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### Continuity and innovation in Syrian artisanal traditions of the 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries

Ceramic evidence from the Syrian-French Citadel of Damascus excavations

*Continuité et innovation des traditions artisanales syriennes du IX<sup>e</sup> au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Les témoignages du matériel céramique trouvé sur la fouille syro-française de la citadelle de Damas*

*استمرارية التقاليد الحرفية من القرن التاسع وإلى القرن الثالث عشر: شواهد من مادة الخزف المستخرج من عمليات التنقيب السورية الفرنسية في قلعة دمشق*

Stephen McPhillips

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# Continuity and innovation in Syrian artisanal traditions of the 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries

## Ceramic evidence from the Syrian-French Citadel of Damascus excavations

Stephen McPHILLIPS

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In the last quarter of the 11<sup>th</sup> century Damascus came under Salġūq control, with the arrival of the Turcoman warlord Atsiz ibn Uvak in the city. The Citadel of Damascus, rapidly built in the northwestern corner of the walled city at this time, was the physical heart of this new powerbase. After 1095 the city was ruled by an *atabeg*, Ṣahīr al-Dīn Tuġtakīn, who governed in his own right from 1104 to 1128, over a quarter century of prosperity, when the life of the court and the city around it were documented by the 12<sup>th</sup> century Damascene chronicler Ibn ‘Asākir.<sup>1</sup> The Damascene court was modelled on that of the Great Salġūqs in the eastern part of the Salġūq empire, the inheritors and patrons of a long and rich cultural tradition. The presence of a court in Damascus may have provided the stimulus for a sustained development in elite artisanal production in the city in the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, building on local technical traditions dating to at least the 10<sup>th</sup> century. This paper considers the perspective offered by the rich ceramic material culture of 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century Damascus, drawing on new evidence from the joint Syrian-French excavations in the Citadel of Damascus from 2000 to 2004.<sup>2</sup>

The Citadel corpus belongs to archaeological phases with a direct relationship to the architectural development of the Citadel complex.<sup>3</sup> This has for the first time enabled the establishment of a typo-chronology from an urban site in Southern Syria, covering the transition from Fatimid to Ayyubid dynasties. Directly connected to the élite communities of the court and garrison, this corpus provides a solid basis for defining the material culture

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1. ÉLISSÉEFF 1959. Elaborate protocol featured at the Salġūq and Būrid court in Damascus, and although not on quite the same level as was reported in the court at Baghdad, a considerable number of state ceremonies were routinely held in the Citadel (MOUTON 1994, p. 154-155).

2. Directed by Edmond El-Ajji (Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums of Syria, Damascus Citadel) and Sophie Berthier (Ifead-CNRS LAMM Aix-en-Provence). The ceramic material was studied between 2001 and 2003 with EU Euromed funding, the total corpus analysed containing some 26,500 items. Additional material from the final excavation campaigns was studied between autumn 2004 and summer 2005, financed by Total Syria.

3. The final publication programme of the Citadel is ongoing. Preliminary publications are therefore referred to here: BERTHIER 2001-2002, 2002-2003 and 2006; GARDIOL 2001-2002; and HARTMANN-VIRNICH 2001-2002 and 2004.

of the city, which has been largely invisible up to now. It throws new light on regional ceramic chronologies, and offers new perspectives for understanding the transfers of technical expertise in the medieval Middle East. The Citadel pottery bears recognisably Damascene material culture traits, grounded in centuries of artisanal practices in the city.<sup>4</sup>

Technically complex glazed stoneware feature prominently in the corpus: this class of pottery was made from an artificial composite body composed primarily of crushed quartz, with the addition of small quantities of glass frit and white ball-clay. The successful production of stoneware demanded an absolute mastery of the intricate preparation of a composite paste, and the exact conditions of its firing, decoration and glazing.<sup>5</sup> One of the major innovations of the Islamic period potter, stoneware is often considered to have appeared in the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> centuries in Egypt or Iran.<sup>6</sup> The analysis of the Damascus assemblage has necessitated a reassessment of this view, as stoneware pottery was present in the city prior to the construction of the Salġūq Citadel, and then underwent a period of experimentation and technological standardisation over the course of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. This paper draws on the material excavated in the Citadel to argue that the further innovation of painting beneath a transparent alkaline glaze is likely to have been a long-standing practice in Damascus, rather than a technique invented in Iran that subsequently filtered westwards in the later 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>7</sup> Related processes of change are to be seen within the rest of the ceramic repertoire from the Citadel: the increased use and variety of lead and alkaline glazing techniques over the same period, and the introduction of other characteristics, such as the use of glazed cooking pots, and glazed slip painted and incised wares that are related to material culture trends common throughout southern Bilād al-Šām.

### The evidence for Abbasid to Ayyubid ceramic production in Damascus

In 1949 Arthur Lane proposed a chronological model for the development and transmission of Islamic fine glazed pottery in Egypt, Iraq and Iran. Lane positioned Damascus in his schema only after the Mongol raids had curtailed production activities at Raqqa on the Euphrates in 1259, ascribing to it the production of an underglaze painted stoneware tradition derived from that of this northern city.<sup>8</sup> Glazed pottery excavated or

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4. Glazed ceramics are first apparent in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> century in the Citadel. Ceramic material from this period is residual in archaeological contexts laid down in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Pers. com. Sophie Berthier 2010.

5. Covered in depth by ALLAN 1973, p. 113-114; ALLAN *et al.* 1973, p. 165-173; CAIGER-SMITH 1985, p. 199; and MASON & TITE 1994, p. 77-78. For ethnographic studies on twentieth century stoneware production, see BAZL 1939, p. 1703-1705, and WULFF 1966, p. 165-167.

6. Lane favoured an Iranian origin, LANE 1949, p. 32; while more recently scholars have suggested that Egypt was more likely, e.g. PORTER & WATSON 1987, p. 189; SCANLON 1999, p. 265-266.

7. For example LANE 1949, p. 44-45.

8. LANE 1949, p. 44-45; LANE 1957, p. 15-16.

attributed to Damascus has similarly been afforded almost exclusively a Mamluk date.<sup>9</sup> In contrast, the Syrian-French work in the Citadel indicates a much broader chronological range, which suggests that the city, rather than being on the periphery of ceramic technical advances, was in fact a major centre of innovation and production. Archaeological evidence for ceramic production in Damascus is frustratingly limited, given that Eustache de Lorey undertook the excavation of a large area of kilns in what was a potters' quarter located outside Bāb Šarqī, the eastern gate of the city, where an arguably industrial-scale ceramic production occurred, as opposed to an independent artisanal activity. The material from this excavation and any accompanying documentation is now lost, although a photographic record of some pieces has been identified in the archives of the Louvre Museum, and appears to show glazed stoneware vessels of 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century date.<sup>10</sup> Photographs of the excavations and some of the pottery recovered were published in an article by Georges Contenau detailing new French excavations in Syria at the time of the awarding of the French mandate over the country: this includes images of some ceramic vessels most likely to be of Mamluk date when compared to the Damascus Citadel material.<sup>11</sup> Contenau nonetheless indicates that the stoneware kiln wasters found alongside consisted of many styles of decoration: "*Parmi les fragments de tous styles qui sont bien de la pâte sableuse et blanche particulière à Damas*". He goes on to mention a figural decoration recalling the "*influence persane de Rhagès*" (Rayy in Iran), with the use of a red underglaze painted colorant of "*un rouge cerise de la plus belle coloration; le bleu turquoise était également imité à Damas*".<sup>12</sup> Jean Sauvaget observed a "*très grand nombre de pièces et de fragments du genre bien connu sous le nom 'céramique de Rakka' (décor noir sous glaçure bleu de cuivre)*" amongst the pottery excavated by De Lorey in this area.<sup>13</sup> Taken together, these comments provide tantalising corroborating evidence for the Damascene production of an important class of 12<sup>th</sup> and early 13<sup>th</sup> century underglaze painted stoneware pottery as attested in the Citadel excavations.<sup>14</sup>

Textual sources confirm the existence of potters' quarters in this sector of the city, with Abū Šāma (d. 665/1268), recording in 1265 that he was born in 600/1203 in the *darb al-fawāḥir*, the street of the potteries, in the Bāb Šarqī neighbourhood.<sup>15</sup> Ibn 'Asākir meanwhile refers to the production of different types of ceramic items in two other extramural areas of the city in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, unsurprising given the potential fire hazard, and the

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9. This includes a corpus of Mamluk ceramics from the Roman necropolis in the Bāb Sarīḡa area of the city (TOUEIR 1973), and a group without secure provenance from the village of Kafr Batna, 6km east of the city (GIBBS 1998/1999).

10. I wish to thank Sophie Makariou of the Department of the Arts of Islam at the Louvre for kindly providing copies of the photographs of pottery from the Bāb Šarqī excavations she identified in the museum archives. The approximate dating of the pieces is afforded by reference to the Citadel pottery typology.

11. CONTENAU 1924, 205, pl. 48:2, Ceramic material postdating 1260 from the Citadel has been studied by Véronique François (CNRS-LAMM), see FRANÇOIS 2008.

12. CONTENAU 1924, p. 205.

13. SAUVAGET 1932, p. 6.

14. Discussed below.

15. cited in MILWRIGHT 1999, p. 510.

generally malodorous nature of this activity.<sup>16</sup> Recent Syrian excavations in the vicinity of Bāb Kīṣān, the southeastern city gate of Damascus, 500 metres distant from Bāb Šarqī, have produced evidence for the production of alkaline glazed calcareous pottery in the 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, indicating that the production of glazed ceramics along this perimeter of the city was likely to have been of long standing<sup>17</sup>.

The most significant evidence for medieval pottery production in the Damascus area was provided by the excavation of kilns and adjacent waste dumps in the extra-mural Ṣālīḥiyya neighbourhood by Abu'l Faraj al-'Ush.<sup>18</sup> This unearthed a rich corpus of fine-walled, mould-decorated cream wares and their accompanying moulds, a selection of this material now on display in the National Museum. The finds were interpreted by the excavator as Mamluk in date, on the basis of iconographic comparison to material from excavations at Baalbek and Sauvaget's publication of similar pottery from clandestine digs in Damascus.<sup>19</sup> By contrast, in the Citadel fine mould-decorated wares occur primarily in 12<sup>th</sup> century contexts (**fig. 7.2**), whilst small quantities are present in 11<sup>th</sup> century. This represents a tradition stemming from the fine cream wares which make their first appearance in Bilād al-Šām in the late 8<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>20</sup> and may represent a middle stage in a transition towards a thicker-walled variant found in the Citadel in Mamluk contexts,<sup>21</sup> and known more widely in the region in that period.<sup>22</sup> A signed jar now in Kuwait, significant in that it bears an inscription indicating that it was made in Damascus, has also been assigned a 13<sup>th</sup> century date in the art historical literature.<sup>23</sup> This cobalt glazed stonepaste vessel, decorated in a pale yellow metallic lustre paint, may however relate to a small quantity of fragments in a comparable ceramic class identified in 12<sup>th</sup> century contexts in the Citadel; certainly, no lustre painted wares are attested in Damascus after the mid 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>24</sup>

16. ELISSÉEFF 1956, p. 71, n°29 and p. 69, n°18.

17. Dating based on comparison with the Damascus Citadel assemblage. Excavated by Yamen Dabbour (DGAMS Damascus). I thank him for allowing me to see this material, which includes kiln bars, in 2005.

18. ABU'L-FARAJ AL-'USH, 1960 and 1963; ABU'L-FARAJ AL-'USH *et al.* 1999.

19. SARRE 1925, p. 115-123, SAUVAGET 1932.

20. CYTRYN-SILVERMAN 2010, p. 107; WALMSLEY 1995, p. 664-668.

21. FRANÇOIS 2008.

22. AVISSAR & STERN 2005, p. 117, fig. 46; POULSEN 1957, p. 244-248, fig. 856-869.

23. LANE 1957, p. 15-17; JENKINS 1983, p. 84; WATSON 2004, p. 396-397.

24. FRANÇOIS 2008, Robert Mason has argued that Damascus was the primary production centre for underglaze painted stonepaste ceramics from the 12<sup>th</sup> century on the basis of his identification of a "Damascus petrofabric" in samples of pottery fragments from an illicit excavation near Ma'arrat al-Nu'mān in the Hama region, donated to the Ashmolean Museum in 1980, and from a larger series of unprovenanced, excavated and surface-collected material from various museum and private collections (MASON 1995, p. 13-15 and 1997, p. 179). Mason contends that this material was made in Damascus on the basis both of stylistic comparison, and the assertion that the city was the sole centre for the production of Syrian stonepaste between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries (MASON 1997, p. 179). A significant proportion of the underglaze polychrome painted pottery he tested was assigned to this "petrofabric" (MASON 1995, p. 15-16).

## The archaeological basis of the ceramic study

The Syrian-French Citadel of Damascus project concentrated its activities in the northeastern and southwestern parts of the Citadel complex, examining both architectural and archaeological evidence, to investigate the complex transition which took place from the building of the first Salġūq Citadel in the late 11<sup>th</sup> century, through to the reconstruction work of the Ayyubid sultan al-‘Ādil of the first quarter of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and its many subsequent Mamluk and Ottoman alterations.<sup>25</sup> These areas were also chosen for their potential to provide rich data about civil or domestic life in the Citadel, including structures which possessed more than a purely defensive function. The Ayyubid columned audience hall provided the main focus of investigation in the northeastern sector of the Citadel (CD2), and it is the stratigraphic sequence established in this zone that has enabled the creation of a pottery typo-chronology consisting of eight distinct phases over the 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. A foundation inscription of the sultan al-‘Ādil, provides a *terminus ante quem* of 610/1213-1214 for archaeological strata sealed by this structure.<sup>26</sup> Excavation of sub-floor deposits brought to light the lower courses and foundations of a structure lying beneath the western part of the audience hall, composed of small re-used irregular stone blocks typical of Salġūq architectural elements elsewhere within the Citadel, and cut by the walls of the overlying structure.<sup>27</sup> This building features water pipes which fed directly into large wash basins constructed of limestone slabs, mortar and brick, and then into associated drains, which contained significant ceramic, animal bone and glass material. The building functioned in a service capacity, possibly as the kitchens associated with the 12<sup>th</sup> century royal residence,<sup>28</sup> the *Dār al-Ridwān*, which Ibn Kaṭīr situates in this northern part of the Citadel complex, and the administrative palace, the *Dār al-‘Imārah* which Ibn Šaddād states likewise was used as a dwelling.<sup>29</sup> Much of the pottery from the building consists of fine wares,<sup>30</sup> while cooking pots and small porous water jugs also feature prominently (**fig. 1.1-1.4**). Internal dividing walls were added in an intermediate construction phase, while towards the end of its life at the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century,

25. BERTHIER 2001-2002, p. 39-41.

26. Situated on the exterior of Tower 7, which contains the eastern gate between the Citadel and Damascus *intra muros*. Architectural analysis has argued convincingly that the tower was the last element built in a construction programme to which the columned hall belonged, and that it predates this inscription by a small margin, dating to approximately 1210 (Sophie Berthier and Andreas Hartmann-Virnich, pers. comm.). The audience hall had been previously dated to 1215 (HANISCH 1996, p. 79).

27. BERTHIER 2001-2002, p. 42-43; BERTHIER 2002-2003, p. 406-408. The only known Salġūq inscription is a secondary reinsertion on the exterior flank of Tower 25 in the west of the Citadel, and is dated 1085 (HANISCH 1992, p. 489).

28. An initial interpretation of this building as a *ḥammām* has now been amended. The basins bear no resemblance to latrines in the Citadel, being higher and possessing a raised sub-structure, with long vertical evacuation pipes. In addition there is no evidence of a hypocaust system that one would expect in a *ḥammām*/bath house, while there are beaten earth floors that one definitely would not (BERTHIER 2002 and pers. comm.). The dating of the building suggested in the preliminary publication (pre-Salġūq), has now been reinterpreted (BERTHIER 2002-2003, p. 406).

29. CHEVEDDEN 1986, p. 38-39, n. 50-51.

30. Matched by fine glassware, and sheep bones derived from choice cuts of meat. The study of glass and faunal material was undertaken by Danielle Foy (CNRS-LAMM Aix-en-Provence) and Lionel Gourichon (CEPAM, CNRS, Nice).



it underwent a transformation into what may be a domestic structure and the basins go out of use.<sup>31</sup> Coin dates and glass parallels are consistent with the dating of the five distinct archaeological phases in this structure between the founding of the Citadel in the last quarter of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, or in the early years of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The foundations of both the service building and the audience hall sit directly on bedrock, leaving few *in situ* remains pre-dating the construction of the Salġūq Citadel; however an archaeological phase with a relative dating in the first three quarters of the 11<sup>th</sup> century was sealed beneath a contemporary exterior paved surface to the east.<sup>32</sup> This included within it residual 9<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> century material from archaeological deposits that overlay a *tessera* floor broken up *in situ* and dated to not later than 814.

The Syrian-French project also investigated the double-storied structure in the southwestern sector of the Citadel complex (CD5), the “Southwest Building”.<sup>33</sup> This building, referred to by Sauvaget as the *palais ayyoubide*,<sup>34</sup> has been demonstrated to have had primarily a military function when it was initially erected, in all likelihood during the reign of Ṣalāh al-Dīn.<sup>35</sup> Ceramic material was deposited in earth packing used in various construction elements of this building, including up to 35% of stonepaste pottery in a sealing layer of yellow clay on the roof of the structure. This was possibly intended to aid in drainage or impact absorption beneath a platform for a counterweight trebuchet, known from written sources to have been positioned on high points in the Citadel. Projectiles likely to have been used in such a device were also excavated in clay deposits atop the structure. Foundation inscriptions on the exterior towers of the Citadel provide a *terminus ante quem* for the construction of the southwest building in 1207, their construction rendering it militarily redundant.<sup>36</sup> In the final stages of the Syrian French project smaller scale excavations took place in other parts of the Citadel, notably in the zones adjacent the eastern Ayyubid gateway (CD18) and the Salġūq southern gateway and enceinte (CD4 and CD6). Archaeological deposits in these areas were studied in 2005 and provide, in some instances, data for the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century unavailable elsewhere in the excavations.

## The appearance of alkaline and tin opacified glazes in Damascus

Archaeological evidence indicates that alkaline and tin opacified glazes become a common ceramic in Bilād al-Šām surface adornment from the late 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> centuries, primarily at urban or fortified centres in the southern part of the region. They are present

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31. BERTHIER 2002-2003, p. 408.

32. Berthier pers. comm. 2010. Ceramic dating evidence is supported by parallels in diagnostic glass fragments studied by Danielle Foy, CNRS Aix-en-Provence. Foy pers. comm.

33. BERTHIER 2001-2002, p. 37-40; GARDIOL 2001-2002.

34. SAUVAGET 1930, p. 219.

35. Pers. comm. Berthier 2010.

36. BERTHIER 2001-2002, p. 43 and GARDIOL 2001-2002, p. 57.

in northern Syria, at sites in the Euphrates valley and the Jazirah, from the 10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>37</sup> Turquoise and bottle-green glazed pottery occurs in small quantities in 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> century contexts in the Citadel excavations, primarily in association with a calcareous, often reduction-fired, earthenware ceramic body, and in open forms (bowls with out-curved rims, small globular bowls, straight-sided pots: **fig. 2.1-2.3**). These were found in small quantities, reflecting the comparative rarity of glazed pottery in what at this time was a residential quarter of the city prior to the Citadel's construction.<sup>38</sup> Evidence for the production of this ware in this same period (approximately 800-1085) has been unearthed by Syrian excavations in 2004 in the vicinity of the Bāb Kīsān gate in the southeast of the city.<sup>39</sup> This pottery group includes examples with underglaze painting in pale brown, reddish brown, greenish brown and black paint, colours obtained with the use of manganese oxide. The use of a clear, transparent, colourless glaze is little attested in Damascus. A soda-flux was likely employed to produce the alkaline glaze, a Persian pottery treatise mentions the burning of the plant *salsola soda*, which occurs naturally in Syria, to produce a form of soda.<sup>40</sup>

Alkaline glazed earthenware remains an important part of the Citadel repertoire until the late 12<sup>th</sup> century, when it disappears completely, a phenomenon also observed at Tall Qaymūn in northern Palestine<sup>41</sup>, whereas in the Euphrates valley it is a common feature until the 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>42</sup> Two main developments are evident in Damascus in the 12<sup>th</sup> century: the arrival of the ledge-rimmed bowl (**fig. 2.4**), and a shift away from pale, sometimes reduction-fired fabrics, to a dense red lime-rich fabric. The most frequent glaze colour is turquoise, the green glaze being restricted to 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> century examples. This class of pottery is significant because it demonstrates the existence of a pre-existing tradition of alkaline glaze use in Damascus, and it is tempting to suggest that this could represent a technical precursor to both the production of alkaline glazed stonepaste ceramic, and to the technique of under glaze painting. Evidence for the making of alkaline glazed earthenwares in southern Bilād al-Šām is currently limited to some unpublished kilns near Tiberias,<sup>43</sup> while in the Euphrates valley and northern Syria similar pottery appears to have been widely produced.<sup>44</sup> A small sub group of this ware from the third quarter of the 12<sup>th</sup> century in Damascus, is a likely import, (**fig. 2.5**) possibly from Beirut where similar examples were found in a kiln deposit.<sup>45</sup> A second distinctive sub-group of

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37. A non-exhaustive list of stratified material includes: 'Āna (NORTHEGE *et al.* 1988, p. 102); Baysān (HADAD 1999, p. 215); Busrā (BERTHIER 1985, p. 14); Fustāt (Iṣṭabl 'Antar) (GAYRAUD, TRÉGLIA & VALLAURI 2009, p. 189); Qal'at al-Ġa'bar (TONGHINI 1998, p. 55-57, 70); Raqqa: Tall Aswad (WATSON 1999, p. 83) and Tall Qaymūn (AVISSAR 1996, p. 82, 84-85, 102, 104).

38. CHEVEDDEN 1986, p. 26; BERTHIER 2002-03, p. 13.

39. See note 12.

40. ALLAN 1973, Section 7, 116.

41. AVISSAR 1996, p. 85.

42. TONGHINI 1998, p. 55-57.

43. AVISSAR 1996, p. 85; OREN 1971.

44. BERTHIER *et al.* 2001, p. 148; MAHMOUD 1978, 3, fig. 11-12a-b; TONGHINI 1998, p. 56; WAAGÉ 1948, p. 87.

45. FRANÇOIS *et al.* 2003, p. 334-337.



glazed pottery appears only in the 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, in archaeological contexts sealed by the floor surface associated with the Salġūq service building, and has an opaque tin or lead glaze, producing a bluish white colour, and consists of open bowls and pots, often with a cut or incised ornamentation (**fig. 2.6-2.7**). This class finds close morphological parallels in contemporaneous lead-glazed pottery, and regional parallels at a small number of urban sites in Bilād al-Šām and with the Iraqi productions of opaque glazed wares, although the latter are thrown in a yellow paste unlike the generally pink lime rich calcareous clay used in Damascus.<sup>46</sup>

### Lead glazed ceramics

Lead glazed pottery is a consistent occurrence in the Citadel repertoire, attested already in 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> centuries, and continuing in an unbroken tradition through to the late Ottoman period, thus emphasising the continuity and longevity of ceramic glazing in Damascus. This class of pottery is executed in a yellow or green glaze in conjunction with a white or cream coloured slip, and ornamented by means of glaze splashing, incision or slip-painting. The earliest 9<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> century group of lead glazed pottery in the assemblage is thrown in small and large bowls and straight-sided pots (**fig. 2.8-2.9**), sharing morphological and technical characteristics with alkaline and tin opacified surface treatments found in the corpus, and strongly suggestive of a local production.<sup>47</sup> A small group with a lime rich fabric is found in 11<sup>th</sup> century contexts in Damascus, and bears close parallels with contemporary examples published from Ĥirbat al-Ĥurrumiyya near Tiberias, potentially indicative of a Damascene or other southern Syrian or north Palestinian production centre (**fig. 2.10**).<sup>48</sup>

By the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century, there is a notable increase in the occurrence of lead glazed pottery in Bilād al-Šām. Damascus is no exception, witnessing the appearance of a local range of bowl forms thrown in an iron-rich clay with abundant quartz temper in conjunction with the use of lead glazing, and incised or slip-painted decoration, and in rare instances a monochrome glaze or the absence of a glaze at all (**fig. 3.1-3.4**). The fashion for this broad family of pottery was widespread and variants are common in the area between the Sinai peninsula and northern Syria.<sup>49</sup> The same technique is used to produce quite different shapes and decoration in Cyprus.<sup>50</sup> It is likely that this represents a transmission of technical know-how and decorative styles rather than distribution of the objects

46. In Bilād al-Šām: 'Aqaba (WHITCOMB 1988, p. 212); Qaṣr al-Ĥayr al-Šarqī (GRABAR *et al.* 1978, p. 114); Tall Aswad (Raḡqa) (WATSON 1999, p. 83); Tall Qaymūn (AVISSAR 1996, p. 85-86). Discussed in NORTHEDGE & KENNET 1994 and excavated at Sīrāf (WHITEHOUSE 1979, p. 59-60).

47. Notable Syrian and Palestinian parallels include Abū Ġawš (DE VAUX and STÈVE 1950, 120-22, Pl. A); Ĥirbat al-Ĥurrumiyya (STERN & STACEY 2000, 174; fig. 3:6-7); Tall Aswad (Raḡqa) (TONGHINI and HENDERSON 1998); Tall Šahīn (TONGHINI 1995, fig. 5: f, h); Tall Qaymūn (AVISSAR 1996, p. 81-82).

48. STERN & STACEY 2000, 175-176.

49. A useful recent summary of many of the numerous occurrences of lead glazed wares dating from the 12<sup>th</sup> in Bilād al-Šām is provided by AVISSAR & STERN 2005, p. 6-23.

50. VON WARTBURG 1997.

themselves, as the wide morphological and fabric variations argues for a local production of this pottery at centres such as Damascus, and at Beirut, where production has been attested.<sup>51</sup> In Damascus in the Mamluk period lead glazed vessel forms become thicker and the decoration less finely applied, combined with the use of monochrome glazing, gouging and the application of a reserve slip. Into the Ottoman centuries shapes change, with much less use of slip,<sup>52</sup> continuing right up to the Bakelite and plastic versions of these bowls made in the region today.

Glazed casseroles, cooking pots and unglazed jars are thrown in a very similar fabric in Damascus. As at a range of sites from mid Syria southwards, the fine walled globular marmite, with lead glaze applied on the interior surface to facilitate cleaning, occurs from the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards (**fig. 1.1**).<sup>53</sup> It is a direct descendant of a vessel form that has its origins in the third century,<sup>54</sup> and continues to be common in Mamluk levels, although in a much thicker and more coarsely made ware.<sup>55</sup> Other variants of wheel made cooking vessel from the Citadel excavations (**fig. 1.2**) are similarly widely distributed in western and southern Bilād al-Šām from the 12<sup>th</sup> century. There is a high percentage of related red terracotta or “brittle ware” pottery present in pre-Salġūq phases in the Citadel of Damascus, and it is likely that the link between early and middle Islamic fine walled cooking wares lies here.<sup>56</sup>

### Stonepaste ceramics in Damascus

The first stonepaste ceramics are found in the 11<sup>th</sup> century phase in the Citadel excavations,<sup>57</sup> adding to evidence from sites in northern Syria,<sup>58</sup> Egypt,<sup>59</sup> and Iran<sup>60</sup> for an early development of this ceramic technology at different locations across the Middle East.<sup>61</sup> Technically complex, this ware required secondary kiln processes for the application of

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51. WAKSMAN 2002.

52. FRANÇOIS 2008.

53. Northedge dates this from the 11<sup>th</sup> century at ‘Ammān (NORTHEGE 1992, fig. 137:5, 141:2) and a similar dating is given at Beirut (SEEDEN & EL-MASRI 1999, p. 400, fig. 3:9-10) and Tall Qaymūn (AVISSAR 1996, p. 135).

54. Seen most clearly in assemblages in southern Bilād al-Šām, for example MAGNESS 1993, p. 211-213.

55. FRANÇOIS 2008.

56. The unglazed ceramics from archaeological phases predating the construction of the Citadel were not studied in detail owing to the large quantities of residual Byzantine and early Islamic ceramics present. The term “brittle wares” was coined in the publication of the American excavations at Doura Europos (DYSON 1968), and considerable recent work has expanded our understanding of this phenomenon in Syria, see particularly BARTL *et al.* 1995, and VOKAER 2007.

57. 21 stonepaste fragments were identified in 11<sup>th</sup> century phases at the conclusion of the first phase of the pottery study in 2003 (McPHILLIPS 2006, Appendix 5). The final stages of the study have strengthened this body of evidence, revealing an additional 30-40 fragments belonging to this phase.

58. BERTHIER *et al.* 2001, p. 143-144; TONGHINI 1998, p. 40; HENDERSON 1999, p. 262-263.

59. SCANLON 1999, MASON & TITE 1994, p. 90.

60. RUGIADI 2010.

61. I thank Mats Roslund, University of Lund, for showing me cobalt glazed and incised stonepaste sherds excavated at Sigtuna, a Swedish royal capital, and dated by association to dendrochronological samples to the late 11<sup>th</sup> or very early 12<sup>th</sup> century (ROSLUND 2008).

coloured alkaline glazes, and were frequently accompanied by either in-glaze or underglaze painting, and the use of a metallic oxide “lustre” painting glaze technique, all involving a range of mineral derived components.<sup>62</sup> The Damascus assemblage is significant for the evidence it provides suggesting that a development in stonepaste technologies and production practices took place from the 11<sup>th</sup> century. The material from the 11<sup>th</sup> century is highly fragmentary, reflecting its archaeological provenance, from secondary deposits in the former northwestern part of the walled city, incorporated in construction layers of the Salġūq Citadel in ca. 1075 to 1085. Illustrated here is an example of a turquoise glazed bowl, bearing faint traces of metallic lustre painting (**fig. 4.1**), and two unusual pieces in opaque white glaze and lustre painted or incised decoration (**fig. 4.2-4.3**). One small eroded bowl fragment provides evidence for the use of in-glaze or underglaze painting at this time, possessing fine, cobalt stripes beneath a colourless glaze (**fig. 4.5**). Present prior to the Citadel’s construction, this first stonepaste class is concentrated in early to mid-12<sup>th</sup> century phases but is mostly absent by the later 12<sup>th</sup> century. It is thin-walled, with a characteristic dense, brilliant white body and smooth, hard, sometimes opacified glaze. In colour it is principally turquoise or white, but cobalt blue also makes an appearance (**fig. 4.8**), as do morphological traits such as the thin splayed foot and conical profile. Incised or champlévé decoration (**fig. 4.6-4.7**) is accompanied by the use of underglaze painting, both in a handful of examples in which the paint runs slightly within the glaze (**fig. 4.4-4.5**), and in the first instances of the more technically successful underglaze painting (**fig. 5**).<sup>63</sup>

From the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century a large quantity of a standardised range of more thickly walled, friable, white stonepaste bowl forms dominates the Citadel assemblage. It displays more diversification in the use of glaze colorants, and greater use of under glaze painted or incised decoration. Illustrated here are examples of the main stonepaste classes found: monochrome glazed (turquoise, greenish or colourless) often with incised decoration (**fig. 5.1**), turquoise and cobalt underglaze painted (**fig. 5.2-5.4**), and rare examples under a green or violet manganese glaze (**fig. 5.5-5.6**). A polychrome underglaze painted ceramic is well represented in the Citadel assemblage through the 12<sup>th</sup> and early 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, belonging to what is sometimes still referred to as “Resafa Ware” in the art historical literature. It incorporates the use of vegetal and figural elements in black, cobalt and dark red beneath a colourless glaze (**fig. 6.1-6.3**); the red-painted elements visible as a thicker paste in comparison to the other colours used. The vessel shapes, and to a lesser degree the decorative repertoire, are very close to those used in the other underglaze painted pottery classes at the Citadel, and on a rapid visual comparison differ considerably from the vessel forms or iconographic repertoires of polychrome underglaze painted stonepaste wares to be seen at Hama or Aleppo.<sup>64</sup> The related technique of painting under an alkaline glaze itself can be demonstrated to be long lived in Damascus, beginning before 1085 on the

62. See ALLAN 1973 for discussion and analysis of the treatise of Abū l-Qāsim on stonepaste ceramics.

63. Two stonepaste jars found in Damascus in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (MIGEON 1907, p. 206; POULSEN 1957, p. 138; PORTER & WATSON 1987, A35) and now in Paris may equate to this class of ceramic.

64. POULSEN 1957; GONNELLA 1999.

earthenware group (fig. 2.2), appearing in some fine, possibly experimental, examples of in-glaze painting on stonepaste body in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century (fig. 4.4-4.5), and continuing into the period of standardisation in the later 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. It then becomes a more common artisanal production in the city in both the Mamluk and Ottoman eras (FRANÇOIS 2008).<sup>65</sup>

Considerable quantities of less finely made monochrome glazed stonepaste also appear, often in more utilitarian forms, such as lamps, undecorated bowls and straight-sided pots (fig. 6.4-6.5). Roughly executed underglaze painted decoration on a small number of examples may be indicative of different levels of craft specialisation in stonepaste production (fig. 6.6), a reflection perhaps of the mixed social strata resident within the Citadel itself, including soldiers of the garrison and civilians attached to the court,<sup>66</sup> or a manifestation of the socio-economic links between the residents of the Citadel and the city beyond its walls. Stonepaste pottery from the early 13<sup>th</sup> century in the Citadel exhibits further morphological and decorative developments including a marked increase in more utilitarian forms. This may correspond to the disappearance from use of alkaline glazed earthenware bowls, and foreshadow the expansion in production and broader distribution of stonepaste wares that occurs on a regional level in the Mamluk period.

A chronological development in stonepaste technologies broadly similar to that seen in the Citadel of Damascus excavations has been observed in the Ḥamā Citadel excavations,<sup>67</sup> and at Qal'at al-Ġa'bar and Raqqa in the Euphrates valley.<sup>68</sup> However, an increase in the available archaeological data about stonepaste production and chronologies in Syria renders terminology, used to describe groups known mostly through museum collections and the antiquities market, such as Tall Minis and Raqqa Wares, less workable. The most commonly advanced art historical models proposed for a regional dissemination of influences are not reconcilable with the archaeological evidence from Damascus. Polychrome underglaze painted wares, for example, are present in the Citadel assemblage throughout the 12<sup>th</sup> century, before other so-called "Raqqa" type wares come to prominence in the second half of that century. This conflicts with evidence from northern Syria where "Raqqa wares" have been seen as a late 12<sup>th</sup> or early 13<sup>th</sup> century phenomenon, and with the proposition that a migration of artisans, fleeing the destruction of the potters' quarter at Fuṣṭāṭ, transferred Fāṭimid technologies to Raqqa, and then to Damascus following the Mongol devastation of the Euphrates valley.<sup>69</sup> Stylistic or technological influences have frequently been described as arriving in Syria after having been invented or developed in Iran or Egypt. The Citadel of Damascus material suggests against interpreting Syrian polychrome underglaze painted wares as a derivative version of Iranian Mīnā'ī (overglaze painted) pottery. The former ware occurs in Damascus prior to the first dated Mīnā'ī vessels, and

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65. FRANÇOIS 2008.

66. CHEVEDDEN 1986, p. 17-19.

67. POULSEN 1957, p. 132-136.

68. TONGHINI 1998, p. 289-292; MILWRIGHT 2005, p. 210-213.

69. Proposed first by LANE 1957, p. 15.

are every bit as finely decorated as their overglaze painted relative.<sup>70</sup> Morphological and decorative features, along with the comparative abundance of polychrome underglaze painting, set the Citadel pottery apart from other published stonepaste assemblages in Syria. Metallic lustre painted wares are uncommon and for the most part not related to the rest of the assemblage, reflecting perhaps a limited range of Damascene products and the concentration of centres of production elsewhere. They include a brown, metallic lustre on a transparent greenish or colourless glaze, and small numbers of examples of greenish yellow or remnant lustre painted on turquoise, cobalt and leaf green glazes (fig. 6.7-6.8). Fine mould-decorated, unglazed pottery, is also well represented in 12<sup>th</sup> century contexts in the Citadel, in addition to fragments of “pilgrim flasks” in a thicker hard buff fabric (fig. 7.1-7.2).

## Conclusion

At the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century a new, largely foreign, Salġūq elite installed itself in the Citadel of Damascus, which emphasised a connection to the opulent court at Baghdad in order to legitimise its power. The reign of the *atabeg* Tuġtakīn (1104-1128) was a time of increasing prosperity and stability in Damascus which is the capital of a largely independent territory. It has also been argued that the city absorbed some refugee populations from areas coming under Frankish control to the west, or escaping from instability in Mesopotamia and Iran that may have brought new craft skills or technical knowledge to the city.<sup>71</sup> An expansion in stonepaste production in Damascus from the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> century took place in the context of further urban growth after the arrival of Nūr al-Dīn in the city and the unification of Syria. Clearly, a strong local market existed in the Citadel, and perhaps elsewhere in the city, for these elite products. The distribution of products from Damascus is more difficult to detect. Zangid or Ayyubid material at Baalbek<sup>72</sup> and Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Šarqī may come from Damascus,<sup>73</sup> but most stonepaste assemblages from published sites in southern Bilād al-Šām including Damascene imports seem to postdate 1260.<sup>74</sup>

The Citadel pottery has many connections with the material culture of the wider region, but it also reflects the physical position of the city, situated in an inland oasis, separated from other urban centres on all but the southern side by journeys lasting several days duration over difficult terrain. The city provided primarily for its own ceramic requirements, reflected in many of the distinctively local elements in the Citadel typology and in the

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70. A single fragment of Mīnāṭī ware was found in a later 12<sup>th</sup> century deposit in the Citadel excavation. It is noteworthy that Ibn ‘Asākir discusses the presence of glassblowers in the south east of the city, south of the *via recta*, the area referred to as the *Mašak al-zuġāġ* (ÉLISSÉEFF 1956, p. 76, n°62), significant given the existence of technical parallels with the manufacture of stonepaste and metallic lustre techniques.

71. MOUTON 1994, p. 302.

72. DAIBER 2006.

73. GRABAR *et al.* 1978.

74. See for example the examples of Acre (PRINGLE 1997; STERN 1997) and Tall Qaymūn (AVISSAR 1996) in Palestine.

relative paucity of imported wares during the period covered by this study.<sup>75</sup> In addition to the strong likelihood of most of its finewares being locally produced, the majority of the glazed and unglazed commonwares are of a distinctively local character, even those which belong to families that occur elsewhere in Bilād al-Šām. The Citadel pottery provides an insight into life in an élite context within Damascene society. We currently possess little knowledge of the Islamic ceramic material culture of other sectors of the urban population, or from rural sites in southern Syria. Indications from work at *Msaykeh*, 60 kilometres south of Damascus in the Leja basalt massif, demonstrate a predominance of hand made wares, while these number less than ten sherds in the Citadel of Damascus itself.<sup>76</sup> Clearly further archaeological and typological work is needed in order to advance current knowledge of Islamic material culture in Bilād al-Šām in the period covering the transition between the Abbasid and Ayyubid dynasties. The Citadel corpus provides valuable new perspectives on the regional role that the artisans of this city played, stimulated as they were by the elite markets installed in the new royal residence and powerbase of the Salġūqs and their successors. It marks the city out as a centre of technical innovation, linked to the long-standing practice of local ceramic traditions.

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75. See   LISS  EFF 1956, p. 71, n  29 and 69, n  18 for the evidence Ibn 'As  kir provides for the manufacture of different ceramic vessels in 12<sup>th</sup> century Damascus. Only a handful of imported Chinese porcelain and celadon sherds have been recovered in the Citadel, in sharp contrast to the situation at Aleppo (Julia Gonnella pers. com.).

76. GU  RIN 1997.



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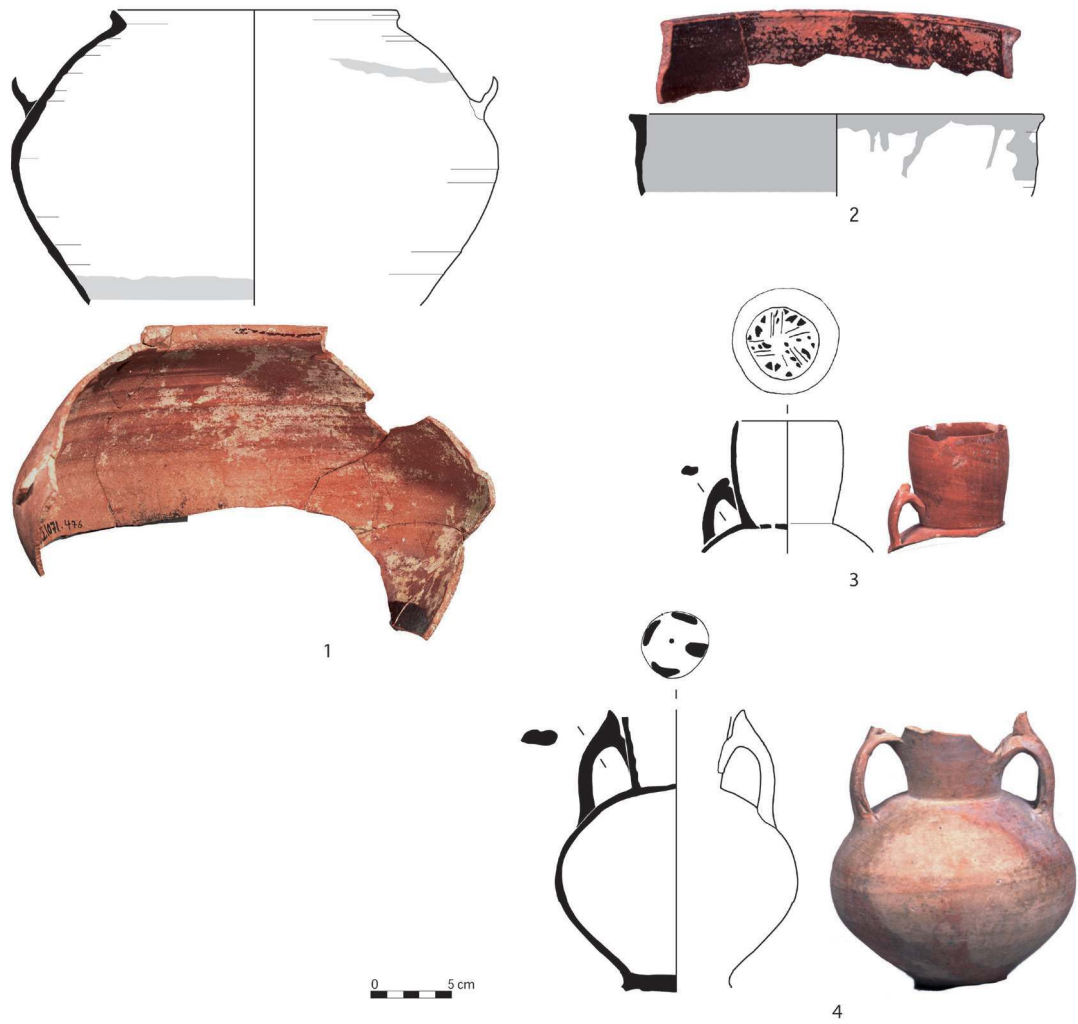


Figure 1



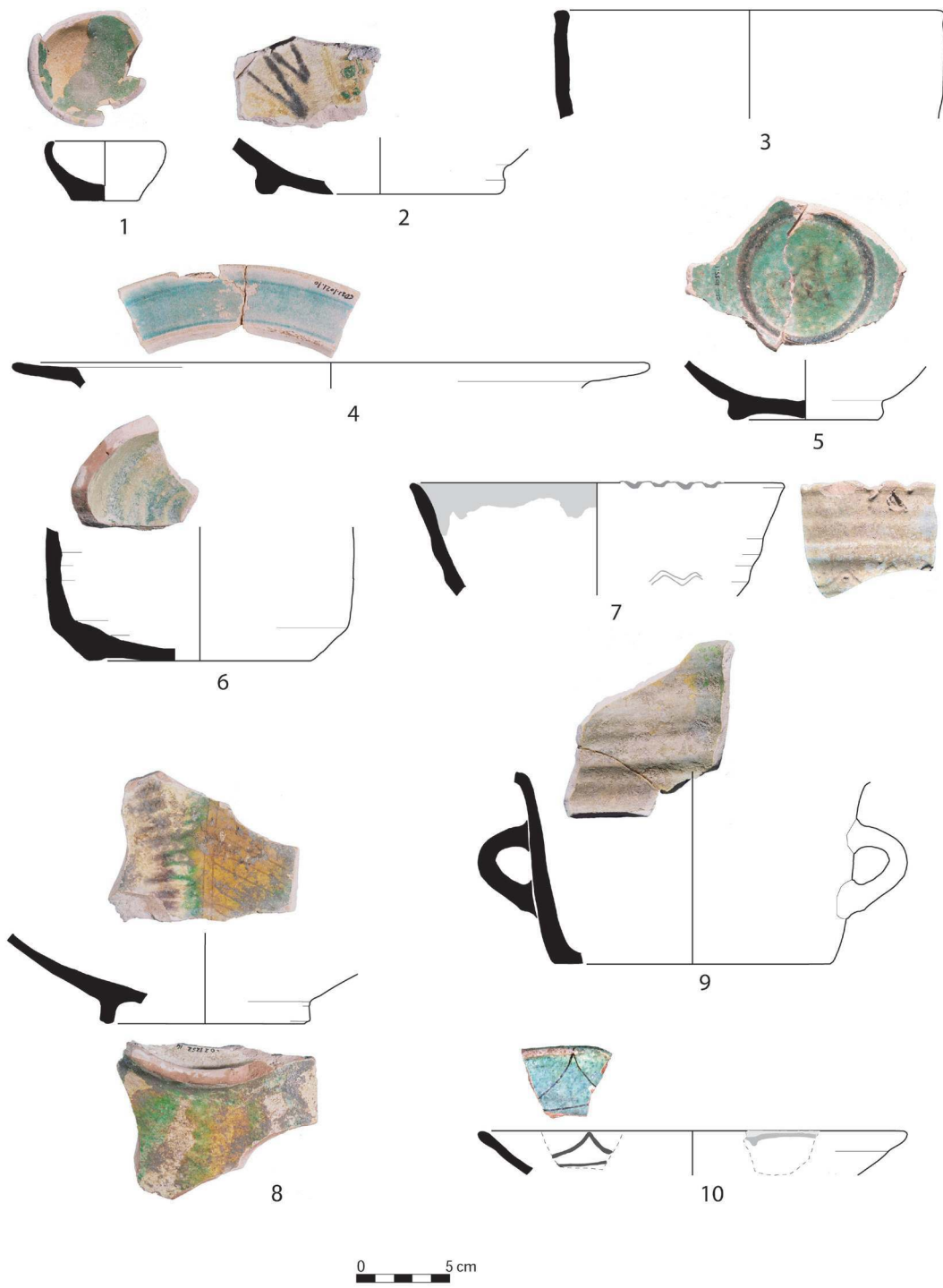


Figure 2

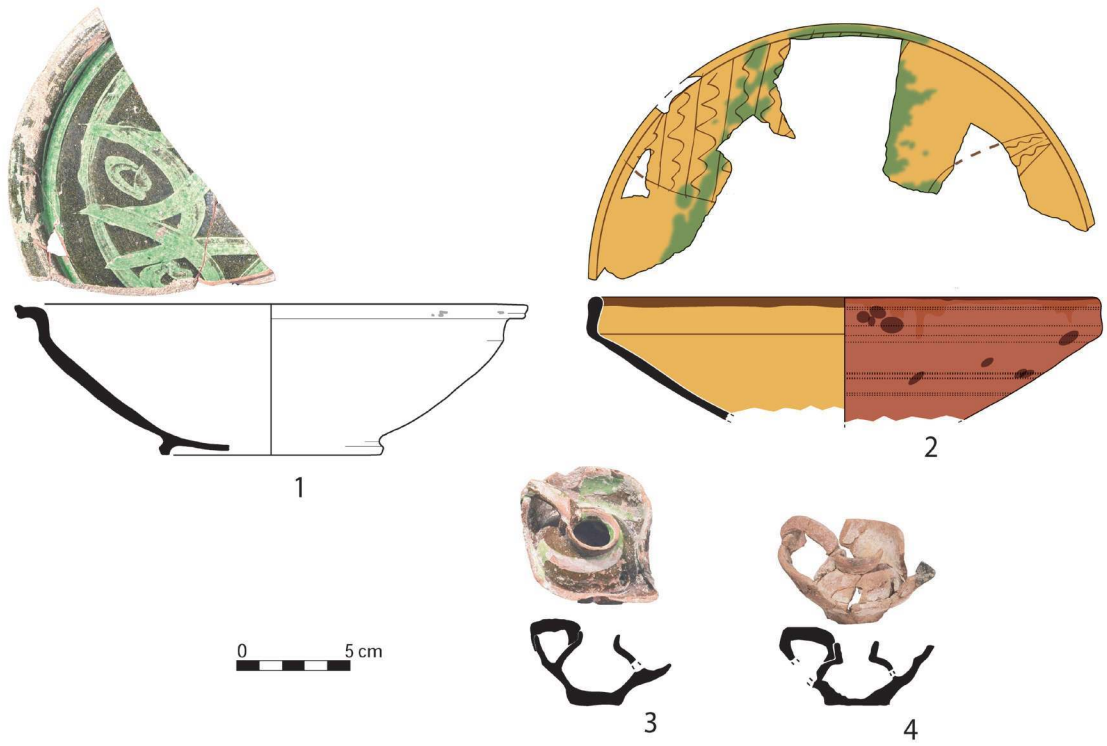


Figure 3

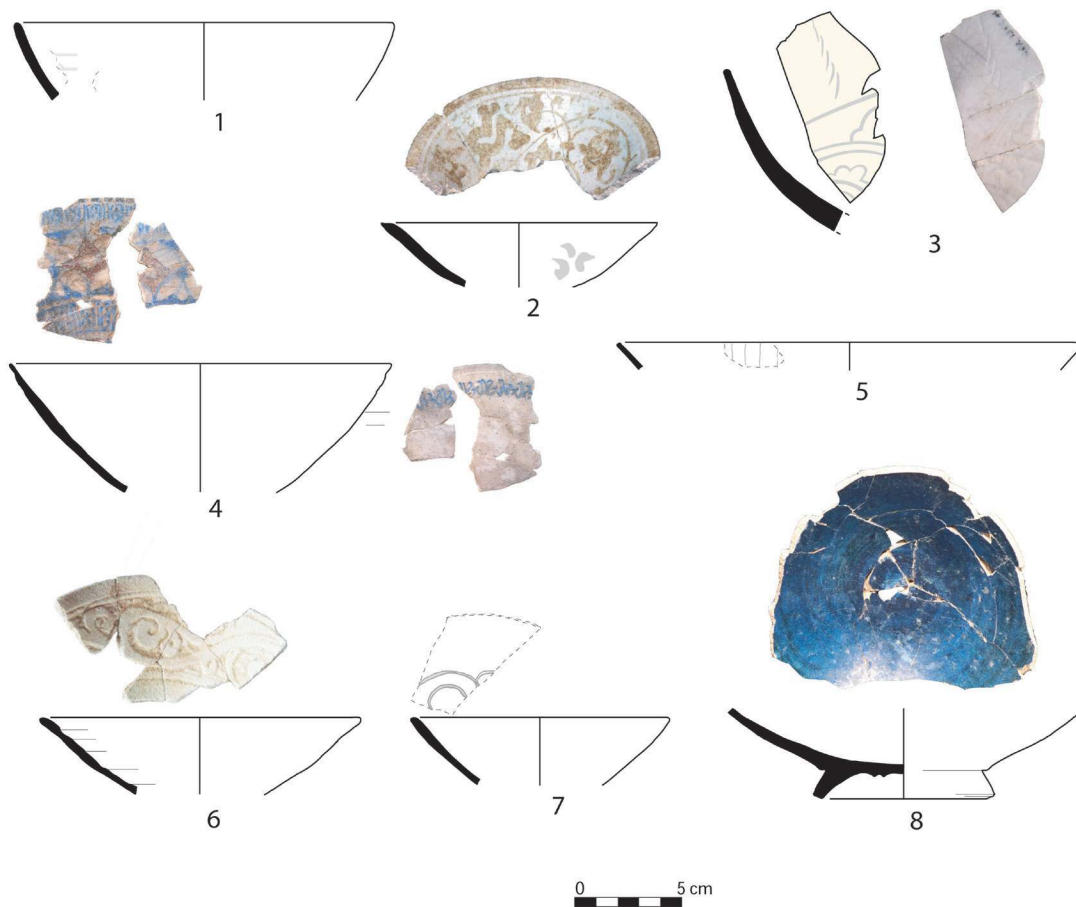


Figure 4

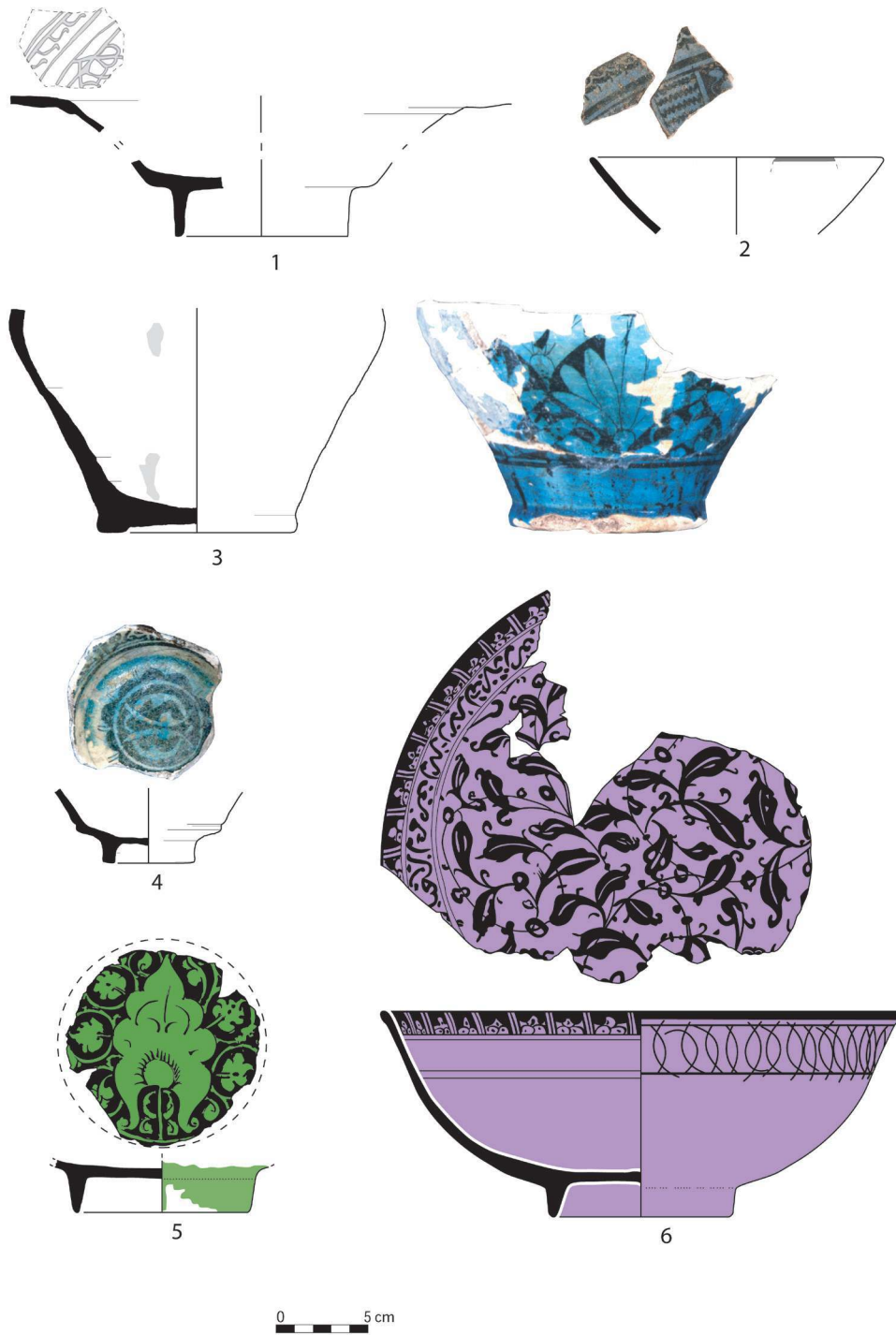


Figure 5



Figure 6

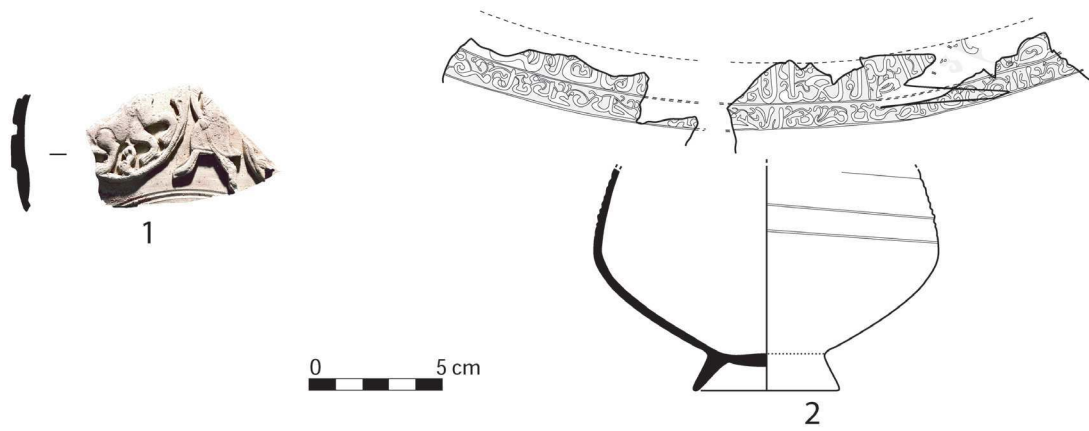


Figure 7



## Figure captions

(Illustrations 3.2, 4.3, 5.5-6, 6.1 and 7.2 by H. David; Photographs: P. Godeau; original pencil drawings: I. Shaddoud; digitalisation: S. McPhillips).

### Figure 1:

1.1 CD2 1071.476; cooking pot; red (2.5YR 5/6) to reddish brown (2.5YR 5/4); translucent brown, grey and white mineral inclusions, reddish brown glaze lower interior.

1.2 CD2 1063.620; cooking pot; colour and fabric as 1.1; thick brown glaze interior.

1.3 CD2 1075.21; porous ware jug with filter; reddish yellow (5YR 7/6) in section, surface light reddish brown (5YR 6/4) and red where slipped (10R 4/6); grey inclusions and some fine quartz and limestone; slip applied with brush exterior.

1.4 CD2 1132.128; as 1.3, slip applied irregularly exterior.

### Figure 2:

2.1 CD2 1083.1; soft very pale brown fabric (10YR 8/3); reddish orange inclusions; white slip and transparent green glaze interior.

2.2 CD2 1021.1; colour as 2.1; soft with red, white and brown inclusions; residual green glaze and white slip, black underglaze paint.

2.3 CD2 1238.50; fabric and colour as 2.1; white slip and turquoise glaze.

2.4 CD2 1075.17 and 1021.10; white, off-white and micaceous inclusions; turquoise glaze.

2.5 CD2 1055.1; soft very pale brown fabric (10YR 7/4 - 8/2); scarce fine black and white rounded inclusions; black painted decoration beneath pale green glaze.

2.6 CD2 1211.2; reddish yellow in section (5YR 6/6) and on the exterior surface pink (5YR 7/6); limestone, grey, and quartz inclusions; opaque pale green and greenish yellow glaze.

2.7 CD2 1211.4b; colour and fabric as 2.6; incised decoration lower exterior, pie-crust rim, green and white opaque glaze.

2.8 CD2 1252.14; very pale brown (10YR 8/3) fabric with very fine grey and white inclusions, vertical and "scribbled" incised lines interior; yellow, green and aubergine glaze, exterior green, yellow and white stripes.

2.9 CD2 1211.12; colour and fabric as 2.8; yellow and green glaze interior, green exterior.

2.10 CD2 1022b.26; abundant limestone and quartz inclusions; red (2.5YR 5/6) in section, light red (2.5YR 6/8) exterior; incised decoration, white slip and dark leaf green glaze.

### Figure 3:

3.1 CD 1098.3; red (2.5YR 5/6) in section to reddish brown (2.5YR 5/4) exterior; quartz, grey and yellowish white inclusions; pale green glaze, white slip painted decoration.

3.2 CD2 1063.832; colour and fabric as 3.1; golden glaze, green splashes, incised decoration.

3.3 CD2 1236.23; colour and fabric as 3.1; yellow and white glaze, white slip painted decoration.

3.4 CD2 1048b.5; colour and fabric as 3.1; traces of burning on nozzle and spout.

### Figure 4:

4.1 CD2 1063.803; friable greyish-white stonepaste; vestigial metallic lustre painted decoration on transparent turquoise glaze.

4.2 CD2 1211.21; soft grey stonepaste; mustard yellow metallic lustre paint over greyish white glaze.

4.3 CD2 1362.44; fused white stonepaste; light incised decoration; transparent white glaze with some fine crazing, matt surface.

4.4 CD2 1098b.2; hard white stonepaste; dark cobalt blue and reddish brown underglaze painted decoration which swims slightly in the colourless glaze.

4.5 CD2 1211.01; reddish-grey stonepaste; dark cobalt blue underglaze painted, colourless glaze.

4.6 CD2 1063.810; friable white stonepaste; champlevé decoration; traces turquoise glaze.

4.7 CD2 1063.807; hard white stonepaste; incised decoration, pale blue turquoise glaze.

4.8 CD2 1081.1; hard white stonepaste; thick transparent cobalt blue glaze, white slip.

Figure 5:

5.1 CD5.3 312.54; friable greyish white stonepaste; incised decoration under thick transparent crazed colourless glaze.

5.2 CD5.3 312.42a; fabric as 5.1; black painted decoration beneath pale cobalt blue glaze.

5.3 CD2 1063.1; fabric as 5.1; black underglaze painted decoration executed in fine brush and incised into surface of vessel prior to painting; shivered turquoise glaze.

5.4 CD2 1073b.1; fabric as 5.1; black painted decoration under turquoise glaze.

5.5 CD2 1894.1; hard white stonepaste; black painted decoration beneath dark green glaze.

5.6 CD2 1075.10; hard white stonepaste; black painted decoration beneath heavily eroded purple glaze.

Figure 6:

6.1 CD5.3 311/312.55; friable greyish-white stonepaste; polychrome painted scene (hare and hound) in black, cobalt blue and red beneath a colourless glaze.

6.2 CD2 1054.2; hard white stonepaste; polychrome painted scene (tree and fragmentary figural scene) in black, cobalt blue and red beneath a colourless glaze.

6.3 CD5.1 4017.1; friable greyish white stonepaste; polychrome painted scene in black, cobalt blue and red beneath a colourless glaze.

6.4 T.4.2 104/106.72; fabric as 6.3; colourless to greenish glaze, exterior drips.

6.5 CD5.3 340.9; fabric as 6.3; thick iridised turquoise glaze, drips lower exterior.

6.6 CD2 1022b.2; fabric as 6.3; black painted decoration beneath vestigial colourless glaze.

6.7 CD2 1022b/1040.1; hard white stonepaste; vestigial metallic lustre painted decoration (fish in outline) over leaf green glaze.

6.8 CD2 1061.2/1044; hard white stonepaste; eroded decoration in mustard yellow metallic lustre over opaque dark blue glaze.

Figure 7:

7.1 CD5.2 432.04; fine fabric, pale yellow (2.5Y 8/3) in section, white (5Y 8/1) surface, scarce very fine red and black inclusions; applied plastic decoration (chain mailed and booted figure bearing a scimitar, between two medallions, probably containing a lion); potentially a “pilgrim flask” fragment.

7.2 CD2 1075.1; fabric as 7.1; relief-moulded epigraphic motif; inscription: “(al-sul)ta(n ?...) al-‘izz ad-d(ā‘im...a)l-iqbāl”, *the sultan (?) the perpetual glory (...) the [good] fortune*; lower line (largely indecipherable): “...‘ādil...” (...) *just (...)*. (Reading and translation Stefan Heidemann).

