

CERÂMICA E COMÉRCIO / *POTTERY AND COMMERCE*

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Pottery as a socio-economic indicator in Sicily (9th - mid 13th century)

In this paper we deal with an historical period (9th - mid 13th century) of main interest for Sicily, because of deep changes in its social and political structure.

The Island was contended by Arabs and Byzantines for seventy-five years (827-902/965 AD) and this led to the creation of internal cultural borders whose consequences are still to be defined. During the Arab domination, Sicily became a multicultural island, where communities of Arabs, Berbers, Persians, Christians, Jews and people newly converted to Islam coexisted. The subsequent Norman conquest of the Island, in the second half of the 11th century, dramatically changed this scenario: the Muslims, who were the large majority of the population, were subdued. The immigration policy of the Norman kings fostered the arrival of a huge number of settlers from North and Central Italy, opening a season of conflicts between the Muslim natives and the newly arrived people. This Muslims' revolts, which occurred from the second half of the 12th century, were definitively squashed by the Emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen in 1246 AD.

The recent archaeological excavations and surveys have thrown new light on the Sicilian Middle Ages, providing us with a large amount of data. The management of this ceramic evidence by means of a dedicated Geographical Information System allows the reconstruction of the economical and social frame of Sicily during the Middle Ages, identifying the presence of different communities, their material culture, their mutual interactions, the existence of different systems of production and exchange in the Island during this periods.

In this article an up-to-date socio-economic synthesis of the medieval Sicily from the 10th to the first half of the 13th is drawn and an interpretative model based on pottery evidence is proposed.