

Iberian wares of medieval date were extremely rare, consisting of an Andalusian lustreware jug and a Merida-type costrel from Lund and amphorae sherds from Ribe. Post-medieval Iberian imports were represented by two olive jars from Ribe. Imports from the Mediterranean in the medieval period are limited to a single sherd of Archaic Majolica jug/jug base from Ribe, whilst post-medieval Italian imports comprise a ?Pisan sgraffito bowl and a complete North Italian marbled slipware jug from Ribe. By contrast with this evidence for trade with western Europe, contact with eastern Europe is represented by sherds of Black Sea amphorae from Lund and Schleswig. These amphorae were first recognised on sites around the Baltic Sea at Sigtuna, Sweden.

It is hoped that further seasons will broaden the geographic coverage of medieval Denmark and intensify the sampling of major assemblages such as those from Lund and Schleswig so as to obtain reliable data from which semi-quantitative comparisons of pottery importation can be produced.

Acknowledgements

This work would not have been possible without the financial assistance of the Society of Antiquaries of London, nor without the help and encouragement of a large number of Danish, German and Swedish archaeologists, namely: Per Kristian Madsen, Keeper, Den Antikvariske Samling i Ribe; Henrik M, Jansen and Jacob Tue Christensen, Svendborg og Omegns Museum; Jens Jeppesen, Moesgard Forhistorisk Museum, Jette Linaa, Michael Andersen and Tom Christensen, Roskilde Museum; Maria Cinthio, Stefan Larsson and Torvald Nilsson, Kulturen, Lund; Prof. Peter Sawyer, Blombaka and Volker Vogel, Schloss Gottorf.

Alan Vince

City of Lincoln Archaeology Unit

THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL HISTORY OF RENAISSANCE MAIOLICA

Around the year 1500, potters in Italy began to produce maiolica in greater quantities than ever before, and to decorate their most spectacular products in a manner that imitated the works of leading painters and engravers. The purpose of this note is to draw attention to a recent paper by Richard A. Goldthwaite, which places this 'top of the line' maiolica in its economic and social context (Goldthwaite 1989).

Thanks to art historians and archaeologists, the development of Italian maiolica in the 15th and 16th centuries is fairly well-documented, especially after 1500 (Watson 1986; Wilson 1987). By the early 15th century, potters in central and northern Italy were producing maiolica with a glaze that was thicker and whiter than earlier glazes, and they were decorating it with thicker, more brilliant colours. In Tuscany, for example, they produced first the so-called *famiglia verde*, and later, maiolica decorated with *zaffera a rilievo*. From the middle of the 15th century, decorators developed new styles that incorporated designs derived from imported ceramics (and perhaps also from textiles), and they used a wider range of colours. In Tuscany, the flower and leaf designs of Valencian lustreware were adopted in the 1440s. In Emilia-Romagna, maiolica decorated with 'peacock feather' and 'Persian palmette' designs may have been influenced by textiles imported in the 1460s and 1470s. Other popular motifs included scrolling 'Gothic' leaves, figures shown in profile, 'contour panels' (in which the subject is surrounded by a frame that follows its shape), interlaced strapwork and numerous small motifs that filled otherwise empty backgrounds.

Many of these motifs occur in the tiles decorating the floor of the Vaselli Chapel in San Petronio at Bologna, which were made in 1487 and which are an important fixed point in the early history of Renaissance maiolica.

A generation later, better control of the colours and improved draftsmanship made possible the development of a new form of decoration, in which the whole surface was treated like a canvas for painting. By c. 1515, *istoriato* maiolica, painted with narrative scenes, was being made in Emilia-Romagna, the Marches, Umbria and Tuscany. The finest *istoriato* vessels were luxury objects decorated with scenes copied from Raphael and other master painters, and embellished with 'grotesque' ornament, variations on the ancient Roman motifs (called in Italian '*grottesche*') that came to light when explorers broke into the buried rooms of Nero's Golden House in Rome. The finest *istoriato* plates were presumably intended for display, and examples painted by the most famous decorators were much in demand. As these artists began to sign their work, decorators such as Nicholas da Urbino and Francesco Xanto Avelli became minor celebrities.

Goldthwaite's paper demonstrates that this development occurred in the context of an unprecedented growth of the Italian ceramic industry as a whole. This growth began in the late Middle Ages. From the early 14th century, tax rolls and notaries' records refer to potters and potter's guilds with increasing frequency, and cities that lacked a native industry sought to attract potters from other centres by offering them incentives such as exemption from taxes, monopoly rights and protection from imports (Goldthwaite 1989, 7, quoting: Cora 1964; Bortolotto 1981, 18-20; Bortolotto 1987, 6-7; Piccinni 1981; Marsilli 1982). At the same time, successful potters became, in Goldthwaite's words 'veritable entrepreneurs'. They entered into long-term contracts; they attracted investment capital and (with the help of their cities' governments); they marketed their products in other parts of Italy and abroad (Goldthwaite 1989, 7-10). The intensity of competition stimulated producers to experiment with new technologies and materials, one result of which was the development of a wider range of colours for painted decoration (*ibid.*, 31).

The social change that Goldthwaite describes was a complex process. The driving force was a remarkable increase in wealth, which supported a new taste for material possessions. This permeated Italian society, beginning at the top. The 15th-century Neapolitan, Giovanni Pontano, in an essay on the five social virtues, extolled that of splendour. Splendour, he wrote, consists in furnishings, utensils for everyday use, ornaments, and personal adornment. The beauty of all these things, he argued, excites admiration for the possessor of objects; and beauty consists not in utility and the inherent value of materials, but in rarity, variety and craftsmanship, and the pleasure they give the owner (*ibid.*, 23).

One of the many manifestations of this new opulence was an increase in the variety of ways in which food was prepared and in the amount of effort that was expended on dining in style. 'The increase in the number of recipe books from the late 15th century onwards' Goldthwaite writes, 'marks the beginning of the history of haute cuisine long before anything similar is found elsewhere in Europe' (*ibid.*, 25: citing Messibugo 1549; Celebrino n.d and others).

Developments in the kitchen were accompanied by developments at the table, notably a marked increase in the quantity and variety of tableware and by the appearance of the 'service' or matching collection of settings. This change is immediately obvious from almost any comparison of 14th- and 16th-century paintings of banquets, such as Herod's feast or the Marriage at Cana: the 14th-century setting is meagre, while the later one is sumptuous. The written record is equally revealing. It demonstrates that, whereas in 1454 Isacco dei Dondi ordered a service of forty-eight white maiolica plates, bowls and pitchers,

each decorated with the family crest, in the 16th century the size of the largest service mentioned in inventories and other records grew by leaps and bounds: in 1545 the viceroy of Naples ordered a service of 380 pieces from Venice, while the aristocratic Gonzagas of Novellara acquired a service of 610 pieces from Faenza in 1590. This proliferation of tableware was accompanied by an increase in the complexity of etiquette, and by a parallel increase in the publication of manuals on the art of gracious dining (*ibid.*, 23).

If we correlate what we know about the development of maiolica with the information collected by Goldthwaite, the following picture emerges. In the early Renaissance, wealthy Italians began to fill their palaces with luxurious possessions, and to adopt a progressively more elaborate style of entertainment. At the table and on furniture designed for displaying portable objects, fine maiolica assumed a significant role. The process may be divided into two phases. In the first phase, which probably began in the 1440s, decorators adopted designs borrowed from Spanish lustreware and later developed the 'peacock feather' and 'Persian palmette' motifs. In the second phase, which began c. 1500, they introduced decoration in which the whole surface was treated like a canvas for painting. This process reached a peak between c. 1515 and 1525, when much of the finest *istoriato* maiolica was made.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bortolotto, A.** 1981, *Storia della ceramica dagli albori alle fine della Repubblica*. Sansoni.
- Bortolotto, A.** 1987, *Maioliche veneziane*. Museo nazionale del Bargello.
- Celebrino, E.** n. d. (later 16th century), *Opera nuova che insegna apparecchiare una mensa*. (n.p)
- Cora, G.** 1964, 'Sulla fabbrica di maioliche sorta in Pisa alla fine del '500', *Faenza* 50, 25-30.
- Goldthwaite, R. A.** 1989, 'The Economic and Social World of Italian Renaissance Maiolica', *Renaissance Quarterly* 42, 1-32.
- Marsilli, P.** 1982, 'Ars Orcelariorum: la corporazione dei maiolicari di Faenza', *Faenza* 68, 13-23.
- Messibugo, C.** 1549, *Banchetti, composizioni di vivandi apparecchio generale*. Giovanni de Bughat et Antonio Hucher.
- Piccinni, G.** 1981, 'Per lo studio della produzione di ceramica e vetro nella prima metà del Quattrocento', *Archeologia Medievale* 8, 589-600.
- Watson, W. M.** 1986, *Italian Renaissance Maiolica from the William C. Clark Collection*. Scala Books.
- Wilson, T.** 1987, *Ceramic Art of the Italian Renaissance*. Brit Mus Press.

David Whitehouse
The Corning Museum of Glass

MIEVEAL EUROPE 1992: THE CERAMIC COMPONENT

Of the many papers presented at Medieval Europe 1992, the International Conference of Medieval Archaeology held at the University of York in September 1992, over fifteen were concerned specifically with pottery, while several others referred to pottery in some detail to illustrate other points. As a whole the period covered spanned the 4th-16th centuries. The conference was designed to give a panorama of work in progress rather than definitive statements; it was organised as a series of parallel sessions and different aspects of pottery production and

distribution were included under the following thematic headings: Maritime Studies (B); Technology and Innovation (C); Exchange and Trade (E). The most important sessions for ceramic studies were C6 (Lustre Ware and Tin-glazing), C9 (Innovation in Pottery Production in the Early Medieval Period) and E4 (Ceramics and Trade).

Summarising the content of such a wide range of papers is not an easy task, not least because (in this reviewer's opinion) many papers spanned more than one of the conference themes, while a few were listed under the wrong session heading. On the whole, a combined chronological, geographical and thematic approach would seem to offer the most useful synthesis of who is working on what and where (the period divisions are those of the reviewer not the conference).

Most contributions were included in the abstracts (English and German, and some also in French) distributed at the conference; some are published in the pre-printed papers; some are included in both, while others appear in neither. In the following, papers presented and/or included in the pre-printed papers are indicated by '*', abstracts by '#'.

The 5th to 8th centuries

Four papers were devoted to this period, of which two were mainly concerned with the ethnic origins of Saxon pottery. The first presented some preliminary results of research into Merovingian pottery from recent excavations of settlement sites along the Flemish coast, notably Roksem and Zerkegem, near the former *castellum* of Oudenburg, probably part of the *Litus Saxonicum* (Hollevoet: C9e*). Two broad categories of pottery were defined: local handmade wares (mostly grass-tempered) and wheel-thrown imports (the minority, mainly Eifel wares). Grass-tempered pottery is rare elsewhere in Flanders, and the Merovingian fabrics found at Oudenburg are unlike those from the only other excavated domestic site at Kerkhove (Scheldt Valley). The organic and decorated wares are most like those from Anglo-Saxon sites in south-east England, and it was suggested that the area was occupied by small communities of Saxon origin. An interim on the pottery from this area has recently been published elsewhere (see Reviews, this volume, p. 98).

The second paper discussed the interpretive potential of stamped decoration found on pottery of the Anglo-Saxon period (Briscoe: C10a#), which is being studied by the Archive of Anglo-Saxon Pottery Stamps (see also *Medieval Ceramics* 17, 65-6).

New information on kiln technology was provided in an interim report on the 1991 excavations of four Merovingian kilns in Maastricht (Panhuysen: C9f*); a summary of the sites and finds has recently been published elsewhere and so they are not discussed here (see Reviews, this volume p. 98).

Ceramic distribution was represented by a discussion of past and current work on the long-standing problem of 'Gaulish' artefacts in 6th- to 7th-century western British and Irish archaeological assemblages, notably 'E' ware and 'Merovingian' glass (Wooding: E6b*). Distribution analyses in France and Great Britain showed that 'E' ware and the associated glass types are found on sites which do not have Saxon affinities and that they probably originated in western or northern Gaul and arrived in Britain via the western sealanes.

The 8th to 12th centuries

Of the six papers outlined below, five attempted, in different ways, to explain developments in pottery production within a socio-economic framework, and most combined the themes of technology/innovation and trade/exchange. Two were regional studies; three were town-specific. The sixth paper, although listed under 'Exchange and Trade', concentrated primarily on aspects of production.