

The Iberian Peninsula in the Iron Age through Pottery Studies

Edited by

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Access Archaeology





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Introduction

Michał Krueger, Violeta Moreno Megías

Pottery reflects social, economic, technological and cultural aspects that can be investigated through interdisciplinary methods. The study of this type of archaeological material faces numerous research problems that are essential for the understanding of the chronological period. This is why a simple ceramic analysis should encompass the study of productive aspects, from the establishment and activity of the workshops responsible for the manufactures to the technological choices of the craftspeople; but also commercial and organisational aspects, such as the circulation of the products, their contents, their commercial registration or their identification by consumers; and finally social and cultural aspects, such as their function as status indicators, their role in the circulation of fashions and trends, their reflection of changes in ritual aspects, daily life or their association with prestige.

For a better understanding of ceramic materials and to answer the questions raised by their archaeological discovery, numerous methodologies can be used, ranging from the traditional approaches of morpho-typological, metric or stylistic studies to analytical laboratory methodologies, with the aim of chemically, physically and mineralogically characterising the materials studied. The results obtained through the interdisciplinary insertion of both the archaeological and archaeometric approaches show us that the underlying historical reality is enormously rich and that multiple lines of study are still open for the future. The knowledge of ceramic production in the Protohistory of the Iberian Peninsula, already very advanced thanks to the numerous ancient and recent works that have been developed around them, allows us to go deeper into the technological, cultural and economic definition of the region, as well as to identify more easily the specific features of the study area. Ultimately, these same indicators are of great interest as elements of comparison in the interpretation of the productive modalities of other similar environments in the Protohistory of the Western Mediterranean.

The application of these perspectives has already become a classic of research methodology in the Iberian Peninsula: it is enough to recall the state of the art presented 15 years ago for the Andalusian area (Cordero *et al.* 2006). Some relevant archaeological investigations opened the path for this research line through the study of pottery materials, such as: González and Pina 1983; Galván 1986; González *et al.* 1986; González *et al.* 1986; Millán *et al.* 1990; Navarro 1997; Tsantini 2007; and many others in the last decade, including Igea *et al.* 2013; Behrendt and Mielke 2014; López de Heredia 2015; Johnston 2015; Moreno 2016, etc; and are therefore the precedent of the present, ongoing projects presented here. During the last years the lines of research approaches have continued to advance, widening their margins and giving rise to numerous currently active projects, some of them being now collected in this volume.

Relevantly, the methodological approach of the contributions of this volume avoids the limitation to laboratory techniques. On the contrary, the aim is to create an analytical apparatus that can detect the archaeological problems to be solved when studying ceramic materials, i.e. to give a historical sense to the study of the archaeological record through Materials Science and the rest of the usual archaeological methodologies. This can only be achieved by using a multi-perspective and equally broad approach, which allows the integration of information of different types, dedicated to the characterisation of ceramics from many different facets. This volume brings together projects of this kind, integrating typological, compositional and spatial approaches to the study of the archaeology of technology, production and trade in different contexts through a cross-cultural and diachronic perspective.

Additionally, the study of the Protohistory of the Iberian Peninsula offers an extremely interesting scenario of cultural interactions and historical developments, which is an even greater incentive to study ceramic materials in order to gain a deeper understanding of the period. From the different cultural realities that unfolded on the Iberian Peninsula in the Bronze Age to the moment of maximum cultural, economic and even population renewal that took place after the contact with Eastern populations interested in this region, the Protohistory of this region is a convulsive, changing but extremely interesting period from an archaeological point of view. The period culminated with the definitive establishment of Roman power in the region, but the heterogeneous background of this conquest is the result of centuries of development of a mosaic of social and cultural realities, to the knowledge of which the studies in this book contribute.

Therefore, from a methodological point of view, but also from the perspective of the highest archaeological interest, this volume aims to discuss different approaches to the study of ceramics from the Iberian Peninsula. It is the result of an international congress titled 'Interdisciplinary research on pottery from Iberian Peninsula' held at the Institute of Archaeology of the Adam Mickiewicz University in June 2019 and organized by the editors of this volume. Its aim was to bring together archaeologists specialized on petrography, technology, chemical analysis, intercultural contacts and experimental archaeology. This meeting proved to be very beneficial, as the presented papers emphasized new discoveries and developments in methods. Seven individual chapters have been included in this volume, which covers a variety of case studies ranging from Late Bronze Age to the Roman period.

The first chapter by Alberto Lorrio, Mariano Torres, and Ester López presents the results of contextual analysis of grey ware pottery from the southern area of the Alicante province. The study confirmed that this kind of pottery was used as tableware in domestic contexts of the Phoenician settlement La Fonteta and also in the local site Peña Negra. As a continuation of the research on this site, the next chapter by Miguel del Pino, Alberto Lorrio, Jaume Buxeda, and Irene Vinader is dedicated to the petrographic and microstructural analysis of the decorated pottery from Peña Negra. Among the main results, it is interesting to indicate the identification of low-fired local production of vessels.

In a similar methodological approach, Violeta Moreno examined more than 150 thin-sections from western Andalusia in Chapter 3. Interestingly, it has been possible to characterize petrographically different pottery traditions between local handmade assemblages and imported Phoenician profiles, from paradigmatic archaeological sites of southwestern Iberian Peninsula such as Setefilla, La Joya or El Carambolo. Samples of *à chardon* vessels from Setefilla, La Cruz del Negro and La Joya (Huelva) have been studied in Chapter 4 by Michał Krueger by means of a portable X-ray fluorescence spectrometer. The first chemical results show that the sample from Huelva present important differences in terms of elemental composition from other ceramic material analysed in this study.

The work of Alba Castellano deals with newly discovered archaeological material dated back to the period between the 7th and 5th centuries BC documented in the northeastern part of the Iberian Peninsula. According to the author, the presence of foreign pottery in the so-called hinterland is a result of exchanges between local and Phoenician and Greek elites.

From a necessary broad, open-minded perspective, an overview of the Greek presence in the Iberian Peninsula is given by Bartłomiej Walkowski in Chapter 6. Archaeological materials, especially pottery, but also written sources have been re-examined in order to mark the main phases of Greek trade activity, as an exercise of combination of historical and archaeological research questions.

Chapter 7 by Mohamed El Mhassani provides an important example of a broad-view study on the circulation of pottery between the Iberian Peninsula and Northern Africa. Considering that, throughout

history, there have been several types of pots used in both regions, the signs of close commercial relations between the two continents are analyzed.

This volume will hopefully stimulate pottery specialists and researchers of the Iberian Peninsula Protohistory to revisit the material record from different and fresh angles as well as provide a general frame of the main research lines for those interested in the study of this area.

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