

La céramique médiévale en Méditerranée occidentale, X<sup>e</sup>-XV<sup>e</sup> siècles (Valbonne, 11-14 Sept. 1978), Actes du Colloque international No 584 du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, organized by G. Démians d'Archimbaud and M. Picon, Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 15 quai Anatole-France, 75700 Paris, 1980: 465 pp.

The forty or so papers that comprise this book are the proceedings of a conference on medieval pottery in the Western Mediterranean held at Valbonne (Provence) in 1978. Some idea of its scope may be given by a few figures. It contains six articles on French pottery; eight on Spanish; nine on Italian; and six on North African. The remainder includes six on traded pottery. As so often happens with conference papers, the volume could have benefited from a stronger editorial hand. This is scarcely surprising, as no one is indicated as having edited it, though presumably those responsible were Mlle Démians d'Archimbaud and M. Picon. One wonders why one or two of the articles were included, and though one discovers with relief that several (but not all) of the Spanish ones have been translated into French, it is rather quaint that the footnotes have remained in Spanish. But carping apart, there can be no doubt that this is a most valuable and important volume. There is probably no other book that encompasses so much detailed information, accompanied by such plentiful illustrations, on the pottery of the West Mediterranean. To anyone trying to find out about the pottery of the area, or the present state of knowledge with regard to it, it would be a fundamental work of reference, though probably not one that is readily available (no library in London seems to have it yet). To someone already familiar with the subject, there is not perhaps a great deal that is new, and the Spanish and North African articles in particular are mainly reassessments of old material. An exception is Redman's excavations at Qsar es-Seghir, though the finds from these have yet to be fully analysed and evaluated. But there are a number of good review articles synthesising the results of recent research. In the case of Italy, Whitehouse presents in characteristic style a concise and lucid account of the present state of knowledge of the medieval pottery of the peninsula and Sicily. The representatives of the Genoese Istituto di Studi sulla Cultura Materiale outline the latest thinking on Ligurian pottery. A useful feature of their article is that it proposes chronologies for each type, something on which Mannoni in his monograph on Ligurian pottery is very cautious. Even more valuable in its way is Francovich and Gelichi's study of the pottery of Siena and its territory, for it is the first time a synthesis has been made of the subject. In addition, there are important surveys of the pottery of Palermo by D'Angelo, of Provence by Démians d'Archimbaud, and a general outline of the development of Spanish pottery by Zozaya.

The conference had, in effect, two related themes. One is the application of scientific techniques to pottery studies. The venue was the new Centre des Recherches Archéologiques at Valbonne, which is apparently well equipped with laboratories for this purpose. In his opening address, de Boüard argues that if the full potential of such techniques is to be realised, there must be closer liaison between those carrying out the analyses and those who excavated the pottery. Such a successful integration of results is not in fact a feature of many of the articles in the book, though notable exceptions are Mannoni and Mazzucotelli's summary of the contribution made by petrological analysis to the understanding of Ligurian pottery, and the studies by Démians d'Archimbaud and her colleagues on the pottery of Provence and the Rhône valley, both imported and local.

But the real *raison d'être* of this conference, though nowhere is it stated as such, is trade. The participants were brought together essentially because the pottery of each other's areas is found in their own countries. The Italians need to be able to date and identify North African, Byzantine and Spanish imports, the French Spanish and Italian imports, whilst Spanish and Italian pottery also occurs in North Africa. In Italy, these imports have long been well-known, if not always well understood, from the bacini or vessels inserted as decorative elements

in buildings. However, these by no means constitute an easy short-cut to the study of imported pottery, presenting problems of their own, as Blake shows in an article on those of North Italy. To some extent, the studies of local common wares are therefore of very peripheral interest. The considerable trade in pottery has acted as a catalyst to the study of the ceramics of the region. It has prompted the Genoese and French to resort to techniques of scientific analysis, and the interest shown by foreigners in the pottery of Spain and North Africa has given an impulse to pottery studies in these areas. Generally speaking, such studies are still at a relatively undeveloped stage, concentrating especially on problems of identification and dating. Essential to future progress is further collaboration between researchers in different countries of the type represented by this conference, as is also greater standardization of, and improvements in, methodology. In the case of Spain and Africa, there is a desperate need of a new material from stratigraphic excavations. One important element so far lacking is any attempt at evaluating pottery as a commodity in medieval trade, though Berti and Tongiorrgi do show how the Pisan bacini mirror approximately the pattern of trade of that city. At some point, it is going to be necessary to identify the main trends in traded pottery at different periods, and to attempt to quantify it and assess its importance. It is merely to be lamented that in this field history and archaeology are not complementary, documents being to a large extent mute on the subject of pots. A historical dimension in the style, perhaps, of Braudel, would have been a valuable addition to the conference, helping to keep its sights set on what must surely be one of its most important objects.

David Andrews