
THE OLD POTTER'S ALMANACK

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EDITORIAL

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the December issue of *The Old Potter's Almanack*.

I am very pleased to introduce this issue containing three articles, covering different historical periods, archaeological problems and scientific techniques.

Michael Tite explains how science allows us to confirm the detailed description, in a famous 16th century manuscript, of the production of the colourful Italian earthenware *maiolica*. In the light of several studies using the scanning electron microscope, he goes beyond chemical characterisation of the body, glazes and pigments, explaining and discussing the reasons behind the diverse technological choices of these 'secretive' potters.

In the second paper, José Carvajal combines archaeological and historical evidence with scientific analysis to highlight changes and continuity during a specific historic process, the Islamicisation of southwest Spain, focussing on the study of cooking and storage vessels. The morpho-typological study, combined with petrographic analysis, sheds light on the introduction of new shapes and maintenance of old ones – and the continuity through time and space of specific fabrics.

The issue of how to interrogate ceramics and the best technique(s) for answering our technological questions is of fundamental importance for scholars who wish to understand archaeological artefacts and their contexts. The third study is particularly important to scholars who want 'to interpret' ceramics and try to use the most appropriate technique to answer their questions. Mary Ownby deals with the use of two existing large sets of neutron activation analysis results from 12th-15th century AD pottery in Arizona and New Mexico. She uses petrographic thin sections not only to improve and clarify the interpretation of the chemical results but also to identify provenance more precisely. Statistical analysis of NAA data showed that pottery was exchanged between sites, but the addition of

petrography allowed the production centres to be located.

I hope you enjoy reading these articles and wish you all the best for 2013.

Michela Spataro

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