

Recent archaeological studies have stressed the wide range of problems arising from laboratory contamination, to which must be added the problems of contamination from subsequent users of the pottery, from deposition, post-deposition (archaeological recovery), and handling in the museum or excavation environment. In recent decades, the most fruitful and novel areas of research have emerged from the combination of the knowledge derived from different scientific disciplines. Fingerprint studies and DNA analysis may one day furnish new insights into the social organisation of communities that produced ceramics.

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CONFERENCE REPORT

Le VIe Congrès International sur la céramique Médiévale en Méditerranée took place between November 13 and 18, 1995 at Aix-en-Provence, under the auspices of the *Laboratoire d'Archéologie Médiévale Méditerranée*, (Medieval Mediterranean Archaeology Laboratory), the *Laboratoire de Céramologie de Lyon* (Lyon Ceramic Studies Laboratory) and the *Association Internationale pour l'Etude des Céramiques Méditerranéennes* (AIECM2 — the International Association for the Study of Mediterranean Ceramics). This event, which included nearly 250 delegates, followed the format of the previous reunions at Valbonne (1978), Toledo (1981), Siena (1984) and Rabat (1991). Together with the earlier conferences, this congress had as its aims the promotion of synthetic communications on the two favoured themes: **change and transferral** (of technology, knowledge and power, as well as manufactured goods), in particular during the High Middle Ages, between the 10th-13th centuries, and in the Early Modern period; and also **architectural ceramics**, studied over the long-term. Several recent discoveries were also described individually.

Over 65 communications and 37 posters were the subject of debate, discussion and exchanges during the period of the conference. The first day was more particularly dedicated to the changes marking the transition between the Ancient World and more properly medieval creations, both in the East and West. The accent placed upon researches and imports from the Near East, Greece or the Islamic world was the reason for the very conception of this congress, embracing a theme which was to be pursued and amplified in the later sessions. The following days, centred conversely on Western mediterranean countries, described the progress accomplished during recent years in the study of production and exchange, in particular regarding the full Medieval period. Together with this synthetic approach, specific studies highlighted the different access between urban and rural communities, with the study then moving by means of cross-referenced sources (textual and archaeological sources) to the dawn of the modern period. Technological change and the study of manufacturing tools were also the subject of several communications, centred on kilns, glazes, and pigments (e.g. cobalt). The final section dealt with problems regarding architectural ceramics in Africa, in several regions of Spain from Andalusia to Catalonia and in southern France from the medieval to the modern periods. In this last case, the data was complemented by information from the exhibition of paving tiles and wall revetments, organised simultaneously at Avignon at the *Palais des Papes*.

Six exhibitions, including several itinerant, were opened on the occasion of the Aix congress. All were accompanied by catalogues, which series now forms a precise documentary base for the southern data, sometimes placed into a very wide context, such as at Marseilles. The thematic exhibition presented in this city, where the oldest faience workshop yet known in France was discovered, was in effect the occasion to gather an important series of over 300 examples with green and brown decoration produced throughout the Mediterranean, through international cooperation which is also reflected in the texts assembled for the catalogue.

COMPENDIARIO

The accompanying exhibitions for which catalogues were produced, were:

Le vert et le brun. De Kairouan à Avignon. Xe-XVe siècles. Marseilles, Chapelle de la Vielle Charité.

Petits carrés d'histoire. Pavements et revêtements muraux dans le midi méditerranéen du Moyen-Age à l'époque moderne. Avignon, Palais des Papes.

De l'Orient à la table des Papes. L'importation des céramiques méditerranéennes dans la région d'Avignon au XIVe-XVIe siècles. Avignon, Musée Voulard.

Ateliers et productions de poteries du Ve au début du

XXe siècle. 1500 ans de céramiques en Vaucluse. Château de La-Tour-d'Aigues.

Terres de Durance. Céramiques de l'Antiquité aux Temps Modernes. Dignes, Musée Départemental.

Poteries d'Oc. Céramiques languedociennes. VIIe-XVIIe siècles. Nîmes, Musée Archéologique.

Publication of the Congress is scheduled for the first quarter of 1997.

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