

CERAMICS PRODUCTION IN MEDIEVAL IFRÎQIYA: LOCAL PRODUCTIONS AND FOREIGN INFLUENCES AS SEEN IN THE CASE OF SABRA AL-MANSÛRIYA

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Recent excavations undertaken by a French-Tunisian expedition, directed by P. Cressier (CNRS-Université Lyon 2) and M. Rammah (INP, Kairouan), gave the opportunity to reconsider the question of ceramics production in Sabra al-Mansûriya, a dynastic capital founded in the Fatimid period at the gates of Kairouan (Tunisia). Local production is attested by a kiln and associated kiln furniture and wasters. Mineralogical, petrographic and elemental analyses of pastes and glazes - carried out by optical microscopy, SEM-EDS, XRD and WD-XRF - enabled to constitute and to characterize reference groups, helped identifying the range of locally manufactured wares and gave information about production techniques.

Besides the turquoise- and opaque white-glazed wares found among the wasters, analyses suggest the manufacture in Sabra of green and brown painted wares ("vert et brun") and of lustre wares. The latter are found together with imported lustre wares of at least two types (one manufactured with a clay paste and another with a synthetic paste or stonepaste). The former find their place in the regional productions of "vert et brun", whose best known representative is the so-called "jaune de Raqqâda" of the Aghlabid period. However, no evidence of local production in the medieval period has been found so far in the neighbouring site of Raqqâda.

Our study expects to bring some new elements, based on reliable archaeological material, on the role of Sabra al-Mansûriya both at the

regional level and within the Fatimid empire, especially regarding its connections with Egypt.