages at different temperatures, and a glaze is applied to enhance the design and make the items impermeable and food safe (The Teacup Attic, 2019).

Fine china, on the other hand, originated during the Tang Dynasty (618-907), known for its beautiful art and culture. Fine china is made from a mixture of clays, including kaolin, feldspar, and quartz. Additional materials may be added depending on the manufacturer. Each piece of fine china is carefully molded into the desired shape and then fired at extremely high temperatures (Kitchenware.nz, n.d.).

The issue of halal (permissible) or haram (forbidden) ingredients in ceramic products is a concern for some Muslims. While some argue that ceramics made from non-halal sources are permissible because they are only used as decorative items, dishware still acts as a link between food and consumers. Muslim users may feel uncomfortable using ceramic products derived from non-halal sources, such as pork bones. Although it is not compulsory to use bone china, Muslim consumers are generally aware of the issue (Hassan et al., 2018). According to Salleh and Subri (2018), the majority of animal bones used in bone china products come from halal animals, particularly cows. However, the bones undergo significant physical and property changes due to the high-temperature firing process. Although Hanafi scholars consider it permissible, the use of bone china products containing non-halal animal bone ashes other than pigs is still prohibited to prevent the use of non-halal ingredients in the production of other consumer goods (Salleh et al., 2017).

The Fatwa Committee of the National Council for Islamic Religious Affairs Malaysia discussed the use of animal bone ash-based equipment and ornaments, specifically bone china. After reviewing the evidence, arguments, and viewpoints presented, it was concluded that,

according to the Shafi'i School of thought, the impurity of pork remains in bone china products and does not disappear through the process of *istihalah*. The committee determined that bone china equipment or jewelry does not meet the level of necessity (*darurah*) for the community to own and use. Consequently, the use of equipment or jewelry made from animal bone ash (bone china) that is not halal according to Shariah law is not required, including animals that are halal to eat but not slaughtered according to Shariah law. However, the use of bone china equipment and jewelry made from animal bone ash that is halal to eat and slaughtered according to Islamic law is permissible (Rosli & Mohamadin, 2016).

The presence of animal bone ash in bone china products raises concerns among Muslims regarding its use, particularly the types of animals used and the method of slaughter (Pauzi & Man, 2018). On May 7, 2012, the National Fatwa Council Committee declared that the use of bone china products by Muslims in Malaysia was completely prohibited. This prohibition applied even if the bone china product was made from bovine bone ash, unless it was slaughtered according to Islamic law. This decision had a significant impact on consumers of bone china tableware sets (Khairi - Pottery Station, 2012).

In summary, porcelain is a hard, shiny, and often white and translucent ceramic material made from refined clay fired at high temperatures. Porcelain was invented in China during the 10th century and has a long history in Chinese culture. Bone china, a hybrid material that combines porcelain with bone ash, was developed by Josiah Spode in the late 18th century. It is known for its superior visual quality and is commonly used for tableware. The presence of animal bone ash in bone china raises concerns among Muslims about its halal status. The concerns among Muslims regarding the halal status of bone china products are related to the source of the animal bones used and the method of slaughter. While some argue that ceramics made from non-halal sources are permissible as decorative items, the use of bone china for tableware and its association with food consumption raises questions for Muslim consumers.

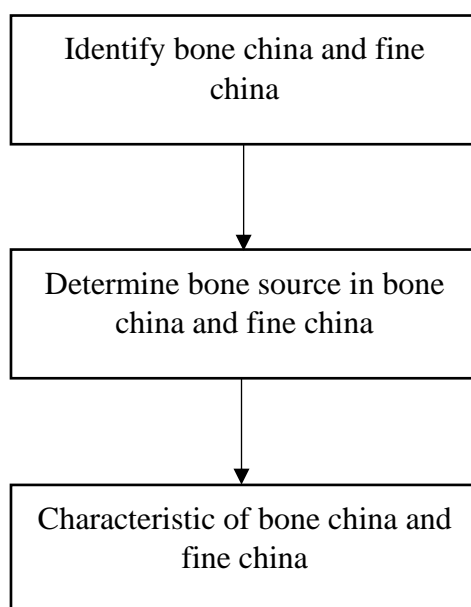
The discussion of halal and haram ingredients in ceramics led to a fatwa (religious ruling) by the Fatwa Committee of the National Council for Islamic Religious Affairs in Malaysia. According to the committee, bone china products containing animal bone ash, including those derived from animals that are halal to eat but not slaughtered according to Islamic law, are not required for use. The impurity of pork remains in bone china products according to the Shafi'i School, and the process of *istihalah* (transformation) is not considered to have occurred, making such products not permissible (Rosli & Mohamadin, 2016).

Therefore, the use of bone china equipment or jewelry made from animal bone ash that is not halal according to Shariah law is deemed unnecessary. On the other hand, bone china made from animal bone ash sourced from animals that are halal to eat and slaughtered according to Islamic law is considered permissible. This fatwa decision reflects the concerns of Muslim consumers and provides guidance on the permissibility of using bone china products within the context of Islamic law.

In conclusion, bone china, a type of porcelain made with the addition of bone ash, is known for its visual appeal and is commonly used for tableware. However, the halal status of bone china products has been a subject of concern for some Muslim consumers. Fatwa rulings have been issued to address these concerns, emphasizing the requirement for bone china products to be made from halal sources and slaughtered according to Islamic law to be considered permissible for use.

### Theoretical Framework

This research including identify bone china and fine china. In addition this research also determine bone source in bone china to know the source of the bone used and the characteristic of each materials.



### Research Methodology

The purpose of this study was to investigate the difference between bone china and fine china, and to examine the usage laws of bone china and fine china with respect to Muslim consumers in Malaysia. However, due to a shortage of primary data, the research process primarily relied on collecting and analysing secondary data from various sources.

The secondary data for this study were collected through different channels, including academic data (journal articles), commercial data (ceramic companies' websites), media data (newsletters), and personal data (blogs). Academic data, in the form of journal articles, provided scholarly insights and findings related to bone china and fine china. Commercial data sources, such as the websites of ceramic companies, offered information on the materials used and the manufacturing processes. Media data, including newsletters, provided additional perspectives and updates on the topic. Personal data, obtained from blogs, contributed individual viewpoints and experiences.

The analysis of the secondary data involved extracting relevant information from these sources. The academic data provided insights into the raw materials of bone china and fine china, as well as the scholar's opinions on the use of animal sources and the adherence to Shariah practices. The commercial data helped identify the bone sources used by different manufacturing companies and their claims of adhering to halal practices. Media data offered a broader understanding of the topic and highlighted any recent developments or discussions. Personal data from blogs provided unique perspectives and personal experiences related to bone china and fine china.

It is important to acknowledge that relying solely on secondary data has inherent limitations. These include potential bias in the sources, incomplete information, and varying

levels of reliability. The lack of primary data may also limit the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, future research should aim to collect primary data through methods such as surveys, interviews, or observations to validate and complement the insights gained from secondary data.

In conclusion, this study utilized secondary data from various sources to examine the difference between bone china and fine china and explore the usage laws of these ceramics among Muslim consumers in Malaysia. While the collected secondary data provided valuable insights, the reliance on such data sources should be supplemented with primary data collection methods in future research to enhance the comprehensiveness and validity of the findings.

### **Finding**

Muslims have expressed longstanding concerns about bone china products. The Law of Equipment And Ashes-Based Animal Bone was deliberated during the 99th Dialogue Fatwa Committee of the National Council for Islamic Religious Affairs Malaysia, held from May 4–6, 2012 (Bone China). In examining the supporting data, arguments, and viewpoints, the Shafi'i school of thought emphasized that impurities present in bone china products would not disappear, rendering the process ineffective. Consequently, the Dialogue concluded that it is against Islamic law to utilize jewelry or other items made from animal bone ash, commonly known as bone china, or from animals that are permissible to consume but are not presumed halal in accordance with Islamic law (Rosli & Mohamadin, 2016).

According to an analysis of fuqaha opinions, only bones from animals that have been slaughtered in compliance with Shariah law are considered halal, while bones from pigs are deemed haram (Mohd Salleh & Mohd Subri, 2018). However, Islamic scholars hold differing perspectives on the use of bones from carcasses other than pigs, as their interpretations of Shariah arguments, including the Qur'an, hadith, qiys, and maslahah, vary. When bone china products contain animal bones, there is a concern within the Shafi'i madhhab that the use of pig bone ash as a raw material in ceramic production poses a halal risk. The Fatwa Councils of Johor, Sabah, and Negeri Sembilan consider pig bone ash to still be najis, and its chemical and physical modifications (istihalah) are viewed as violating Shariah (Alias & Zabidi, 2021).

As a result, the use of pig bone ash-based plates, dishes, bowls, cups, spoons, teapots, and vases in the food service and hospitality industries is regarded as a halal risk. Only animal bones obtained from animals slaughtered in accordance with Shariah guidelines, including ash bones, may be deemed halal. Any animal bones that raise questions or concerns are also considered najis and present a halal risk (Alias & Zabidi, 2021). The findings of this research can benefit manufacturers, consumers, and Islamic regulatory bodies in Islamic countries. Manufacturers can gain insights into alternative materials and manufacturing processes that align with halal requirements, allowing them to adapt their production practices. Consumers can make informed choices about tableware that adheres to their religious beliefs, and Islamic regulatory bodies can use the research findings to develop consistent guidelines for halal certification in the tableware industry.



## Analysis

Table 1

*Bone sources in bone china products.*

Company name	Fine china	Bone china	Bone source
China Pottery (M) Sdn. Bhd. – Penedar Tunggal Noritake	√	√	Ox bone/cow bone
Wedgwood-Royal Doulton United Kingdom	√	√	Cattle bone
Narumi-Japan Royal	√	√	Cow bone
Royal Porcelain-Thailand Royal	√	√	Cow bone
Royal Crown Derby-United Kingdom	√	√	Cattle bone
William Edwards-United Kingdom	√	√	All bone used is Halal certified (not stated what bone that have been used)

Note. Data collected by author on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 2

Based on previous research, several companies that incorporate bone china in their production have been identified. For example, the Noritake Company utilizes cow bone ash imported from New Zealand and undergoes audits by the International Islamic Religious Council to ensure the absence of bones in their products, considering the importance of halal compliance in Malaysia. Similarly, the Wedgwood-Royal Doulton Company from the United Kingdom acknowledges the use of cow bones in their manufacturing process. Narumi-Japan Royal and Royal Porcelain-Thailand Royal are other companies that employ cow bones in their manufacturing processes. The Royal Crown Derby-United Kingdom Company imports cow bones from the Netherlands. Lastly, the William Edwards-United Kingdom Company has clarified that they use bones with halal certification, although they have not explicitly specified the animal source (Salleh & Subri, 2018). It is important to note that all of these companies also supply fine china products.

Table 2

*Differentiation between bone china and fine china*

<b>Product</b>	<b>Bone China</b>	<b>Fine China</b>
<b>Characteristic</b>		
Physical	Soft color, Creamy (Almost translucent appearance)	Brighter whiter tone, Opaque (Non-translucent)
Main Materials	Mixed of clays, kaolin, feldspar, quartz and the added of bone ash.	Mixed of clays, kaolin, feldspar and quartz.
Durability	Has the greatest strength and resilience of all ceramics with the addition of bone ash to its raw materials	Somewhere in the middle between Porcelain ware and Bone China in terms of quality
Permissible	Haram -It haram if contained animals bone ash which is pig or animals that not been slaughtered according to Islamic law.	Halal -Due to fine china not containing any animal's bone ash.

Note. Data collected by author on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 2

### Physical

The primary distinction between bone china and fine china lies in their color. Bone china incorporates "bone ash," which is derived from animal bones, typically cow bones, into the ceramic material. The inclusion of cow bone ash gives bone china its characteristic creamy and soft color. In contrast, fine china, which does not contain bone ash, exhibits a brighter and whiter tone. When held up to light, bone china appears translucent and allows more light to pass through, while fine china is opaque and blocks any light transmission (Wedgwood, n.d.).

### Main Materials

The term "bone china" originates from its composition, which includes bone ash obtained by grinding animal bones, usually cow bones, into ash. Bone ash typically constitutes between 30% and 45% of the ingredients in bone china. Other components may include quartz, feldspar, ball clay, silica, and various types of clay (21Oak Contributor, 2022).

### Durability

Fine china, similar to bone china, primarily comprises quartz, kaolin, feldspar, and mixed clays, as mentioned in "Fine China: When and Where it Originated, Along With Our Favorite Sets" (n.d.). Depending on the manufacturer, additional elements may be added. Each product undergoes meticulous shaping and is fired at extremely high temperatures. Noritake



confirms that the production process for bone china follows a similar procedure to that of fine china. The key distinction lies in the presence of cow bone ash in the ceramic material of bone china, resulting in a slightly lower firing temperature compared to fine china.

### *Permissible*

In the religious question and answer section provided by the Selangor State Mufti Department, the following observation was made regarding bone china: "Using pig bone powder to make plates is mughallazah impurity. The use of the plate is prohibited. The same is true for bones from halal or non-slaughtered cows, goats, or other animals" (Salleh & Subri, 2018).

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

In conclusion, it is crucial for people to be aware of the materials they use in their daily lives. As Muslim consumers, the adherence to halal and haram guidelines is of utmost importance to ensure the purity of the products we use. In this regard, a fatwa issued by Jakim and the Department of Islamic Religion highlights the prohibition of using bone china that contains animal bones, such as cow and pig bones. Different opinions exist regarding the use of bone china, but the Muzakarah believes that bone china equipment or jewelry do not fulfill the community's essential needs (darurah) for ownership and use. Therefore, it is agreed upon that the use of equipment or jewelry made from animal bone ash (bone china) that is not halal according to Shariah law, including animals that are halal to consume but not slaughtered according to Islamic law, is unnecessary. However, it is required to use equipment and jewelry made from animal bone ash (bone china) that is halal in terms of consumption and slaughtered according to Islamic law. In light of this research, it is recommended that guidelines be developed for users, especially Muslim consumers in Malaysia. Given the significance of determining the halal and haram status of everyday products, an educational guideline in the form of an infographic, for example, should be created to raise awareness and provide guidance on bone china-related issues.

This research makes a valuable contribution to the field of Islamic studies by exploring the intersection of Islamic principles and the use of bone china in tableware production. It not only expands the body of knowledge regarding halal practices and regulations but also provides practical insights for Muslim consumers when purchasing ceramic products in the market. The research delves into the specific concerns and regulations surrounding the use of bone china in Malaysia, taking into account the interpretations of Islamic law and the rulings of Islamic councils. By analyzing and presenting this additional data, the study enhances our understanding of the cultural and religious factors that influence the acceptability of tableware materials. It fills a significant gap in existing knowledge by offering a comprehensive analysis of the use of bone china in tableware production within the context of Islamic countries. Moreover, the research has broader implications for promoting cultural and religious sensitivity in the tableware industry, enabling manufacturers to develop products that cater to the needs and preferences of Muslim consumers. By considering and respecting their religious beliefs and practices, this research fosters inclusivity, strengthens consumer trust, and creates enhanced market opportunities in Malaysia.

Lastly, this research plays a crucial role in promoting cultural and religious sensitivity in the tableware industry. By understanding and respecting the religious beliefs and practices of consumers in Malaysia, manufacturers can develop products that cater to their needs and

preferences, fostering inclusivity, strengthening consumer trust, and enhancing market opportunities in Malaysia.

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