

A SURVEY OF NASRID POTTERY

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to describe all the varieties of ceramics produced during the period of the Nasrid dynasty (1232-1492) of Spain.

The subject is introduced by brief histories of pre-Nasrid and Nasrid Muslim Spain. These chapters are followed by a survey of the ceramics, and their shapes and decorative motifs, made during the Caliphal, Taifas and Almoravid-Almohad periods.

Nasrid ceramics are divided into four major categories: unglazed, slip-painted and monochrome-glazed wares; cuerda seca and verdugones ware; blue and white ware and lusterware. The development of forms, decorative motifs and techniques is considered as are their possible origins and sources.

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NOTES

The transliteration of Arabic names and words in this paper follows the rules set forth in the Encyclopoedia of Islam.

Because Nasrid pottery is more important for the study of European than Near Eastern ceramics, only Christian dates will be given.

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## INTRODUCTION

The ceramics of the West owe a great debt to those of the Near East and the Islamic world. The Arabs introduced many new techniques into Europe via Spain, including the all important tin glaze. Without the innovations brought by Islamic ceramics, maiolica would have probably never existed and Delft would be an unknown name. Even though this crucial contribution has long been recognized, as has its route through Spain, it does not appear to have ever occurred to anyone to actually study the pottery of the last Muslim kingdom of al-Andalus.

The Nasrid kingdom of Spain was a tiny country, covering only 30,000 sq. kilometers at its height and with a population of well under 1,000,000.<sup>1</sup> It had few links with the rest of the Muslim world and existed under a constant Christian threat. Though its architecture is famous, there are only two collections of Nasrid pottery in all of Spain (in the Museo de la Alhambra in Granada and in the Museo de la Alcazaba in Malaga) and none outside of the country. In books on Spanish ceramics, Nasrid pottery is lucky if it receives two pages and one of its two most important contributions, blue and white tin-glazed vessels, is virtually never even mentioned.<sup>2</sup>

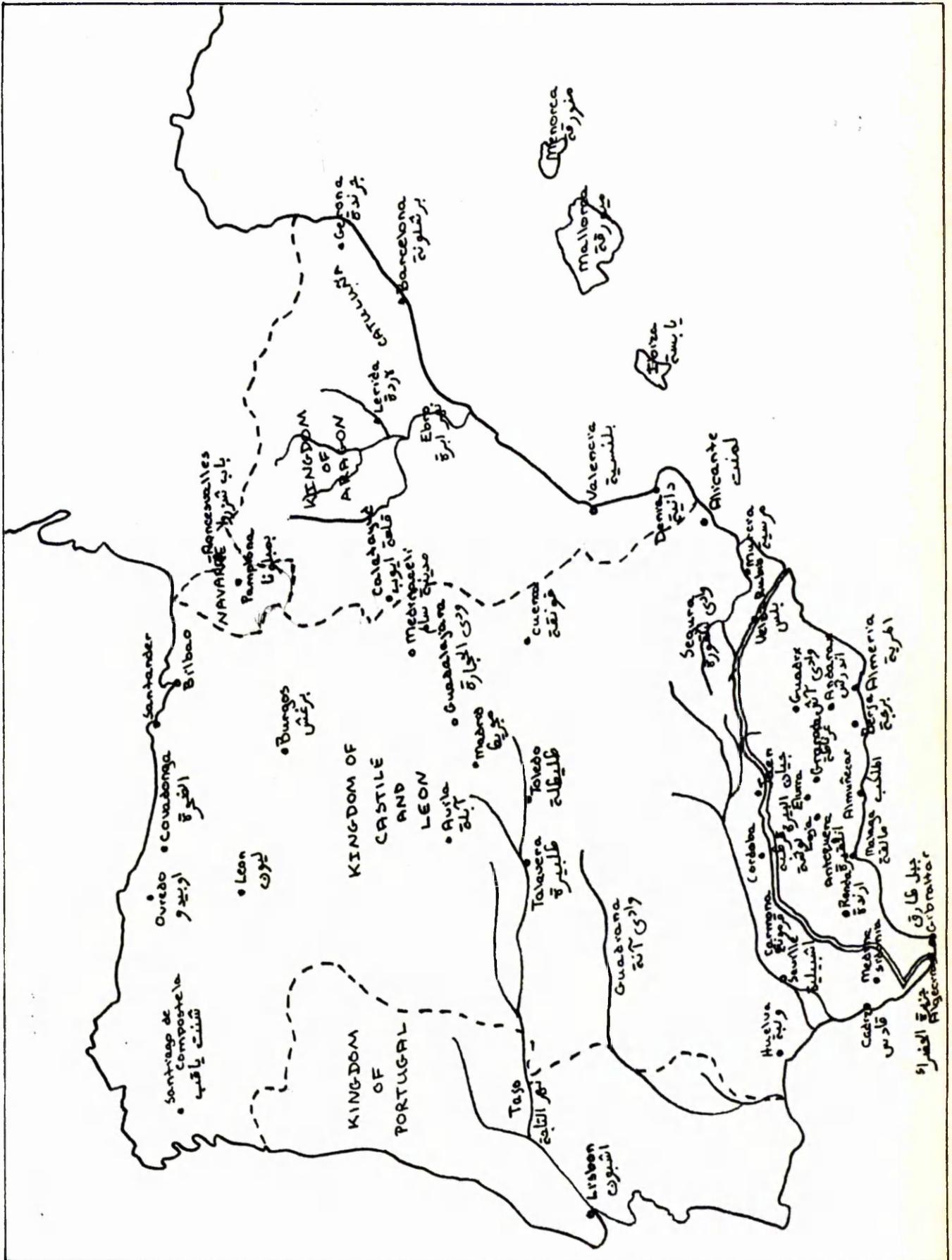
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1. At the time of the final reconquest, the population was only 700,000.
  2. Alan Caiger-Smith in his book, Tin-Glaze Pottery (London, 1973), for example, devotes six sentences to this pottery and states that it is extremely rare and that one of the major collections is in the Museo Arqueológico of Cordoba. This museum does not, in fact, have a single example of Nasrid pottery except for a few unglazed well heads. See p.55.

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Yet it was under the Nasrids that not only blue and white and tin glaze first appeared in Europe but luster was also introduced.

Nasrid art is often referred to as one of decline and the only importance given to its pottery is its place in the development of the Hispano-Moresque style. This is clearly wrong. Any study of the origins and development of European ceramics must be incomplete without a knowledge of Nasrid pottery. Until now this has been impossible and though many of the important questions surrounding Nasrid ceramics still cannot be answered, it is to be hoped that this paper will at least provide us with a preliminary survey and study of the pottery of this very interesting period.

MAP OF SPAIN ca. 1250-1450



CHAPTER IA BRIEF HISTORY OF PRE-NASRID MUSLIM SPAIN

In the year 711 A.D. a Muslim army under the command of Tariq ibn Ziyād invaded the Iberian Peninsula and defeated the forces of Roderigo, the last Visigothic king: with this conquest began the most glorious period of "Spanish" history. When the Muslim forces appeared, Spain was in a confused and dangerously weak state. After the fall of the Roman Empire, Spain, one of its richest provinces, was invaded by a rapid succession of Vandals, Goths and, in the year 414, Visigoths. Unlike their predecessors, who continued into Africa, the Visigoths settled in the north-eastern corner of Spain, where despite their military superiority, they had great difficulty in establishing firm control over the native inhabitants, who were a mixture of "Iberian" and Roman stock. Not only did they try to impose the German tribal system on the subjugated people but they also adhered to the heretical Arian form of Christianity while the "Spaniards" were Latin Christians. Though the Visigoths were able to strengthen their position somewhat with a mass conversion to Latin Christianity in 589 A.D., the monarchy continued to be far from strong and there was widespread resentment among the subject peoples. The Visigoths had failed to instill any of the sentiments, such as tribal loyalty, which their system of government depended on. There was no fixed law of succession (a factor which often divided the nobility)

and the army was formed by men who had an obligation to serve only because of personal loyalty to the King. The Visigoths also made the mistake of taking away many of the privileges that had been enjoyed under the Romans; cities lost many of their municipal privileges. The Jewish population hated their rulers: a decree of 693 A.D. made it impossible for them to engage in trade and another law of 694 A.D. enslaved all Jews who would not convert. At the beginning of the eighth century the Iberian Peninsula was ripe for invasion.

What little is known about the Muslim invasion of Spain has been deduced from the legends recorded by later Arab geographers and historians. When the Visigothic king, Witiza, died in 710 A.D. the nobility chose Roderigo (who was not of royal descent) to follow him,<sup>1</sup> but Witiza's son, Akhila, had many followers and succeeded in making himself dux of the province of Tarraconensis. Roderigo was hated by many of the Visigothic nobility, especially by Count Julian (Yulyān) of Ceuta<sup>2</sup> whose daughter, according to legend, had been seduced and then abandoned by Roderigo.<sup>3</sup>

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1. See: al-Himyāri, Al-Rawḍ al-Mitar, ed. Lévi-Provençal (Leiden, 1938), p.7:

ولذريق لم يكن ابنا الملوك ولا يصير النيب في القوط وانما نال الملك  
من طريق الفصب والتور عندما مات غيظشة الملك وكان اثيرا لديه  
فاستصفر اولاده واستمال طائفة من الرجال صالحوا اليه فانتزع الملك من  
ولد غيظشة وغيظشة آخر ملوك القوط بالاندلس ولى سنة ٧٧ من الهجرة  
فملا خمس عشرة سنة.

2. It is thought that this Count Julian may have actually been a Byzantine exarch.

3. al-Himyāri, op.cit., pp.٧-٨.

Julian is said to have crossed into Spain in October, 709 in order to prove to the Muslims that there was valuable booty to be had there. In July of the next year a small reconnaissance force of Berbers under the command of Tarīf was sent across the straits. Then, in the summer of the year 711 A.D., an army of 7,000 Muslims (almost entirely Berber) under the command of Tāriq ibn Ziyād, a Berber client of the Arab governor of north-west Africa, Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr, was sent into Spain. The Muslim forces established their base at Algeciras and on the nineteenth of July met and defeated Roderigo's army in the valley of the Rio Barbate. The subjugation of the Iberian Peninsula continued and in July of the following year Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr, himself, brought 18,000 more men (mostly Syrian Arabs) to help in the pacification of the new province. By the end of the year 715 all of the Iberian Peninsula except for a tiny area in Asturias was in Muslim hands.<sup>1</sup>

When Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr left Spain in 714, he made his son, Abd al-ʿAzīz, governor of the new province. After only two years, however, Abd al-ʿAzīz was assassinated and during the following forty years there were twenty different governors of al-Andalus. Though most of these men were appointed by the governor of Ifriqiyya in Kairouan, they were largely independent from him and, of course, even more separated from the caliph in Damascus.

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1. The Muslims' only defeat in Spain was by the Christian King, Pelayo, at the battle of Covadonga (ca.718). The conquest was, in fact, so rapid and, apparently, bloodless that it has been suggested that it was not a question of military conquest, but rather of mass conversion to Islam. See: I. Olague, La Revolucion Islamica en Occidente (Guadarrama, 1974).

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The political situation in Spain throughout the first half of the eighth century was most uneasy not only because of this constant change of government but also because of the friction between the Berber troops who had settled in Spain, and the Syrian army who also wished to stay. There was, in fact, a Berber revolt throughout North Africa in 739 when the sub-governor of Tangiers tried to stop more Berbers from crossing into Spain. This rebellion developed into a Kharajite separatist movement known as the Ibādiyya. There was also tribal rivalry among the Syrians: the Qaysites versus the Kalbites (or Yemenis).<sup>1</sup> It was in this state of chaos that 'Abd al-Rahmān appeared.

In 750 the Umayyad dynasty was overthrown by the Abbasids who proceeded to kill all the members of the former royal family. A young prince, 'Abd al-Rahmān, managed to escape the slaughter and fled to North Africa to seek refuge with his mother's Berber tribe. He sent an envoy to Spain who was enthusiastically received by the Syrian jundis and the Yemenis. With their help, in May 756, 'Abd al-Rahmān defeated the Qaysite forces and established the Umayyad dynasty of Spain.

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1. The various tribes were finally settled as they had been in Syria. Each jund was given a province: those from Damascus were settled in Elvira, the Qinnasrīn in Jaen, the Hims in Seville, the Palestinians in Medina Sidonia and Algeciras, the Egyptians in Beja and Murcia, and the "Jordanian" in Malaga. See: M.A. Sha'ban, Islamic History (Cambridge University Press, 1971), p.152, and B. Lewis, The Arabs in History (New York, 1966), p.122.

The first seventy years of Umayyad rule was a period of pacification and consolidation for the emirs 'Abd al-Rahmān I (756-788), Hišām I (788-796), and al-Ḥakam I (796-822). It was extremely difficult to maintain control over a kingdom with so many different groups forming the population. There were frequent revolts and uprisings: the Umayyad emirs appear to have achieved unity only through force.<sup>1</sup> On the "Day of the Foss" in 797, for example, all the nobles of Toledo were tricked into entering the palace and once inside, were beheaded one by one and their bodies thrown into a common pit.

By the time of the reign of 'Abd al-Rahmān II (822-852), the Umayyads were well established and though there were still frequent revolts, these were largely peripheral. 'Abd al-Rahman II began an extensive building program and brought scholars and artists from the East.<sup>2</sup> Al-Andalus became one of the richest provinces on the Mediterranean with an annual income of one million dinars.

Though 'Abd al-Rahman II's rule was a period of relative peace, with his death the government's weaknesses

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1. It has been suggested that the Umayyad emirs unified the country by identifying their cause with that of Islam and the caliphate but this does not appear to have been true until very much later.
  2. The most famous of these artists was Ziriyāb, a Persian musician who not only influenced the development of Spanish music but also brought many Persian customs, in clothing, food and building, to Spain.

once again became apparent. During the rule of Muḥammad I (852-886), the governor of Tudela, Mūsā ibn Mūsā ibn al-Qāsi, established an independent kingdom in Zaragoza, as did Ibn al-Jallīqī in Badajoz and Ibn Ḥafṣūn in Malaga and Ronda. Muḥammad's successor, al-Mundhīr, ruled for only two years and was followed by 'Abd Allāh (888-912). During 'Abd Allāh's reign al-Andalus was broken up into even tinier semi-independent states: the treasury was bankrupt and his eleven sons were all either poisoned or beheaded.

Al-Andalus was saved from this sorry state by 'Abd Allāh's grandson, 'Abd al-Raḥmān III (912-961) and it was under his rule that Umayyad Spain reached its zenith. During the first twenty years of 'Abd al-Raḥmān III's reign the unity of al-Andalus was re-established and the expansion of the Christian kingdoms of Leon and Navarre in the north was halted. In order to counter the Faḥimids in North Africa, in 929 'Abd al-Raḥmān III assumed the titles of Khalīfa and amīr al-mu'minīn as well as the "throne name" of al-nāṣir lī dīn Allah. In 936 the Caliph began the construction of a new capital, Madīna al-Zahrā'. 'Abd al-Raḥmān was succeeded by his son, al-Ḥakam II al-Mustanṣir bi-llah (961-976). His reign was a continuation of his father's: al-Andalus remained a peaceful and prosperous nation.

Al-Ḥakam II was followed by his eleven year old son, Hišām II (976-1013). The true ruler of al-Andalus for the next twenty years was a man named Ibn Abī Amīr (976-1002), more often known as al-Manṣūr (or Almanzor).

Al-Manṣūr grew to be so powerful that his name was mentioned after that of the Caliph during the Friday prayer. As if he were a caliph he was "succeeded" by his sons ʿAbd al-Malik al-Muzaffar (1002-1008) and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Ma'mūn (1008-1009), and, therefore, the period from 976 to 1009 is often known as that of the Amīrid dictatorship. Al-Manṣūr's "reign" was a period of great military activity: the Muslim territory was actually increased and some form of suzerainty was established over the Christian kingdoms of the north. This military program was continued by al-Manṣūr's two sons but the younger one, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al Ma'mūn, so antagonised the populace that there was a great Berber uprising throughout al-Andalus during which he was killed. His death was followed by a period of confusion during which six Umayyads (1009-1031) and three Ḥammūdids (1016-1027) a half-Berber family, all held the throne.

By 1031 thirty different towns had declared themselves independent from the caliphate. The rulers during this period from 1031 (or 1009) to 1091 are commonly known as al-mulūk al-tawā'if or "Party Kings". The word "party" refers to the three groups of Muslims living in al-Andalus: the Berbers, the Saqāliba (Slavs) and those of Arab and native Iberian descent. There were countless kingdoms and dynasties: the Ḥammūdids in Malaga and Algeciras, the Zīrids in Granada, the Abbādids in Seville, and the Jahwarids also in Granada, to name only the most important.

The Christian kingdoms of northern Spain did not hesitate to take advantage of the internal weaknesses of al-Andalus and in 1085 Alfonso VI conquered Toledo. The fall of this crucial city caused al-Mu'tamid of Seville to ask for help from Yūsuf ibn Tāšufīn (or Tašfīn), the head of the Almoravid (al-Murabitūn) dynasty of North Africa. In 1086 Yūsuf crossed into Spain with a Berber army, defeated Alfonso VI in a battle near Badajoz and immediately returned to Africa. The Christian threat, however, continued and Yūsuf returned in 1088: this time he decided to remain in al-Andalus. In 1090 he captured Granada and in 1091 both Cordoba and Seville fell to the Almoravids.

The Almoravids had acquired a huge empire in only fifty years: it included all of Morocco and Mauritania as well as the basin of the Senegal river in the south and the western part of Algeria in the north. In 1090 the Almoravids moved to Spain. In Spain, however, they were not so successful: though they occupied all the Muslim territory neither Yūsuf ibn Tāšufīn nor his successors, 'Alī ibn Yūsuf (1106-1143) and Tāšufīn ibn 'Alī (1143-1145), were able to reconquer Toledo or any of the land that the Christians had captured. Many of the Muslim population as well as the Jews and Christians felt great resentment towards their new rulers with their programs of public austerity and their inquisition of Malikite jurists. The decline of the Almoravids had already begin in 1118 with the loss of Zaragoza to Alfonso I el Batallador of Aragon. There were many other successful Christian forays into

al-Andalus as a result of which the towns of Tudela, Tarragona, Catalayud, Daroca and Alcañiz were also reconquered, and the general discontent finally grew to be so great that the Almoravid dynasty was overthrown during the rebellions of 1144 and 1145.

The period from 1145 to 1170 was a time of unrest and political confusion in al-Andalus: once again the country was broken up into petty kingdoms.<sup>1</sup> A new force, the Almohads, soon appeared and once again the petty kings were easily overthrown.

The founder of the Almohad movement is commonly known as Ibn Tūmart. He explained Islamic dogma in a new way: he placed great emphasis on taw'hīd or "assertion of unity". His followers were, therefore, known as al-muwahhidūn. In 1121 Ibn Tūmart proclaimed himself Mahdī and continued as the spiritual and military leader of the Almohads until his death in about 1130. Though Ibn Tūmart had chosen his successor, 'Abd al-Mu'min (1130-1163), he was not so proclaimed until 1133. 'Abd al Mu'min continued Ibn Tūmart's war against the Almoravids and in 1147 captured Marrakesh. Though 'Abd al-Mu'min had interfered in the affairs of al-Andalus as early as 1145, it was not until 1171 that his son Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf I (1163-1184) decided to consolidate his position in Spain. By the time of his

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1. Though this period is sometimes known as the second "Reyes de Taifas", the kings did not represent "parties" as had previously been the case.

death, the Almohads were in possession of all the Muslim territory in Spain and had even started a jihād against the Christian Kingdoms. His son and successor, Abū Yūsuf Yaʿqūb al-Manṣūr (1184-1199) spent most of his reign in North Africa and though there were several major victories over the Christians, as at Alarcos in 1196, there was no fundamental change in the balance of power between the Muslims and the Christians.

Perhaps because of these Muslim victories the Christians renewed their efforts in the Reconquest and it was under Abū Yūsuf Yaʿqūb al-Manṣūr's son, Muḥammad al-Nāṣir (1199-1213), that the Muslims met with their first truly catastrophic defeat in Spain. In July, 1212 an army of troops from Leon, Castile, Navarre and Aragon left Toledo and met and conquered the Almohad army at Las Navas de Tolosa. Though the magnitude of this victory was not at first apparent because of internal dissention among the Christians, the Muslim power in Spain had been finally broken.

The last Almohad caliph was Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf II (1213-1223) who succeeded his father at the age of fifteen. He died, leaving no heir, and the dynastic quarrels which followed destroyed the central administration and the ability to resist the Christian Reconquest. In 1236 Ferdinand III of Castile and Leon captured Cordoba and in 1248 Seville also fell. Except for one small though important exception Muslim Spain had ceased to exist.

CHAPTER II

A BRIEF HISTORY OF NASRID SPAIN

The Almohad caliphate in Spain had shown signs of internal weakness as early as 1217 when Muḥammad b. Yūsuf ibn Ḥūd, a descendant of the Ḥūdīd dynasty of Zaragoza, captured the fortress of Sanfiro. For the next decade there was widespread unrest throughout al-Andalus and great resentment towards the government and its Maliki inquisition. This "movement" found a leader in Ibn Ḥūd when, on June 15, 1228, he raised the black flag of the Abbasids and declared war on the Almohads. He was immediately successful: on the fourth of August, 1228 Murcia swore allegiance to Ibn Ḥūd, calling him amīr al-muslimīn and al-mutawakkil 'alā-llāh.

In the following year the Almohad caliph, al-Ma'mūn, was forced to cross over to Morocco to deal with other local insurrections and his departure was followed by a general rebellion throughout al-Andalus. Valencia was seized by Zayyān b. Sa'd b. Mardanīš while Denia, Alcira and Játiva swore allegiance to Ibn Ḥūd. Cordoba followed their example in September-October, 1229, as did Seville (October 31, 1229), Algeciras, Granada (both in May, 1231), and even Ceuta (in 1230).

By the year 1230, Ibn Ḥūd was in control of all of al-Andalus except for the cities of Valencia, Carbonera and Chinchilla which were loyal to the Banū Mardanīš. Ibn Ḥūd's success was very shortlived: in 1230 he was driven

from Jerez by the Christians and in the following year his forces suffered a crushing defeat at Merida, also at the hands of the Christians. Perhaps because of these defeats or perhaps because of the tribute of 1,000 dinars per day that Ibn Ḥūd was forced to pay to the Christians, his popularity waned rapidly and one of his subjects was quick to take advantage.

After the morning prayer on Friday, the 18th of April, 1232, the inhabitants of Arjona proclaimed Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf ibn Naṣr,<sup>1</sup> sultan. Muḥammad "al-Ṣaykh", also known as Ibn al-Aḥmar, immediately seized the neighbouring towns of Guadix and Baza<sup>2</sup> and during the following year succeeded in extending his influence over Jaén, Porcuna, Cordoba, Seville<sup>3</sup> and Carmona. In June-July, 1234 Ibn Ḥūd recognized Ibn al-Aḥmar as king of Jaén, Arjona and Porcuna in return for Ibn al-Aḥmar's becoming his vassal.

Ibn al-Aḥmar was not content, however, to remain a vassal and when Ferdinand III began the reconquest of Cordoba in January, 1236, Ibn al-Aḥmar helped him. Not only did he help the Christians to take Cordoba but also, taking advantage of Ibn Ḥūd's difficulties, he entered Granada in May, 1237. A few months later Ibn Ḥūd was

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1. Muḥammad b. Naṣr was supposed to be descended from the anṣar, Sa'd b. 'Ubada, the chief of the khazraj. See: Ibn Khaldūn, "Histoire des Banou'l-Ahmar Rois de Grenade". Tr. Gaudefroy-Demombynes, Journal Asiatique, Vol.XII, 1898, p.321.
  2. These towns may have actually been captured the year before.
  3. After a few months Seville and Cordoba decided that their new ruler was too severe and returned their allegiance to Ibn Ḥūd.

assassinated and Ibn al-Aḥmar immediately set forth to take Almeria. Almeria fell in 1238, as did Malaga a few months later.

It was, however, at this time that the Christians decided to renew their efforts to complete the Reconquest. According to Ibn Khaldūn, "...At this moment, the enemy (the Christians) appeared from every direction and threw themselves on the Muslim provinces and surrounded them like a wall."<sup>1</sup> In November 1244 Arjona fell to the enemy and in August, 1245 the Christian forces under Ferdinand III laid seige to Jaén. It was obvious to Ibn al-Aḥmar that he and his followers could not resist the Christian onslaught so, with the realism that was to distinguish his whole career, he began negotiations with Ferdinand III. In March, 1246 the Christians entered Jaén: Ibn al-Aḥmar had agreed to become a vassal of Ferdinand and to pay tribute to him and in return was allowed to retreat peacefully to Granada. The agreement was to last twenty years.

Ibn al-Aḥmar began to build a new capitol in Granada. Though the following twenty years of his reign were peaceful, in 1264 he began to expand his borders. Several years before, Ibn al-Aḥmar had recognised the Ḥafṣid emir of Tunisia, Abū Zakarīyā, as caliph and now Abū Zakarīyā sent troops to reinforce the Nasrid army.

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1. Ibn Khaldun, op.cit., p.319.

The Muslims rapidly captured Jerez, Utrera, Lebrija, Murcia, and Seville. In 1265, however, Jaime I of Aragon came to the assistance of Alfonso X and retook Murcia, Seville and Medina Sidonia. At the same time the Banū Ašqīlūla, cousins of Ibn al-Aḥmar, the governors of Malaga and Guadix, rebelled and received assistance from Alfonso X in the form of 1,000 Christian knights under the command of Nuño Gonzáles.

With the help of his son, Muḥammad, Ibn al-Aḥmar signed a peace treaty with Alfonso X in which he agreed to abandon all claims to the provinces of Murcia and Jerez, to pay Alfonso 250,000 maravedis every year, and to give the Banū Ašqīlūla a year to renew their allegiance to him. In return, Alfonso promised to remove his support from the rebels; a promise he later ignored. In 1272 Ibn al-Aḥmar was able to take his revenge; he supported the rebellion of the "Ricos Hombres" of Castile, under the leadership of Nuño González, against Alfonso X. The rivalry between these two sovereigns came to an abrupt halt when, during the afternoon prayer on January 22, 1273, Ibn al-Aḥmar died. He left a country that stretched from Algeciras in the west to Vélez Rubio and Almeria in the east and to Huescar and Bedmar in the north, and which was protected by three apparently impregnable fortresses<sup>1</sup> as well as by numerous smaller ones.

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1. These were the castles of Ronda, Granada, and Gibraltar.

Ibn al-Aḥmar was succeeded by his son, Muḥammad II al-faqīh (1273-1302). He continued the war against the Banū Ašqīlūla and, with the help of the "Ricos Hombres" of Castile, managed to capture Antequera. Muḥammad II later turned against his Christian allies in order to sign a treaty with Alfonso X.<sup>1</sup> Realizing that Alfonso intended to continue supporting the Banū Ašqīlūla, in September, 1274 Muhammad II sent an embassy to the Marīnid Sultan of Morocco, Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb, inviting him to join in a jihād.<sup>2</sup> Though the Sultan accepted his invitation and crossed into Spain with a large army, it soon became apparent that the Marīnids favoured the cause of the Banū Ašqīlūla. In an attempt to lure Abū Yūsuf to his side Muḥammad II gave him the town of Ronda and its Serrania as well as the cities of Tarifa and Algeciras.

In the war against the Christians, Abū Yūsuf and Muḥammad II were so successful that the former only narrowly escaped a complete defeat: both Nuño González and Alfonso's heir, Fernando, were killed. Abū Yūsuf was forced to return to Morocco but returned to Spain in 1277 and gave his full support to the Banū Ašqīlūla in return for the city of Malaga. Muḥammad II was forced to request assistance from Aragon as well as from the emir of Tremecen. Abū

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1. Muḥammad II agreed to recognize Alfonso as his suzerain and to pay him 300,000 maravedis per year. In return, Alfonso pledged to give the Banū Ašqīlūla no more than one year to reform themselves.
  2. At the same time the Banū Ašqīlūla also sent an embassy to the Marīnids requesting assistance against the Nasrids.

Yūsuf's forces were soon defeated and he agreed to give back Ronda and Malaga in return for Muḥammad II's desertion of his Christian allies at the battle of Algeciras. But the two allies rapidly fell out and during the civil war between Alfonso X and his son, Sancho, the Marīnids and the Banū Ašqīlūla supported the former while the Nasrids backed the latter.

In 1284 Alfonso died, as did Abū Yūsuf, and al-Andalus was temporarily at peace.<sup>1</sup> In 1291 Jaime II of Aragon and Sancho IV of Castile agreed to continue the war against the Muslims<sup>2</sup> and in 1297 Sancho captured Tarifa. Muḥammad II responded by seizing much of the middle and upper Guadalquivir from Castile, including the towns of Quesada, Alcaudete, Bedmar, Arenas and Locubín. The death of Sancho and the accession of Fernando IV caused a period of great political weakness for Castile and the Nasrids promptly allies themselves with Jaime II of Aragon.

Muḥammad II died in 1301 and was succeeded by his son, Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad. In 1304 Muḥammad III agreed to become a vassal of Castile, thus offending the Marīnids' idea of "pan-Islam", and led a razzia against Aragon into the south of Valencia and in 1309 captured Ceuta. But in 1309 Castile and Aragon signed the treaty of Alcalá de Henares and a few months later Aragon agreed

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1. The new Marīnid Sultan, Abū Ya'qūb, was not interested in involving himself in the politics of al-Andalus.
  2. In medieval Spain war against the Moors was a source of political prestige.

to another treaty with the Marīnids in order to form a triple alliance against the Nasrids. Though Muḥammad III was able to avoid some of the potential danger by persuading the Marīnids to break their agreement in return for giving them Ronda and Algeciras, in the same year he lost Gibraltar to Castile and was forced to abdicate in favour of his brother, Abū al-Juyūš Naṣr.

In 1310 Naṣr signed a peace treaty with Fernando of Castile,<sup>1</sup> but this period of peace was short. In 1314 the ra'īs of Malaga, Abū Sa'd Farajj, with the help of the Marīnids, overthrew Naṣr and put Abū al-Walīd Ismā'īl I (1314-1325) on the throne. Ismā'īl was extremely successful in the continual war against the Christians and, indeed, inflicted so terrible a defeat on his enemies, killing both the heir to the throne of Castile and his younger brother, that he was able to force them to sign a peace treaty. Aragon also signed peace treaties in 1323 and 1326.

In 1325 Ismā'īl was assassinated and was followed by his young son, Muḥammad IV. In 1331 new peace treaties were signed with Castile, Aragon and the Marīnids, but Muḥammad IV's relations with the new Marīnid sultan, Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī, soon became very cordial and with Marīnid help retook Gibraltar and in 1333 forced a severe new peace treaty on Alfonso XI of Castile. In this same year Muhammad IV was assassinated and his brother, Abū al-Ḥajjāj

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1. He agreed to pay Fernando 11,000 doblas per year and to return all the towns of the upper Guadalquivir to the Christians.

Yūsuf b. Ismā'īl, began his reign with a series of setbacks. The Marīnid forces were defeated in 1340 by Alfonso XI at the battle of Tarifa and at the same time the Christians captured the towns of Alcalá la Real, Priego and Benamejí. In 1344 Algeciras<sup>1</sup> fell to Alfonso. Fortunately for the Nasrids, Alfonso died in 1350 and, perhaps also because of the great plague of 1349-1350, there followed a period (1350-1406) of relative peace. The year 1350 also marked the end of the political dependence of the Nasrid kingdom on North Africa.

In 1354 Yūsuf I was assassinated and was followed by his son, one of the greatest of the Nasrid emirs, Muḥammad V.<sup>2</sup> He began his reign unfortunately, by supporting Pedro I of Castile in his war against Pedro IV of Aragon. In revenge Pedro IV backed a group of rebels in al-Andalus who succeeded in overthrowing Muḥammad V in 1359 and in putting Ismā'īl II (1359-1360) and then Muḥammad VI "el rey bermejo" (1360-1362) on the throne. Muḥammad V fled to Fez and with the support of his old ally, Pedro I, he was able to return to al-Andalus in 1362 and on March 16th he entered Granada and retook the throne.

In 1366 Pedro I was deposed by his brother, Enrique de Trastámara and Muḥammad V, still loyal to his former ally, declared a jihād and captured El Burgo and

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1. Artillery was first used in Europe at the seige of Algeciras.

2. Muḥammad V's vizier was the famous historian, Lisān al-Dīn ibn al Kātib and the court poet was the equally illustrious Ibn Zamrak.

Iznajar. In 1370 Muḥammad V was persuaded to sign a treaty with Castile and Fez: this peace treaty was renewed in 1375, 1378 and 1379 and there followed the longest period of peace in the history of the Nasrid Kingdom.

In 1391 Muḥammad V was succeeded by his son, Abū al-Ḥajjaj Yūsuf II (1391-1392). He ruled for less than a year and was followed, in turn, by Muḥammad VII (1392-1408). Muḥammad VII's reign marked the beginning of a period of total isolation from the rest of the Muslim world.<sup>1</sup> Throughout his reign both the Muslims and the Christians carried out continuous raids on each other until Enrique III of Castile became so annoyed by the former's behavior that he began to prepare for a full-fledged war. In December, 1406 Enrique died and the Castilians limited themselves to occasional raids into Muslim territories. Between January and August, 1407 the Christians captured the castles of Pruna, Zahara, Ayamonte, Priego, Cañete la Real, Torre Alhaquime, las Cuevas and Ortejicas. Muḥammad VII, in return, laid seige to Jaen and Alcaudete but died before these cities could be defeated. His brother, Yūsuf III (1408-1417), immediately retook Priego and then settled down to two years of peace. But in 1410 Fernando of Castile laid seige to Antequera and inflicted a crushing defeat on the Muslims, who were forced to sign a peace treaty that lasted until 1428.

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1. The Nasrid's last Muslim ally, the Marīnids, were virtually powerless for many years before their final defeat in 1465.

Yūsuf III died in 1417 and was succeeded by his son, Muḥammad VIII, a child of eight. Two years later the powerful family of the Banū Sarrāj (los Albencerrajes) rebelled and placed Muḥammad IX on the throne, thus beginning a period of intense political turmoil. During the next seventy years there were fourteen different emirs, many of whom served more than once.

In 1427 Muḥammad VIII retook the throne but in 1429 Muḥammad IX returned from North Africa and with Castilian aid once again overthrew his rival. He then immediately turned against his Christian allies and joined Alfonso V of Aragon in his war with Castile. In January, 1431 Muḥammad IX's authority was once again challenged when Yūsuf IV was proclaimed emir in every town but Ronda and Malaga. The Castilians decided to take advantage of the confused internal situation of al-Andalus and invaded the plains north of Granada. On the first of July, at the battle of La Higuera, the Christians won their greatest victory since Las Navas de Tolosa. For some reason they did not take advantage of this victory and, with the assassination of Yūsuf IV in April, 1432, Muḥammad IX was able to regain control of al-Andalus. There followed a period of constant raiding and though there were victories on both sides, the Christians were particularly successful in the east, capturing Vélez Blanco, Vélez Rubio, Baza, Guadix, Galera, Castelléjar, and Albox. Because of the internal weakness of Castile, the Christians were forced to sign a peace treaty in 1439 which was renewed in 1442 and 1443. War began again in 1445 when Alvaro de Luna

gained control in Castile. In the same year Muḥammad IX was once again overthrown, this time by his nephew, Muḥammad X. At the same time Yūsuf V, who had been living at the Castilian court, renewed his claim to the throne and received the support of the Banū Sarrāj. Yūsuf V had succeeded in capturing the Alhambra when, in 1446, the Banū Sarrāj gave their support to Muḥammad X. In 1447 there was yet another change of state and Muḥammad IX returned.

The border skirmishes continued but now the Muslims were more successful than their adversaries. But in 1450 there was a rebellion in Malaga led by the former Yūsuf V, and Muḥammad IX was forced to sign a peace treaty with Juan II. Muḥammad IX died in 1453 and was succeeded by the son of Muḥammad VIII, Muḥammad XI, but in the following year the Banū Sarrāj proclaimed Saʿd, emir. In March, 1455 the Castilians, under Enrique IV, began a new campaign against the Muslims and they were forced to accept Saʿd as emir so as to be able to fight the Christian threat. The next seven years were a period of intermittent war, and peace treaties that were badly kept, culminating in 1462 in the loss of Gibraltar to the Christians. Peace treaties were signed in 1463 and 1464 and the situation remained relatively peaceful until the final Reconquest twenty years later.

In September, 1462 the Banū Sarrāj put Yūsuf V on the throne but three months later Saʿd regained control. Saʿd was again deposed two years later, this time by his son, Abū al-Ḥasan, who now had the support of the Banū Sarrāj.

The new emir immediately turned against his allies who then tried to replace him with his brother, Muhammad ibn Sa'd al-zaghal. Abū al-Ḥasan succeeded in putting down this rebellion, and for the next eighteen years ruled over a peaceful country. This peace, however, was due to the civil war in Castile which ended with the accession of Isabel I in 1480.

The Christian chronicles claim that the final phase of the Reconquest was provoked by the Nasrid's seizure of the castle of Zahara in December, 1481. The Muslim historians, on the other hand, say that the Christian assault on Alhama in February, 1482 was the first battle of the war. No matter who began the war, the Christians clearly had the advantage: for the first time Christian Spain was united, under Ferdinand and Isabel, while al-Andalus was once again torn by internal strife. In 1482 the Banū Sarrāj again rebelled and replaced Abu al-Hasan with his son Muhammad XII, "Boabdil". In April, 1483 Boabdil was captured by the Christians and his father regained the throne.

In 1484 Ferdinand and Isabel began to concentrate their efforts towards the Reconquest and during that year the towns of Álora, Alozaina and Setenil were captured. On May 22, 1485 Ronda fell and eighty neighbouring fortresses were so horrified by the defeat of what had always been thought of as an invincible castle, that they surrendered without battle. Later that year Abū al-Ḥasan died and his brother Muhammad al-Zaghal was proclaimed emir. In 1484 Boabdil regained the throne and became the last of the Nasrid Kings. In April, 1491 the forces of the Christian Kings laid seige to Granada and on the sixth of January, 1492, the Christian forces entered the city.

CHAPTER III

PRE-NASRID POTTERY OF MUSLIM SPAIN

The study of Muslim Spain has been much neglected by Western scholars, and its art even more so than its history or literature. The study of ceramics has been left virtually untouched: only the most elementary work has yet been done, and we are still immensely ignorant about the origins and development of the art of alfararería.<sup>1</sup>

The history of Hispano-Muslim ceramics can perhaps best be dealt with by dividing it into four periods:

1. Ceramics made from and during the time of the Muslim invasion and political dependency on the East (711 to 912 A.D.).
2. Ceramics made during the Caliphate of Cordoba (912 to 1010/1031 A.D.).
3. Ceramics made during the Kingdoms of "Taifas" and the North African dynasties (1010 to 1091/1223 A.D.).
4. Ceramics made under the Nasrid dynasty (1232 to 1492 A.D.).

The first period can be covered very rapidly, for absolutely nothing is known about the pottery that was made

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1. Spanish, for "the art of ceramics".

in al-Andalus from 711 to 912. Though it is safe to assume that there was pottery being made during these first two centuries of Muslim rule, since people have always needed pottery for eating and drinking and as storage vessels, nothing has yet been found and identified as belonging to this period. It would seem likely that this pottery must have been either unglazed or monochrome green, brown or yellow and so similar to either the earlier Visigothic or later Hispano-Muslim ceramics as to be indistinguishable from them.<sup>1</sup>

The ceramics of the second stage, the caliphate of Cordoba (912 to 1010/1031), are much better known than those of the first period because of the excavations at Madīna al-Zahrā<sup>2</sup> and Medina Elvira. Madīna al-Zahrā' was the great palace city begun on the nineteenth of November,

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1. A real difficulty is that there has never been an excavation of a site from this period: several years ago, during the restorations of the oldest part of the Great Mosque of Cordoba, a pit filled with pottery shards was discovered but because of internecine quarrels among government officials, no one has ever been allowed to study these fragments.
  2. See: R. Castejon, "Las Excavaciones de Madinat al-Zahra en Cordoba", Atti del III Congresso di Studi Arabi e Islamici (Naples, 1967), pp.257-265; R. Castejon, Excavaciones del Plan Nacional en Medina Azahara (Cordoba). Campana de 1943 (Madrid, 1945); R. Castejon, Medina Azahara (Editorial Everest, n.d.); R. Castejon, "Medina az-Zahra; Trabajos en el Año 1926", Anales de la Comision Provincial de Monumentos Historicos y Artisticos de Cordoba (Cordoba, 1926), pp.48-53; R. Jiménez Amigo, Excavaciones en Medina az-Zahra (Madrid, 1925-1926); B. Pavón Maldonado, "La Formación del Arte Hispanomusulmán. Hacia un Corpus de la Ornamentación del Caliphato de Córdoba", Al-Andalus, Vol.XXXVIII (1972), pp.195-242; B. Pavón Maldonado, "La Loza Doméstica de Madinat al-Zahra", Al-Andalus, Vol.XXXVII (1971), pp. 191-227; B. Pavón Maldonado, Memoria de la Excavacion

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936 by 'Abd al-Rahmān III al-Naṣir li dīn Allah. According to the historian, al-Makkarī, ten thousand men and fifteen hundred mules and donkeys were employed during the construction of Madīna al-Zahrā', which cost three hundred thousand dinars every year for twenty-five years.<sup>1</sup> White marble was brought from Almeria, pink and green marble from North Africa, and engraved vessels from Byzantium and Syria. The roof tiles were covered with gold and silver and there was a fountain of pure mercury. This splendid palace complex, which was never completed, was burned to the ground during the great Berber uprising in 1010 A.D.. Medina Elvira, though not so magnificent a site as Madīna al-Zahrā', was an important city, the capitol of the kūra of Elvira,<sup>2</sup> and, like Madīna al-Zahrā', was destroyed by the Berbers in 1010.

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Footnote 2 continued from previous page:

de la Mezquita de Medinat al-Zahra (Madrid, n.d.); B. Pavon Maldonado, "Notas sobre la Ceramica Hispanomusulmana", Al-Andalus, Vol. XXXII (1967), pp. 415-37; L. Seco de Luceno, "Las Ruinas de Medina az-Zahra", Faenza, Vol. II (1923), pp. 9-15; R. Velázquez Bosco, Medina Azzahra y Alamiriya (Madrid, 1912).

1. al-Makkarī, Nafh al-Tīb, ed. Muhyy al-Din 'Abd al-Hamid (Cairo, 1949), p. 167.
2. After the destruction of Medina Elvira (also known as Granada la Vieja) the capitol was moved to the present day Granada.

It was at Medina Elvira that in 1875 Don Manuel Gómez-Moreno, the elder, picked up some pieces of the type of pottery now known as "Elvira". It is this pottery that is not only the best known but also the most interesting of the varieties of ceramics made during the Caliphate. It was clearly the luxury ware of the tenth and eleventh centuries and many other more humble varieties of ceramics have also been found at Madīna al-Zahrā' and Medina Elvira. It would, perhaps, be simplest and clearest to list all the different types of pottery that have been excavated at these two sites.

The largest category is, naturally, the domestic unglazed and monochrome-glazed wares: all of these wares are made from a very thickly potted (between 0.5 and 1.5 centimeters) red clay, formed into plain, un-Islamic shapes. This category of pottery may be divided into the following types:

- 1) Unglazed and undecorated vessels.
- 2) Unglazed vessels with very coarse decorations in relief, incised, stamped, carved and moulded
- 3) Unglazed vessels with decorations painted in black and/or white slip on the exterior.
- 4) Unglazed vessels with coarse decorations painted in white slip directly on the biscuit.
- 5) Vessels with monochrome brown, green or yellow glaze on both the interior and exterior.

- 6) Vessels with dark yellow glaze on the interior and a green or black slip covered with a transparent glaze on the exterior.
- 7) Vessels with decorations painted directly on the biscuit, leaving large areas uncovered, in enamel-like glazes in black, dark green, yellow and white and often outlined in black and covered with a transparent glaze.<sup>1</sup>

Besides these very coarsely potted vessels, there have also been found three varieties of pottery with very finely potted red earthenware bodies. These are:

- 1) Unglazed and undecorated vessels with extremely finely potted bodies.
- 2) Vessels with the interior covered with bright yellow slip (antimony oxide) and decorations in green and sepia beneath a transparent glaze, and the reverse unglazed.<sup>2</sup>
- 3) "Elvira" pottery: vessels with a transparent glaze over a white slip with decorations (often floriated kufic) in black, turquoise and green, and outlined in black and with the reverse of the vessel covered with transparent dark yellow glaze.<sup>3</sup>

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1. The only difference between the decoration on this type of pottery and that on the "Elvira" variety is the presence of a white slip on the latter. It is this type that probably led to the style known as cuerva seca.
  2. This variety is extremely rare.
  3. The color is due to iron impurities in the glaze.

The other important category of pottery that has been found at Medina Elvira and Madīna al-Zahrā' consists of very finely potted vessels, between two and three millimeters in thickness, with a white earthenware body. This category includes the following types:

- 1) Unglazed and undecorated vessels.
- 2) Unglazed vessels with decorations in turquoise outlined with black.
- 3) Vessels with white glaze on the exterior and white or dark yellow glaze on the interior or reverse.
- 4) Vessels with decorations in turquoise in black on white glaze.

The fourth category of pottery that has been found at Medina Elvira, Madīna al-Zahrā', Medinaceli and Bobastro consists of lusterware. Though most scholars believe that all the luster fragments from this very early period were imported from Mesopotamia,<sup>1</sup> there are also a few, notably Gómez-Moreno, who think that some of the luster shards, because of their very heavy potting and sandy material, are of a local Spanish manufacture.<sup>2</sup> Though there is no definite proof of a native production

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1. According to Ettinghausen, many of the well-known pieces of luster, such as the one with a camel carrying a maḥmal, definitely come from Iraq. He also points out that several of the terms used in Spanish for pottery are derived from Iraqi Arabic, i.e.: "Alcaraza" from al-kurāz. See: Ettinghausen, "Notes on the Lustreware of Spain", Ars Orientalis, Vol.I (1954), pp.133-134.
  2. See: M. Gómez-Moreno, "La Loza Primitiva de Malaga", Al-Andalus, Vol.V (1940), p.385 and R. Velázquez Bosco, op.cit., p.71.

of lusterware in Spain until the thirteenth century, there is a document in the Real Academia de la Historia of Madrid, written in 1066 by Abuchar Ahmed ben Mohamed Mogueits of Toledo, that mentions the local production of "escudillas doradas" (golden bowls).<sup>1</sup> There is another document of the eleventh century by Abū al-Walīd ibn Janāh, a doctor of Cordoba, that says of lusterware: "...It is not made by the Arab potters of Spain but among those of the East. I have seen it, it is true, in this country but among the Eastern potters."<sup>2</sup> Despite these two documents it is, however, still extremely doubtful if lustreware was being produced in Spain before the fall of the caliphate.

"Elvira" ware is certainly the most interesting of all the types of pottery that have so far been mentioned and deserves a closer examination. The pieces of "Elvira" ware that have survived are almost all either very large (up to forty centimeters in diameter), very concave bowls without footrings or else bottles with long thin necks of a rather Persian type. All the vessels are covered with either a white slip<sup>3</sup> or else with a lead glaze mixed

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1. J. Pijoan, "New Data on Hispano-Moresque Ceramics", Burlington Magazine, Vol.XLIII, No.CCXLV (August, 1923), p.79.
  2. Gómez-Moreno, op.cit., p.385: "...No es usada entre los alfareros arábes de Espana, sino entre los del Oriente. Yo lo he visto, en verdad, en este pais, pero entre los alfareros orientales."
  3. Ibid., p.387. This white slip was extremely difficult to make since there is a high iron content in all Spanish clays.

with tin oxide or silicious sand and common salt.<sup>1</sup> The decorations were painted in enamel-like glazes: black and brown from iron oxide and manganese, turquoise blue from copper oxide mixed with an alkali, and yellow from antimony sulphate.

The decorations are usually isolated motifs with bands of ornaments around the edge and center of the bowls, leaving exposed a great deal of white background. The central designs are often quite complex, naturalistic figures of plants, rabbits, horses, gazelles, birds, and human beings. Though these designs exhibit a strong Eastern influence, an equally strong Hispano-Visigothic element is also present. It has been suggested that a Byzantine influence is discernable as well,<sup>2</sup> though it is, perhaps, a Byzantine element that has been transmitted through Visigothic art. The central designs sometimes consist of a word written in floriated kufic.<sup>3</sup> On these plates, the decoration is always painted in turquoise blue and outlined in black. On the vessels with animal and vegetal motifs, yellow, green and brown are also used. The bands of decoration that go around the edges and the central well of the bowl usually consist of a vegetal motif, often very Visigothic, or of kufic or even cursive

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1. Gómez-Moreno, op.cit., p.387.

2. M. Gómez-Moreno, Ars Hispaniae III: El Arte Arabe Espanol hasta los Almohades, Arte Mozarabe (Madrid, 1951), p.310.

3. The most common word is al-mulk (or al-mulk lillah), the standard of the Umayyad dynasty in Spain.

Arabic or of a series of heart-like shapes alternately black and turquoise.

"Elvira" pottery seems to have died along with Medina Elvira and Madīna al-Zahrā' but it and another very similar type of ceramic (see page 30) may have led to the development of "cuerda seca" pottery, the most important contribution of Spanish potters to their craft.

Nothing is known of the pottery of the time of Reyes de Taifas but it would seem safe to assume that it was merely a continuation of the more common varieties from the time of the Caliphate. The pottery of the North African dynasties, the Almoravids and the Almohads, is almost equally unknown: Torres Balbás, for example, believes that the art of the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries is the most unstudied and mysterious art of the whole history of Muslim Spain.<sup>1</sup> Virtually all the known pieces of pottery from these three centuries come from only two sites, one of which is not even in Spain: the Alcazaba of Malaga and the Qal'a of the Banū Hammād<sup>2</sup> in North Africa. Most of the fragments are, naturally, of unglazed pottery which continued to be molded appliquéd, stamped, incised and carved. Though very few pieces have survived intact, the shapes appear to have

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1. Ars Hispaniae IV: Arte Almohade, Arte Nazari, Arte Mudejar (Madrid, 1949), p.62.

2. See: L. Golvin, Recherches Archeologiques à la Qal'a des Banu Hammad (Paris, 1965).

continued almost unchanged from the time of the Caliphate: jugs and pitchers with two modest "rabbit-eared" (or "winged") handles, large storage jars and large, shallow bowls. Cuerda seca and slip-painted wares are the two other types of pottery known from this period.

Cuerda seca is a term that can strictly only be applied to that pottery on which different colored glazes are separated and kept from running into each other by lines of manganese oxide mixed with a grease which was often linseed oil.<sup>1</sup> The design was first drawn directly onto the plain biscuit of an already fired vessel in the manganese and grease mixture. The colors were then filled in between the lines and the vessel was once again fired. The colours were made from a combination of oxides and a lead glaze made of ten parts of lead glaze, ten parts of silicious sand and three parts of regular sand.<sup>2</sup> After the second firing, the glazes remain in their separate compartments in slight relief, contained by the now dull black line of manganese and grease. Unlike the early prototypes that were found at Madīna al-Zahrā', cuerda seca from the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries is usually entirely covered with glaze.<sup>3</sup> A few pieces,

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1. Though the term cuerda seca is often applied to any pottery with decorations outlined in black, technically, the black lines must actually repel the glazes for the pottery to be truly cuerda seca.
  2. González Martí, Cerámica Española (Barcelona, 1933), p.52.
  3. Some Spanish scholars even insist upon calling those pieces of pottery that are not entirely covered with glaze by a different name: verdugones.

such as the famous storage jar found in the Alcazaba in Malaga have designs of birds and lions. Others have floral decorations or bands of geometric designs or kufic lettering. The shapes are always very simple: shallow bowls, storage jars, and, most frequently, jars with two large "rabbit-eared" handles.

Besides unglazed, slip-painted and cuerda seca pottery, a few fragments of lusterware have been found: these may or may not have been made in Spain. By the time of the Almohads there is slightly better evidence for the native production of lusterware. The geographer, al-Idrīsi, writing in 1147-1148, states that gilded bowls<sup>1</sup> were manufactured in the town of Calatayud. All of the pieces that have been found are of a very finely potted red clay and can be divided into two varieties: one type consists of purplish luster on a background of a white slip, covered with a transparent glaze; the other type is the more usual tin-glazed variety.<sup>2</sup> In both varieties a white slip covers the exterior and interior though the former is never decorated (unlike Nasrid lusterware). There are also a few fragments of molded and stamped vessels with luster and sgraffiato decorations. The designs on the first variety of lusterware are usually simple floral arabesques or bands of sgraffiato patterns or kufic lettering,

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1. al-Idrīsi, Description de l'Afrique et de l'Espagne, ed. Dozy and de Goeje (Leiden, 1866), p. 189. الفنار المذهب.

2. Gómez-Moreno, "La Loza", op.cit., pp. 387-88.

especially the words al-yumn and sa<sup>c</sup>d, or words, especially al-baraka, in among arabesques. On the other variety of lusterware, the luster is a bright yellowish green. All the known fragments appear to be pieces from large dishes with the most common designs being the word al-yumn, bands of sgraffiato decorations and bands with knotted designs. Included in this category of tin-glazed yellowish-green lusterware are the few pieces of molded relief ware that have been found as well as the luster plates that have been discovered in the walls of churches in Pisa and Ravenna.<sup>1</sup>

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1. See: M. Gómez-Moreno, "La Loza", op.cit., p.394.

CHAPTER IVNASRID POTTERY: UNGLAZED, SLIP-PAINTED  
AND MONOCHROME-GLAZED WARES

While most of Nasrid culture, whether art, architecture or literature, represents a complete break from its immediate North African predecessor, the more humble ceramic wares do show continuity and the gradual development of forms and motifs. It is in the unglazed, slip-painted and monochrome-glazed wares that, at the beginning, North African and, at the end, Christian influences are most obvious. If one wishes to study the origins and development of the shapes and decorations of the luxury ceramics, such as lusterware, one must go first to this humbler form of pottery.

Unglazed Nasrid pottery may be divided into two main categories: well-heads and large storage jars, known as tinajas, and small, moulded vessels covered with a fine white slip. Both the well-heads and the tinajas are made of a very heavily potted (up to eight centimeters) coarse clay that ranges in colour from yellow to a dark reddish brown. The well-heads show no change in shape from their earlier Almoravid-Almohad round, hexagonal and octagonal counterparts (Plate I) but their decorative motifs do continue to develop as do those on the tinajas. These tinajas are characterised by large ovoid bodies, flaring trumpet necks and broad, "wing" handles, and range from 1 to 1.5 meters in height (Plate II). Though this



PLATE I: Unglazed well-head with stamped and incised decorations.  
Granada - Museo de la Alhambra

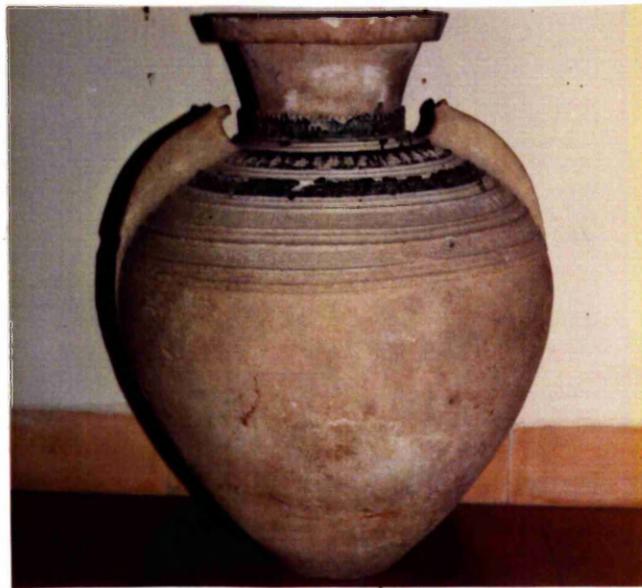


PLATE II: Unglazed tinaja with stamped, sprigged and glazed decorations.  
Granada - Museo de la Alhambra

basic shape is to be found among the pottery of the North African dynasties, the disproportion between the size of the neck and the body becomes more and more accentuated under the Nasrids.

The unglazed clay surface of these objects was decorated while leather-hard with designs impressed with clay or wooden stamps or with incised or sprigged decorations. These ornaments are arranged in horizontal bands of different widths, encircling either the entire body of the tinaja or well-head or, in the case of the former, only the collar and the shoulder (Plate III). The motifs most often seen are: giraffes, monkeys, dogs, peacocks, kufic lettering, palmettes, chevrons, arabesques, geometric designs such as stars, stylized floral and diaper patterns, arcading, and large fig and vine leaves (Plate I and IV). Though these well-heads and tinajas were usually left totally unglazed, occasionally a green glaze was applied over the bands of decorations. This glaze did not spread evenly and if it was not applied carefully, it was apt to run into the indented spaces and leave the raised points uncovered (Plate III). The differences between the Nasrid and the North African forms of decoration on these types of vessels are most evident in the kufic lettering. Floriated and knotted kufic disappears and the letters become looser, often descending to pseudo-Arabic. A few new motifs, such as the stylized leaf pattern in Plate IV, are introduced from lusterware and some, such as the large, rather messy, incised fig and vine leaves, from the Christian world.

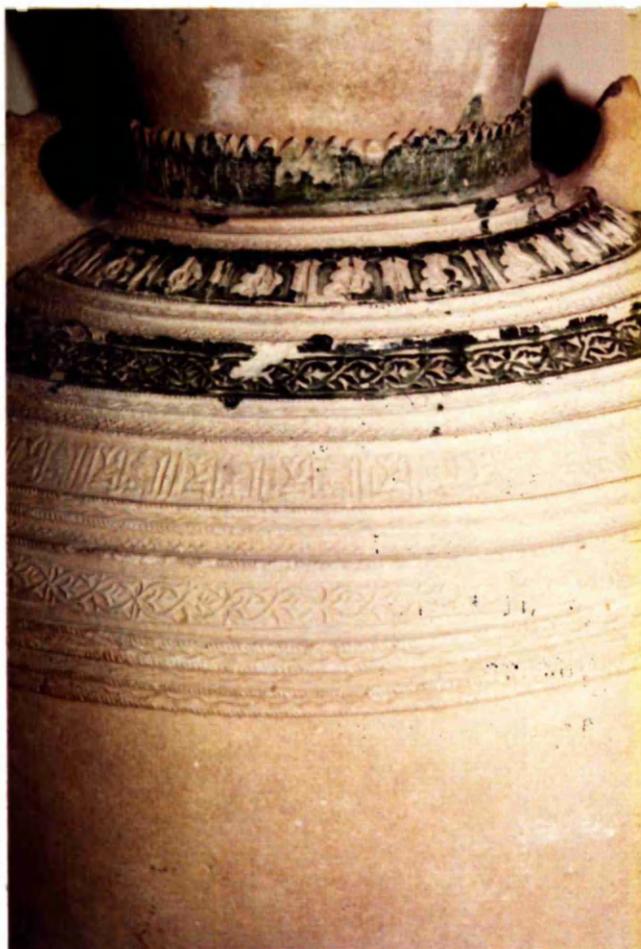


PLATE III: Detail of Plate II.



PLATE IV: Stamped decoration on an unglazed tinaja.  
Granada - Museo de la Alhambra.

Like unglazed pottery throughout the world, it is extremely difficult to date these well-heads and tinajas: at the moment all that can be said is that the more inexact the lettering and the more frequent the appearance of fig and vine leaves, the later the object is. Because there are very few towns in Andalusia that have good clay and even fewer that are likely to have had very large kilns, it is possible to suggest several likely centers for the production of these vessels. An Egyptian visitor to Granada in 1465 mentions that a very red clay, called "inyibar", was mined at the foot of one of the hills of the Alhambra and that the water vessels made from this clay were famous for their excellence.<sup>1</sup> Another Egyptian traveller, Ahmad ibn Yahyā al-Umarī, states that there were large ceramic factories in Andarax and that because of the very high quality of its clay, the cooking utensils this town produced were unequalled in the whole world.<sup>2</sup> This statement was repeated by al-Qalqaṣandī, who also added the towns of Arjona, Antequera and Berja as pottery centers.<sup>3</sup>

Though there were undoubtedly many other unglazed objects being made throughout the Nasrid period, these are, at the moment, indistinguishable from ones made centuries

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1. Torres Balbás, op.cit., p.210. Andalusians still believe that water tastes better in vessels from certain towns: Guadix is particularly famous.
  2. Ibid. This clay is yellow in color.
  3. Ibid.

earlier or, indeed, from ones still being produced. The only exception to this is a very unusual group of vessels, almost all of which have been found in Malaga. These are small, moulded vessels all with a very fine red body that is exceptionally thinly potted (approximately two millimeters) and covered with an equally fine white slip (Plate V). These vessels have no precedent in Hispano-Muslim ceramics: they appear suddenly and disappear equally suddenly. They have been dated by the José Temboury as being anywhere from the fourteenth to seventeenth century. It would, however, seem likely that the former is a more accurate date than the latter for one moulded bowl has survived that is decorated in a purely Nasrid manner in blue, purple and white. It would also seem logical to assume that since all these vessels were found in Malaga they were made there and it is known that <sup>pottery</sup> manufacture had almost died out in Malaga by the middle of the fifteenth century and that the potters had moved to Manises. It seems most improbable that the few potters who remained in Malaga would have been capable of producing such fine work. Temboury may have suggested the very late date of the seventeenth century simply because of a still-life by Zurburán which shows several examples of this type of ware which were probably curiosities even then.<sup>1</sup>

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1. See: Martín Soria, The Paintings of Zurburán (London, 1955), p.150, figure 47.

Slip-painted wares appear to have gone out of fashion under the Nasrids and there are very few pieces that may be assigned with any certainty to this era. These vessels are of a finely potted buff earthenware and are all of the typical Nasrid vase shape (Figures I,II) that is more usually to be found decorated in cuerva seca or verdugones.<sup>1</sup> These vases are decorated with a dull black manganese slip which occasionally has additional decorations incised through it. The motifs that are most commonly found are chevrons, pseudo-Arabic lettering and checker-board patterns (Plate VI).

Torres Balbás has suggested that this type of pottery also may have been made in Andarax<sup>2</sup> or in Almeria or Guadix.<sup>3</sup> It is, in any case, quite rare; perhaps not just because slip-painted ware was unfashionable but also because it was too finely potted for domestic use yet its decoration too simple for luxury ware.

Monochrome-glazed wares form the bulk of Nasrid domestic pottery and may be divided into two principle categories: domestic utensils and wall tiles. The domestic utensils, oil lamps, candlesticks, pitchers, bowls and plates, are all quite heavily potted of a coarse reddish clay. The majority have simply been dipped into a monochrome green, caramel brown or occasionally turquoise

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1. See Chapter V.

2. Op.cit., p.210.

3. "Cerámica Doméstica de la Alhambra", Al-Andalus, Vol.2,(1934), p.388.



Plate V: Moulded vessels covered in a white slip.  
Malaga - Museo de la Alcazaba.

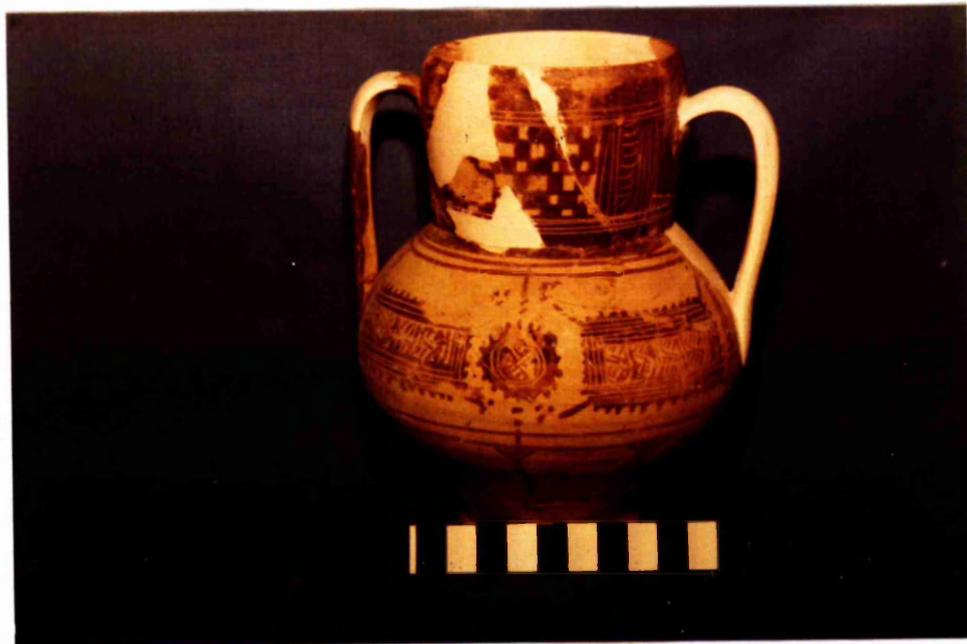


Plate VI: Slip-painted vase.  
Granada - Museo de la Alhambra, #463.

blue glaze, though there are some bowls and basins, usually with the exterior unglazed, with decorations painted in black under the glaze and one unique bowl with incised half palmettes under a green glaze (Plate VII). Though the differences between Nasrid and Almoravid-Almohad monochrome-glazed wares is more obvious in the more ornate examples, even in the unadorned pieces there are important changes in shape, as well as the use of green glaze for the first time.

Unlike their predecessors, Nasrid oil lamps almost never consist of a simple cup with a small ring handle but rather, have quite long stems and large handles curving from the cup to the base (Figure VI). Candlesticks appear for the first time under the Nasrids and the few that have survived would seem to be direct copies of Mamluk metalwork prototypes (Figure VII). In both pitchers, bowls and dishes, the characteristic Nasrid footring of a narrow ring of clay set at an angle to the vessel appears as do bowls with straight walls and either "perpendicular" or flattened rims (Figures IV, V).

It is in the vessels with decorations painted in black under the glaze that the Christian presence is most obvious. Though some dishes and bowls are simply decorated with stars or circles or wavy lines, others have birds or men (Plate VIII) or musicians (Plate IX) that are very un-Muslim in character. The shapes of these vessels are also more Christian than Muslim: deep bowls and basins with convex sides and with inverted or flattened rims or even no rims at all. Both this and all other



Plate VII: Monochrome green bowl with incised decoration.  
Malaga - Museo de la Alcazaba



Plate VIII: Monochrome turquoise basin with underglaze  
painted decoration.  
Granada - Museo de la Alhambra # 132

varieties of monochrome-glazed wares are found in such quantities at every site in southern Spain that it would seem reasonable to assume that they were produced in many different locations..

Despite the existence of a few spectacular pieces of lusterware such as the Alhambra vase, it is arguable that Nasrid pottery reached its height with the panels of tiles and tile mosaics that covered the walls of almost every room in palaces, houses, mosques and even baths. These panels are the only aspect of Hispano-Muslim ceramics which can compare favorably with, and perhaps even excel their Near Eastern counterparts.

These panels, or alicatados, are formed either with tiles (azulejos) or tile mosaics known as alicerés, or with a combination of the two. Alicerés may be defined as small tiles cut from larger monochrome-glazed pieces which form part of a composite design. Azulejos, on the other hand, are single tiles decorated with designs of their own. The alicerés were shaped as stars, squares, rectangles, irregular polygons, and other geometrical figures with straight or curving edges (Plates X and XI). These were juxtaposed, face downwards, on a pattern and plastered together to form panels which were then set in walls or floors. The earliest known examples of alicerés, a panel in the Torre de las Damas in the Portal of the Alhambra, consists of a relatively simple geometric design of white stars surrounded by interlacing green and black bands. These patterns soon developed into much more



Plate IX: Monochrome white glazed bowl with underglaze painted decoration.  
Granada - Museo de la Alhambra #3.813



PLATE X: Panel of aliceres.  
Granada - Museo de la Alhambra

intricate forms and elaborate colouring.<sup>1</sup>

Cutting glazed tiles so that they fit together perfectly is obviously a very slow and pain-staking process. To expedite matters, the Andalusian potters began cutting pieces from slabs of soft clay with a brass pattern. This process was simplified still further by pressing iron moulds into the unfired clay which would cut out the entire pattern.<sup>2</sup> This method was still quite complex since the tiles could expand or contract in firing and it was eventually simplified to standardised polygonal tiles surrounded by equally standardised interlaced ceramic strips.

By the fifteenth century even this process was too complicated for the Andalusian potters and they began to imitate the panels of alicerés with azulejos made of cuerda seca.<sup>3</sup> A yet simpler technique, the cuenca style, was soon developed (Plate XII): a stamp was pressed into the unfired clay, leaving a pattern with high ridges that imitated the lines of the cut out bands of the alicerés.

The custom of covering the walls of rooms with glazed tiles appears to have begun after the invasion of the Almohads and to have reached perfection by the time of Yūsuf I (1333-1354), but since even the earliest examples are flawless, there must have been prototypes that have not survived. Henri Terrasse believes that the origin of this art is to be found in Persia but gives

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1. The mathematics of these tiles have been studied by Bronkowski in his book, The Ascent of Man (New York, 1974).

2. See: A Frothingham, Lustreware of Spain (New York, 1951) p.4.

3. See Chapter V.

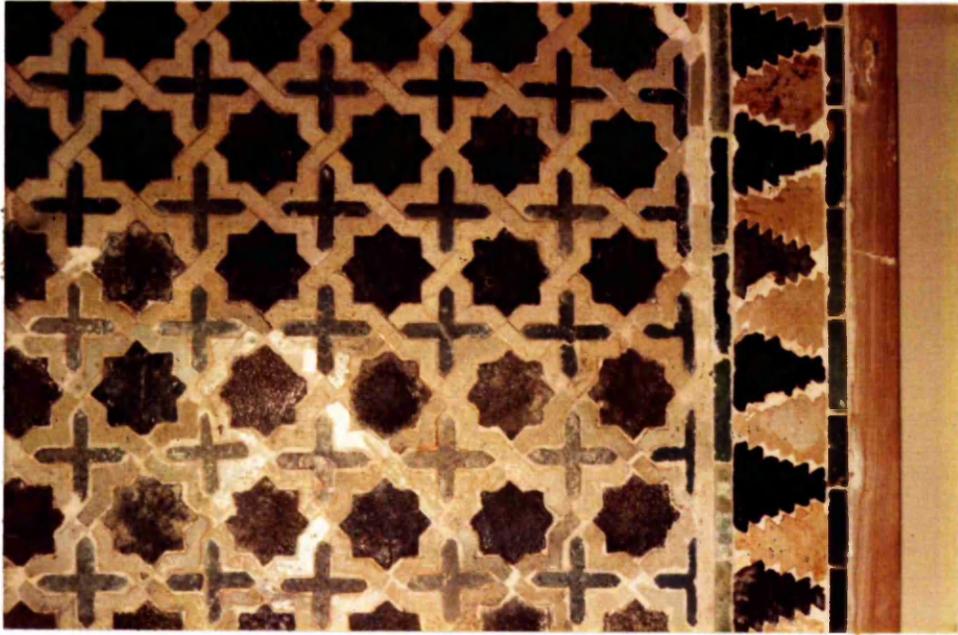


PLATE XI: Panel of aliceres.  
Granada - Museo de la Alhambra

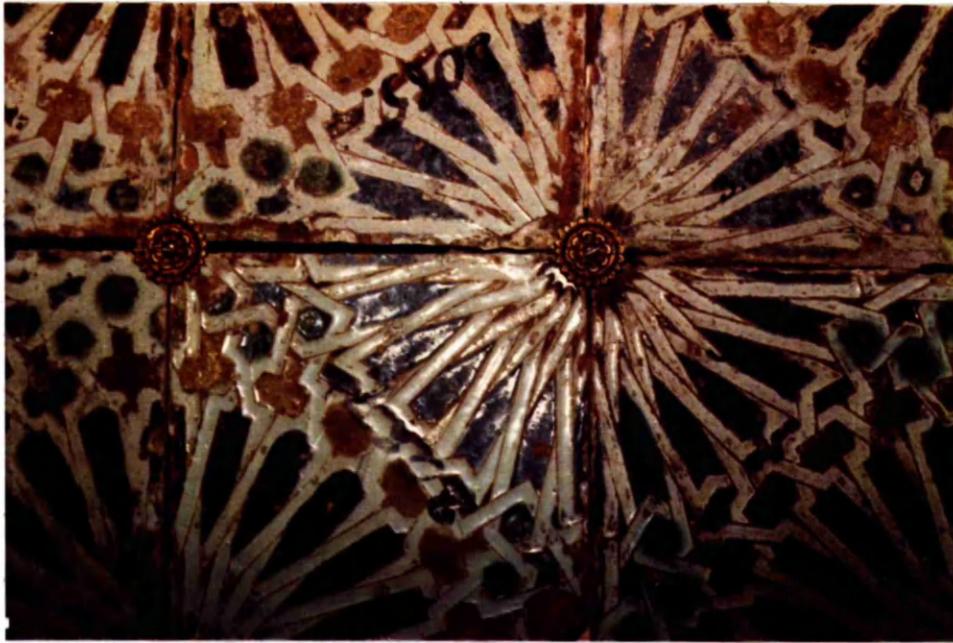


PLATE XII: Panel of azulejos in the cuenca technique.  
Granada - Museo de la Alhambra

as his reason the fact that the technique was not known in contemporary Egypt and Syria.<sup>1</sup> This fact is incorrect and it seems more likely that the prototype for the alicerés is to be found in the plaques of stone inset with red brick that have been excavated at Madīna al-Zahrā.

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1. See: "Persian Influence on the Ceramic Arts of North Africa and Spain", Proceedings of the Second International Congress on Persian Art, (1931), p.20.

CHAPTER VNASRID POTTERY: CUERDA SECA AND VERDUGONES WARE

Cuerda seca pottery underwent major changes during the Nasrid period: all except one of the traditional shapes for vessels disappeared and the technique itself became so different that many scholars believe that it belongs to a completely separate category of ceramics. It was also under the Nasrids that cuerda seca wall and floor tiles were first produced.

During the North African dynasties cuerda seca pottery appears to have been the luxury ware and was used for almost all objects: bowls, plates, small storage jars and vases. The Nasrid potters discarded all of these shapes except for the vase, to which they occasionally added a small lid (Plate XVI). All of the extant examples are remarkably similar: they have very thinly potted bodies of a fine, porous white earthenware, ranging from twenty to twenty-five centimeters in height. All have small, ovoid bodies with disproportionately large, vase-like necks which are slightly inverted at the mouth (Plates XIII, XIV, XV). The bodies stand on a high foot with a flaring rim, and have large, "rabbit-ear" handles. All these vases are decorated with green and purplish black glazes that are so thickly applied that they often appear to stand out in relief. These glazes are sometimes contained by the traditional "cuerda seca" but are more frequently simply outlined in dull black, with the glazes



PLATE XIII: Vase decorated in verdugones  
Granada - Museo de la Alhambra, # 111.

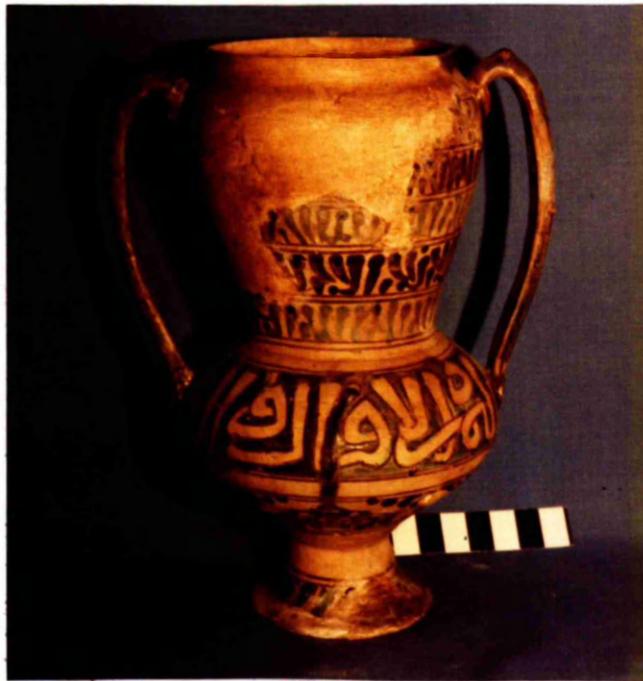


PLATE XIV: Detail of Plate XIII.

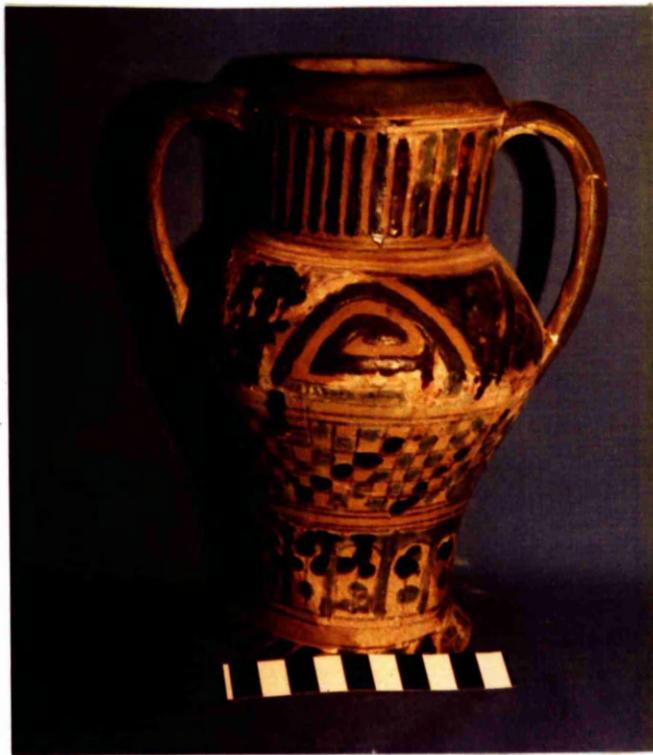


PLATE XV: Vase decorated in verdugones.  
Granada - Museo de la Alhambra, # 2.818.

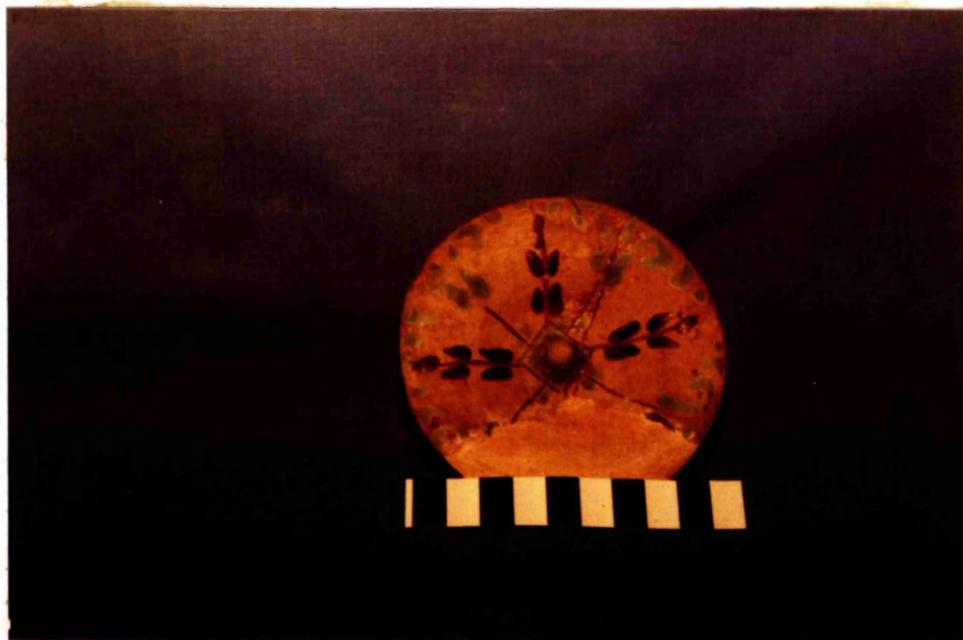


PLATE XVI: Lid to a vase, decorated in verdugones.  
Granada - Museo de la Alhambra, # 118 (4657).

allowed to expand and run at will, and leaving large areas of the biscuit uncovered (Plates XIII, XV). It is this technique that some scholars believe should be distinguished from cuerda seca, and refer to it as verdugones or "welts".<sup>1</sup> Though it is indeed different from the more traditional forms of cuerda seca, it was perhaps simply a variety developed in order to make possible the decoration of the nearly vertical surfaces of a vase. The number of decorative motifs is limited and the most common are messily drawn palmettes, checkerboard patterns (Plate XV), arcades (Plate XV), floral patterns (Plate XV), pseudo Arabic (Plates XIII, XIV) and inscriptions in cursive Arabic script (Plates XIII and XIV).

These vases present the student with many problems: their origins, purpose, place of manufacture and even date are unknown. Torres Balbás has claimed that they were never intended to be used but were simply copies of mosque lamps.<sup>2</sup> Juan Zozaya believes that all examples of this shape and technique were made during the period of the North African dynasties,<sup>3</sup> while Balbina Martínez-Cavero considers that all of them belong to the Nasrid period.<sup>4</sup> None of these

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1. It is even argued that cuerda seca pottery must, by definition, cover the entire surface.

2. Ars Hispaniae, op.cit., p.212.

3. From personal communication.

4. Catálogo de Cerámica Espanola (Madrid, 1968), p.72.

opinions would seem to be correct. The development of this form is readily apparent (Figures I, II) and to whatever source the earliest examples of these vases owe their origin, it is certainly not to a mosque lamp. It would seem much more likely that the source is to be found among the still unstudied Visigothic pottery of pre-Muslim Spain.

It is easy to prove that not all of these vessels can be dated to the Almoravid-Almohad period. The vase shown in Plates XIII and XIV bears the inscription: "al-yumn wa-l-iqbāl wa-l-‘āfiyya wa-l-‘iz". It is believed that the Mamluk phrase, al-yumn wa-l-iqbāl wa-l-‘iz, was not introduced into Spain until the fourteenth century when a large group of Andalusian workers were sent to Cairo to help in the reconstruction of a mosque that had been damaged in an earthquake.<sup>1</sup> The vase cannot, therefore, be other than Nasrid, despite even the presence of small spurs or knobs on the curves of the handles that Zozaya claims are purely North African! Though it is more difficult to disprove Martínez-Cavero's assertion, the existence of similar shapes decorated in other techniques that are, without any question, Almoravid-Almohad would certainly seem to make it extremely unlikely that all these vases are Nasrid. There is also a sudden change in the decorative motifs that seems to coincide with the appearance of the characteristically Nasrid large footrings and necks, and long, thin handles. The use of turquoise blue disappears

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1. Personal communication from Don Antonio Fernández Puerta.

and the areas covered with glaze become smaller. The drawing becomes looser and the surrounding  cuerda seca  lines are less carefully drawn.

The final problem associated with these vases, their place of production, will probably always remain a mystery. The fine, white clay with which they are made does not occur naturally in Spain. All Spanish clays have high iron content and white earthenwares and slips are, of necessity, highly purified. Though it would seem likely that such fragile vessels must have been produced at pottery centers such as Malaga or Granada, there is at the moment no evidence to support this idea.

Throughout the Nasrid period the true  cuerda seca  technique was used in the production of wall and floor tiles. Though many of these tiles or  azulejos  were simply copies of the more complicated  aliceres  (Plate XVII) or of  alicatados  of  aliceres  combined with  azulejos  (Plate XVIII), others belong to a category all of their own. These  azulejos  range from quite simple floor tiles (Plate XIX) to the immensely ornate ones covering the spandrels of the eastern arch in the Puerta del Vino (Plate XX). These tiles are painted in white, green, black, blue and yellow and compare favorably with the best Ottoman  cuerda seca  tiles.  Cuerda seca  tiles were also decorated in blue and white (Plates XXI, XXII) with motifs such as arabesques and vegetal scrolls that were clearly copied from contemporary blue and white pottery as well as from lusterware.

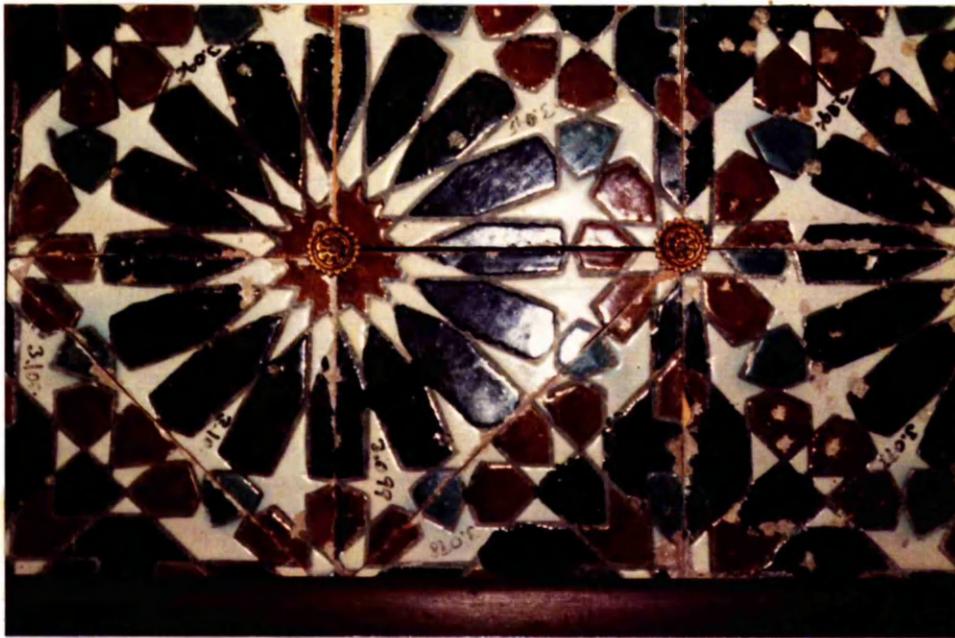


PLATE XVII: Cuerda seca tile.  
Granada - Museo de la Alhambra.



PLATE XVIII: Cuerda seca tile.  
Granada - Museo de la Alhambra.

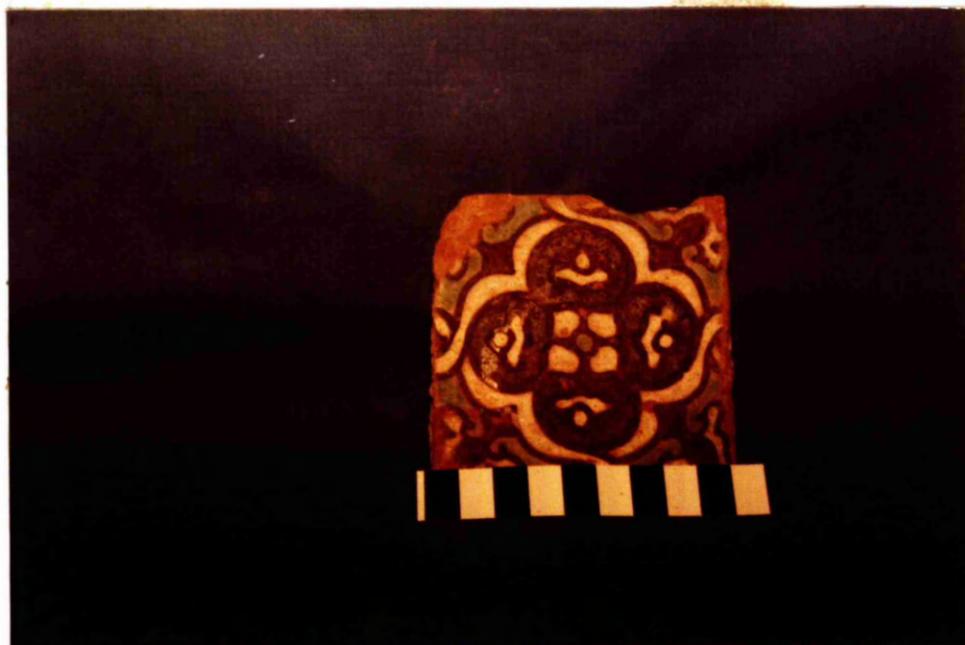


PLATE XIX: Cuerda seca floor tile.  
Granada - Museo de la Alhambra, # 3.772.

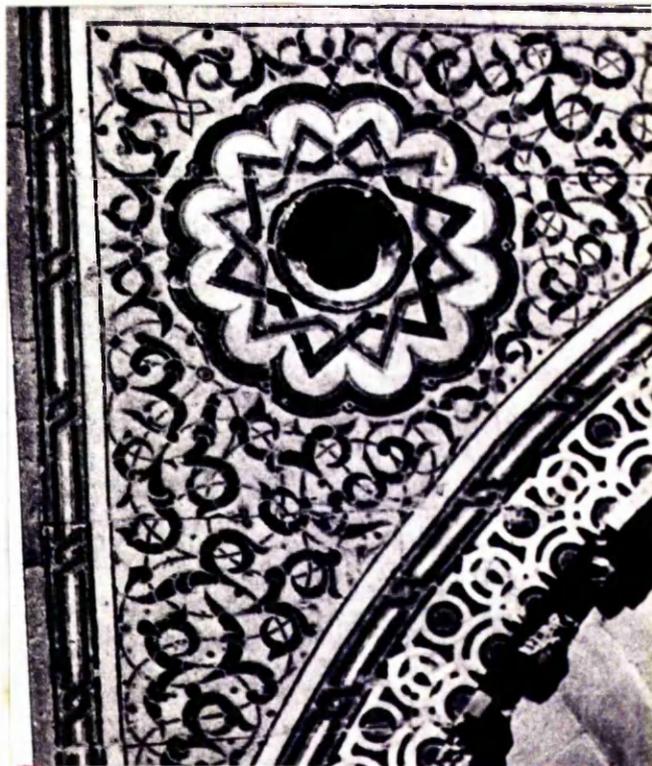


PLATE XX: Cuerda seca tiles from the Puerta del Vino.  
Granada - the Alhambra.



PLATE XXI: Cuerda seca tile forming panel surrounding  
a fountain.  
Granada - Museo de la Alhambra



PLATE XXII: Cuerda seca tile  
Granada - Museo de la Alhambra.

CHAPTER VINASRID POTTERY: BLUE AND WHITE WARE

The style and techniques of decoration of Hispano-Muslim pottery underwent great changes during the thirteenth century. Under the Nasrids, cobalt-blue glaze made a sudden appearance and revolutionized Spanish and, indeed, European ceramics. The source of the use of cobalt-blue is not clear but it would appear likely that it originated in the Near East and was imported to Spain along with lusterware. Though unglazed, slip-painted and monochrome-glazed vessels were the household wares of the masses, the Nasrid nobility clearly immediately became infatuated with the new blue and white pottery and adopted it as their domestic ware. During excavations in the Alhambra and in the Alcazaba of Malaga the remains of plates, bowls, basins, oil lamps, stemmed cups, ewers, jars and even tombstones and grave markers decorated in blue and white have been found in immense quantities.

Almost all of these vessels are of a rather coarse, solid construction with a reddish earthenware body that has sometimes fired to a tan on the surface. The vessels are completely covered with a very thin, white tin-glaze, over and under which are painted the cobalt blue decorations. The glaze itself is often in very poor condition: besides the crazing and pitting that occurred during firing, large areas of glaze have fallen off many vessels and on others it is very dull and decayed.<sup>1</sup> Though

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1. This is particularly true of the vessels excavated in Granada.

the decorations are drawn with great precision, the cobalt blue is usually a rather murky grey (Plate XXIII) or a very light blue (Plate XXIV) instead of the clear, strong indigo blue that one finds in Near Eastern ceramics. This discolouration, however, may have been intentional. Cobalt blue is one of the most volatile of all glazes and must be used with extreme care for during firing it can spread and ruin not only the vessel to which it is applied but also all the other objects in the kiln. Perhaps because of this danger, the Andalusian potters did not purify the cobalt and, in fact, further weakened it by adding sand to the glaze. Many of these blue and white vessels also had a few touches of luster (Plates XXV, XXVI), which have now almost totally disappeared through decay. These dabs of luster may have been added only to raise the value of the vessel,<sup>1</sup> and certainly do not appear to have affected the overall design in the slightest.

The variety of shapes decorated in blue and white is remarkably limited and appear to have remained virtually unchanged for the first two hundred years of Nasrid rule. Objects such as oil lamps and stemmed goblets are identical with contemporary monochrome-glazed ones. The oil lamps consist of a single, small cup for the oil and the wick, set on a tall stem which itself sits in the center of a flat dish with vertical sides. A long handle

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1. A document from the French port of Colliure, dated 1297, divides the "work of malicha" into three categories: luster or blue and luster, blue, and green and black from Barcelona. The first category was the most expensive and paid the highest tax while blue and white pottery cost the same as the vessels from Barcelona. See: L.M. Llubia, Cerámica Medieval Espanola (Barcelona, 1973), pp. 93-6.



PLATE XXIII: Blue and white ware, approximately 20 cm.  
at widest point.  
Granada - Museo de la Alhambra.



PLATE XXIV: Blue and white ware  
Granada - Museo de la Alhambra.



PLATE XXV: Blue and white bowl with Nasrid shield with luster decorations.  
Granada - Museo de la Alhambra, # 128 (4667).



PLATE XXVI: Blue and white bowl with luster decorations,  
51 cm. in diameter  
Granada - Museo de la Alhambra, # 1.083

runs from the cup to the base and the stem is usually decorated with one or more flanges or round swellings (Plate XXVII and Figure VI). The goblets are rather reminiscent of modern champagne glasses: a shallow, straight-sided cup on a narrow stem with a hollow, flaring foot (Figure VIII). Bowls and plates appear in only two basic shapes though these range from 15 to 90 centimeters in diameter. Both forms have the typical Nasrid, splayed footring from which the straight sides rise at an angle, and rims that are either flattened and everted or that rise at an almost right angle from the slanting sides (Figures IV, V). These bowls and plates form the vast majority of the pieces of blue and white ware that have been excavated. A few other shapes do, however, appear. There is, for example, a shallow bowl (Plate XXVIII) that must have been copied from Near Eastern examples. Several tombstones and markers for the four corners of graves have been found. These are all of the same shape and size: almond-shaped bodies about 30 centimeters in height, set on rectangular bases, and with small circular "ears" set at an angle near the top of the body (Plate XXIX). Tiles were also decorated in blue and white. Other colors, such as green (Plate XXX) or luster, were often added and because of the frequent incorporation of Christian themes and figures into their decoration are extremely useful in the dating of other blue and white objects. There are also a few small, covered storage jars (Plate XXXI), pitchers and ewers (Plate XXXII) that are of typically Christian shapes and are therefore of the greatest importance in the study of this ware.



PLATE XXVII: Oil lamp decorated in blue and white.  
Granada - Museo de la Alhambra, #1.229.



PLATE XXVIII: Blue and white bowl with incised decorations,  
approximately 20 cm. in diameter.  
Malaga - Museo de la Alcazaba.

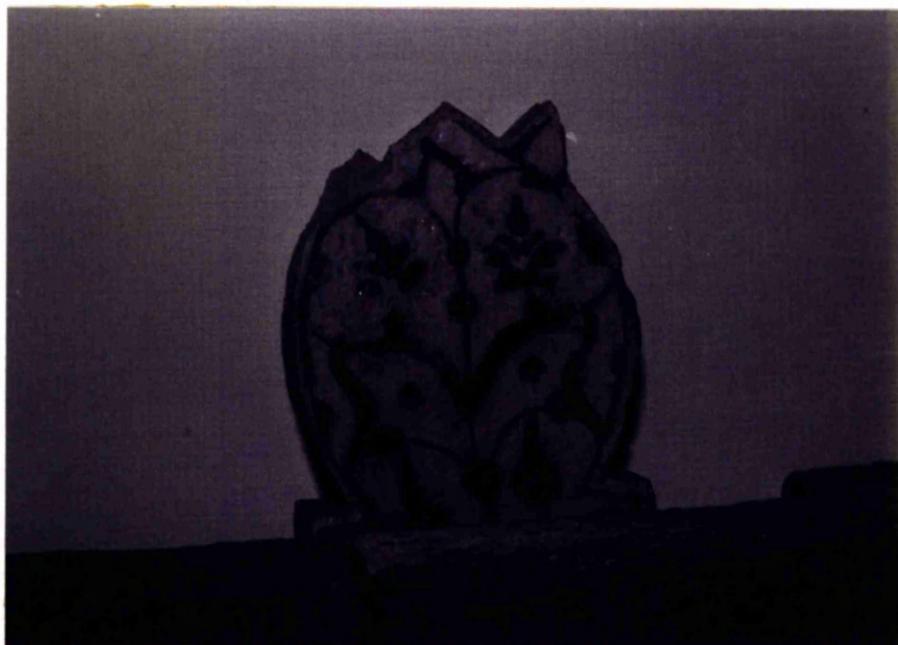


PLATE XXIX: Grave marker decorated in blue and white.  
Malaga - Museo de la Alcazaba.



PLATE XXX: Moulded tile from the Puerto de la Justicia.  
Granada - Museo de la Alhambra.

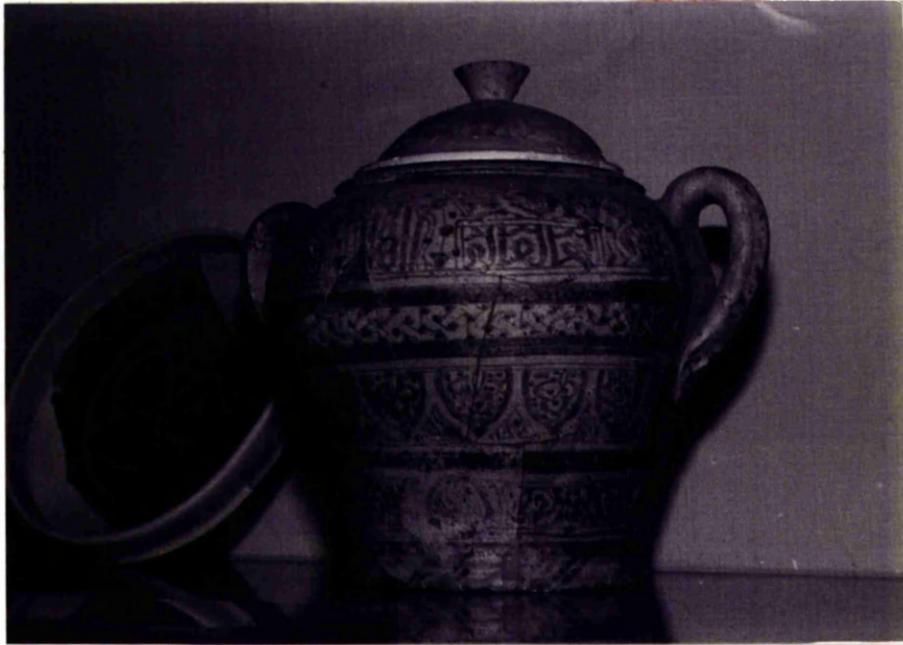


PLATE XXXI: Blue and white storage jar, approximately  
25 cm. high.  
Malaga - Museo de la Alcazaba.



PLATE XXXII: Blue and white ewer with luster decorations,  
approximately 20 cm. high.  
Malaga - Museo de la Alcazaba.

Though the shapes of blue and white ware remain relatively unchanged, the decorations do not. There are at least four major periods or styles discernable. The problem is to determine their sequence. Through the study of not only the motifs themselves but also the shapes with which they are associated, it is possible to suggest a probable course of development. It would seem reasonable that the earliest period of Nasrid blue and white ware includes those bowls with splayed footrings, straight sides and "perpendicular" rims, as this is a purely Hispano-Muslim shape which can be traced back to at least Caliphal times and the motifs that appear on these bowls are the most Near Eastern in character. These decorations follow the general Persian scheme of dividing the surface into areas and zones of different shapes (Plates XXXIII, XXXIV, XXXV): bands, circles, squares and triangles are all used on a single piece. Perhaps the earliest pieces are those with the well of the bowl decorated in radiating panels (Plates XXXIII, XXXIV) in a manner very reminiscent of Persian pottery of the fourteenth century "Sultanabad" type. A further indication of Persian influence is the tendency towards the complete covering of surfaces with designs. There are no vacant spaces or undecorated background area as is to be found in pre-Nasrid ceramics. Within the panels are to be found a large variety of motifs: pseudo-palmettes, tree-of-life patterns, dotted backgrounds (Plates XXXIII, XXXIV), "crenellations" (Plates XXXIV, XXXV), knot patterns (Plate XXXVI), and cursive Arabic lettering (Plate XXXV). The cobalt blue used for these decorations is



PLATE XXXIII: Blue and white bowl, approximately 25 cm. in diameter.  
Malaga - Museo de la Alcazaba.



PLATE XXXIV: Blue and white bowl.  
Granada - Museo de la Alhambra, # 1207.

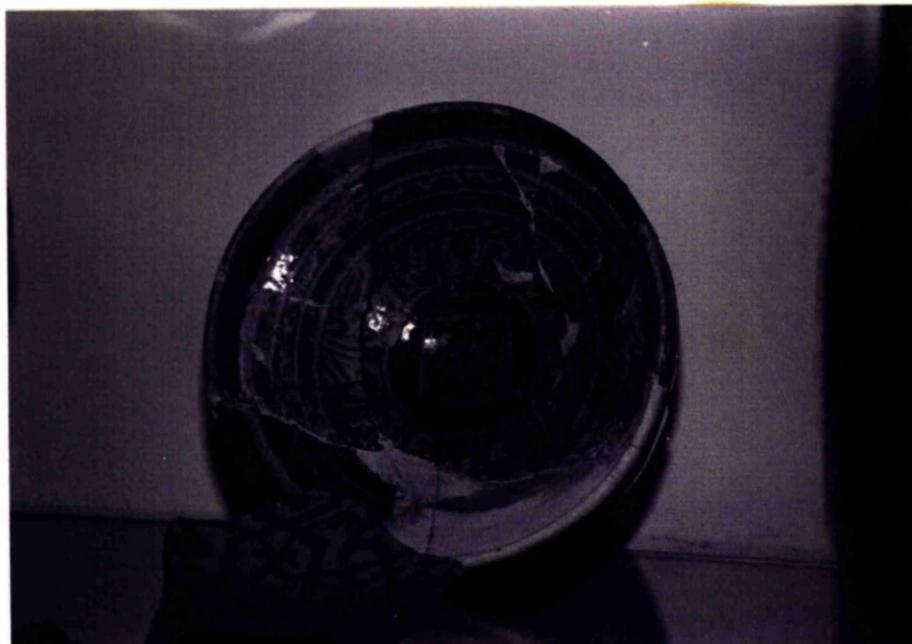


PLATE XXXV: Blue and white bowl, approximately 20 cm.  
in diameter.  
Malaga - Museo de la Alcazaba.



PLATE XXXVI: Blue and white bowl fragment with knot  
pattern.  
Malaga - Museo de la Alcazaba.

the darkest in color that is seen in all the Nasrid blue and white ware. Since it is assumed that blue and white wares appeared shortly after the foundation of the Nasrid dynasty, this style of decoration can probably be dated to the second half of the thirteenth century.

In the next stage of blue and white ceramics the traditional Nasrid bowl shape with its "perpendicular" rim continued to be produced though the rim became smaller. A new variety was also introduced with a flat, everted rim. The decoration became much less dense, leaving large areas of undecorated white background, and it is also on these vessels that the cobalt blue begins to be lighter and clearer in color and dabs of luster appear. Many of the motifs of the first period of blue and white continue and become ever more ornate. The tree-of-life, for example, develops into a true work of art (Plate XXVI). New themes also appear: intersecting geometric patterns (Plate XXXVII), gazelles (Plate XXXVIII), the Nasrid shield (Plate XXV), and the khams or hand symbol (Plate XXXIX). The appearance of a shield or blazon, bearing the motto "there is no victor but God",<sup>1</sup> probably does not indicate a Christian influence but rather a Mamluk one. The khams first appears in Muslim Spain on these blue and white vessels and on some contemporary luster vases,<sup>2</sup> though it had long existed in the Near East. In Iran it was, and is commonly associated with Alī or with his son, Abū al-Faḍl

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1. لا غالب الا الله.

2. For a complete study of the khams motif see: R. Ettinghausen, "Notes on the Lusterware of Spain", *Ars Orientalis*, Vol. I (1954), pp. 148-154.

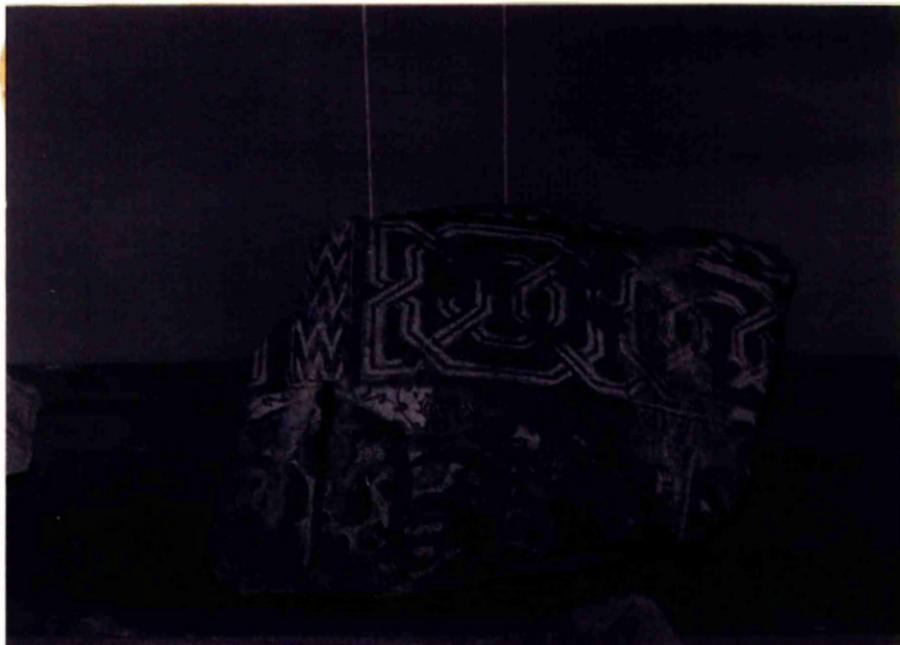


PLATE XXXVII: Blue and white fragment from an "Alhambra"  
vase with geometric pattern.  
Granada - Museo de la Alhambra.



PLATE XXXVIII: Blue and white tinaja fragment with  
gazelles  
Malaga - Museo de la Alcazaba.

‘Abbās, who died at the battle of Kerbelah. In North Africa, on the other hand, the Khams represented the hand of Fatima and was used to ward off the evil eye. Though there was a small shi‘ite kingdom in al-Andalus during the period of the Reyes de Taifas, it would seem likely that the latter significance of the Khams was the one that applied in Spain. Because of the appearance of identical "hands" on both blue and white vessels and on dated lusterware, this period of blue and white pottery may be dated to the first half of the fourteenth century.

In the third period of blue and white pottery, a whole new style of decoration appears, and the more outstanding characteristics of the Nasrid bowl shape, such as the "perpendicular" rims become less and less accentuated. The cobalt blue becomes a very light, clear blue (Plate XXIV) and almost all of the old motifs disappear. The bowls and plates have a very simplified central rosette, often consisting of only four branches or plumes, with three or four bands running from it to the edges of the bowl (Plate XL). The bands are frequently filled with pseudo-Arabic lettering, the most common being the "al-afiyya" pattern (Plate XL), while the spaces between these bands are often filled with cross-hatching (Plate XLI) or simplified tree-of-life motifs (Plate XL). The latter become so reduced that they turn into mere plumes or branches (Plates XXIV, XXXII).

This style is particularly interesting because not only has a dated piece survived but also because new



PLATE XXXIX: Blue and white bowl with khams design.  
Malaga - Museo de la Alcazaba.



PLATE XL: Blue and white bowl  
Granada - Museo de la Alhambra.

Christian shapes and themes begin to appear. A tombstone has been excavated at Huelva, commemorating the death of a young student on the thirty-first of March, 1409.<sup>1</sup> Though this stele is decorated in luster, the style is identical with that of this period of blue and white. Three even more interesting objects were found in the town of Bérchules, in the Alpujarra range, to the west of Granada. These are three very similar pitchers decorated with simplified and plume-like trees-of-life and the "al-afiyya" pattern in blue and white with touches of luster. Their shape, however, is typical of the pitchers made in Paterna (Valencia) during the fifteenth century.

To this period also belong the large number of blue and white tiles that have been found in the Alhambra. While some of these tiles continue in the Muslim tradition (Plate XXX) of arabesques or simply bear the Nasrid shield, many are decorated with Christian figures. Some show the Nasrid escutcheon being born by human figures or by dragons (Plate XLIII), other have knights on horseback, figures of courtly lovers and musicians (Plate XLIII). These figures are useful for the dating of these tiles, for their clothes are of the early fifteenth century. Because of these tiles, the three Bérchules pitchers, the tombstone and the dated luster vases bearing the Khams, this third period of blue and white pottery can, with

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1. See: Frothingham, op.cit., p.70.



PLATE XLI: Blue and white bowl.  
Granada - Museo de la Alhambra.



PLATE XLII: Blue and white tile, dragons bearing Nasrid  
shield with motto in luster.  
Granada - Museo de la Alhambra.

certainty, be dated to the end of the fourteenth and the first half of the fifteenth century.

The final phase of Nasrid blue and white ware is represented by large bowls and basins of almost Hispano-Moresque, rather than Hispano-Muslim, shape. Large, quite simple geometric patterns cover the surface, leaving major areas totally undecorated (Plate XLIV). This style lasted for no more than forty or fifty years but its influence can still be seen in the potteries of Triana and Fajalauza.



PLATE XLIII: Blue and white tile with musicians.  
Granada - Museo de la Alhambra.

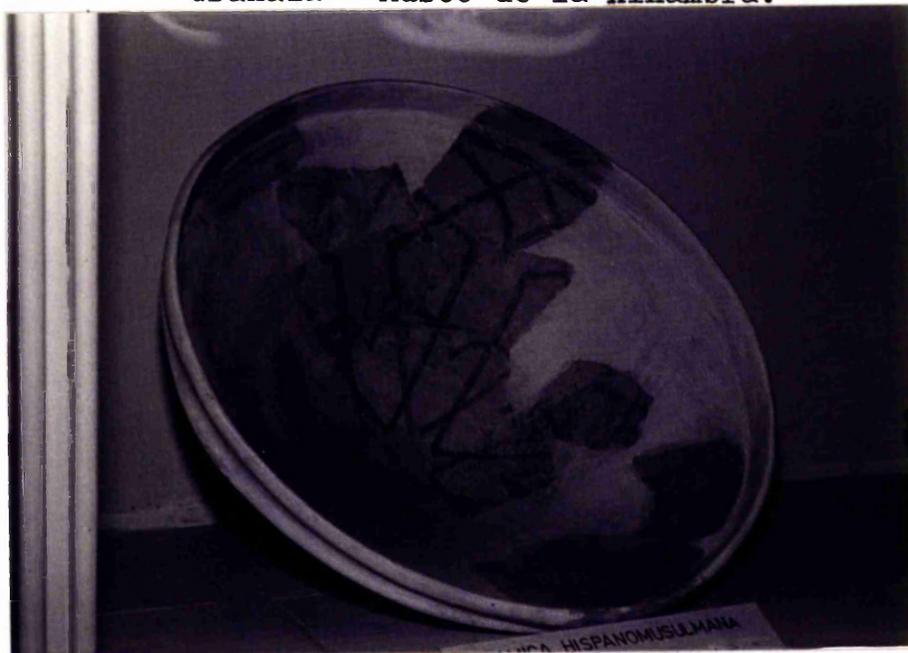


PLATE XLIV: Blue and white basin, approximately 50 cm.  
in diameter.  
Malaga - Museo de la Alcazaba.

## CHAPTER VII

### NASRID POTTERY: LUSTERWARE

The most spectacular type of pottery that has ever been produced in Spain is lusterware and though many beautiful examples of this technique were made in Manises, Valencia and Reus, Nasrid luster ceramics are, undoubtedly superior. Lusterware is the only variety of Nasrid pottery that has survived above ground and some of the pieces are so impressive that they have given rise to many strange legends and theories.<sup>1</sup> Washington Irving wrote a story inspired by the beautiful "Alhambra" vase while others, such as Théophile Gautier, have considered it to be a "jewel of invaluable rarity."<sup>2</sup>

Nasrid lusterware can best be dealt with by dividing it into three groups: small vessels, tiles, and the series of Alhambra vases. All of the extant examples of small vessels are of finely potted, red earthenware body that has fired to a light buff color on the exterior. The majority of these have the basic characteristics of the Nasrid bowl shape: straight sides rising at an angle from a splayed footring. The perpendicular rims, however,

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1. The Stolckholm vase, for example, was believed to be one of the jars from the marriage at Cana when Christ transformed water into wine. See: O. Kurz, "The Strange History of an Alhambra vase", Al-Andalus, Vol.40 (1975), p.206.
  2. J.C. Davillier, Histoire des Faiences Hispano-Moresques à Reflets Métalliques (Paris, 1861), p.18.

are very reduced (Plate XLV), and occasionally totally absent, as are the flattened and everted rim found in blue and white wares. There are a few examples that must have been copied from Near Eastern pieces: very finely potted bowls with convex, curving sides and no rims (Plate XLVI).

The bowls are completely covered with an opaque, white tin-glaze, over which the luster and sometimes cobalt blue decoration have been applied. The process of producing these luster vessels was extremely complex and it is easy to understand why so few seem to have been made. After the body was potted, the vessel was fired for the first time and, provided that it survived the initial baking, it was dipped in the tin-glaze. If cobalt blue was to be used, it was applied when the glaze was dry and the vessel was fired again. In the final stage of the process, the metallic luster was applied and the pottery was placed in the kiln for a third firing. The manufacturer of the luster itself was also very lengthy. Though no account of this technique has survived from Muslim Spain, there does exist a detailed recipe from the sixteenth century.<sup>1</sup> According to this document, sulphur, old copper and silver were boiled together and, when

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1. E. Barber, Hispano-Moresque Pottery in the Collection of the Hispanic Society of America (New York, 1915), pp. 17-21.

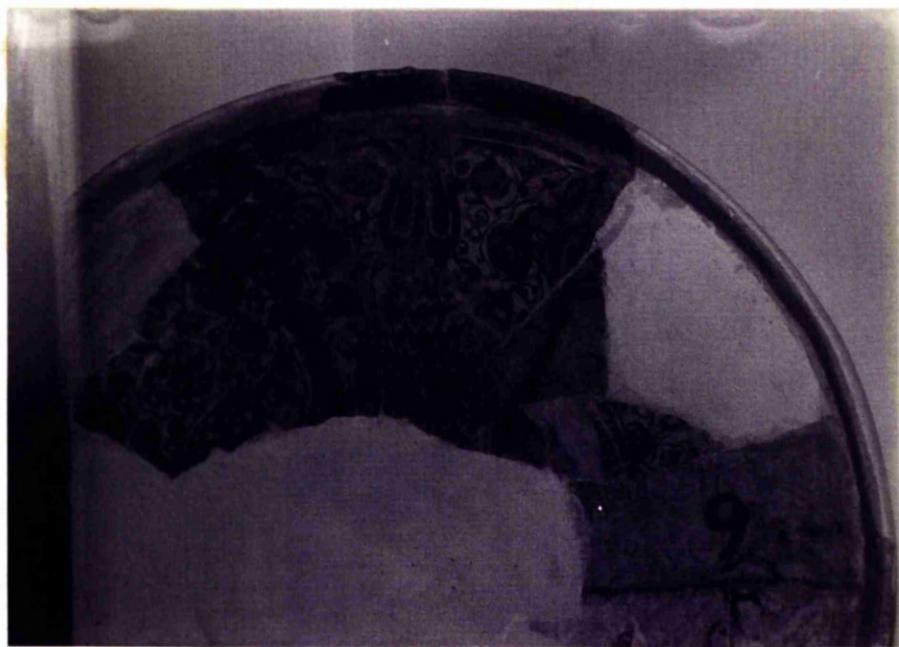


PLATE XLV: Luster bowl, approximately 60 centimeters in diameter.  
Malaga - Museo de la Alcazaba.

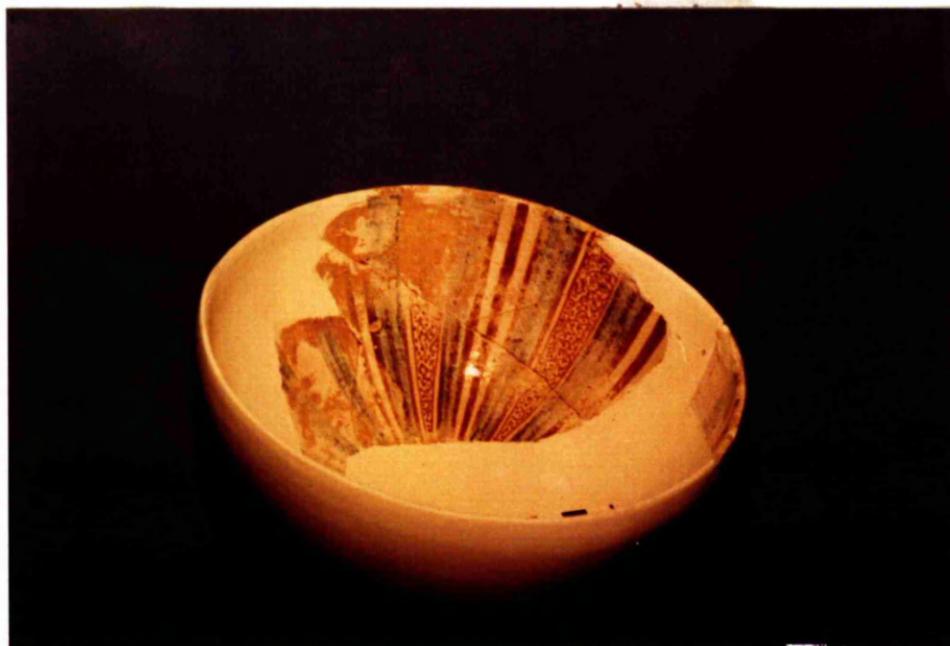


PLATE XLVI: Blue and luster bowl.  
Granada - Museo de la Alhambra, # 1235.

cooled, pounded into a very fine dust. Red ochre was mixed in and the whole again ground into a powder. This powder was then mixed with water until it formed a paste, which was spread on the sides of a basin and baked for six hours. The mixture was broken from the basin and pounded into a powder. Vinegar or wine was then added and after this paste had again been ground, it was ready to be used. Once this luster preparation had been applied and the vessel was ready for its final firing, a muffle kiln was prepared with either dried rosemary or, according to a document from 1440, a type of oak known as carrasqua<sup>1</sup> as the fuel. After the pottery was removed from the reducing kiln it was washed with soap and water and then polished.

Along with the introduction of the luster technique came many new decorative motifs and patterns. The interior of the bowls is divided into radiating panels and, following Persian examples, and there is a similar horror vacui. On the pieces that are most Near Eastern in shape, the radiating panels are decorated alternately in blue, luster and white stripes with intermediary panels of luster spirals (Plate XLVI). A strong Spanish character is soon introduced into the designs and motifs appear that are familiar from other types of Nasrid ceramics.

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1. Frothingham, Catalogue of Hispano-Moresque Pottery in the Collection of the Hispanic Society of America (New York, 1936), p.LXXVII.

Perhaps the most typical is a very ornate tree-of-life that has developed into a heart-shaped area filled with arabesques (Plate XLVII). An interesting variation on this pattern is a similarly shaped area filled with a checkerboard pattern (Plate XLVIII). The origin of this design is not clear: it could have been derived from the checkerboard patterns that appear on contemporary verdugones ware, or it may have been an attempt to copy the checkered trees that appear on Persian lusterware from Jurjan. The khams is another symbol that appears on both Nasrid luster and blue and white wares, though in the former, a zigzag pattern that probably came from Visigothic or Iberian traditions is often added to the attached panel (Plate XLV). Another design of Visigothic or Iberian origin that is used is a cross-hatched pattern (Plate XLV). Phrases in cursive Arabic and pseudo-Arabic lettering frequently appear (Plate XLVIII) as do knot-like patterns which may have been derived from platted kufic (Plate LIV) and which are reminiscent of designs on fourteenth century Syrian lusterware. One of the most distinctive features of these bowls and plates is the manner in which the cobalt blue and the luster are used to complement each other. This factor is most obvious on pieces such as the famous bowl in the Berlin Museum, on which the triangular sections are decorated in alternating knot patterns and arabesques in blue on a background of dense luster spirals. There is, unfortunately, no characteristically Nasrid shade of luster: it ranges in color from a pale, lemon yellow to a dark brown.

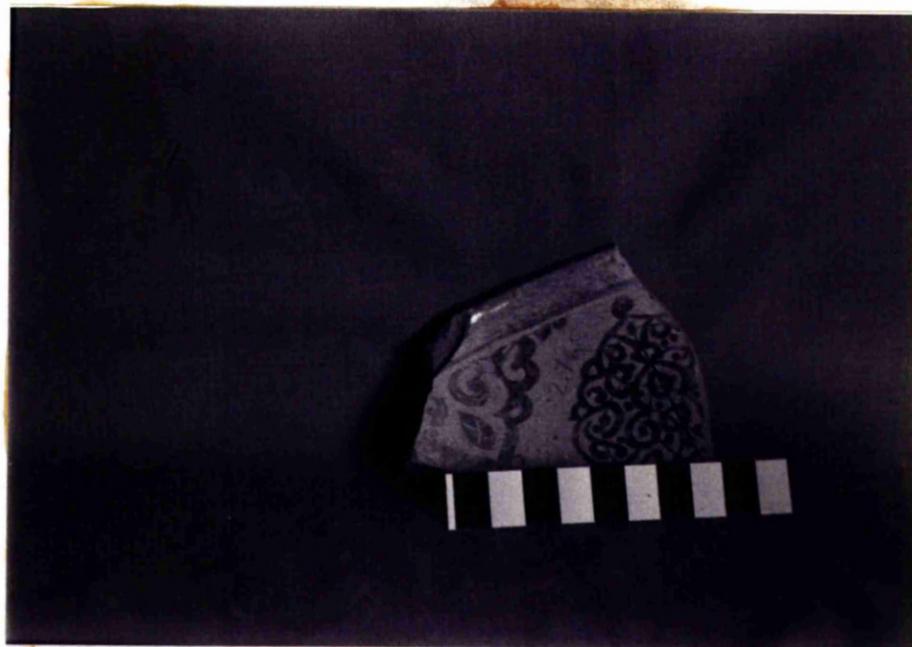


PLATE XLVII: Blue and luster fragment with tree-of-life pattern.  
Granada - Museo de la Alhambra. # 2.766



PLATE XLVIII: Blue and luster fragment with checkerboard pattern.  
Granada - Museo de la Alhambra.

At the same time as these bowls and plates were being produced, luster tiles were also in demand. In a room in the Torre del Peinador de la Reina in the Alhambra window frames of luster tiles remain in situ. These are decorated with phrases in cursive Arabic lettering in luster on a white background with luster spirals. Along the outer edge runs a row of "crenellations" (Plate XLIX). Other luster tiles, probably of a later date, are moulded and have additional decorations painted in blue. A common motif is two confronted animals on either side of a tree bearing the Nasrid shield (Plate L). More impressive examples of the Nasrid potter's art are the two large tile plaques that are now in Madrid. The more beautiful and technically superior one<sup>1</sup> is decorated in a uniform golden brown luster and though of a late date, shows none of the signs of deterioration of quality apparent in the other plaque decorated in blue and luster<sup>2</sup> (Plate LI). Though the overall character of the decoration on these plaques is Muslim, many Christian elements are present. The plain luster plaque has a surrounding Arabic inscription and the main pattern is formed by interlaced vines with double-lobed leaves and bearing Nasrid shields. Many of these leaves, however, terminate in dragon's-heads derived

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1. This plaque is now in the Instituto de Valencia de Don Juan.

2. This plaque is now in the Museo Arquelógico Nacional.

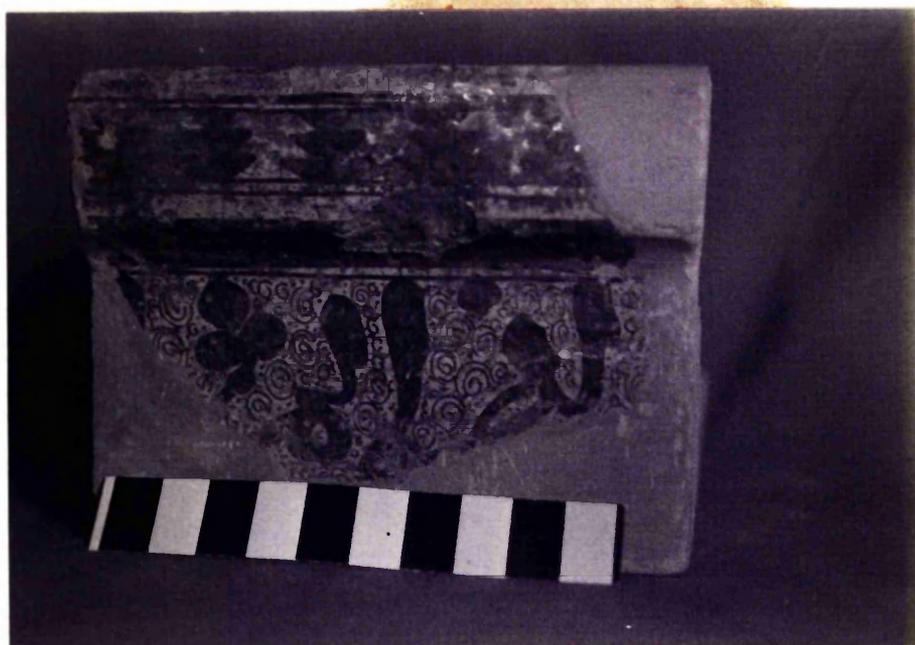


PLATE XLIX: Luster tile from the Torre del Peinador de la Reina.  
Granada - Museo de la Alhambra, #179.



PLATE L: Blue and lustre moulded tile.  
Madrid - Instituto de Valencia de Don Juan.

from contemporary Christian illuminated manuscripts and nestling in among the branches are swans, peacocks and naturalistic plant forms. The plaque decorated in blue and luster is almost identical in design though the surrounding Arabic inscription is lacking and the cobalt blue ran during firing and obscures all the fine details visible on the other plaque. Both these tile panels are dated to the early fifteenth century: the Arabic inscription on the luster one glorifies Yūsuf III, who reigned from 1408 to 1417, and the second plaque was probably made within a decade of its companion.

The Alhambra vases, without any doubt, count among the greatest achievements of Islamic ceramic art.<sup>1</sup> Like other Nasrid lusterware, they are made of a red earthenware that fired to a pale buff colour on the exterior. The bodies are, of necessity, very heavily potted (up to five centimeters). On some of the vases, the bodies appear to be made from sections which were first turned on a wheel and then joined together while others seem to have been slowly built up from strips of damp clay.<sup>2</sup> The handles were probably cut from slabs of clay that had been rolled flat while the collars were

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1. For a complete study of these vases, see: Frothingham, Lustreware, op.cit. and Ettinghausen, op.cit.
  2. In Talavera large vases of a similar shape and size are still made with the second technique: it takes over a year to build the body.

partly moulded and partly wheel made. The process of producing the body of these vases alone required great skill and patience, and many must not have survived the preliminary firing. As with other lusterware, after the first baking the body was covered with an opaque white tin-glaze. It is, however, very difficult to apply glaze evenly over such large surfaces and on many pieces one can see areas where the glaze has dripped or run in thick layers. Other faults that commonly appear are pinholes, blisters and crazing. After a second firing, luster and, in some cases, cobalt blue were applied and the vessel fired again. After this final baking many more faults appeared: the vases with cobalt blue decorations have a bluish tint over all the body while streaks of emerald green from copper-oxide particles in the luster mixture are to be found on the pieces decorated wholly in luster.

In shape these vases are closely related to the unglazed and partially glazed tinajas that are found in such abundance all over southern Spain. All the examples have large, ovoid bodies that taper to a point.<sup>1</sup> Octagonal collars with flaring walls, vertical ridges and overhanging rims are connected to the body by a series of mouldings. (Plate LII). The broad, flat handles rise from the shoulders of the vases until almost halfway up the side of the

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1. Near the bottom are a series of indented rings which may indicate that these vases were intended to be "screwed" into a base.

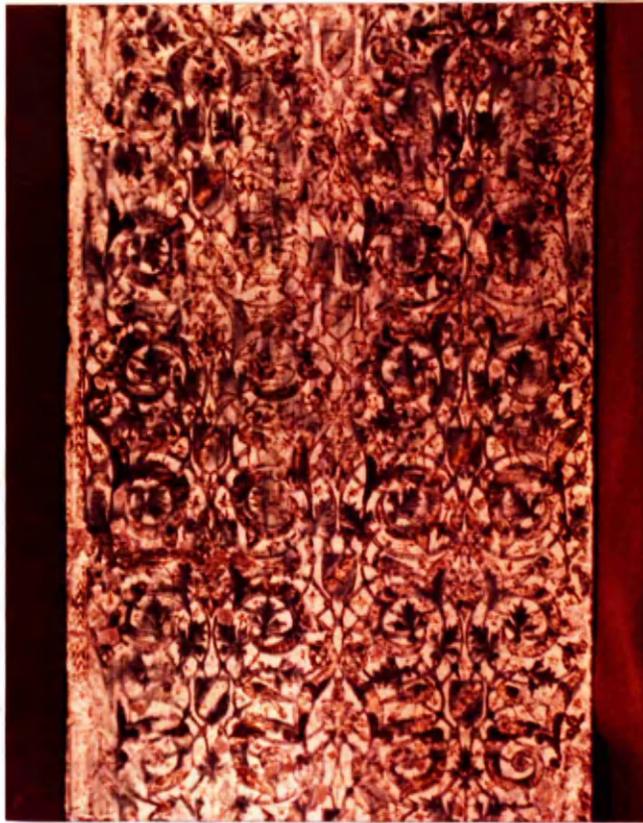


PLATE LI: Blue and luster tile plaque.  
Madrid - Museo Arqueologico Nacional.



PLATE LII: The "Alhambra" vase.  
Granada - Museo de la Alhambra.

collar, when the outer rim curves suddenly inwards to form a point (Plate LIII). These points were then decorated with ceramic spirals and fleur-de-lis and joined to the collar. The vases range from 1.2 to 1.7 meters in height and the shape becomes very exaggerated in the later examples.

The nine surviving Alhambra vases may be divided into two groups: those painted solely in luster and those decorated in cobalt blue and luster. Though some scholars have suggested that the two varieties were contemporary with each other and were simply the work of two different centers, it seems more likely that they represent the work of one center throughout the fourteenth century, for not only the shapes but also the decorative motifs show a clear process of development.

Six of the vases are decorated solely in luster though one of these, the "Simonetti" vase, is so damaged that only the collar retains its glaze. The "Osma", Palermo, Leningrad, "Jerez" and Stockholm vases are all divided into horizontal bands of decoration. The "Osma" and Palermo vases have a large central band of floriated kufic lettering in luster on a white ground which dominates the whole decoration. Though the "Jerez" and Leningrad vases also have central bands of lettering, these are much smaller and the words are reserved in white on a luster ground. On the "Osma" vase the phrase "al-mulk lillah" appears in the central register while on the others only the word "al-mulk" is used. On the "Osma" vase the

inscription is twice interrupted by large roundels filled with a geometric pattern of polygonal interlacing while the other bands are filled with knotted kufic, rows of palmettes and arabesques. The handles are unfortunately missing. The Palermo vase is adorned with bands of a scale-like pattern (Plate LIV) and leafy arabesques that are very similar to those that appear on the cuerda seca tiles of the Puerta del Vino. This same leafy motif is found on the Leningrad vase which also has a large band of roundels filled with kufic lettering. The two handles are decorated with the khams motif with Arabic lettering on the attached panels. The "Jerez" vase is quite similar though it lacks the band of roundels and has instead a row of naskhi script. The drawing on the handles of the khams and the details of the attached panels are much finer. The surface of the Stockholm vase, the final example decorated only in luster, is divided into many narrow bands filled with delicate, though rather "scribbly" knot patterns, arabesques, checkerboard patterns and naskhi lettering.

Of the second group of vases decorated in luster and cobalt, the earliest example is probably the "Hornos" vase. It is divided by ribs into vertical bands filled with foliage patterns, naskhi script and knot patterns. Its follower, the "Alhambra" vase that gave its name to the whole series, is no longer divided into either horizontal or vertical bands. The upper and main register has a central motif of two confronted gazelles. On one side of the vase there is a very large tree-of-life between the



PLATE LIIII: Detail of Plate LII.



PLATE LIV: Neck of the "Simonetti" vase.  
Granada - Museo de la Alhambra.

animals while on the other, the animals are face-to-face (Plate LI). The lower register and neck are filled with decoration: naturalistic foliage, knot patterns (Plate LIII), tree-of-life motifs of both the arabesque (Plates LV and LVI) and checkerboard type (Plate LV), phrases in naskhi script (Plate LV), chevrons (Plate LVI) and net patterns. In the background there are spirals drawn in fine luster lines (Plate LVII) and even the luster lines of the decorations are further embellished with lines that have been scratched through to the white glaze (Plate LV). All the luster decorations, unfortunately, have been lost from the last example of the Alhambra vases, the "Freer" vase. The cobalt blue designs that remain are divided into three sections: a top "row" of confronting gazelles on either side of a tree-of-life; a middle band of poetry in naskhi script, and a lower section filled with four eight-pointed stars filled with an interlaced star pattern (Plate LVIII).

The dating of the Alhambra vases has been studied in some detail,<sup>1</sup> and the probable sequence is as follows:

1. "The "Osma" vase: end of the thirteenth century.
2. Vase in the National Museum, Palermo: about 1300.
3. Vase in the Hermitage, Leningrad: about 1300.
4. The "Simonetti" vase: early fourteenth century.
5. The "Jerez" vase: early fourteenth century.
6. Vase in the National Museum, Stockholm: mid-

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1. See: Frothingham, Lustreware, op.cit. and Ettinghausen, op.cit.



PLATE LV: Detail of the "Alhambra" vase.  
Granada - Museo de la Alhambra.



PLATE LVI: Detail of the "Alhambra" vase.  
Granada - Museo de la Alhambra.



PLATE LVII: Detail of the "Alhambra" vase.  
Granada - Museo de la Alhambra.



PLATE LVIII: The "Freer" vase.  
Washington D.C. - The Freer Gallery of Art.

fourteenth century.

7. The "Hornos" vase: mid fourteenth century.
8. The "Alhambra" vase: mid to late fourteenth century.
9. The "Freer" vase: about 1400.

Most of this dating has been based on the study of the calligraphy on the vases and of contemporary textiles with identical motifs. None of the vases, unfortunately, are either signed or dated but there does exist one piece of evidence that corroborates the suggested dating: until the nineteenth century the "Alhambra" vase stood in a niche in the Sala de las Dos Hermanas. This room was built for Abū al-Ḥajjaj Yūsuf who ruled from 1333 to 1354 and the niche is an original feature.

Though the problem of the dating of these luster vases and, to a lesser extent, other luster ceramics has been largely solved, the exact location of production remains uncertain. When it was believed that the Alhambra vases represented the work of two different pottery centers, it was assumed that vessels decorated solely in luster were manufactured in Malaga while those with additional cobalt blue designs were produced in Granada. There is very good historical evidence that Malaga was indeed a center of luster ceramics. In the middle of the thirteenth century the geographer, Ibn Sa'īd, stated that golden pottery was produced in Murcia, Almeria and Malaga.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Llubia, op.cit., p.93.

In 1320 Faḍl Allāh said that a pottery was made in Malaga unequalled in the whole world<sup>1</sup> while in 1337, a geographer, Aḥmad ibn Yahyā al-Umarī wrote that beautiful lusterware was produced in Malaga.<sup>2</sup> Ibn Battūta visited Malaga in the middle of the fourteenth century and marvelled at the beauty of the local pottery, which he said was exported to the whole world.<sup>3</sup> This statement was confirmed ten years later by Ibn al-Khaṭīb; the vizier of Yūsuf I and Muhammad V, who stated that this pottery even reached the city of Tabriz, in Persia.<sup>4</sup> Several pieces of pottery have also been found which support these statements: on the footrings appears a word in Arabic that is believed by many to be "malaga". Large kilns that probably produced lusterware even survived in Malaga until thirty years ago when they were bulldozed out of existence.<sup>5</sup>

There is, on the other hand, no good evidence for the production in Granada of lusterware in general or the Alhambra vases in particular. Though over three hundred kilns have been found within the walls of the

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1. Llubia, op.cit., p.96.

2. Ibid.

3. Les Voyages d'Ibn Batoutah, ed. Defrémery, Sanguinetti (Paris, 1858), Vol.4, p.367.

4. Llubia, op.cit., p.97.

5. The destruction of these kilns was ordered by the Director of the Alcazaba, Temboury, and by Gómez-Moreno.

Alhambra,<sup>1</sup> none of these are large enough to hold one of the vases. It is also very unlikely that an author such as Ibn al-Khaṭīb, who describes every conceivable quality and product of his native city, would not have mentioned the manufacture of something as important as the Alhambra vases. Unless new evidence appears, therefore, one must assume that Nasrid lusterware was made only in Malaga.

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1. None of these have actually ever been excavated.

### CONCLUSION

Though pottery made under the Nasrid dynasty in Spain cannot compare in beauty with that of Persia and the Near East, it is nonetheless an exceptionally interesting period for the development of ceramics. The culture of al-Andalus was a unique blend of "Iberian", Greek, Roman, Visigothic, Byzantine, Berber and Arab ideas. It was under the "Moors" that al-Andalus rose to be one of the economic and cultural centers of the world and the kingdom of Granada was the final outpost of this civilization. Though most of the Nasrid rulers were weak and ineffectual, and their country existed under the constant threat of the more powerful surrounding Christian Kingdoms, Nasrid art provided a brilliant ending to the whole Hispano-Muslim period.

Nasrid domestic pottery, unglazed, slip-painted, monochrome-glazed, cuerva seca and verdugones wares, represents a clear continuation and development of the Hispano-Muslim tradition in both decorative motifs and forms. The technique and style of decoration, as well as the shapes of the vessels of the Nasrid luxury wares, on the contrary, underwent major changes during the thirteenth century. A cobalt blue glaze and a luster glaze suddenly appeared and were applied, sometimes in combination, on a background of white tin glaze. Unlike pottery from earlier periods, the surfaces of objects were completely covered with designs which were usually divided into areas and zones of different shapes.

The origins of these new techniques and decorative styles are unknown but evidence would seem to indicate Persia as a possible source. The same tendency to crowd the surface with patterns is particularly visible in the luster pottery of Kashan, with its mazes of delicate patterns. Many of the decorative motifs that are typical of Nasrid lusterware, such as backgrounds of small, finely traced spirals, double-lobed leaves and ornate arabesques, demonstrate the close relationship between the luster pottery of Muslim Spain and that of Iran, as does the combination of luster with cobalt blue glaze.

Though the cobalt that was used for the glaze appears to have been mined within Spain,<sup>1</sup> the process of producing the luster itself is so complicated that it is extremely unlikely that it could have been discovered simultaneously in Iran and Spain or that a written "recipe" would have been sufficient. It would seem more likely that potters may have actually travelled to Spain from Iran. Historical facts admit of this possibility. The family of the early tenth century geographer, al-Razi, came to Spain from the city of Rayy in 867 A.D. along with many of their fellow townsmen.<sup>2</sup> The Persian musician,

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1. Though it is known that Iran was exporting cobalt to China and other countries at this period, it seems more likely that the cobalt used in al-Andalus was of native production for as early as the tenth century, large beds of this material were mined in Spain. See: Ahmad al-Razi, "Description de L'Espagne d'Ahmad al-Razi", Al-Andalus, Vol.XVIII (1953), p.63.

2.F. Pons Boigues, Los Historiadores y Geografos Arabigo-Espanoles (Amsterdam, 1972), p.45. One of the iqlim of Spain was, in fact, known as "Rayya",

Ziryāb, also came to Spain during the ninth century and profoundly influenced Hispano-Muslim music and dress. In the thirteenth century Ibn Battūta stated that Persian dervishes chose to settle in Granada because it reminded them of their native country. In the fourteenth century Ibn al-Khaṭīb wrote that the inhabitants of Granada wore Persian cloaks.<sup>1</sup>

If al-Andalus attracted Persian farmers, historians, dervishes and even musicians, it does not seem unlikely that one or two Persian potters might also have arrived in Malaga, fleeing the Mongol invasion. Though a few fragments of Persian pottery have been found in the grounds of the Alhambra, the Nasrid rulers were probably too poor and weak to be able to import it in quantities sufficient to have so powerfully influenced the native production of pottery. It is also unlikely that if pottery had been imported into Spain in large quantities, no geographer or traveller would have mentioned the fact.<sup>2</sup>

Nasrid pottery is of interest not only because of the fresh Near Eastern stimulus that may be seen in it but also because of its possible future importance in the dating of Persian lusterware itself and for its

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1. Frothingham, Lusterware, op.cit., p.23.

2. Ibn Battūta, for example, states that Chinese ware was exported to Morocco but does not mention Spain. See: Ibn Battūta, op.cit., Vol.4, p.256.

influence on later Hispano-Moresque ceramics. The manufacture of luster pottery in al-Andalus came to an end while its products still displayed admirable qualities. By the mid-fourteenth century Nasrid maritime power was severely curtailed and pottery had to be ferried to Christian ports in Cataluña and Valencia, paying high shipping rates and taxes, before it could be exported. At the same time, the monarchy, the major patron of and market for pottery, was involved in constant battles for succession. In order to be able to sell their produce, Muslim potters were forced to move north to Murcia and Valencia.<sup>1</sup> There they continued to make "Islamic" pottery and, to paraphrase Gómez-Moreno, to magically transform base materials into works of art.

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1. By 1491, in fact, potters had to be summoned to Malaga from Valencia because there was no one left in the former town who knew how to make glazed pottery.

DRAWINGS

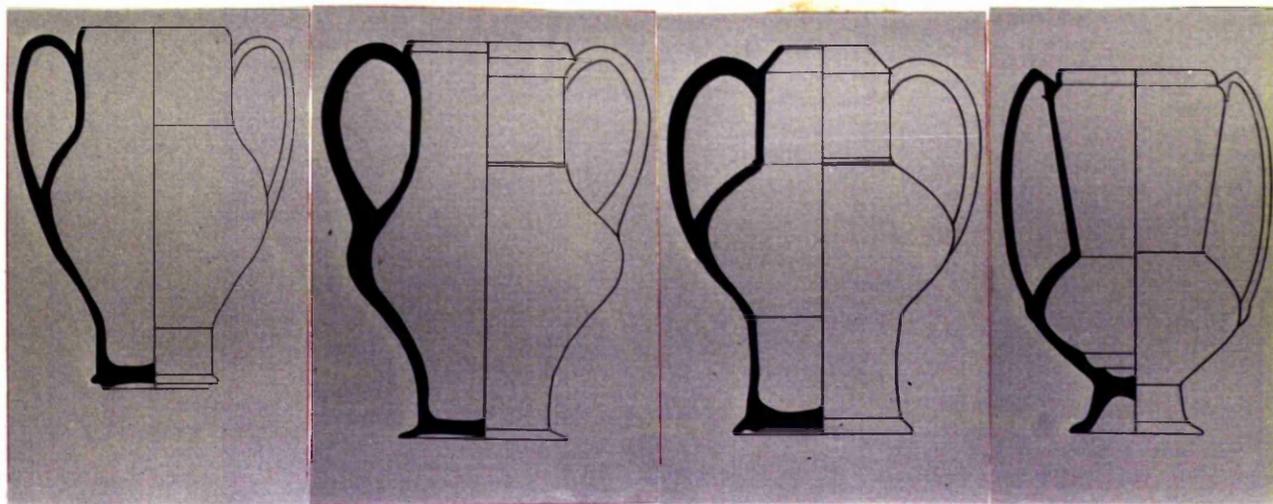


Figure I: 1. Almohad-Almoravid vase, Instituto de Valencia de Don Juan; 2. Early Nasrid vase, Instituto de Valencia de Don Juan; 3. Nasrid vase - Museo de la Alhambra, # 2.818; 4. Nasrid vase, Museo de la Alhambra, # 111.

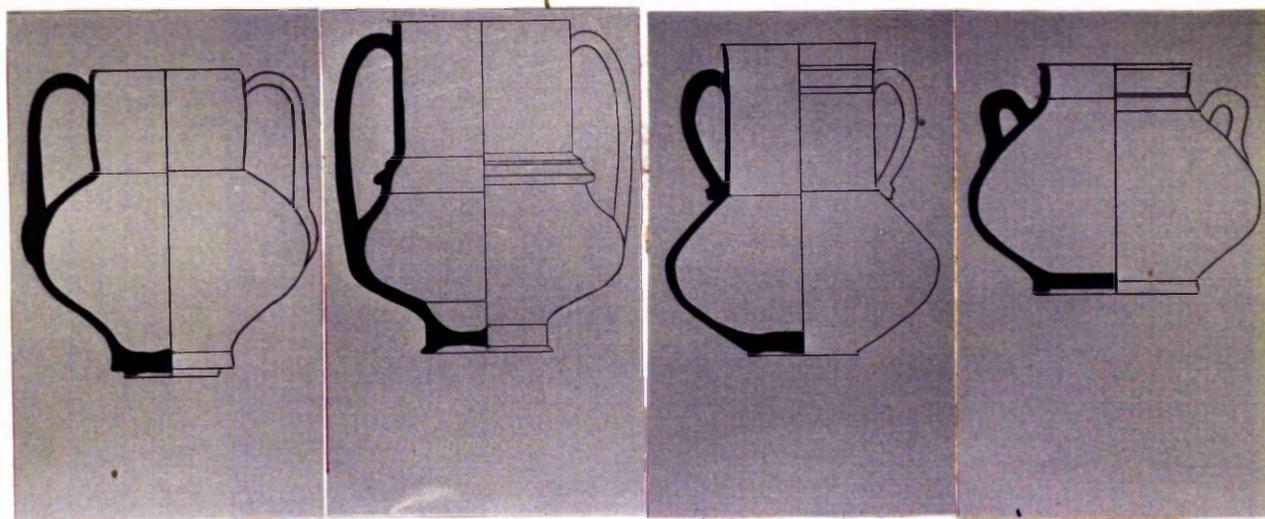


Figure II: 1. Nasrid vase, Museo de la Alhambra, # 463; 2. Nasrid vase, Instituto de Valencia de Don Juan; 3. Nasrid vase, Museo Arqueologico Nacional, # 454; 4. Nasrid pot, Museo Arqueologico Nacional, # 489.

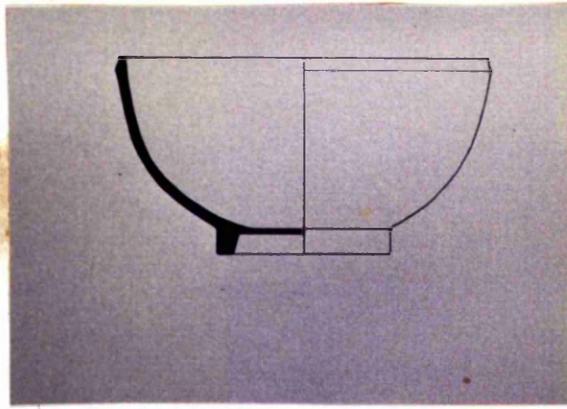


Figure III: Early Nasrid bowl, Museo de la Alhambra, # 1235.

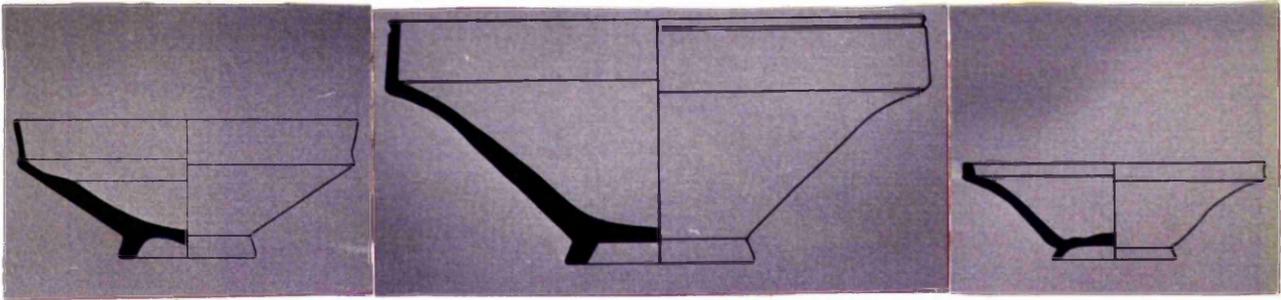


Figure IV: 1. Nasrid bowl, Museo Arqueologico, # 212;  
 2. Nasrid bowl, Museo de la Alhambra, # 1207;  
 3. Nasrid bowl, Museo de la Alhambra, # 128 (4667).

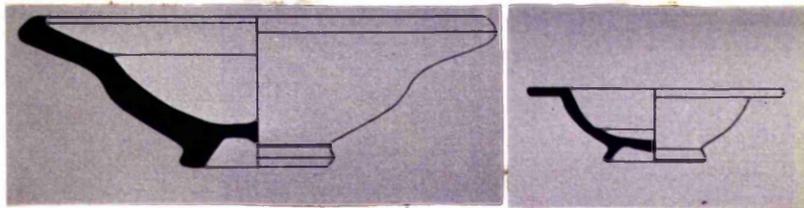


Figure V: 1. Nasrid bowl, Museo de la Alhambra, # 4664;  
 2. Nasrid bowl, Museo de la Alhambra, # 330.

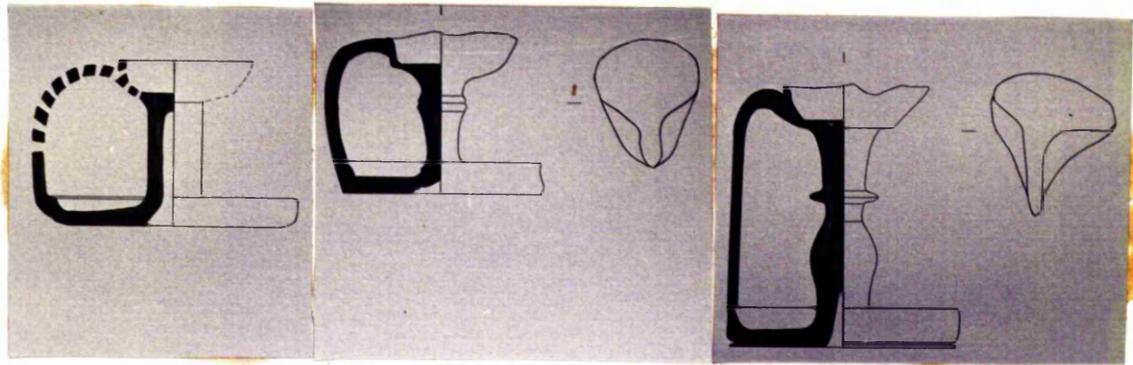


Figure VI: 1. Nasrid oil lamp, Museo Arqueologico Nacional, # 8287; 2. Nasrid oil lamp, Museo Arqueologico Nacional, # 444; 3. Nasrid oil lamp, Museo Arqueologico Nacional, # 704.

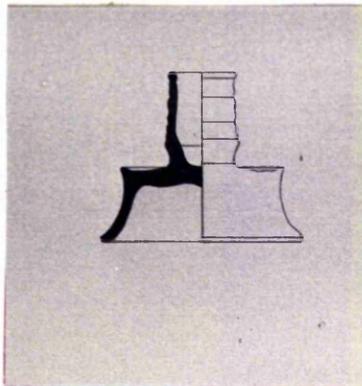


Figure VII: Nasrid candlestick, Museo Arqueologico Nacional, # 55.

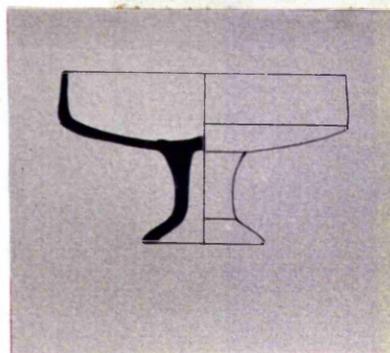


Figure VIII: Nasrid goblet, Museo de la Alhambra.

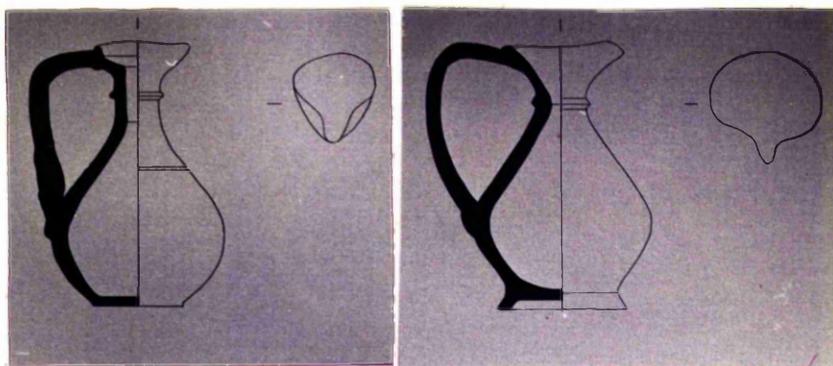


Figure IX: 1. Pre-Nasrid pitcher, Museo Arqueologico Nacional, # 37. 2. Nasrid pitcher, Museo Arqueologico Nacional, # 336.

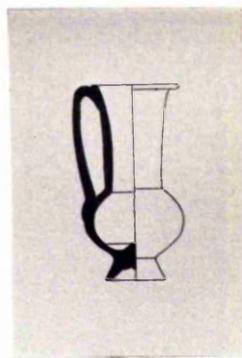


Figure X: Nasrid ewer, Museo Arqueologico Nacional, # 317.

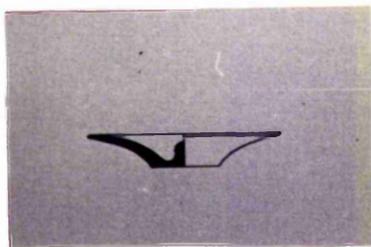


Figure XI: Nasrid vase lid, Museo de la Alhambra, # 118.

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