

CERAMIC PRODUCTION IN ISLAMIC SMALL KINGDOMS (TAIFAS) OF THE IBERIAN PENINSULA: THE CASE OF ALBARRACIN (TERUEL), 11TH – 12TH CENTURIES AD

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As part of a large project on ceramic production in Islamic Taifas (small kingdoms in the Iberian Peninsula during last periods of Muslim political authority), pottery found in Albarracin (Teruel, Spain) was studied in order to know the main characteristics and influences of the ceramic manufacture in the area, with examples of tin-glazed, coloured-transparent-glazed and slip-decorated pottery.

Albarracin Taifa (in the south of the current Aragon region) was an independent kingdom since the beginning of the 11th century AD. During this Taifa time, the small town showed a splendid cultural and economic period, with prosperity and refinement similar to other important towns in al-Andalus (Muslim Iberian Peninsula). In 1170, Albarracin territory passed to Christian hands, but still preserving some independence for a century. This privileged position during more than two centuries helped to Albarracin to maintain economical contacts with Muslim areas but also with Aragon and Castilla, and advantageous cultural relations.

These cultural features of the Albarracin Taifa led its ceramic production to be considered very interesting to know pottery characteristics and actual exchanges between different workshops in the 11th-12th centuries. Fragments of non-glazed and glazed pottery were analysed by ICP-Atomic Emission Spectrometry, and slips and glazes studied by Scanning Electron Microscopy with Energy Dispersive X-ray Spectrometry. The knowledge of raw materials was completed by the investigation of lead-isotope ratios by ICP-Quadrupole Mass Spectrometry. Results from some of the most interesting ceramic types will be presented in order to emphasize principal differences and similarities between them and also in relation to other Islamic areas (like Zaragoza, Valencia or Murcia).