

Changing rooms Fixtures, fittings and movable goods in European lifestyles

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Summary

This paper, delivered at MPRG's conference in Winchester 2004, rapidly surveys the use of the clay industries that may have impacted on the manipulation of private and public space in western Europe. Did these changing rooms influence potters and the social context of pottery utilisation? The paper concludes

that assemblages, with people at their core, must embrace all movable goods to revisit some of the earlier excavations of castles, palaces and monastic institutions and using modern methodology explain the differences. The results need to be presented in a more accessible manner.

Introduction

The production, distribution and consumption of the products of the clay industries are embedded within a wider context of changing environmental, technological, economic, social, political and ideological contexts and practices has long been noted (MPRG conference Worcester 1997; 'Pot in Use, the study of the material culture of consumer sites').

Change must have a cause: technology is about people and the challenge has been to develop conceptual, methodological and interpretative ways to look at past objects, artefacts, patterns and activities (Hurst 1976, Moorhouse 1983, Orton et al. 1993, Cumberpatch and Blinkhorn 1997, and Vince 2005). The past decade has seen attempts to use archaeological data to perceive objects as they might originally have been experienced and engaged with, within the home or work place (Mellor 1997, McNamara 1998). More recent publication has demonstrated the depth and detail that 'material culture reveals about the changing patterns of domestic life and social organisation' (Hinton 2005) and this paper offers an historical review of the use of ceramics in interiors and considers how this resource might be interpreted under spatial theory in respect of Norman exemplars in three parts of Europe, and poses several questions for the future.

Part I Ceramics and interiors, an overview

The line of enquiry explored here was sparked by research for an exhibition at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford in 1998/9 entitled, 'Tiles from East and West', which included the unique red painted upper wall earthenware tiles of a 'ceremonial room' together with columns, a fireplace and a 'blind window' excavated at Bb Jn in western Iran (Luristan), dating to the 8th century BC (Goff 1970); the fire-resisting brick of

ancient Rome and the Mediterranean world, first introduced in the 7th century BC; the 9th–10th-century AD lustre tiles of the Islamic Near East used to decorate dados and from the 12th century AD, used to furnish both secular and religious buildings, a tradition whose major flowering was in Iran under the Saljuqs in the 12th–13th century AD. Following the Mongol conquests (early 13th century AD) came the development of 'tile mosaic'. In the ensuing centuries vast areas of mosaic tile-work were used to cover complete exteriors and interiors of mosques, the most famous being the early 17th century Royal Mosque in Isfahan.

In Syria there was a brief flowering of under-glaze blue and white tiles in the early 15th century under the influence of imported Chinese blue and white porcelains. The most famous Islamic tile-work was produced in Iznik in western Turkey in the 16th century. Here, polychrome under-glaze painted tiles, often using a thick red sealing-wax were made, for decorating large areas of mosque interiors and also provided tiles for the Ottoman court from the late 15th century onwards. From Iznik the style spread to Ottoman Syria, then through Jerusalem to Damascus, where Iznik craftsmen set up a factory in the 17th century producing similar tiles, though characterised by a reduced and less attractive colour scheme in which dark green, dark blue and purple predominate (pers. comm. James Allen).

Latinised Christendom, stretched from the Mediterranean up to and beyond the Danube in the east, and north to Britain. In northern Europe large, glazed wall tiles and elaborate decorated polychrome relief floor tiles were introduced for decorative purposes in the 10th and 11th century AD for religious buildings at Winchester, Bury St Edmunds, St Albans, Polesworth and York (Eames 1980, I, 33), and London (Betts 2002, 44), but this seems to have been a short-lived fashion.

Mosaic decoration of floors using plain ceramic tiles was probably introduced in north-west Europe in imitation of Italian stone mosaic floors, because at

comparatively low cost the earthenware tiles were capable of producing a wide variety of effects to enhance the architectural impact of their setting (Lewis 1999, 1). Here the style of the plain glazed and two colour inlaid paving tiles that made up the magnificent Gothic pavements flourished during the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries – showing greater regional innovation in England and Wales than elsewhere in Europe.

Earthenware pavements first appear in north-west Europe c.1200, though undecorated and unglazed floor tiles are known from the second half of 12th century in England, for example the reredorter at Bermondsey Abbey, London (Betts 2002, 44). Plain and decorated tile mosaic pavements were introduced to remote abbeys in Wales, possibly as early as the late 12th century (Lewis 1999, 7), to the Cistercian and Augustinian Yorkshire abbeys slightly later (Stopford 2005, xv) and to the west of England (Somerset) in the 13th century (Lowe 2003, 9–10).

The fashion for decorated two-colour paving tiles was initially associated with luxury pavements in the south of England. The technique was introduced during the reign of Henry III and his second wife, Eleanor of Provence (Eames 1985, 48). This royal couple championed the fine and decorative arts during their reign. Queen Eleanor's own upper storey apartments at Clarendon Palace – an undefended hunting lodge, near Salisbury in Wiltshire, had a wall fireplace, a window overlooking the gardens, plastered internally and painted with vivid imagery (Gilchrist 1999, 131, Richardson 2003, 140, 151–155) and set in motion the raising of standards in interior design. Floor tiles laid in 1250–1252 AD in her chambers included martial imagery: 'knights in combat'.

The initial iconography on the two-colour inlaid tiles was not English, the symbolism 'suggested that an understanding of the layout of the floors depended on intellectual links with southern Europe' (Stopford 2005, xv). However, these designs were rapidly assimilated and copied by the emerging new craft-workers and by 1300 AD, personalised designs had entered the tiler's repertoire, along with inscriptions, though often illegible. Although adopted in some domestic buildings, decorated floor tiles were not used in everyday dwellings, which continued to have earthen floors.

Two-colour pavements gradually fell from fashion during the 15th and 16th century in England and were replaced by plain coloured tiles from the Low Countries, but the medieval tradition continued in parts of Europe into the eighteenth century (Keen 1969, 144–170), in parallel with the technology of tin-glaze earthenware tiles (van Lemmen 1998).

Great bricks, locally made, were in use prior to 1208 AD in the making of hearths at Farnham Castle in Surrey (Riall 2001) and were manufactured in huge quantities in Flanders and brought by sea to London (Salzmann 1997, 140). Royal building accounts attest to a quarter million of bricks used to build the rubble walling of the Tower of London c.1278, as with the Roman bricks, they were invisible as the external facing

was stone; bricks were also used in the construction of vaults. By the 14th century moulded decorative bricks were in use at the great Cistercian monastery, Abbey of the Dunes, at Ten Duinen, Belgium (van Royan in Vanclooster 2005, 74), where rare survivors of tin-glazed decorated earthenware floor tiles, depicting biblical scenes and monsters, were excavated from the 14th-century Abbott's lodging and are now on display in the Museum Ten Duinen, Koksijde, Belgium).

Alongside the growing tile industries for floors, roofs and ceramic ventilators, the German stove-tiles used to construct closed wood burning stoves – a fixture and a sign of affluence and a desire for greater comfort in households, began to be built in central and north-west Europe (Gaimster 1993, 168–169; Romanitz 2005).

Ceramic building materials of the period and the physical attributes of the documented changing building styles (two-storey timber buildings are evident in some urban spaces (Pearson, 2005, 47) were all to impact on interiors of households. Fixtures are often implied in the archaeological record through the preservation of ironwork from doors and windows, including locks and keys for mounted locks.

The 1998–9 Oxford exhibition was to prove the catalyst in the digital reunification of the dispersed watercolours of medieval paving tiles in the Parker-Hore collection at the beginning of 21st century (Bridges and Mellor 2000), results of which can be located on the web (<http://tileweb.ashmolean.museum>). These watercolours from the ceramic pavements, many still in position with their original arrangement in the late 19th century, reflect the imagery used in royal households – palaces and hunting lodges – the great cathedrals, rich abbeys and nunneries of the Middle Ages and show that medieval European cultures also made a great deal of use of emblems.

Part 2 Decorative fittings and movable goods in changing interiors

My central theme, the process of change, is possibly illustrated in 13th century pottery products. Anyone who aspired to a new lifestyle and had sufficient purchasing power could choose pottery vessels in the marketplace: new shapes of jug with a variety of rich coloured glazes and plastic decoration were emerging throughout England (Pearce and Vince 1988; Mellor 2005, 149–164), inspired perhaps by ideas relating to their environment – the interiors of private and public space in elite households (though see below for castle assemblages). Green paint was popular with Henry III (Wood 1965, 396) and rich green glazed pottery emerged at this period as a favourite style too. Changes in taste could also be influenced by new materials and new methods of manufacture; associated aspects of social practice and embedded values have been argued by Cumberpatch (1997, 127). The archaeological evidence points to the importance of textile furnishings in the

town houses in the 14th century (Crowfoot, Pritchard and Staniland 2001, 6).

From the mid 14th century patrons commissioned pictures to commemorate a special occasion where all wealth must be visible, perhaps to cement social relations, providing much pictorial evidence to supplement the archaeological record, written records and inventories, to help understand the interior decoration of buildings. Examples of public space are illustrated showing great halls, either on the ground or first floor with movable textile screens which could be manipulated to create more or less space, depending on the number of people to be accommodated; walls are hung with large patterned textiles or pictorial hangings: textile canopies are sometimes visible above a portable throne; vessels – blackened silver is often displayed – a visible sign of conspicuous consumption and wealth. All are portable, with the exception of some fixtures, for instance decorated tiled floors, window glass casements with shutters that opened inwards, brightly decorated roof trusses and the occasional recessed cupboard.

The bedchamber either on the first or second floor afforded a degree of privacy, here the bed was all important but the room might accommodate further fittings: a divan and portable folding stools – a design that has changed little since the 7th century AD (Blair, Barham and Blackmore 2004, 13), along with textile furnishings and possibly a chest for the valuables of the household or for clothing. Such images do not always convey whether the activities are ground floor, first floor or second floor level, nor how the rooms are linked one to another. In England much documentary evidence became available in the reign of Henry III and Gilchrist has shown how documents, surviving architecture and archaeological excavations can highlight clear spatial patterns in castles in the 13th and 14th centuries (1999, 136), but detailed studies in the use of space and any associations of pots which may be reflected in the use of space in town houses are still lacking (Cumberpatch 1997, 145–6).

Duby (1988, 60) cites an inventory belonging to a Catalan magnate in 1071 AD, whose bedchamber included mattresses, feather cushions, covers, tapestries and rugs. Fabrics, furs and gloves, hats, mirrors and other items are mentioned along with candelabra and utensils of precious metals for use in the dining hall, but only on special occasions.

My own interest lies with the period that led up to the introduction of the luxury tiled pavements in north-western Europe – a time that may only be visible in the archaeological record, when many people were still involved with the agrarian cycle, with labour services still owed to the lord (Dyer 2003, 179–180).

Although the research concentrates on the technology of the polite end of society, it may bring us back to everyday life of the majority of the population and to the people for whom the clay industries and their products were central to their lifestyles.

Can we therefore identify a link between developing aspirations of an occupant and the availability of products that would fulfil those aspirations? I propose to examine this with reference to an associated group of households in three markedly different parts of Europe, the castles of the 11th- and 12th-century Norman ascendancy.

Part 3 Characterising Norman castles: three European case studies

The Norman dynasty of the 11th, 12th century in England and Wales, Normandy, France and Sicily all share a common heritage, and a visit to early castles in these territories is still possible. Such visits confirm the diversity of the building styles adopted by the dynasty, and the interior layouts are just as varied. Castles were the signature of the Normans in all their territories and their introduction created a visible change in the landscape. They were needed to support the political and social realities as their masters secured their new lands, and to understand them we have to explain the differences one from another (Johnson 2002, XI).

The obvious impact of the Conquest was the increasingly widespread and competent use of masonry (Impey 1999, 72). Considerable resources were required, including the need for lime and mortar on an industrial scale. The use of stone, often Caen stone, from northern France meant opening up huge quarries and then transporting the cut stone to the new building site, resulting in the biggest economic change since the break up of the Roman Empire. Great Norman castles in southern England hint of high living (Platt 1990, 37–41), but the challenge is to find evidence of well stratified and well dated artefact sequences within the original structures, in order to correlate the material culture with the specific building and activity areas that have been archaeologically excavated.

Norman England Residential households and *donjons* at Castles Acre and Rising in Norfolk

Excavations in the 1970s uncovered foundations of a two-storey stone manor house or ‘country house’ at Castle Acre, Norfolk (Fig. 1), situated some 19 km south east of medieval seaport of Kings Lynn (Coad and Streeten 1982, 138–301). Built c.1085 AD the house was surrounded by a wall, large ditches and a gatehouse, and documents refer to orchards and ploughlands. There was nothing fortress-like about the earliest buildings. The patron was William de Varennes (Warenne in English), who had been a close adviser to Duke William (later to be known as William the Conqueror). His son succeeded Warenne, a loyal supporter of Henry I and before his death in 1138 had founded the magnificent Cluniac Acre priory (a daughter house of Lewes, Sussex) and the market town of Castle Acre alongside his father’s ‘country house’.



Figure 1

Castle Acre, Norfolk, looking into the interior of the 'country house', buried by Anarchy earthworks.

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The major fortification of the country house was c. 1130s and 1140s (the time of the English anarchy) – the house was converted into a tower keep and was transformed into a stone fortress on a motte, a mature donjon typical of Normandy since 1000 AD (Impey 1999, 71). The original square building with a spine wall running down the centre was of mortared chalk rubble, faced externally with flint and internally with roughly squared chalk blocks. The two ground-floor chambers were of equal length (19m east–west, the northern chamber was 8 m wide and the southern one 9.3m wide). The east and west gable walls of the south chamber revealed blocked two-light windows, one at each end (Coad and Streeten, 1982, 150). The east wall of the north chamber, where the building survives to first floor level, revealed a blocked window dressed with Barnack stone (brought from near Stamford, some 94 km to the west of Castle Acre), with sockets for two horizontal bars across the opening. All three windows had sill heights 2.30m above floor level. In the south wall of the south chamber was a blocked ground-floor doorway (2m wide) with a mortar/chalk floor within. Two internal wells were discovered in the south-east and north-east corners.

At first floor level the primary floor was laid with chalk on mortar. The north chamber had a substantial

single light west window, with a rebate for a wooden frame, presumably for shutters (Coad and Streeten, 1982, 153). The first floor fireplace with two beam slots may have supported a lath and plaster hood. The north-east corner of the building had a blocked first floor doorway, evidence that the first floor building consisted of two chambers. There was no evidence for access to this floor from inside the building and an external wooden stairway seems probable. This residence with its hall and great chamber were well lit, individually heated, and clearly made a comfortable dwelling.

This county house was transformed into a keep whose outward appearance was defensive, though little remains. A contemporary structure at Castle Rising, some 28 km north west of Castle Acre, presents the classic keep externally, but behind the fortress exterior was a comfortable residence, built about 1140 AD, by William d'Aubigny, to celebrate his marriage to Henry Is widow. The first floor apartments were approached by an exterior stair-tower richly decorated externally with 'roundels, a blind arcade and chevron ornament', which led into a great hall. On the same level next to the hall a spacious personal chamber with private latrine and a private chapel was sited. Private space such as this was still rare in mid 12th century, but in this case 'wealth had been the lubricant of change'. The hall also had its



Figure 2

Caen Castle, Normandy. Did Henry I's Baron's Hall accommodate both hall and chamber block, later replaced by separate buildings?

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own latrines along with a service room and kitchen with fireplace, drain and oven (Platt 1990, 41).

Artefact evidence for gender and spatial organisation at Castle Acre

At Castle Acre, the archaeological record shows that it was the small scale movable possessions, such as the frequency of hair dressing pins, that provides the key to wealth of the ladies who lived or visited the castle (23 in bone and one of copper alloy) with decorated heads (Margeson 1993, 9). Gilchrist pointed out that 'women were involved in building a living' in a castle, as distinctive patterns of spatial organisation can be identified (Gilchrist 1999, 136). These very portable possessions are suggestive of a sophisticated lifestyle, but were they originally lost on the ground floor or on the upper floor chambers in more private space? This is a reoccurring dilemma for archaeologists – as upper floors decayed and timber joists rotted crashing to ground level they brought objects with them to be excavated and discovered at ground level, so limiting the understanding of spatial organisation.

The pottery from Castle Acre suggests that this residence was firmly embedded in the local economy with local pottery from several different production centres supplying the routine daily needs of the castle (in the earliest phase: St Neot's type ware, Thetford-type ware, Early Medieval Ware and Grimston-Thetford ware). This trend, although with different ceramic traditions, continued in the 12th century. Continental imports were rare and regional imports such as glazed Developed Stamford, dating to the late 12th century accounted for less than 2 percent (Milligan 1982, 226),

but may have shared the same route to the castle as Barnack stone.

This pattern of using local pottery in fortified manors and castles can be paralleled elsewhere in England (Keevill 2002, 117–136), so it is the quality of the personal effects as well as the interior fixtures that indicate increasing sophistication and high living, also the food consumed: in particular good joints of meat (Coad and Streeten, 1982, 296; Ayres and Serjeantson 2002, 180).

Norman France Caen Castle in Normandy

At sites where all the main accommodation was within the tower, by the end of the 12th century their residential role may frequently have been supplanted by a more practical hall and chamber block complex within the bailey. This may have occurred earlier at Caen Castle, where Henry I, William the Conqueror's youngest son, built both the Baron's Hall and a huge keep as early as the 1120s. The Baron's Hall (Fig. 2), believed by the excavator to be a first floor hall with an external doorway in the gable end, is now commonly referred to as 'The Exchequer' (de Bo,ard 1965), but recently Impey has argued that this is a ground floor hall (1999, 64). In addition to the tower, the walls and the chapel, the accounts of repairs made to the castle in 1180 AD mention the 'chambers' and the 'hall', perhaps by now no longer in the Baron's Hall but located more expansively in the area now excavated. De Bo,ard, the excavator, suggests that the terms imply a distinction between 'the hall in which public power was manifested' and the 'private apartment of the prince' (Duby 1988, 59).



Figure 3
Is the Marriage of Cana serving to a first floor hall or a private chamber?

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A rare 12th-century manuscript (Fig. 3, MS Cotton) depicting the Marriage of Cana – the story of the miracle of water transformed to wine – suggests how a space like the Baron’s Hall in Caen, as envisaged by the excavator, may have been managed: the ground floor is visible with a ladder up to the first floor, leading to either a hall – where the wedding feast was being celebrated – or possibly to an adjoining chamber. In the foreground someone is drawing water from the well while the butler wears an embroidered tunic and directs the fetching and carrying of the liquid. In the background another servant holds open the door of a cupboard with decorative metal hinges, wherein elegant decanters, presumably empty, were stored. The decanters are carried up the ladder on the shoulder of a servant/slave, with one hand steadying the vessel and the other steadying the carrier apparently holding a rope. It was at ground level that the cellars, granaries, barrels and jars were to be found. This image therefore reiterates the question of the first floor hall or the two-storeyed chamber block accompanied by timber-framed ground-floor halls, presently the preferred option (Pearson 2005, 44). Could conclusive proof be supplied by studying the associated material culture and associated documentary evidence at Caen?

Norman Sicily Ziza, the royal palace, Palermo, and Monreal

The hall mark of high status sites in England during the 13th century were ‘sheets of water’ and complex hydraulic systems (Johnson 2002, 44), and on the continent at Ghent castle in Flanders, sophisticated internal arrangements were already in place by the 11th century (three hearths and two latrines on the second floor of the donjon) and water piped to the upper levels by the end of the 12th century (Duby 1988, 406). Water



Figure 4
Summer palace of Ziza, near Palermo, Sicily.

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was also part of the Muslim features of garden design that ‘was related to the strategic manipulation of views to reinforce social rank’ (Johnson 2002, 44), and the two are conflated at a Norman house in Sicily, the palace of Ziza at Palermo (Fig. 4).

Sicily, a Fatamid province in the central Mediterranean, had been conquered by the Normans on the eve of the first crusade, 1060–1090 AD (Whitehouse 1997, 4), having already fought in southern Italy since the late 10th century (Rowley 1999, 13, 125, 131). The summer palace of Ziza (built 1153–1166 AD), originally surrounded by orchards and pleasure gardens, overlooks the town of Palermo (Norwich 1992, 599). The approach via a narrow strip of land (a causeway) across a lake has long since disappeared; the entrance to the central room has a very different ‘feel’ to the royal palaces (hunting lodges) in north-western Europe.

The rectangular building (50m x 25m), presents its main entrance and façade on the east side towards Palermo. The façade has three arched entries supported by marble columns, the central one accessing the main room, with a fountain in the wall (water from nearby springs was brought to the site through underground pipes). This room extends up two storeys, with niches decorated with stalactite roof vaults, beautifully sculpted, while the walls are decorated with mosaic – a fixture – depicting archers shooting birds out of a tree and peacocks perched in palm trees and pecking dates. The exterior walls at Ziza are as austere as they were in north-western European castles. The layout of the internal space differed on the ground floor, obviously a place to relax in. The upper floors housed smaller private chambers with window lights and a fireplace, and more strikingly under-floor heating and piped water.

Quantities of ceramic amphorae imported from the Byzantine (Greek) empire were excavated from the

heating ducts, presumably for wine rather than oil. Amphorae had been used and traded over significant distances since the Early Roman period (Peacock 1982, Ward-Perkins 2005, 88), indeed documents show that coarsewares, including amphorae were considered agricultural property, and by the 14th century had been totally replaced by wooden barrels (Dark 2001, 81, and 52). By contrast the coronation of Roger II (1130 AD), the first Norman king on the island, documents that scarlet and purple hangings decorated the hall, all the dishes and cups were of gold (African gold) or silver and the servants, even those serving at table, wore garments of silk (Norwich 1992, 331). An abbot recording the ceremony was clearly surprised that everyone ate and drank from expensive metal and all the servants were dressed in silk. No other king in Europe had such a revenue as Roger, and his income from Palermo alone reputedly exceeded what his Norman cousin (William the Conqueror) collected from all England (Rowley 1999, 166).

This scene may have occurred at the Royal Palace, in the centre of Palermo, built around the former Fatimid Palace (Militello et al., 2001, 63), which also housed the royal *tiraz* – the workshop for goldsmiths, jewellers and silk workers, offering an opportunity for the exchange of ideas and the transmission of skills between craftsmen. Roger II added his own personal chapel, on the first floor overlooking the inner courtyard. The Palatine chapel consecrated in 1140 AD, with its Arab stalactite ceiling of carved wood with some iconography derived from Indian and Persian mythology (Rowley 1999, 173) and the ‘stupendous mantle’ of Byzantine mosaics covering its walls with Italian marble flooring, is a fusion of three cultures (Norwich 1992, 433–345).

Sicily: Christian art

Some one million glass cubes weighing five tons was necessary to produce the mosaic wall fixtures in the magnificent Sicilian cathedral at Monreale, a short distance from Palermo, commissioned by a Norman king, William II of Sicily in 1172 AD. Again as with mortar and lime in northern Europe for castle building, the glass cubes were produced on an industrial scale: mosaic glass making in the 12th century and possibly earlier was in massive demand (Francois and Spieser 2002). Most rulers of this period in the Mediterranean used art to enhance their prestige and to make political statements and the use of mosaic, a medium closely associated with the Byzantine Empire may have been a political gesture by the Normans (Rowley 1999, 154).

Some of the decorative motifs of the Romanesque cloisters and mosaics of Monreale are shared with designs from the circular-pattern tiled floor of the first floor King’s chapel at Clarendon Palace, near Salisbury, Wiltshire, dated c. 1244 (Eames 1985, 2–3). Could this be an example of what Dark suggests for the Byzantine world – the use of pattern books – in his case explaining the shared designs found on Fine Sgraffitto Ware

and 12th century Byzantine metalwork, textiles and sculpture (Dark 2001, 106)? There was considerable interaction between the Byzantines, the Moslems, the Latins and the Normans at this period.

Part 4 Diplomatic gifts and trade mould social relations

After the Roman withdrawal, the south west of England remained within the significant network of the Mediterranean world in the 5th and 6th centuries (Hinton 2005, 19), and it is possible that diplomatic gifts of wine explain the appearance of ceramic amphorae: African red slipware (Figs 5 and 6), Phocaean slipware, together with Byzantine coarseware. These have been identified at the possible royal fortress of Tintagel in Cornwall, at British hilltop settlements South Cadbury castle, Glastonbury Tor and at a shrine at Cadbury Congresbury in Somerset (Rahtz 1992). Textiles (often shrouds) found in north-western Europe in the 6th and 7th centuries depict pearl roundels, fleur de lys and heart motifs, sharing a common artistic culture with the Byzantine polychrome tilers of 9th–11th century (Dark 2001, 101). Byzantine imports of the 5th and 6th centuries were replaced by south-west French 7th century traded pottery: ‘E’ ware (Hinton 2005, 40 and 45). This brought contact with people in Bordeaux, a society with close ties with the ‘Byzantine mercantile community’ in the 5th–7th centuries (Dark 2001, 91) and enabled continued access to olive oil and wine. Other eastern Mediterranean possessions have been found associated with 7th century burials inland, for example in Oxfordshire, and ‘point to increasing access to goods and crucially ideas from the Frankish and Mediterranean worlds’ (Hamerow 1999, 27–29, Hinton 2005, 60). Recent excavations at Dorchester-on-Thames, Oxfordshire, a frontier zone and baptismal place (Hinton 2005, 287), recovered four dark green glazed whiteware sherds, whose provenance is believed to be Byzantine (Underwood 2003, 343–344), perhaps the result of ‘ecclesiastical diplomacy’ linking East and Western churches (Dark 1994).

The study of Byzantine ceramics has advanced a great deal since the seminal work by Talbot Rice (1930; Armstrong, Hatcher and Tite 1997) and archaeological research may now be able to chart the interaction between the Byzantine (Greek) glazed wares and the development of medieval Italian glazed pottery – glazed Byzantine wares are not known before the 7th century (Dark 1994, 829), but ‘Forum ware’ a glazed ware, may be in use in Rome in the 8th century (Ward Perkins 2005, 107). By the 9th century the Arabs, skilled in agriculture, had conquered Sicily (Whitehouse 1997, 4). Perishable goods, while less impressive, may have been used as diplomatic gifts provided there were appropriate containers. For instance, Rowley describes how sugar was exported in the 9th century, and citrus fruits (lemons and oranges), melons and almonds are



Figure 5

A diplomatic gift: African Red Slip Ware (ARSW), a dish from Abydos, Egypt, illustrated in the report of the late/post Roman hilltop settlement at Cadbury Congresbury, Somerset. Ashmolean Museum I892.I072.

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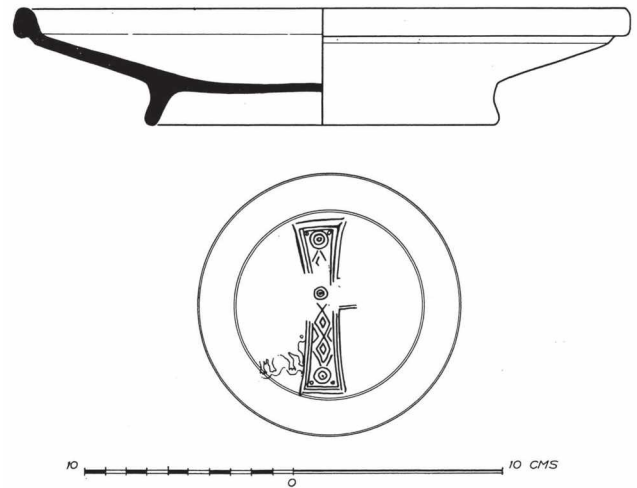


Figure 6

Line drawing of the African Red Slip Ware (Figure 5), showing details of cross and quadraped.

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Figure 7

A diplomatic gift: an Incised Ware base of a bowl, with characteristic chequerboard pattern decoration.

© Ken Dark. Photograph by Ken Dark

documented in the 10th century. Henna and indigo were also grown for colouring dyes in the 10th century (1999, 166), madder occurs in the archaeological record in London during the 10th–12th century (Crowfoot, Pritchard and Staniland 2001, 168–9). Vince has indicated that very few ceramic imports dating to late 9th century or early 10th centuries are known in Britain (2005, 231), but decorated red painted and glazed wares, dating to the 9th–11th centuries, have recently been reviewed in the Loire valley, France, with startling results (see Husi this publication, p000). The technique of glazing was to emerge in the Middle Meuse valley in Belgium in the second half of the 9th century AD (Giertz 1996, 56), and may possibly be linked to the late 9th century pottery industry established at Stamford, Lincolnshire, in the east of England (Kilmurry 1980a, 1980b). As long distance trade began to grow in the central Mediterranean in the 10th century, glazed tablewares from the Islamic and Byzantine worlds became available (Whitehouse 1997, 7), by the end of 11th century Sicily was trading with northern Italian cities and by the early 12th century this trade was in the hands of Italians,

though the majority of merchants in Palermo were still Moslem. Dark (2001, 112) writing about Byzantine ceramics has postulated that Byzantine Incised ware of the 12th–13th centuries (Fig. X6) may also have been used as diplomatic presents, if so then ceramic researchers should be prepared to find some in other parts of Europe. The inhabitants of our castles must have been aware of some of these cultural changes.

Roger II established the first Latin silk-weaving workshop in Sicily (Rowley 1999, 143), robes were embroidered with Arabic lettering and an example of the workshop is illustrated in Staniland (1991, Fig. 51, dated 1130–1140 AD), some of these designs were later adopted by the tile makers of medieval pavements in north-western Europe. Europe relied upon Byzantine and Islamic silks until Italian silk weaving in the 14th century and wall cloths and wall coverings embroidered with gold are mentioned in documents (Wood 1965, 402) and Sicilian silk may also have been used as diplomatic gifts by the Normans, for personal use or in public spaces as wall hangings.

Part 5 Conclusion: an approach to space

The energetic Normans could assemble resources on a large scale, both in north-western Europe and in the Mediterranean. New ideas and perspectives of their cousins' lifestyles in the Mediterranean must have stimulated change in Normandy and England at the very least, in particular domestic space in relation to stone buildings (Meirion-Jones and Jones 1993), and such 'a borrowing' of architectural innovation is believed to be the palace at Everswell by Woodstock in Oxfordshire, built in the Sicilian manner with cloistered courts and pools for Rosamund Clifford, mistress of Henry II (1154–1189 AD (Platt 1978, 80). The monastic orders also played a part in disseminating ideas during the 11th century, if not before (Keevill et al., 2001) and were particularly pioneering in water management (Wood, 1965, 386). The first Crusade in 1099 AD also stimulated changes, though the central Mediterranean may have been more influential in the later 10th–11th centuries.

We have targeted a group of well-studied buildings on a range of latitudes and considered the material evidence of the society that was their heritage and their economic platform. These may be unified in theories of historical space, of which the last decade has seen some stimulating overviews (Gilchrist 1999, Johnson 2002, Giles 2005, 293–311, Pearson 2005, 43–63). House types have an essential role in the definition of cultural entities in the early medieval period and as part of cultural landscapes (Hamerow 2004, 50–51, Ellis 2000), though ceramic studies where they are part of the archaeological record are yet to enter the core of this research. Richardson suggests that 'tiled pavements are signifiers of space' (Richardson 2001, 415) and argues that there is 'potential for broadening the study of medieval tile pavements: social practices, organisation and customs within monastic life and amongst the living spaces of the elite are pivotal to our understanding of the Middle Ages' and this could be extended to embrace marble flooring and stone mosaics of the Mediterranean world.'

Within this space would have resided the products of craftsmen working in privileged conditions under wealthy patronage. This may have been stimulating, and equally may have encouraged continuity in design and workmanship as well as conformity of designs and motifs across a range of crafts. Textiles as carriers of new symbols and designs will have affected how interiors were presented in elite households and the social context of how pottery was decorated and used (for 13th–17th centuries see Gutierrez 2000, 199). Pitchers for example in north-western Europe became used as decanters to serve at table in the later 11th and 12th centuries, and these changes in turn will have trickled down to a wider group of people who may have aspired to visually pleasing but functional possessions in their homes, as part of everyday life.

The challenge remains to find more archaeological evidence to test the hypotheses of changing contact with Mediterranean cultures in the 8th, 9th and 10th

centuries and how it influenced households in north-western Europe. As regional typologies and ceramic traditions are refined and dated, ceramic specialists should remember 'it is the structure of archaeological assemblages which provides the key to differentiation (Gerrard 1999, 156). Some old excavations may therefore benefit from a revisit with a fresh set of questions, where people are at the core and where all the material culture is compared to reveal patterns of human activity. Archaeologists and artists both explore patterns as ways of looking at the world. 'Norwich Households', published over a decade ago, did much to humanise archaeological data (Margeson 1993), but the traditional format (Gutierrez 2000, 198, 200), makes it difficult for the reader to visualise the lifestyles of many of these residences. Where social patterning is sought, is there a place for publishing closely dated groups as multi-material assemblages by phase, to perceive the objects as they might originally have been engaged with, and thereby paint a picture that is exciting and accessible to a wider audience (Mellor 1984, 181–211).

The vision is for some inter-disciplinary projects linked to physical science, to tease out the differences of the interiors of Europe's earlier buildings (5th–12th century AD) and focus on their subtleties, drawing on data for all movable goods and so engage with early medieval lifestyles and human activity as they may have originally been lived.

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Résumé

Cet article, communiqué à la conférence du MPRG de Winchester en 2004, passe rapidement en revue l'utilisation des produits issus de l'industrie de l'argile qui auraient pu influencer le maniement des espaces privés et publics dans l'Europe de l'ouest. Est-ce que ces changements décoratifs ont influencé les potiers et le contexte social de l'utilisation de la poterie? Cet article conclut que, de manière à revisiter les fouilles faites par le passé dans les châteaux, palais et institutions monastiques, l'analyse des objets se doit d'être anthropocentrique et doit inclure tout le matériel présent. En utilisant une méthodologie moderne, nous nous devons d'expliquer les différences. Les résultats doivent être présentés de façon plus accessible.

Zusammenfassung

Dieser Bericht, der auf der MPRG-Konferenz 2004 in Winchester vorgetragen wurde, gibt einen kurz zusammengefaßten Überblick über die Verwendung der Produkte der Tonindustrien, die einen Einfluß auf die Gestaltung privater und öffentlicher Räume in Westeuropa gehabt haben mögen. Hatten diese räumlichen Veränderungen einen Einfluß auf die Töpfer und den sozialen Kontext des Töpferwaren-Gebrauchs? Dieser Bericht kommt zu dem Schluß, daß Fundgruppen mit Menschen in ihrem Zentrum auch alle beweglichen Güter einschließen müssen, und daß daher auch einige der früheren Ausgrabungen von Burgen, Palästen und monastischen Einrichtungen neu zu bewerten und unter Verwendung moderner Methodologie die Unterschiede zu erklären sind. Die Ergebnisse müssen in einer zugänglicheren Weise vorgestellt werden.

