Pottery and Islamicisation: The development of the production of large containers in the Early Medieval Vega of Granada (Spain) between the 8th and the 11th centuries CE. Results of an interdisciplinary approach

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INTRODUCTION

ARANPOT is a Marie Curie project that aims to research the period of Islamicisation in the Vega of Granada (SE Spain), that is, between the 8th and the 11th centuries CE.

The Vega of Granada is a semi-arid inner basin that was transformed into a fertile plain (vaga) by means of irrigation since the Islamic period. In this area there had been a certain urban development during the Roman period, but by the Islamic conquest (711-714 CE) there was only one town in the area: Ibillin, that became known as Ilibria. In the 11th century, a second town emerged, Granada, and overtook Ilibria as capital of the Vega and, in fact, of a larger political entity (the Zirid Kingdom of Granada). Therefore, there are two historical political centres that need to be considered in this period.

The process of Islamicisation has been studied from the point of view of changes in political institutions and landscape, but little attention has been paid to the anthropological transformations that the Iberian populations experimented with the arrival of Islam. This project attempts to shed light on those changes through an integrated typological, technological and scientific approach.

In this presentation this approach is applied to the large storage containers (LC) located in seven archaeological sites of the Vega of Granada and of relevant dates. This poster shows the relevance of petrographic analysis of technology and microprovenance to the study of local cultural change.

RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT

The ARANPOT project is a Marie Curie Action of the VII Programme of the European Union developed at the University of Sheffield (UK).

CONCLUSIONS

This study has produced the following conclusions:

1. There is a clear change in the morphology of the vessels used for storage: from dolia to tinajas. This change is accompanied by another innovation in the fabrics. The traditional clay recipes for making storage vessels (LC3, LC4 and LC5) are totally abandoned after Phase I and LC1, LC2, LC6, LC7, LC8 and LC9 take over from Phase II onwards.

2. The new fabrics do not necessarily support a technical innovation. LC1 is documented in late Antiquty, but it is associated to other type of vessels (paneras or testa).

3. There is no clear correspondence between the technological changes described above and a change in distribution. In marked contrast with the cooking pots, storage vessels seem to have been distributed in late Antiquty (Phase I and befor) in a similar way as they were distributed in the Early Middle Ages (Phase II and onwards).

4. This contrasting picture in the production and distribution of cooking pots and storage vessels suggests a sociotechnical system based on a mixture of domestic and workshop production in which different centres had different projections on the landscape of the Early Islamic period.

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