

north African workshops throughout the 14th century, but never achieved the heights of perfection reached by the workshops of Murcia.

From the mid-13th century until 1492, al-Andalus was reduced to the Kingdom of Granada, which comprised roughly the present provinces of Almería, Málaga and Granada. Products of this, the Nasrid period, caught the attention of early scholars, especially ornamental tiles and the large vessels, decorated in blue and luster sometimes known as the “vases of Alhambra” (Gómez Moreno 1924, Frothingham 1951, Llubíá 1967, Martínez Caviro 1983; Flores Escobosa 1988; Flores Escobosa *et al* 1989; AAVV 2006a) (Fig 7.9D).

The influence of Islamic pottery in the Mediterranean

by Alberto García Porras

Archaeology has made one of its greatest contributions to the historical reconstruction of the Middle Ages in respect of the relationships – mostly economic – between different areas, especially between diverse civilizations like the western Christian, Islamic, Byzantine and Slavic. Ceramics, which survive well in the ground and were widely distributed provide a powerful index of context and cultural preference. Pottery was used in most domestic activities, and this also provides an indication of the local practices of daily life. Large amounts of ceramics were traded or moved as containers, thereby assisting the reconstruction of trade routes (Davey & Hodges 1983).

Among the most interesting exchanges of ceramics took place between feudal Europe and the Islamic world, defined in this case as North Africa and south-east Spain (al-Andalus). Pottery produced in the Islamic world shows similar forms, decorative patterns and the same technical procedures, the result of a wealth of shared knowledge of ceramics production. These features show up clearly if we compare, for example, the sherds recovered from Medieval layers in a variety of sites in Northern Africa, like Lixus (Habibi *et al.* 2001), Belyounech (Grenier de Cardenal 1980), Qsar el Seghir (Redman 1980), and many others, and those recovered in diverse sites in the Iberian Peninsula dating from the same period (see above, p 000). The sherds of the Almoravid and Almohad periods found in different sites or contexts show only minor differences in decoration, but the fabric varies with the place of manufacture, as may be determined by archaeometric analysis (Ch 1, p 000). The trade involved not only pottery with outstanding aesthetic qualities, like Tunisian glazed pottery decorated in blue and black on a white ground that was much appreciated in the Italian and French markets (Blake 1972; Berti 2002, Berti & Bianchi 2007), but also more ordinary wares that required the use of lower technical devices (green glazed pottery) and with plainer decorative features (stamped with or without the same glaze). Goods reached not only the farthest points in the Muslim world (Azuar Ruiz 1998), but could also be traded outside its boundaries, reaching all corners of the Mediterranean (García Porras 2000).

Three case studies illustrate the process. The north Italian town of *Pisa* enjoyed a central trading role during the Central and Late Middle Ages. Research carried out on *bacini*, the ceramics used for decorating mainly religious buildings, clearly points out

the economic relationships existing between Pisa and other centres, as well as the nature and intensity of this trade (Berti and Tongiorgi 1981). Merchants from Pisa sailed to Egypt, then to Tunis and objects manufactured in Morocco or in al-Andalus were usually included in the goods they collected. All the evidence analysed to date clearly indicates that these interchanges were relevant in the process of establishing the first local production of glazed pottery in Pisa (Fig 7.10). So far as we know, Pisa was the place where tin-glazed pottery was first produced in Italy, the *Maiolica Arcaica*. The technical procedures were the same as those employed in al-Andalus for making glazed pottery decorated in green and brown, products that had themselves been widely imported to Pisa. Thus, the relationship between Pisa and this part of the Islamic world (al-Andalus), not only led to the establishment of new trade routes, but also greatly influenced the first production of tin-glazed pottery in Italy (Berti *et al.* 1997) (Fig 7.11).

The case of *Marseille* is quite similar. During the first half of the 13th century new forms of pot and techniques of pottery-making were introduced into this French town. These included the use of tin-glazing on the outer surface of the objects (Marchesi *et al.* 1997). During the excavation undertaken in the area of the town known as Sante-Barbe, where potters had their workshops during the Middle Ages, kilns clearly showing Islamic features were found. This new evidence clearly pointed to the origin of the new technique employed in Marseille and confirmed the way this technique was transmitted.

The third and last case to be considered is the production in the area of *Valencia and Granada*. It has been proved that new ceramics production started in the Iberian Peninsula in the beginning of the 14th century (above, p 000). Cobalt oxide was introduced and used for decorating pottery with opaque white glaze. The first production of the new blue, or blue and lustre-ware decorated pottery, was made in the area of Granada, in the newly formed Nasrid Kingdom (p 000). However, the evidence collected so far seems to indicate that the use of this new technique for decorating pottery was the result of the transmission of technical methods developed in Tunisia (Fig 7.12) and successfully traded within the Mediterranean area during the previous decades (García Porras 2003). To some extent, Nasrid potters were trying to imitate North African products, aiming at carrying on this tradition, as well as at starting to control the market. By the 14th century, the ceramic technology had moved from Granada to Valencia (Fig 7.13). Written sources appear to show quite clearly that entire families of potters moved from the south to establish themselves in the Valencian area (López Elum 1984, 65-66). Once there, they succeeded in producing objects that were widely appreciated throughout the Mediterranean and as far as the North Sea (Gutiérrez 2000; Coll Conesa 2007), where they also circulated.

Thus, certain ceramic products, such as those from Tunisia, circulated within a trading system, reaching faraway harbours. Furthermore, the technique that these potters used deeply influenced later European production both in the Islamic (García Porras 2006) and in the Christian areas (Berti-Gelichi & Mannoni 1997). These contacts were not only important from an economic standpoint, but had a strong cultural influence. In fact, they resulted in the establishment of new pottery workshops of Islamic type in

Christian Europe, especially in the Mediterranean area, from the beginning of the 13th century onwards.

The versatile bote: Spanish decorated jars and their uses

by *Alejandra Gutiérrez*

Decorated wares from Spain, especially lustrewares produced near Málaga and Valencia, have been found in 14th and 15th century contexts on excavations across the Mediterranean and northern Europe, from Ireland, Sweden and Poland to Montenegro, Greece and as far as Acre in modern Israel. Important collections can be seen at the *Museo Nacional de Cerámicas y Artes Suntuarias González Martí* in Valencia, the Victoria and Albert Museum and the British Museum in London.

There are contemporary written references to *operis Maleche* or *Malyk* pots from the end of the 13th century, mostly in port books and custom accounts in their country of destination. Trade sometimes benefitted from tax exemptions, as it did in Flanders and Venice in the middle of the 15th century, and no doubt a certain preference for this sort of pottery expressed by the European nobility also helped to boost demand. Eleanor of Castile was already importing bowls and jars into England by 1290 (Gutiérrez 2010), and lists of acquisitions could be lengthy. In 1454 Queen Mary of Aragon ordered for purchase 'dishes for serving food and for eating off, small bowls to drink broth and to make thick soup, water jugs, large mortars, little bowls and small pieces, jugs with and without spouts and containers for drinking water' (Osma 1912).

Apart from plates and bowls, a frequent find on European excavations is the *bote*, *albarello* or concave-sided jar. These vases could have been used as containers for exotic foodstuffs, such as spices, honey, syrup or sugar-preserved fruits (Gutiérrez 2000, 100–112). Such ingredients were much in demand throughout the high status kitchens of Europe and the use of ceramic containers to transport sweets and preserves is well attested in custom accounts (Childs 1995, 29). The containers would have been covered with a piece of cloth or parchment and then tied with string around the rim. As imported foreign goods, preserves of this type were exclusive and available only to those who could afford them.

Other uses for *botes* are also worth noting. Some undoubtedly travelled empty, and documents from Valencia record them as such being readied for export in the 14th and 15th century. *Botes* are also listed in contemporary Spanish inventories in apothecaries' workshops, where they were used for storing potions and medicines such as myrrh, aniseed and basil seeds (Olivar 1950, doc V). The same vessels also appear on 15th century paintings depicting birth scenes, usually positioned by the bed of the convalescent mother, for instance in Ghirlandaio's *Birth of John the Baptist*. In paintings of Christ's entombment a jar of this type holding embalming oils is also often represented in the scene, in some cases sealed with parchment or waxed paper (Fig 7.14). On the other hand, the *Adoration of the Shepherds* for the *Portinari Altarpiece* by Hugo Van der Goes (Uffizi Gallery, Florence) shows a lustreware *bote* holding lillies and irises. The use of the *bote* as a flower-vase here serves to illustrate that pots, especially containers, had