

# Pottery and Social Dynamics in the Mediterranean and Beyond in Medieval and Post-Medieval Times

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# Rural Society in Al-Andalus during the Late Middle Ages. Ceramic Assemblages and Social Dynamics in Eastern Andalusia

Alberto García Porras  
Universidad de Granada

## Abstract

The fortified medieval village known as “El Castillejo” (Los Guájares, Granada, Spain) shows specific archaeological features that make possible our undertaking different kinds of analysis from a variety of viewpoints. For example, it is possible to compare qualitative and quantitative data on sherd assemblages with the features of the buildings they were recovered in.

**Keywords:** Fortified Settlement, Andalusí House, Ceramics (13th-14th century)

## 1. Introduction

The settlement known as *El Castillejo de Los Guájares* (Granada) (Figure 1), is located in the mid Toba river valley, opposite to Guájar Faragüit but very close to it and above Guájar Fondón, on a cliff about 400 metres on the sea level (M.T.N.E., E. 1/25.000, hoja 1.041–IV, Los Guájares; <sup>4</sup>4.730/407.701).

Several excavations have taken place during the last few decades. A wide area in the inner part of the settlement was excavated.<sup>1</sup> As a result, quite a few papers and essays have been published so far. These works discuss different points, including the relationship between this site and the regional settlement system it was part of. Furthermore, the building techniques used, the settlement patterns and the features of private and public buildings have been analysed (Barceló *et al.* 1987; Bertrand *et al.* 1990; Cressier, Malpica and Rosselló 1987; Malpica *et al.* 1986).<sup>2</sup> The ceramic sherds recovered during the excavations have been also studied and published (Cressier, Riera and Rosselló 1986). My PhD dissertation, defended a few years ago, included a detailed study of the pottery recovered during the numerous archaeological excavations undertaken on the site during the last two decades. When the research was still at an early stage, it was clear that in order to get reliable results there should be a rigorous approach. To get a complete understanding of the context the assemblage should be studied as a whole, analysing the features of the ceramics recovered and their relationship with the type of house the sherds were found in (García 2001). Actually, thanks to this approach it was possible to achieve results leading to a broader understanding of the context. As we have pointed out in earlier works (García 2002), this kind of research provides information not strictly related to ceramics in themselves.

Because of its unique features, “El Castillejo” can be regarded as a *unicum* and analysed as a case study. Usually, this is not the case for settlements dating to the same

period. This paper aims to provide a complete analysis of these features that can be summarised as follows:

- Patterns related to building techniques, layout and spatial organisation of the settlement.
- A closed context showing minimal post-depositional alteration and perturbation
- The layers corresponding to the phase when the village was deserted show clear signs as to how the settlement was inhabited. We are talking about ceramic sherds that were recovered *in situ* and in a closed context as the settlement was abandoned.
- The pottery recovered shows homogeneous features concerning shapes and the technical devices used in making it.

Thanks to an integrated analysis of the settlement and of the archaeological assemblage, it was possible to reconstruct social aspects and the daily life of the community living in the village.

## 2. El Castillejo, a fortified settlement

This settlement was defended by walls with three small squared towers, delimiting an oval area (120x 130 m) oriented W-E that fitted the irregular shape of a hilltop (Figure 2). The main gate was located on the western edge of the enclosure. There was, actually, only one access to the settlement: a bent entrance with a side bastion, erected for guarding and defending the village. The space inside the walls is not divided into different areas: there are houses as well as other buildings, like a cistern for communal use that is joined to the inner side of the southern wall. All the buildings are, in fact, made of extremely thick lime and with a stone foundation, following the technique used for building mud walls. The use of this building technique exclusively, conveys to the settlement an extremely uniform aspect. There was a pond and a hydraulic system just outside the walls, but it does not seem that these structures were related to the water supply system existing inside the village.

*El Castillejo* can be defined as a fortified settlement, more precisely as a ‘fortified village’. Thanks to the archaeological excavations it was possible to ascertain the

<sup>1</sup> Four archaeological excavations were undertaken in 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1989 as part of a research project directed by Antonio Malpica Cuello. Further research was carried on at different times during the same period.

<sup>2</sup> The bibliography quoted does not pretend to be a full list of all publications on *El Castillejo*, but includes the most important ones.



FIGURE 1 – *EL CASTILLEJO* PICTURED FROM THE EASTERN EDGE OF THE SETTLEMENT.

number of houses present in the settlement and that all of them were built inside the same enclosure. Even though *El Castillejo* can be defined as a village, it was fortified in the same way as some castles in Andalusia. The walls, the towers and the bastion are a clear sign that the site needed to be defended.

As far as we know, *El Castillejo* was inhabited between the late 12th and the beginning of the 14th centuries, at a time when the Almohad kingdom was playing an important role in the Iberian Peninsula. The major development of the settlement took place at that time. Nevertheless, it was still inhabited when the Nasrid kingdom was established in Granada during the second half of the 13th century. The analysis of the ceramic sherds recovered suggests that *El Castillejo* was abandoned between the end of the 13th and the beginning of the 14th century. The settlement was abandoned at once, but there is no sign of a catastrophic event: neither ash layers as a consequence of a fire, nor evidence that the buildings fell down abruptly. Apparently, there is no sign of a fight but, truth be told, we do not know why the village was abandoned. The inhabitants left behind all their belongings.

Nevertheless, a few centuries later this site recovered its original function; in fact, it was used again as a fortified settlement during the 16th century, but it was not inhabited any longer on a permanent basis. The chronicle of Luís del Mármol Carvajal mentions this phase: '*Pasando el río, caminó la gente toda en sus ordenanzas, y llegando á Guájar del Fondon, donde se veían las reliquias del*

*incendio que los herejes habían hecho en la iglesia cuando mataron á don Juan Zapata, hallaron el lugar desamparado, aunque tenía un sitio fuerte donde se pudieran defender los moradores*' (Mármol 1946, 245).<sup>3</sup> This account has been confirmed by archaeological evidence (García 1995).

### 2.1 Houses in '*El Castillejo*'

At first sight the farming settlement *El Castillejo* shows an extremely heterogeneous structure. The plan of the buildings could easily be recognised even before undertaking the excavation. Only one street crossed the settlement from east to west, reaching the edges of the hilltop. It divides the site into two areas: the south and the north. This street coincides with the crest of the hilltop.

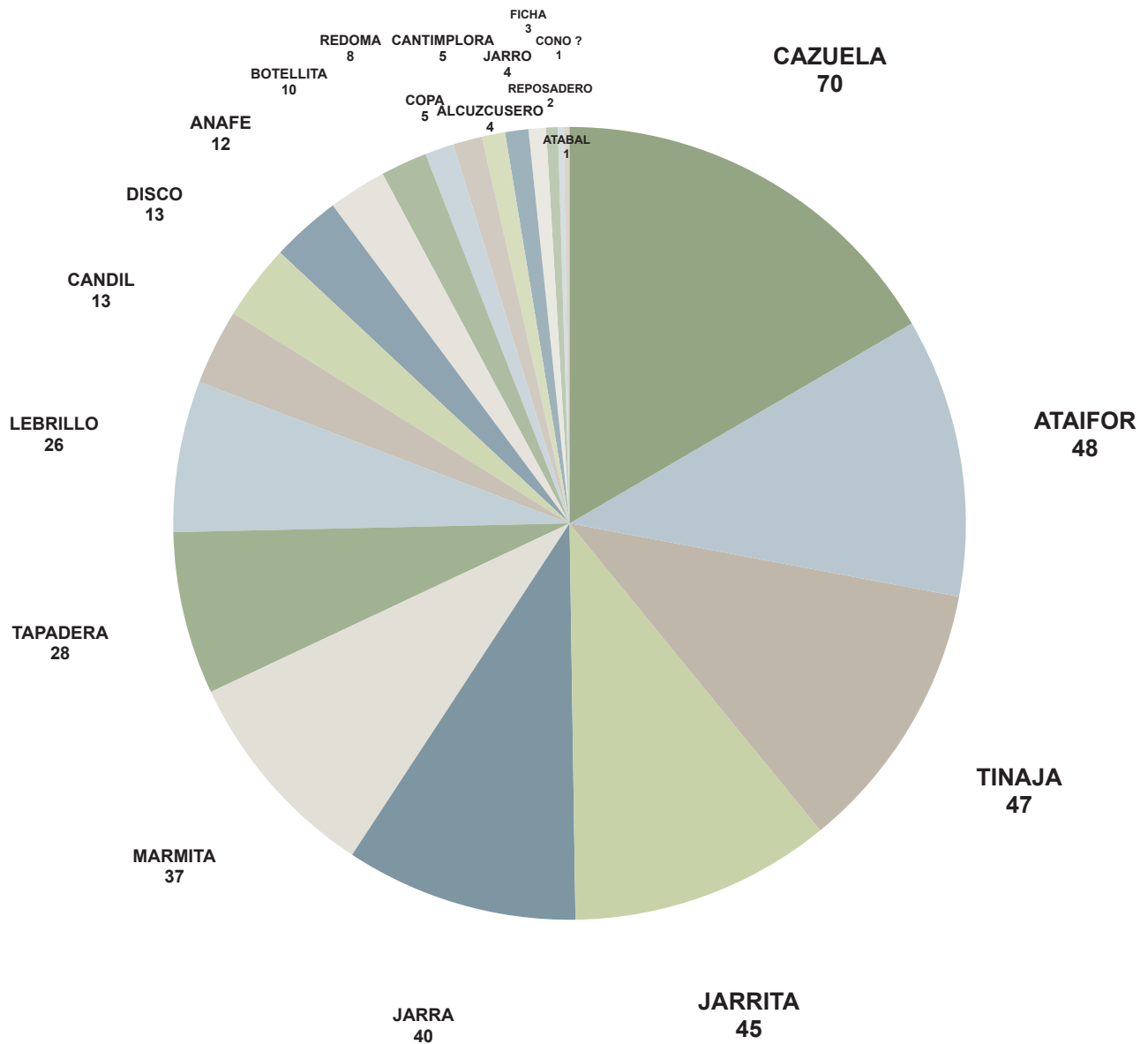
Even though all the buildings show similar features, not all of them can be considered as houses or mansions. There are a few with two or three parallel naves that can be regarded as a distinguished feature. Possibly, these buildings were not part of the residential area; in fact, only a few ceramic sherds were recovered inside them. They have been interpreted as structures for communal use, probably storage places or stables, but their function is not yet clear. The analysis of the ceramic assemblages

<sup>3</sup> "They crossed the river and everyone walked orderly; when they reached Guájar Fondon they could see the signs of the fire put by the heretics when Juan Zapada was killed. The site was clearly abandoned but there were still some fortified structures that made it possible to defend it".



FIGURE 2 – OVERVIEW MAP OF THE FORTIFIED SETTLEMENT *EL CASTILLEJO* (CASA = HOUSE; MURO DE TAPIAL = MUD WALLS; BARRO COCIDO = FIRED MUD; MURALLA = TOWN WALLS; ALJIBE = CISTERN; ESTRUCTURA DEFENSIVA = DEFENSIVE STRUCTURE).





SERIES

Cazuela	70
Marmita	37
Cuscusera	4
Jarra	40
Tinaja	47
Cono de Azúcar	1
Lebrillo	26
Candil	13
Anafe	12
Ataifor	48
Jarrita	45
Jarro	4
Copa	5
Botellita	10
Redoma	8
Atabal	1
Ficha	3
Cantimplora	5
Tapadera	28
Reposadero	2
TOTAL	422

FIGURE 3 – CERAMICS TYPES RECOVERED IN *EL CASTILLEJO* (CAZUELA = CASSEROLE; MARMITA = SAUCEPAN; CUSCUSERA = PAN FOR COOKING COUSCOUS; JARRA = JUG; TINAJA = EARTHENWARE STORAGE JAR; CONO DE AZUCAR = SUGAR CONE; LEBRILLO = WASHBASIN; CANDIL = OIL LAMP; ANAFE = PORTABLE STOVE; ATAIFOR = TRAY; JARRITA = SMALL JUG; JARRO = PITCHER; COPA = CUP; BOTELLITA = SMALL BOTTLE; REDOMA = CRUET; ATABAL = SMALL DRUM; CANTIMPLORA = WATER BOTTLE; TAPADERA = LID; REPOSADERO = SUPPORT).

recovered in the areas interpreted as public buildings shows that all the sherds are part of pots with the same function. It appears that some buildings had a defensive function, while others were possibly used as stables or storage places.

Turning to analyse the houses, they show differences in terms of layout, plan and dimensions (Bertrand *et al.* 1990; Malpica *et al.* 1986). Even though the building technique employed was always the same, it was possible to make a typological analysis of houses and buildings in *El Castillejo*, as summarised below:

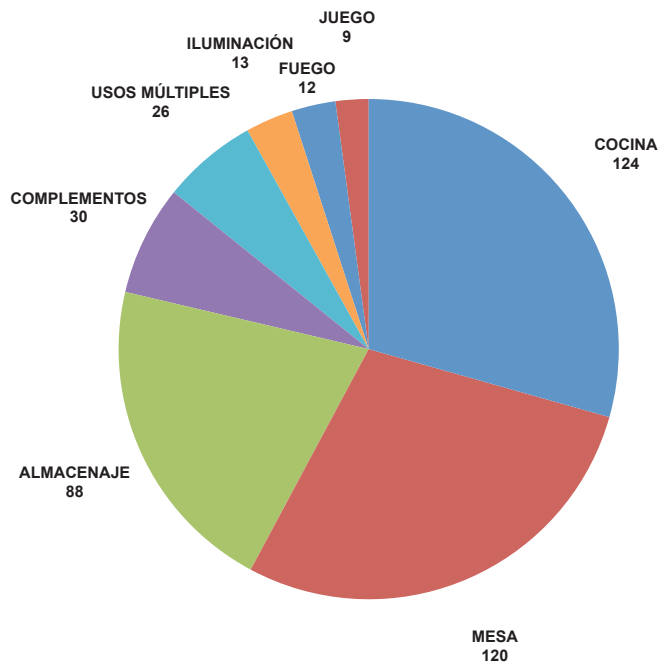
- A. Simple houses
  - AI. Single-room houses
  - AII. Houses with an inner court
    - AIIa. A small house of approximately 40 sm with an L layout and a central court
    - AIIb. A big house of approximately 70-80 sm with four or five rooms with a U layout and a central court
  - AIII. Buildings with parallel naves
    - AIIIa. Buildings with two naves
    - AIIIb. Small buildings (sup. ≤ 22 sm) with two squared areas
- B. Complex houses
  - BI. With a central structure like AIIa
  - BII. With a central structure like AIIb
- C. Houses with an unidentified structure

Most of the houses are type AII or B (with an inner court or complex structure) and all of them had a central court that was the major source of light and air. Thanks to stairs, possibly made of perishable materials as they have not been preserved, it was possible to access the upper floor. A large amount of tiles has been recovered, suggesting that these buildings had a double-sloped roof.

**2.2 Pottery assemblages at ‘El Castillejo’**

During the archaeological excavations undertaken at the site, large assemblages of ceramic sherds were recovered. The analysis and preliminary restoration of these materials make it possible to state that the pottery recovered on the site shows homogeneous features concerning forms, functions and technical devices used; moreover, it dates to the same period. We are talking about ceramics for daily use with marked functional features, but made with little attention to aesthetic patterns.

Twenty-one different types of vessels have been classified (Figure 3) and divided into eight functional groups (Figure 4). On the one hand, the pottery used for cooking and storing food, like pans and big storage jars, does show small variations in forms; on the other hand, jars, plates and other objects used for food consumption and display on the table show wider variations. Nevertheless, these variations are not as marked as in town centres. Generally speaking, the pottery recovered at *El Castillejo* shows homogeneous patterns and was made in an extremely



**VAJILLAS**

Cocina	124
Almacenaje	88
Usos múltiples	26
Iluminación	13
Fuego	12
Mesa	120
Juego	9
Complementos	30
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>422</b>

FIGURE 4 – CERAMICS RECOVERED IN *EL CASTILLEJO* DIVIDED BY FUNCTION (COCINA = VESSELS USED IN THE KITCHEN; ALMACENAJE = STORAGE VESSELS; USOS MÚLTIPLES = MULTIPLE FUNCTIONS; ILUMINACIÓN = LIGHTING; FUEGO = COOKING VESSELS; MESA = TABLEWARE; JUEGO = GAMES; COMPLEMENTOS = SUBSIDIARY OBJECTS).

accurate way. These objects were nicely shaped: as several scholars have pointed out, with the ratio between different dimensions being well balanced (Fernández 2003, 444). This accuracy might be the result of a perfect control of technical devices during the different phases of pottery making: clay selection and processing, modelling with the wheel, firing, use of glazes, finishing etc. All these techniques were mastered by the potters who made the objects recovered at *El Castillejo*, but more generally the same can be stated about all potters working during the Almohad period (Fernández 2000).

As stated above, there are small variations in objects’ form and all the pottery dates between the late 13th and

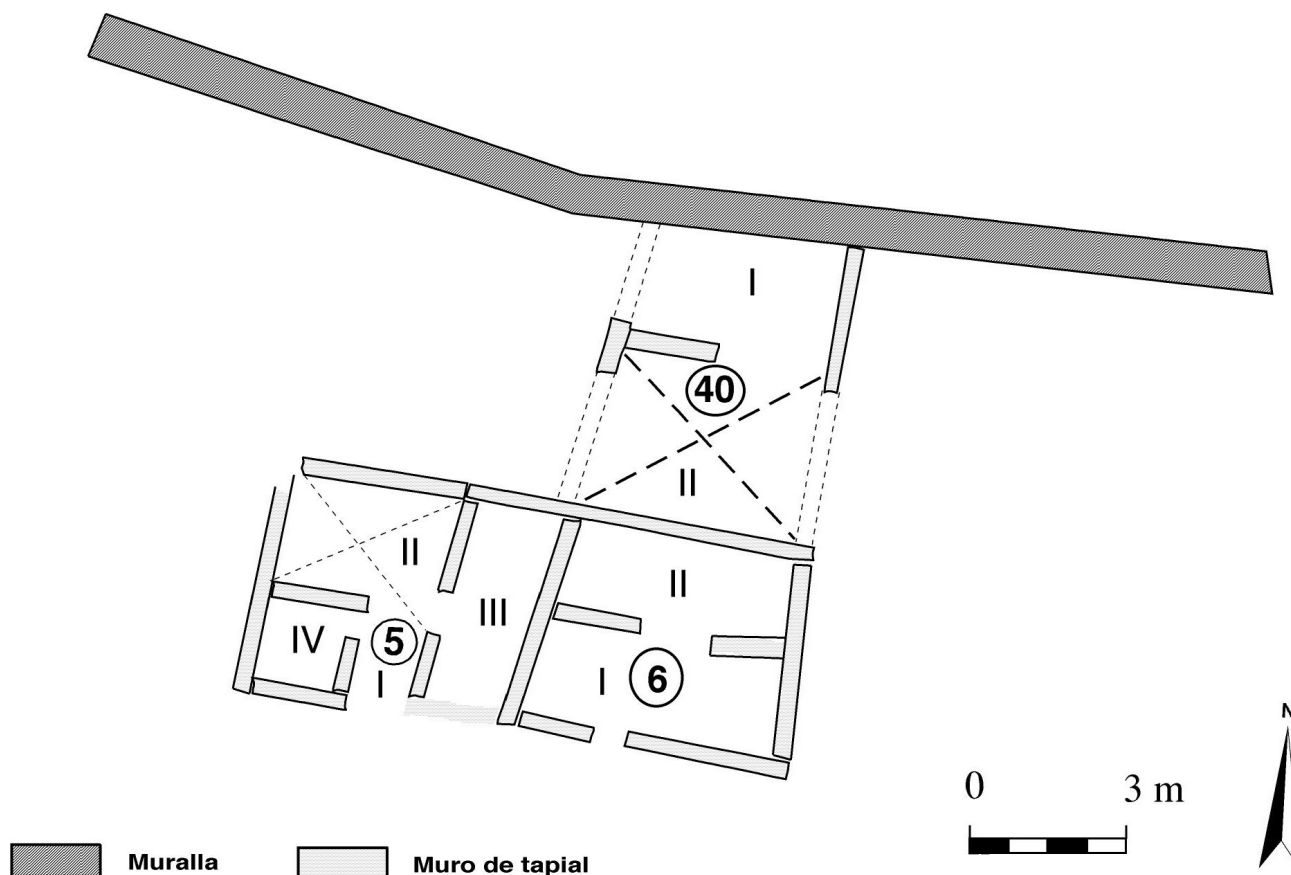


FIGURE 5 – A GROUP OF HOUSES IN *EL CASTILLEJO*: HOUSE 5, 6 AND 40  
(MURALLA = TOWN WALLS; MURO DE TAPIAL = MUD WALL).

the beginning of the 14th century, corresponding to the phase when *El Castillejo* was deserted and the inhabitants left behind their belongings. It is worth noting that most of the pottery recovered was *in situ*; actually, in the very same place where it was normally kept or used. This made it possible to reconstruct the majority of the objects and to get a deeper understanding of daily life on the site just before it was abandoned.

To get a clear picture of this phase a comprehensive quantitative analysis of the ceramics was carried out, taking into account known typologies as well as the functional groups.

### 3. Ceramic sherds and buildings: a comparative analysis

As discussed above, the buildings, as well as the ceramics assemblages recovered inside them, show similar features across the whole settlement. All the sherds were found in primary deposition. The relationship between pottery use and the possible function of the building it was found in has been analysed. The discussion that follows does not concern ceramic features and building techniques only, but aims to be a complete study of the context. The case studies below have been chosen as examples.

#### 3.1 Buildings with 'special function': House 5

House 5 is located in the central area of the settlement (Figure 5), between House 4-4bis and House 6. It is a small square house of 42sqm (a detailed description is in Malpica *et al.* 1987, 488).

The rooms are arranged with an L plan and give on to an inner courtyard, which is connected to the main entrance thanks to a small and narrow passageway (room I, measuring 3,6sqm). Actually, the inner courtyard (room II) is the largest room of the house (11,7sqm) and there is a room on each side of the entrance: the one on the western side is smaller (room IV, about 3,5sqm), while the one on the opposite side (room III) is bigger (9,4sqm). The floor was made of the natural rock, smoothed so as to make the surface more regular. A stone bench was used for craft activities.

The archaeological assemblage recovered inside this building is extremely well preserved. Worth mentioning is a gilded and embossed necklace made of copper, possibly used as an amulet (Malpica *et al.* 1987, 488). Concerning ceramic sherds, 29 different objects were found (Figure 6). As in every house at *El Castillejo*, the majority of sherds (31%) are cooking pottery, while storage jars are 7%, and



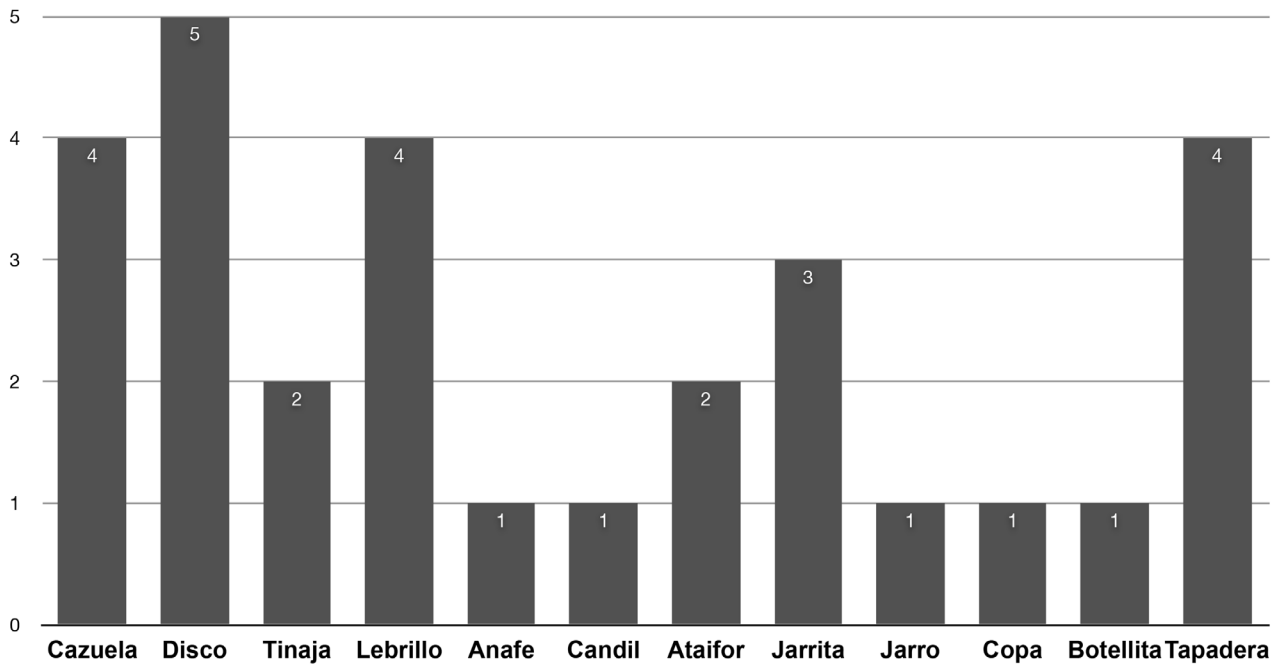


FIGURE 6 – CERAMIC TYPES RECOVERED IN HOUSE 5 (CAZUELA = CASSEROLE; DISCO = DISK; TINAJA = EARTHENWARE STORAGE JAR; LEBRILLO = WASHBASIN; ANAFE = PORTABLE STOVE; CANDIL = OIL LAMP; ATAFOIR = TRAY; JARRITA = SMALL JUG; JARRO = PITCHER; COPA = CUP; BOTELLITA = SMALL BOTTLE; TAPADERA = LID).

pottery used for eating and displaying food is 27,6% of all sherds recovered. A portable stove, a big basin and four lids were found also, and some of these objects show distinctive features.

Even though this house is similar to other buildings excavated on the site, a few elements can be regarded as unusual. Vessels that are usually quite common in al-Andalus, like pans and jars, were not recovered inside this building; round ceramic discs were used instead. These objects were found in large amounts and could be used for different purposes: as lids for big storage vessels (two lids in House n° 5) or for preparing food (all the other discs in House n° 5), including for baking bread (as suggested by Rosselló 1992, 255). Several objects recovered in this house can be related to bread preparation, like the big basin and a type of unglazed pan (type VIII in García 2001, 202-204). Several pans of this kind were actually found in House n° 5 (Figure 7).

Turning to analyse the spatial distribution of the sherds, it can be said that most of the pottery was found in the courtyard (about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the total amount of sherds). Furthermore, pottery used for different purposes was found there, implying that this space was used for a variety of activities. As the majority of pans, discs and the basin were found in the courtyard, it is clear that most daily activities related to food preparation (cooking and preparing bread) were carried out there. Food was consumed in the court; water and wheat were stored. The variety of ceramics sherds recovered shows that the court was a multi-functional space that could be used for resting, as a storage place and even as a kitchen. As all the other

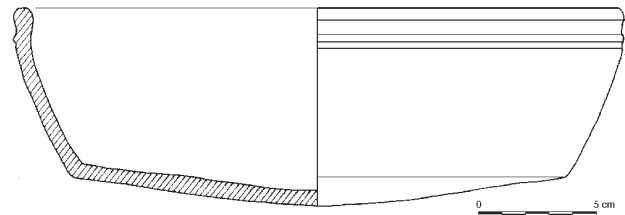


FIGURE 7 – CASSEROLE POSSIBLY USED IN THE OVEN.

houses, it possessed an upper floor that could be reached thanks to stairs, and a double-sloped roof.

### 3.2 The development of the houses in 'El Castillojo': House 4-4bis and House 00-00bis

#### 3.2.1 House 4-4bis

This house is located in the western area of the settlement (Malpica et al. 1987, 443-44; Figure 8). On the southern side it gives onto the main street of the settlement, on the eastern side it adjoins the wall of House 3, and on the western side it borders on House 5. This building consists of two parts: one is the inner courtyard and is located in the northern area; the southern wall of the other part adjoins the courtyard. There is no connection between the two parts.

The northern part has the same structure as the other buildings of the village: the rooms are arranged in an L layout around an inner courtyard. The main entrance is located on the south-west corner and gives direct access to an inner rectangular courtyard (room I). The floor is

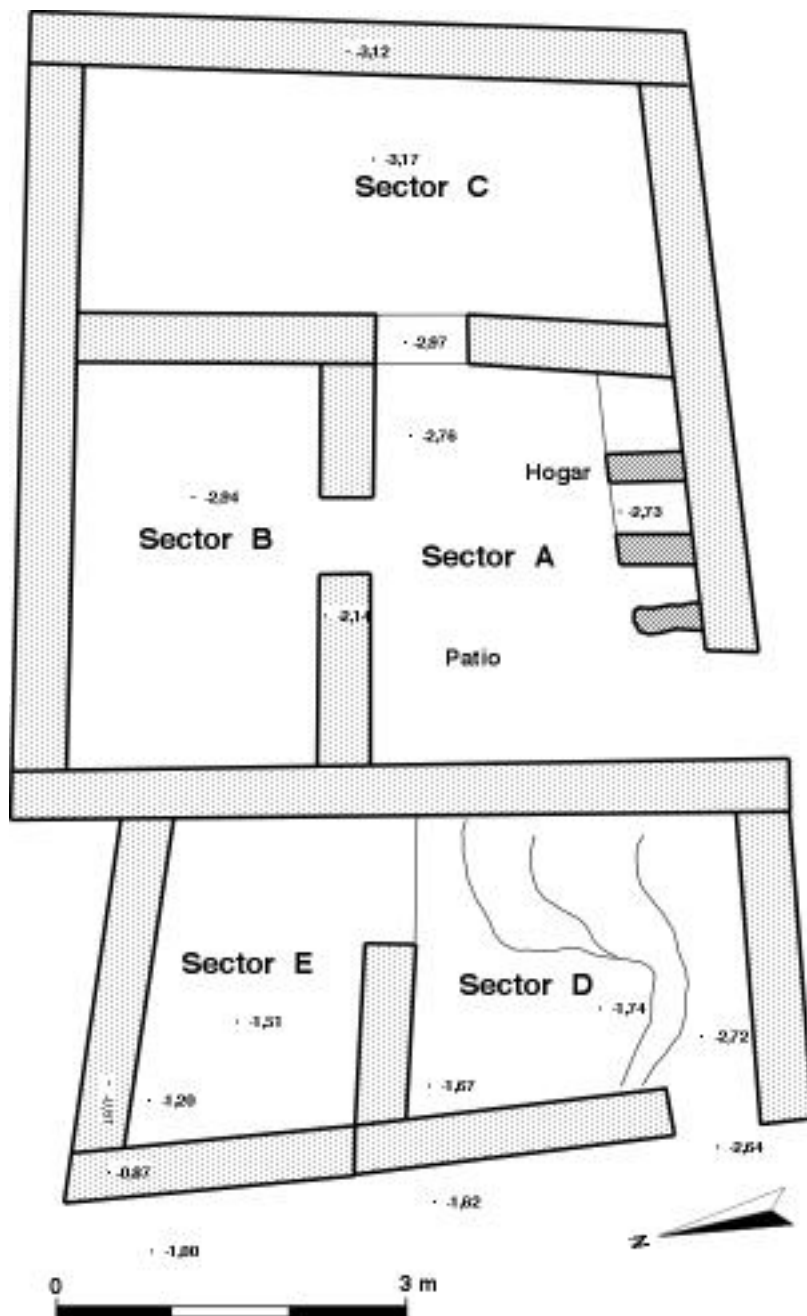


FIGURE 8 – HOUSE 4-4BIS: HOUSE WITH A COMPLEX STRUCTURE (SECTOR = AREA ; PATIO = COURTYARD; HOGAR = FIREPLACE).

extremely poorly preserved, but on the eastern side of the perimeter wall there are traces of a structure, possibly a larder, divided in two parts by two masonry walls. The larder was very close to the fireplace: a layer of ashes and a considerable amount of ceramic sherds are the only evidence left.

The house consists of two rooms: one on the eastern and one on the northern side of the courtyard. The one located on northern side is larger (room II) and has a rectangular plan (10,9sqm). This room could be accessed through a small room and two steps fill the height difference

existing between the two areas. Only a minimal part of the floor was preserved. The room on the eastern side of the building (room III) has a slightly trapezoidal plan (7,8sqm) and access to it is through a very small room. The floor was made of lime and it is badly preserved. Next to the northern wall there are traces of ashes that have interpreted as a small fireplace with edges made of stone and bricks, and with a coating. The postholes left in the walls by some beams clearly show that there was an upper floor that could be reached thanks to a stair made of wood or of any other perishable material. The large amount of tiles recovered indicates a single-sloped roof.

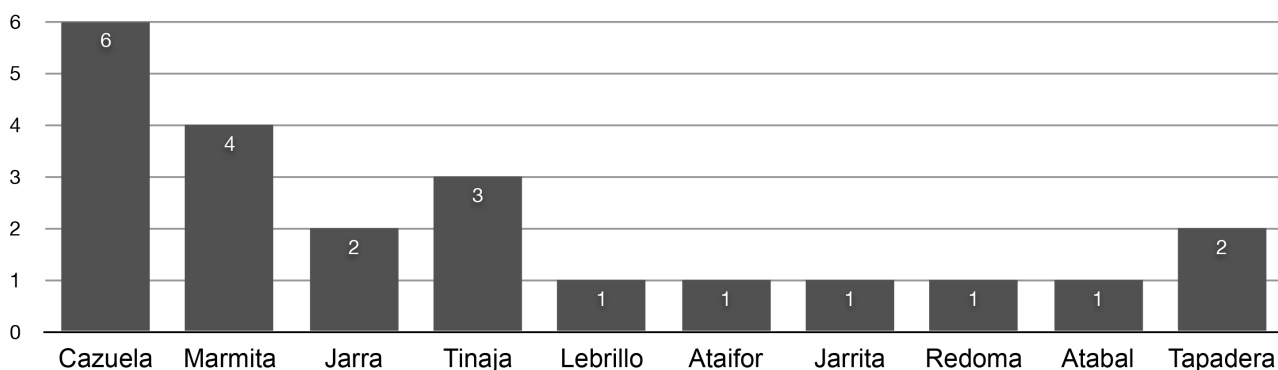


FIGURE 9 – CERAMIC TYPES RECOVERED IN HOUSE 4-4BIS (CAZUELA = CASSEROLE; MARMITA = SAUCEPAN ; JARRA = JUG; TINAJA = EARTHENWARE STORAGE JAR; LEBRILLO = WASHBASIN; ATAIFOR = TRAY; JARRITA = JAR; REDOMA = CRUET; ATABAL = SMALL DRUM; TAPADERA = LID).

Two more rooms adjoin the southern side of the house described above and were named as '4bis'. Access to this area was from the south-east. Firstly, we are going to describe the room located on the south-east (D area). It is a very small room (5,4sqm) located next to the court and possibly without a roof. A grey layer, probably the fireplace, was found there together with ceramic sherds, unfired clay and metal waste. The room on the south-west edge (E area) was even smaller (5,4sqm); a dark layer was found there. Most of the pottery was actually recovered in this room.

The relationship between the two buildings is not yet clear. It might be possible to shed new light on this point by analysing the spatial distribution of ceramics in connection with the stratigraphy (Figure 9). A total amount of 22 ceramic objects were found: 7 inside House 4 (31,8%) and 15 in House 4-bis (68,2%). The pottery recovered in House 4 can be divided into three groups according to its function: cooking pottery is the largest group (71,4%) followed by pottery with multiple functions (14,3%, i.e. the big basin) and objects used as part of a seat (the lid, 14,3%). It is apparent that objects commonly used for storing or consuming food were not present in this house.

Turning to analyse pottery recovered in House 4-bis, we find that a larger amount of sherds was recovered; furthermore, these objects could be used for a broader range of functions. About 33% of the vessels recovered in House 4-bis were used for cooking and 20% for consuming and displaying food, implying a lower rate of the latter in comparison to the assemblages recovered in all the other houses of the settlement. It is worth noting that a vessel used as a small drum was found (6,7%). The pottery recovered in House 4-bis was used for a variety of purposes and shows similar figures: there are pans (20%), pots (13,3%) and jars (13,3%). Surprisingly, big storage jars (*tinajas*) are the objects present in the highest amount (20%).

These vessels responded to a wide range of daily needs. As objects used for displaying and storing food were not found in House 4, this house should be regarded as part

of a larger building that included House 4bis. Actually, in House 4 it would not have been possible to carry on certain domestic activities because some objects are lacking. For this reason, to get a better understanding of this area, the ceramics recovered in House 4 and 4bis should be analysed as if they were two different parts of the same building. As a result, the quantitative analysis of the sherds gives different figures. Cooking pottery is 45,5% of the total amount, about twice the average figure of a standard house in this settlement. Pans are the large majority of cooking pots (27,3%), followed by other pots (18,2%), while objects used for food consumption are 13,6% of the total amount of sherds (with an average of 28,4% in the rest of the village). Furthermore, in all the other houses jars and trays are the majority of objects used on the table, while in House 4-4bis they represent 4,5% each of the total amount of sherds.

We believe that the large number of cooking vessels might be related to the presence of two fireplaces. As they were located in two different spots and a complete seat of kitchen pottery was associated to each of them, we can assume that the two fireplaces might have been used at the same time. Nevertheless, it is not clear why there is so little tableware.

Anyway, if we analyse the distribution of the sherds recovered inside House 4-4bis it clearly shows that there are two different groups of kitchenware, each one related to one of the two fireplaces. One fireplace was located next to the northern wall of the inner courtyard in the building numbered as House 4 and close to the larder. The other fireplace was recovered in the first room (Room E in D area) of House 4bis: two saucepans, two cooking pots, one jar and a lid were found there. About 27,3% of the total sherds recovered was found in each fireplace, but a larger amount of pottery was recovered in room O in building 4bis (40,9%). Most of this assemblage consisted of storage jars (2 big jars and 3 storage vessels: *tinajas*). Furthermore, there were a few objects that were not used on a regular base (a saucepan, a jar and a small globular

pot) or that were employed on special occasions (a small drum). Room O has been interpreted as the storage room.

Only a few sherds were recovered in the rest of House 4-4bis. Evidence of daily activities was recorded in the room located in the northern area of building 4, where a glazed lid was found. These rooms were probably resting areas.

Summing up, a house with I1a plan was built and it was enlarged later on. The old fireplace was kept in use, but a new one was added. It might be possible that the presence of two fireplaces implies that two related conjugal units were living in the building. As the analysis of the ceramic assemblage has shown, we cannot talk about two separate houses. Furthermore, the presence of a shared storage room implies that the two conjugal units were closely related.

### 3.2.2 House 00-00bis

House 00-00bis is possibly the most peculiar building in *El Castillejo* (see Malpica and Cressier 1991, 287-288) (Figure 10). Together with house 4-4bis, it belongs to the group defined above as ‘complex houses’. New rooms (annex IV and 00bis) were added to the older part (00); the result was a more complex building.

This building is located close to the main gate, adjoining the inner side of the village walls. Entrance to the building is from the main road, just after the gate and crossing a porch. The courtyard (9,5sqm) was the central part of the house; access to it was through the passage I. Three rooms were arranged in an L layout around the courtyard. The rooms located on the south or on the western wings could be accessed through the southern side of the patio: room VI (south-west), room V (south) and room VII (west). Room VI and V were probably rest-rooms while the ceramics recovered in the Room VII show that it was a kitchen or a place for food consumption. Two rooms with a trapezoidal plan were added on the western side (group IV, adjacent to building 00). Their shape adjusted to the empty area left around the original building. Access to the new rooms was from the same street. As there were scant sherds in these two rooms, they have been interpreted as storage rooms.

The ‘group 00bis’ is located south of House 00. The two buildings are strictly related: there was a stair between room V in House 00bis and room III in House 00bis. The connection between the two buildings and the complex structure of 00bis led to further research to understand the relationship between the two parts of the building. The relationships between these two buildings, their role and their possible use at the same time have been analysed. House 00bis was built on a rectangular plot: four

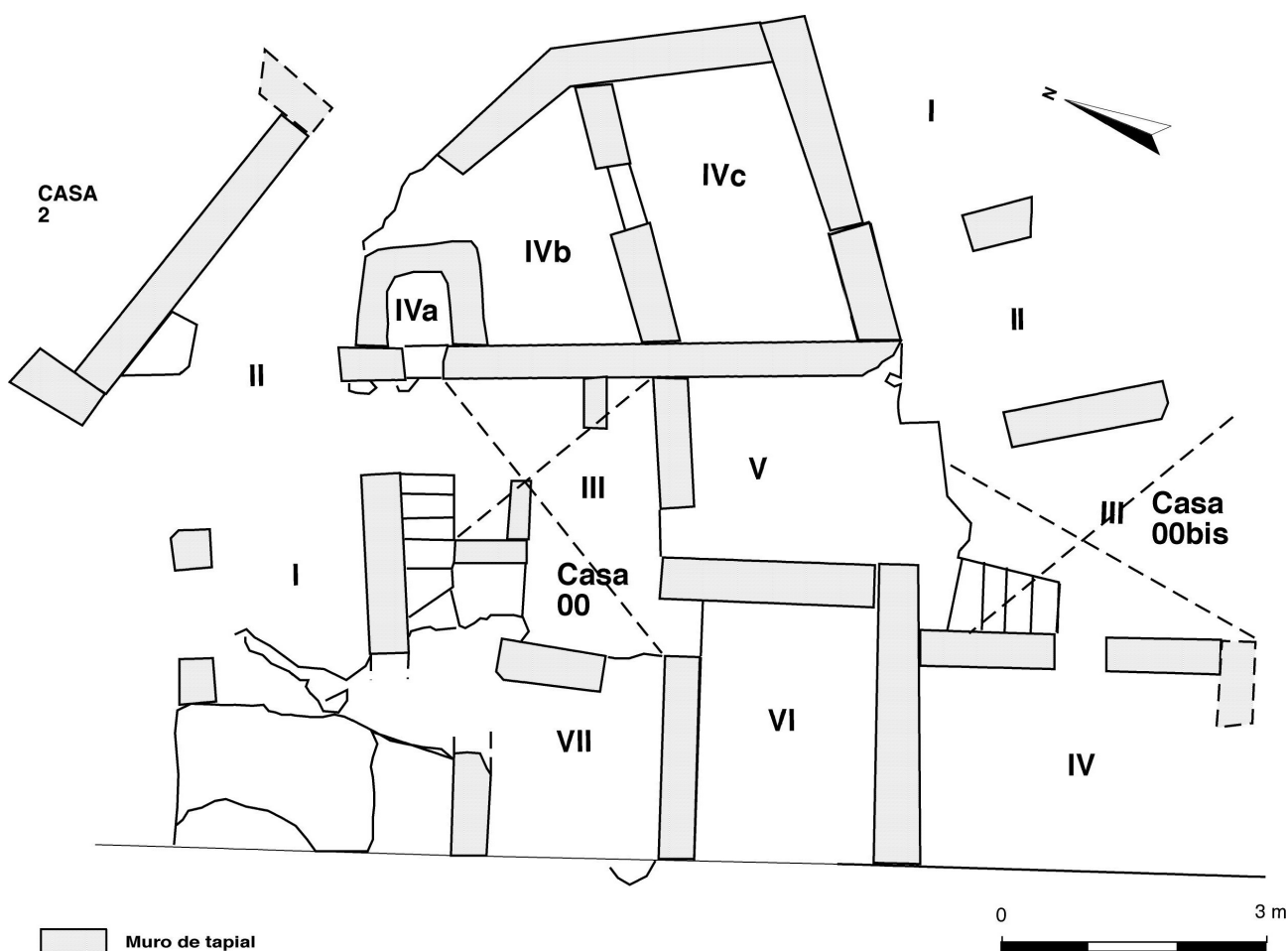


FIGURE 10 – HOUSE 00-00BIS: HOUSE WITH A COMPLEX STRUCTURE (CASA = HOUSE; MURO DE TAPIAL = MUD WALL).



rectangular rooms were built in a row. Access to this new area was from an alley on the eastern side of the building. Building 00 was not well preserved because of the sloping ground it was built on. The ground was preserved only in room III and IV. In room III, actually the patio, there was a stair connecting it with building 00. The latter adjoins the village walls: a stone bench covered with plaster was built there, showing that it was a resting room.

This building was made with the same technique used in all the settlement: earthen walls were erected on a masonry base. Despite the differences in the material used in the two phases and comparisons made with the other houses in the settlement, it was not possible to establish when the building 00-bis was added. The walls of building 00bis adjoin the southern side of House 00. Thus, it is clear that the latter was built at an earlier stage. Furthermore, it seems that not much time passed between the erection of the two buildings.

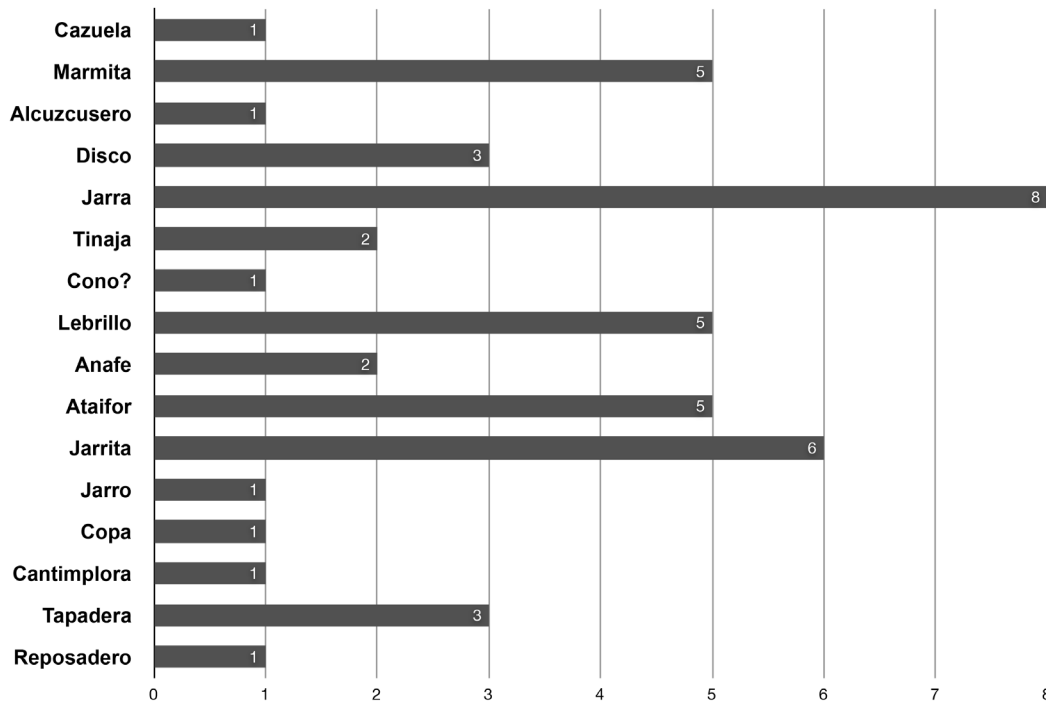


FIGURE 11 – CERAMIC TYPES RECOVERED IN HOUSE 00 (CAZUELA = CASSEROLE ; MARMITA = SAUCEPAN; CUSCUSERA = PAN FOR COOKING COUSCOUS; DISCO = DISK; JARRA = JUG; TINAJA = EARTHENWARE STORAGE JAR; CONO DE AZUCAR = SUGAR CONE; LEBRILLO = WASHBASIN; ANAFE = PORTABLE STOVE; ATAIFOR = TRAY; JARRITA = SMALL JUG; JARRO = PITCHER; COPA = CUP; CANTIMPLORA = WATER BOTTLE; TAPADERA = LID; REPOSADERO = SUPPORT).

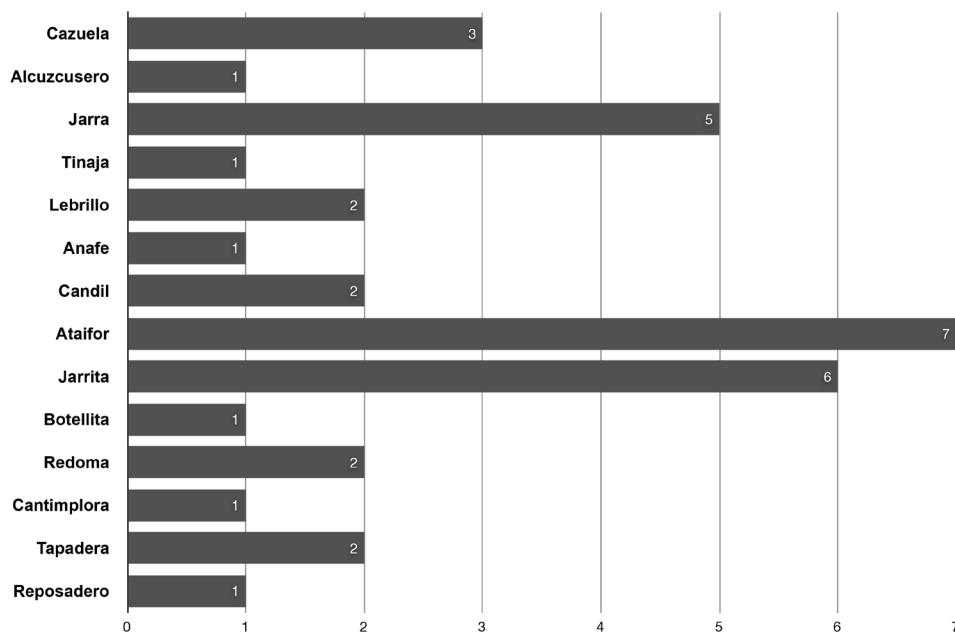


FIGURE 12 – CERAMIC TYPES RECOVERED IN HOUSE 00BIS (CAZUELA = CASSEROLE; CUSCUSERA = PAN FOR COOKING COUSCOUS; JARRA = JUG; TINAJA = EARTHENWARE STORAGE JAR; LEBRILLO = WASHBASIN; ANAFE = PORTABLE STOVE; CANDIL = OIL LAMP;

Turning to analyse the relationship between the two buildings, it is important to take into account the distribution of ceramics (Figures 11 and 12). The assemblage recovered in House 00 shows features similar to most of the buildings in the settlement. Nevertheless, there are a few differences concerning cooking pottery (21,7%) and possibly storage pottery (23,9%). The ceramics recovered in House 00bis show a different distribution. Neither cooking pottery (11,4%), nor storage pottery (17,1%) show figures similar to the rest of the settlement. Most of the ceramics recovered in this building are tableware (nearly half of the total number of sherds). Basins (20%) and small jars (17,1%) were next, while other objects were present in the same quantities as in the rest of the settlement.

If we analyse the ceramics present in House 00 and 00bis as one assemblage instead of considering them as two separate assemblages, the differences mentioned above do not appear so marked anymore. The sum of the ceramics recovered in both buildings could satisfy completely daily needs. Spatial analysis shows that food preparation and cooking were carried on in the courtyard of House 00, just next to House 00bis and room IV. Food was mostly stored in House 00bis (annex IV) and consumed in the two courtyards. All the other rooms were resting areas.

Coming to a conclusion, it can be said that this house with a complex structure was inhabited by the same family group, possibly an extensive familiar group made up of two conjugal nuclei. Thus, the existence of a duplicated ceramic assembly can easily be explained.

#### 4. Ceramic production centres

##### 4.1 Ceramics from nearby urban centres

A variety of pottery made in different places reached *El Castillejo*. So far it has not been possible to reconstruct the trading network between production centres and the sites where the pottery was used. It is difficult to draw a picture of the market without written sources available. This being the case, the only way to reconstruct ceramic trade is to analyse the features of the vessels recovered both in production centres and in the places where they were used. The best way to approach this kind of research is to undertake a quantitative analysis of all the materials recovered in key-sites, such as *El Castillejo* proved to be.

*El Castillejo* shows unique features: it is a closed context and the ceramic assemblage dates entirely to one phase, corresponding to the time when the settlement was deserted. Thus, typologies and quantitative data can be used as reference (García 2001, 416-420). The number of sites with similar features is extremely low; in fact, there are only a few settlements with such a degree of precision. Moreover, there are even fewer sites we can take into account if we wish to analyse this specific period.

Luckily, there is an extremely interesting site dating approximately to the same period and located in a town

centre, thus it can be discussed as a case study for a comparative analysis of the assemblages recovered at *El Castillejo*. We are talking about the excavation undertaken a few years ago on the site known as *casa de San Nicolás* in Murcia (Navarro 1991, 69).

The sherds recovered in the two contexts are clearly different. Differences involve both features and functions of the objects. The vessels recovered in rural settlements are in fact very different from those present in urban contexts. Generally speaking, the number of big storage vessels is higher in the countryside, as larger amounts of water and wheat needed to be stored. As countryside settlements were remote place from the main trade routes, storage vessels like *tinajas*, as well as siloes, were largely employed to store food. *Tinajas*, as well as jars could be used for storing water, as there was no systematic water supply. In town centres wheat, other kinds of grain and food in general, as well as water, were kept in jars and *tinajas*, but different storage systems could be used. As town centres were closer to marketplaces, it was easier to get access to food supplies; moreover, the inhabitants could count on public water supplies.

There are further differences between settlements in the town centre and in the countryside. For example, lids are more widespread in urban sites than in villages. This represents a kind of object that can be considered of minor importance, but the difference shows up. The number of lamps is higher in urban contexts; this was possibly related to the the larger dimensions of the houses located in town centres. In *El Castillejo* there was only one lamp in each house.

Turning to analyse functions, if we compare urban and rural sites, differences involved not only the number of sherds but also the variation in features relating to each functional group. Even though the same objects were present both in town and in rural settlements, in urban sites like the *casa de San Nicolás* the difference between ceramic forms is more marked and the objects are distributed in a more uniform way. It is important to underline that the ceramics produced in town centres reached also rural settlements. The same objects present in urban contexts in al-Andalus were widespread in the countryside, but their percentages differed responding to different needs.

##### 4.2. Long-distance trade objects

Thanks to the comparative analysis undertaken so far, it has been possible to ascertain that immediately after the establishment of the kingdom of Granada, objects produced in town workshops were traded to far distant settlements, including *El Castillejo*. In doing so, general features, quantitative and qualitative data have been taken into account. Among the sherds recovered in the settlement, some can be regarded as rather 'uncommon'. These vessels are useful in reconstructing the trade network *El Castillejo* was part of.

Especially one object caught our attention while studying this assemblage: the rim of a big storage vessel. It has a tronco-conical shape, with a broad and flat rim, thicker in the outer side and with a thin edge. There is a thin incision all around the neck.

We are presenting an unpublished piece that could not be included among the ceramic types identified at *El Castillejo*. Even though only a few fragments were recovered and it was not possible to reconstruct this object, it was probably a big storage vessel made in the Valencian area between the 13th and 14th centuries (Mesquida 2002, 208-209). This kind of storage vessel or tinaja has been recovered on several sites far away from Valencia; in fact, they were used as containers for trading food. We are not going to list all the places where these vessels were found, but it is worth mentioning that some were recovered in Tuscany (Francovich and Gelichi 1984, 28-39) and Majorca (Coll 1993, 1071-1074) while others in closer sites, like on Gibraltar (Torremocha 2004).

It is worth pointing out that in this case the tinaja described above was found in a rural settlement far away from the main trade routes of the late middle Ages. It is only a few sherds but important nonetheless.

## 5. Conclusions

There is no doubt that *El Castillejo* was a rural settlement. The features of the buildings and the building technique used show that the village can be regarded as a uniform site. Despite that, the difference existing between the buildings in the southern and in the northern area of the settlement might imply certain social difference: a point that is worth further analysis.

The features of the ceramic assemblages confirm the picture drawn starting by the analysis of the buildings. Generally speaking, the objects recovered in different houses within the settlement show similar features and functional needs were far more important than any aesthetic aspect. This can help reconstructing the social context these objects were used in.

Despite that, it should be said that the forms show a certain degree of variation but without reaching the diversification achieved in urban contexts next to the production centres.

The difference existing between assemblages recovered in a rural site like *El Castillejo* and in an urban context like *Casa de San Nicolás* in Murcia make clear the functional purposes that these objects served in different contexts. Thus, differences should not be related to the distance from production centres and trading networks. Technical devices, forms and, whenever present, decorative patterns are actually the same in both contexts.

As mentioned above, the ceramics produced in urban workshops rather close to settlements like *El Castillejo* were commonly traded to rural areas. Objects produced in

different regional areas could also reach the countryside: this is the case of the storage jar from the Valencian area used for shipping goods (Amigues *et al.* 1995) that could circulate over a wide area thanks to trading networks.

It can be said that, if on the one hand, objects and more generally goods circulating on a long distance basis reached *El Castillejo*, on the other hand, products and especially food stuffs produced in the area controlled by *El Castillejo* were not necessarily consumed on a local base and could also reach urban centres. During the 13th and 14th centuries *El Castillejo* might have been part of a broader network, and even though the inhabitants lived from agriculture their production might have not been uniquely for self-consumption.

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