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C. M. Gerrard, A. Gutiérrez & A. Vince, (eds.). *Spanish Medieval Ceramics in Spain and the British Isles*. 405 pp, 205 figures. Tempus Reparatum, BAR International Series 610, 1995. ISBN 0 86054 796 6. Price £42.00

The *raison d'être* for this compendium on Iberian pottery is set out in the introductory summary (p vi) which is worth repeating here:

'This volume comprises a series of 32 commissioned and edited papers written between 1990 and 1994 on the theme of early thirteenth to late sixteenth century Spanish medieval ceramics. The papers, assembled by 34 different authors, are arranged in three parts. Part 1 provides the historical background to the period and aims to set the detailed discussion of ceramics which follows into a more general cultural and economic context. In Part 2 there are 11 articles from contributors working in Spain, covering a wide selection of regions but focusing especially on the latest work in the Valencia region, perhaps the most important source of production for exports to northern Europe. Finally, the papers in Part 3 review the current state of knowledge about Spanish ceramics found in North-West Europe and especially in the British Isles and Ireland, beginning with an overview of material found to date and followed by summaries of archaeological information from the major medieval ports (Southampton, London, Bristol) and the analysis of distributions from the English counties, Wales and Scotland. Especially important British material such as the Armada ceramics, Spanish tiles and the British Museum collections are considered separately as well as the latest results from neutron activation analyses. The volume ends with a proposed research agenda for future work.

Overall, the intention is to provide a series of overviews by workers collaborating in this field. We believe that most recent work in Spain and the British Isles on later medieval pottery is included here. Although not intended to be comprehensive (latest work from other countries such as France, Italy and the Americas is not covered for example), it is hoped that this volume, with its many illustrations and glossary, will act as a useful gazetteer and sourcebook for those archaeologists and art historians interested in late medieval Spanish ceramics discovered in northern Europe as well as for those with wider interests in Spanish culture in the Middle Ages.'

The aspirations of the editors (and their contributors) have, in the main, been satisfied and they are to be congratulated that for the most part, the volume reads as an

integrated study rather than the rag, tag and bobtail approach exhibited by so many conference proceedings where a series of disparate papers appears whose only perceived link is a "common theme".

The production of the volume is generally up to the usual, adequate BAR standard, but several of the illustrations, especially those in the Exeter and Southampton contributions, suffer from lack of printed detail. I can only assume that the authors did not see proofs of their figures. Figure 24.3 is particularly bad. The albarello, No. 27, is actually covered externally overall with a lustre chequer pattern which hardly shows at all. Similarly the lustre detail of No. 26 has not reproduced, nor have the green sections of Nos. 36 and 37. The decoration of the *Cuerda Seca* bowl, No. 39, is completely unintelligible. These specific criticisms apart, the illustrations are generally clear and conform to a standard pattern — a tribute to one of the editors (AG) who '... re-drew and re-scaled many of the drawings over many evenings and weekends...' (p 10).

The volume begins with an editorial introduction by CMG (pp 1–10), giving a brief history of the study of Spanish pottery and a preview of the book's contents. The résumés of the Spanish language papers are very useful and augment the individual article summaries.

Part 1, The Historical Background consists of seven articles (in English) starting with a short general history of the Iberian Peninsula by the late Derek Lomax, which, to this reviewer anyway, sheds light on the complex political and cultural background to the study. This is followed by two papers by Wendy Childs detailing her work on the documentary evidence for Anglo-Iberian trade. The first of these deals with the trade in general whilst the second examines the more pottery-specific documentation, mainly customs accounts. She rightly draws attention to the confusing terminology used in such records and the care needed in interpreting them. This theme is continued in an important paper by Alejandra Gutiérrez on *Questions of terminology in the study of Spanish medieval ceramics*. She compares terms used in contemporary English and Spanish documentation and, by using the modern Spanish equivalents, attempts to define the form and use of the specific vessels listed in the various accounts. The article is illustrated with typical Spanish forms with their recommended English and Spanish terminology.

Tom James follows this with a selection of references from local Southampton documentary material, including Petty Customs Books, Brokage Books and Probate Inventories which complement Childs' preceding papers. The historical section ends with an article by Thomas Tolley on *Anglo-Spanish contacts in the visual arts* (which has little to do with ceramics) and a brief note by Ian Friel on the shipping of the period illustrated by ships shown on town seals. Oddly he misses the Southampton seal (Davies 1883, 245).

Part 2 contains eleven papers in Spanish, with introductory English summaries, on the principal ceramic production areas of Spain, here divided into The North — 2 papers; Aragon; Catalonia; Valencia — 4 papers; Murcia and Andalusia — 2 papers. These either synthesise recent work in the area or concentrate on specific aspects of it. For the student of ceramic technology several of the contributions contain kiln details, and François Amigues paper, *La cerámica valenciana: sus técnicas de fabricación* includes reconstructions of a recently excavated medieval kiln and workshop at Paterna and details of various glaze formulae in use in the late medieval and post-medieval periods. A useful Spanish/English (and English/Spanish) dictionary of pottery terms is included at the end of the volume to assist those whose Spanish is not sufficient to follow the discussions in detail without aid.

Part 3, Spanish medieval ceramics in the British Isles — opens boldly with a *Guide to Spanish Medieval Pottery*, by the editors abetted by John Hurst. This examines wares from the principal production areas, here defined as Andalusia, Valencia and 'Others', and presents fabric descriptions (AGV), backgrounds and distribution maps for the main types of Spanish medieval pottery found in the British Isles. This guide, at least for British workers, ought to be the keystone for the whole volume and set out the guidelines for all future research, but it is badly flawed and likely to cause confusion. The Andalusian wares are divided into Early Andalusian Lustrewares, Late Andalusian Lustrewares, Seville Tin-glazed wares, *Cuerda Seca*, Seville *Morisco* wares, coarsewares (a catch-all category), large green-glazed *lebrillos* and *Melado* dishes. No satisfactory explanation for this division is given; indeed references to other works are often employed in order to avoid having to engage in further discussion. Surely a guide should give all information available and not send the reader to many other publications, some of them very out of date, for the details. Thus the background section to *Cuerda Seca* simply states that an 'introduction to these wares is to be found in Hurst 1986 and Pleguezuelo and Lafuente (Chapter 18, this volume)' (p 284). The Seville *Morisco* wares create an even worse dilemma, both for the authors and the reader. It is shown that several different terminologies exist, including those of Goggin, those of Spanish ceramicists and an English one which is somewhere in between. The guide recommends (p 284) that Goggin's terminology is retained by British analysts. Why? In the light of recent Spanish research the use of terms such as Isabella Polychrome must surely be now untenable (for those without access to Goggin, Isabella is a site in the Dominican Republic). One suspects that the authors have left us with Goggin's terminology to extricate themselves from the morass that is its legacy. The dilemma that faced them is further evidenced by their table (Fig. 20.1) which presents 'correlations between different nomenclatures of some pottery types' (my italics). This clarifies nothing except the need to establish a more coherent terminology that has universal validity and acceptance. Remarkably this is not among the *Future directions for research* put forward in the final chapter of this book.

The guide is followed by a series of regional reviews which summarise recent work in Ireland (Rosanne Meenan), South-west England (John Allan), Bristol (Mike Ponsford and Rod Burchill), Southampton (Duncan Brown), London (Alan Vince) and the remainder of England and Scotland (John Hurst). These add detail to the distribution maps of the previous contributions but show that many of the dots-on-maps are only single sherds. It is difficult to understand what these distribution patterns actually mean and until the material is quantified and compared with other types of imported pottery, it is impossible to assess the relative importance of the Iberian trade. Only Brown (Chap. 24) gives any form of quantification and shows the Iberian wares as a percentage of total imported pottery through time from c. 1100 to c. 1550 for nine Southampton sites. He is confused with the use of the term *Morisco* wares, however, and includes *Cuerda Seca* among them. Allan (Chap. 22) is similarly confused as he includes both *Cuerda Seca* and *Melado* dishes in his *Morisco* wares. His *Melado* dishes have 'a hard granular brick-red sandy fabric' (p 311), whereas the guide includes them in the fabric group described as having 'off-white firing bodies' (p 283)!

Bruce Williams offers an interim note on his research on imported Spanish tiles which hints at a specialist pre-Dissolution distribution and Tim Wilson draws attention to

the collections housed in the British Museum. Colin Martin contributes an update of his important 1979 paper on Armada pottery and emphasises the significance of groups of material from wreck sites but again, without the essential common terminology. The scientific work carried out by the British Museum, Department of Scientific Research is crucial in many cases for the sourcing of Iberian pottery, and Michael Hughes's survey gives a précis of the recent on-going chemical analysis programme using neutron activation, and the setting up of a comprehensive ceramic database. Hurst closes Part 3 with a brief overview of Iberian and other Mediterranean pottery found on the mainland of north-west Europe.

Gerrard and Hurst bring the volume to an end and 'treading somewhat fearfully' offer ten points for consideration for future research. This is very laudable but it is not a programme of work. Before we look at *Status* (point 5), *Symbolic Meaning* (point 8) and the various documentary sources we must know the extent and identification of the available material.

How many Iberian sherds lurk in unpublished site archives? How many sherds have mistaken attributions? How much of the Merida-type micaceous wares . . . and so on. There is a role here for future local meetings of the MPRG in conjunction with the proposed English Heritage Imported Pottery seminars.

This important work lays foundations, albeit some of them a little shaky, for all future studies on the subject of *Spanish Medieval Ceramics in Spain and the British Isles* but, until mutually accepted definitions, characterisations and terminology for the various wares are established, the subject will remain confused. Does the term *Morisco* ware really mean pottery produced by a 'Muslim or Arab converted to Christianity and living in Christian-ruled territory'? (Glossary p 377).

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Bob Thomson

Deborah A. Ford, *Medieval Pottery in Staffordshire, AD800-1600: A Review*. Staffordshire Archaeological Studies No 7, City Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent, 1995. 62pp., 22 figs. (including 204 pots) and 7 plates. ISBN 1 874414 08 4 paperback.

This work can be divided into two main parts; the first third provides an introduction to and discussion of the medieval pottery of Staffordshire and the second two-thirds describes the major ware types found in the county and provides an illustrated catalogue of them. The 'exotic imports', which so often disproportionately dominate reports, are rare in Staffordshire and have been deliberately excluded from this study.

The first part is very wide ranging, covering topics such as the landscape, geology and history of Staffordshire as well as the technology of pottery production and methods of analysis. It discusses too the potential of documentary evidence for locating production sites and is well illustrated with maps showing relief, solid geology, towns, roads, kiln