

CHAPTER 12

*Ceramic studies in historical archaeology**David Barker and Teresita Majewski*

WHY CERAMICS?

Ceramic studies have played a central role in the development of archaeology – a fact that is equally true for historical archaeology as for studies of earlier periods. Ceramics represent by far the largest class of artefacts recovered during excavations of historical sites. As in other periods, ceramic materials survive in the ground when objects made from other materials do not, and their archaeological value is very high even though they generally only survive in a fragmentary state. As ubiquitous products prone to stylistic change in response to new fashions and consumer preference, ceramics are readily datable, and often prove the most important diagnostic materials recovered when an archaeologically excavated sequence is being interpreted. In addition to their value as sensitive temporal markers, ceramics have the potential to provide insights into a wide range of other topics: cultural change and colonisation; the identities of groups and individuals; the social and economic status of consumers; the emergence of changing practices relating to the consumption of food and drink; patterns of trade and of local and regional variations in trade; and technological change and industrialisation.

The past five hundred years have witnessed massive increases in the production, exchange and consumption of ceramics in Asia, Europe, North America and around the world. In Europe, an intensification of international trade in commodities was a central part of nascent colonialism and the transition from medieval to modern societies, as the Old World was opened up to new commodities from the East and as new markets for new commodities developed in the New World and beyond. A chapter on ceramics could be written from many geographical perspectives. The main focus of the present chapter is European-made ceramics, but discussion of non-European ceramics is interwoven throughout.

The development of historical ceramic studies has been primarily a British and North American phenomenon, and the parallel and separate trajectories on either side of the Atlantic are traced in the first section of this paper. The second section provides an overview of ceramic production and technology, primarily told from an archaeological vantage point. Subsequent sections provide case studies that illustrate how the analysis of ceramic assemblages has informed the study of trade, exchange and consumption. In the concluding section, we sketch some of the new and innovative ceramic studies that are currently emerging.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CERAMIC STUDIES IN HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

Until the mid-twentieth century, collectors, decorative artists and art historians dominated ceramic studies. Their work provided sound empirical research and classification schemes, resulting in reference works of continuing usefulness: such as Godden's (1964) encyclopaedia of manufacturers' marks on British pottery and porcelain and Lehner's (1988) similar work for the United States. Such studies were not concerned with the production of ceramics or the social and economic contexts in which they existed, and consideration of the consumption of ceramics was limited to the finest wares possessed by the highest levels of society. Ceramic objects were most commonly viewed as *objets d'art*, demonstrating the perceived skill of their makers and illustrating the design influences contemporary with their creation. A preoccupation with attribution – the need to know who made what – and the elevation of a small number of factories to an undeserved prominence resulted, giving a distorted view of the development of the ceramic industry. The early literature is therefore of limited use for archaeologists who want to move beyond artefact descriptions.

In the United Kingdom, as 'post-medieval' archaeology developed in the post-war period and the number of large-scale urban excavations increased, it soon was evident that the most recent material culture was in many ways the least understood. In 1963, the Post-Medieval Ceramic Research Group was founded, and in 1966 broadened its interests to become the Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology (Barton 1967). The chronological focus of this work (AD 1500 to 1750) led to many studies of the medieval–post-medieval ceramic 'transition', examining sixteenth- and seventeenth-century coarseware industries and their products (e.g. Coleman-Smith and Pearson 1988; Gaimster and Stamper 1997; Moorhouse and Roberts 1992; Pearce 1992).

Archaeological knowledge of European post-medieval ceramics has developed rapidly in recent years, drawing together evidence from excavated ceramic production sites and from 'pit groups' – excavated assemblages from sealed archaeological contexts. In the 1980s, British urban archaeology generated several impressive, city-wide studies, notably in Norwich (Jennings 1981) and Exeter (Allan 1984). In continental Europe, the strong tradition of urban archaeology, especially in Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands, has yielded vast quantities of artefacts from urban contexts. For instance, in the Netherlands an impressive study of the contents of 176 excavated pits in the Dutch towns of Deventer, Dordrecht, Nijmegen and Tiel has resulted from the 'Rubbish Pits and Cess Pits Project' (Bartels 1999). The ceramics from such deposits represent the full range of wares available within north-western Europe and illustrate the chronological development of ceramic types, ceramic use, and the impact of regional and international trade. Notable English language works on European ceramics, drawing on evidence from pit groups, from production sites and from the extensive study of European wares in colonial and trading contexts, have been produced by Hurst et al. (1986) for the full range of later medieval and early post-medieval wares, and by David Gaimster (1997) for German stoneware.

In North America until the 1970s most ceramic studies focused on sites in the eastern seaboard – the region of English colonisation and initial spread of settlement. Ceramics from nineteenth- and twentieth-century sites, and even for earlier Spanish- and French-occupied sites away from the east coast, were rarely studied. The neglect of home-produced ceramics and ceramics produced elsewhere in the Old World was sustained. This emphasis on early sites was particularly visible in Noël Hume's 1969 classic *A Guide to Artifacts of Colonial America*, and in the papers in Quimby's (1973) conference volume, *Ceramics in America*. During the 1970s, however, the advent of US government-funded cultural resource management projects led to new studies – whether of rural farmsteads or inner-city dwellings. Archaeologists were poorly prepared to analyse the nineteenth- or twentieth-century assemblages that were produced, especially because ceramic analysis had previously relied heavily on collector literature, which usually dealt with earlier time periods.

In two influential articles, George L. Miller (1980, 1991) pioneered a systematic approach to the classification of nineteenth-century refined earthenwares based on decoration rather than ware. He argued that this system paralleled the terms used by potters, merchants, and consumers in that period, avoiding the problems caused by historical archaeologists adopting terms coined by collectors (e.g. 'china glaze' versus the collector term

‘pearlware’). Miller used documentary materials to establish price index values for various ceramic forms, to inform the comparative analysis of archaeological assemblages to determine expenditure patterns.

In 1987, Majewski and O’Brien recommended categorising ceramics based on body type and degree of vitrification. Their scheme, equally applicable to all ceramics produced during the historical period, from colonoware to tin-glazed earthenware to porcelain, allows the researcher to better understand the interconnectedness of global technological advances and stylistic movements. While Miller focused primarily on ceramics dating to the nineteenth century, Majewski and O’Brien extended the discussion into the twentieth century (see also Majewski and Schiffer 2001), integrated information on ceramics produced outside of the United Kingdom, and discussed the importance of understanding style when categorising ceramics.

Most American ceramic studies in historical archaeology have focused on refined earthenwares. Some notable exceptions include studies on coarse redwares by Beaudry et al. (1983) and Turnbaugh (1985), or on stonewares by Greer (1981), on ‘Rockingham’ ware by Claney (2004), and on Asian-manufactured ceramics (particularly porcelains) by Costello and Maniery (1988). Significant work has also been carried out on ‘colonowares’ – the coarse, low-fired, unglazed earthenwares made in European forms found throughout the eastern United States and in the Caribbean, which appear to have been made and used by native Americans and enslaved African-Americans (Ferguson 1992).

Colonoware was first noted in the Chesapeake Bay area of the eastern United States in the 1930s, but was not formally recognised until 1962 when Noël Hume published a brief article on the topic (Noël Hume 1962). Believing that the pottery was made by native Americans during the colonial period, he coined the term ‘Colono-Indian ware’. Within the next decade, researchers were leaning towards an African-American rather than a native-American origin for the ware (Deetz 1977: 236–245), which is now generally referred to as ‘colonoware’. More recently, scholars (e.g. Ferguson 1992) have suggested that the ware was made by both groups. Based on the accumulated evidence for its distribution, it is clear that ‘colonoware’ was by no means a homogeneous ware type made by a single cultural group; rather, the manufacture of unglazed earthenwares that combined non-European technologies with European shapes was a diverse and ‘creolised’ material dimension of new colonial situations.

The study of historical ceramics has developed as an interdisciplinary field. The launch of an annual publication, *Ceramics in America*, in 2001 marked an important moment in the development of ‘a new level of

interdisciplinary dialogue in the study of historic ceramics' (Hunter 2001: xiv). Meanwhile, archaeological guides to historical ceramics have been published in Canada and Australia (Collard 1984; Brooks 2005). In Britain, later industrially made ceramics have been increasingly studied, synthetic accounts of the post-medieval delftware (e.g. Bloice 1971) and stoneware industries (C. Green 1999; Pryor and Blockley 1978) have been written, and the study of later eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ceramics has been pioneered in north Staffordshire (Barker 1991). The increase in developer-funded archaeology in Britain since the early 1990s has brought a marked increase in the number of excavations undertaken on later ceramic-manufacturing sites (e.g. Francis 2001; Haggarty and McIntyre 1996; STAS 2003), and the first of many important publications resulting from these are beginning to appear (e.g. Gregory 2004; Killock et al. 2003). Ceramic studies in Britain are increasingly driven by archaeology, in contrast with the previous influences of ceramic enthusiasts or collectors.

EUROPEAN CERAMIC PRODUCTION AND TECHNOLOGY

These developments have made possible much clearer accounts of the development of European ceramic production from the sixteenth century. These new accounts are underpinned by archaeological studies of production sites, which range from the recovery of factory products on manufacturing sites or in deposits of ceramic 'wasters', to the excavation of kilns, workshops and the range of material associated with production. In this section, we consider the historical processes through which masses of new ceramic products were distributed across the world.

Between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries, Europe witnessed the gradual but widespread and radical appearance of new ceramic types and vessel forms. This 'ceramic revolution' (Gaimster 1999a) witnessed an increase in the scale of the manufacture and consumption of ceramics, while the appearance of ceramics at the table 'represent[ed] the transformation of the medium from an exclusively utilitarian to a social commodity' (Gaimster nd.). The main new ceramic ware types to emerge during this period were salt-glazed stonewares, tin-glazed earthenwares, and new types of fine earthenwares with an all-over lead glaze.

The first of these ceramic types is primarily associated with the Rhineland (Gaimster 1997). The production of vitrified stonewares fired to temperatures of 1200°C was well established there before the sixteenth century at, for example, Siegburg, Langerwehe and Raeren. From the sixteenth century, production developed on an industrial scale in and around the centres of

Cologne, Raeren and Frechen and in the south-west Westerwald to meet the demands of an expanding market. Wheel-thrown vessels, frequently decorated with applied reliefs, were fired in kilns fuelled by wood. From the early sixteenth century stoneware production benefited from the widespread adoption of salt glazing. A distinctive type of horizontal stoneware kiln has been revealed by excavations in Frechen, with antecedents in Siegburg and Langerwehe (Gaimster 1997: 42–45), while a kiln of very similar form was excavated at Woolwich in London (Pryor and Blockley 1978), where it had almost certainly been built and operated by German potters in the mid-seventeenth century.

From 1672, John Dwight secured a monopoly to produce stonewares in London; his wares closely copied Rhenish types, but German influence did not extend to the type of kiln used. Excavations at Dwight's Fulham factory have shown that he adopted the rectangular kilns then favoured by London tin-glaze potters for firing his stonewares (C. Green 1999: 21–28); an outlier of this 'London-type' of stoneware kiln has been located at Yorktown, Virginia, where William Rogers produced English-style stonewares during the 1720s–1740s (Barka 2004).

Tin-glazed wares were an equally widespread phenomenon in medieval and post-medieval Europe. Introduced into Europe from the Near East, the production of elaborate lustre-decorated tin-glazed wares was established in Moorish Spain by the thirteenth century. During the fifteenth century, lustreware production flourished in Valencia, and the industry's products were still being traded within western and north-western Europe during the sixteenth century. Following the discovery of the Americas, however, it was Seville that developed as Spain's leading producer of earthenware, with a virtual monopoly on overseas trade. Its products are known from the New World, rather than from excavations in Seville, and the main tin-glazed types – such as the decorated Isabella Polychrome and Yayal Blue, and the undecorated Columbia Plain – are named after find spots across the Atlantic (Hurst et al. 1986). Deagan (1987) and Marken (1994) review tin-glazed types found in the Americas.

By the sixteenth century, white tin-glazed ware, *maiolica*, was being produced in northern Italy at centres such as Montelupo, Liguria and Faenza (Hurst et al. 1986: 12–30). The painted decoration of these fine earthenwares ensured them a market throughout Europe, while wares from Montelupo are found in the Americas (Hurst et al. 1986: 12, 21). Maiolica kilns have been excavated at Cafaggiolo, and waster dumps are widespread at Montelupo and elsewhere in the region (Blake 1987: 15).

The expansion of tin-glazed earthenwares into north-west Europe during the sixteenth century has been charted in papers published in an impressive British Museum volume (Gaimster 1999b), which draws upon scientific analysis to distinguish between the products of different centres. By the early sixteenth century, Italian-style tin-glazed wares were being produced in Antwerp (Veeckman 1999), and during this century production was established in France, the Netherlands and in England.

By the seventeenth century, the impact of Dutch tin-glazed wares, with blue-painted decoration influenced by imports of Chinese porcelain, was felt throughout Europe and the colonial world (Figures 12.1a and 12.1b). Identical wares were produced in London, at pothouses established in Southwark and Lambeth; the industry expanded throughout the seventeenth and into the eighteenth century, with abundant archaeological evidence in the form of kilns and waster deposits (e.g. Bloice 1971; Tyler 1999). Tin-glaze production spread to other British ports – Brislington, Liverpool and Glasgow (Crossley 1990: 265), but ultimately competition from superior Staffordshire wares brought about the tin-glaze industry's demise.

During the sixteenth century, earthenware manufacturers in western Europe developed products to accommodate contemporary fashions in food preparation and, for the first time, dining and drinking. Distinctive fine lead-glazed drinking vessels became common, with the products of the different manufacturing centres being identified either by their clay bodies or by variations in style or form. Earthenwares were decorated with coloured slips throughout western Europe during the sixteenth century, but it was during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries that 'slipware' became ubiquitous.

The slipwares which had the greatest impact upon ceramic consumption, and which are therefore most useful to archaeologists, are those manufactured in the Netherlands, Germany, and England. Slipwares with *sgraffito* decoration – that is with a design being scratched through a slip-coat to reveal the body beneath – had been made in the Low Countries until the mid-sixteenth century, but it was the slip-trailed North Holland wares of the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries which had dominated European and overseas markets (Hurst et al. 1986: 154–175). German slipwares which combined trailed and *sgraffito* decoration were also widely marketed throughout Europe at this time, reaching North America by the mid-seventeenth century (Hurst et al. 1986: 242–250). These wares were produced at centres along the Werra River, such as Wanfried, Witzenhausen and Hannoversch-Munden, at all of which waster deposits have been found.



Figure 12.1 Post-medieval ceramics I. Top left (12.1a), tin-glazed earthenware jar with polychrome painted decoration, Dutch, early to mid-seventeenth century. Wares such as this are found across western Europe and those areas of European economic and colonial interest. In England, such wares prompted the development of the English tin-glazed industry, whose products initially were indistinguishable from those of the Netherlands.

Top right (12.1b), porcelain saucer with blue-painted decoration, from a domestic rubbish pit in St Mary's Grove, Stafford, Chinese, 1760–1770. This is typical of the millions of pieces of tea- and tableware exported from China during the mid-eighteenth century, before English creamwares and pearlwares took over the market. (12.1a and 12.1b, Courtesy of the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent).

Bottom left (12.1c), US importer's mark (Chauncey Filley) with 18 December 1856 registry mark for 'Berlin Swirl' pattern by Mayer & Elliot, Longport, and impressed workmen's marks.

Bottom right (12.1d) 'London'-shape bone-china cup and saucer with blue-printed chinoiserie temple-and-bridge pattern, probably Staffordshire, 1810s–1820s. Similar bone-china teawares with oriental temple patterns inspired by the 'willow pattern' were made by many British potteries; bone china rapidly became the most successful of British-made porcellaneous bodies. Figure composed by C. Elsner Hayward.

During the seventeenth century, slipware became one of the defining post-medieval ceramic types in England. The *sgraffito*-decorated slipwares of north Devon which had separate biscuit and glaze firings (Grant 1983: 49), not hitherto a feature of English earthenware production, suggest European influence. The main manufacturing centres were the seaports of Bideford and Barnstaple which developed a substantial coastal and overseas trade, supplying Ireland and the Caribbean and North American colonies (Grant 1983: 85–130; Outlaw 2002; Watkins 1960). Coarse gravel-tempered wares, from the same pottery-making workshops, also formed part of this trade. *Sgraffito*-decorated slipwares were also made at Donyatt in Somerset (Coleman-Smith and Pearson 1988), an industry serving a large regional market. However, small quantities of Donyatt wares have also been recognised in seventeenth-century contexts in Virginia (Kiser 2001) and Newfoundland, and in eighteenth-century contexts in mainland Canada (Allan and Pope 1990: 51).

Elsewhere in England it was North Holland slipwares which influenced manufacture. During the early seventeenth century ‘Metropolitan’ slipwares, produced predominantly in Harlow in Essex (Barker 1993: 11; Crossley 1990: 251), dominated the market for decorated wares in London and south-east England. Metropolitan slipwares with trailed slip motifs of the kind used on the North Holland wares were a catalyst for slipware manufacture throughout much of England. This influence can be seen in major developing industries at, for example, Wrenthorpe in West Yorkshire (Brears 1967; Moorhouse and Roberts 1992) and in north Staffordshire (Barker 1993).

During the second half of the seventeenth century, north Staffordshire became England’s main slipware-producing centre. The excavations of production groups and kilns have provided evidence for the range of wares produced and for manufacturing processes (e.g. Celoria and Kelly 1973). Staffordshire’s output was predominantly of decorated wares and these, combined with the migration of potters, had a marked influence on slipware production elsewhere in the country. By the early eighteenth century, Staffordshire-type slipwares were being made in places such as Bristol, Clifton in Cumbria, and Jackfield in Shropshire (Barker 1993: 19–20, 2001: 77).

Throughout Europe the production of coarse utilitarian earthenwares continued alongside that of decorated wares. While these were often for local consumption, the products of some industries were more widely marketed. Dutch redwares, English and Welsh black-glazed redwares, and olive jars from Seville, for example, had a major impact upon European and colonial markets, but the products of smaller industries may also occur in overseas

contexts, given the right circumstances. For example, coarse earthenwares from workshops in and around the port of Totnes, in south Devon, occur in seventeenth-century contexts in Newfoundland, which suggests the activity of Devon fishermen (Allan and Pope 1990).

As Rhenish stonewares had dominated the European and overseas trade in ceramics in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, so Staffordshire wares came to define ceramic trade and consumption from the mid-eighteenth century. From the mid-seventeenth century, the north Staffordshire industry was expanding and producing good quality earthenwares and salt-glazed stonewares which are found in many parts of Britain. There is evidence for a limited overseas trade from the 1610s, but by the 1690s Staffordshire ceramics are common finds on Caribbean and North American sites.

The greater accessibility of tea and the growing popularity of tea drinking in the early eighteenth century stimulated a demand for home-produced teawares as affordable alternatives to imported Chinese porcelains which had hitherto been the only teawares available. Around 1720, Staffordshire potters responded to this market opportunity with fine white salt-glazed stonewares and red earthenwares. By the 1740s, tablewares of white salt-glazed stoneware competed in price and quality with pewter and fragile tin-glazed earthenware, while at the higher end of the market creamwares challenged the role of porcelain at the tables of the well to do from the 1760s. The Staffordshire ceramics industry was transformed during the 1720s–1740s (Barker 1999), with changes in scale, organisation and manufacturing methods which ultimately set the tone for pottery production elsewhere in Britain and beyond (Barker 2004).

New types of ware required more efficient preparation of clays and new processes, such as lathe-turning, moulding, and separate biscuit and glost firings for earthenwares. A growing market demand for white-bodied wares led to the development, during the 1740s, of ‘creamware’. White wares required white-firing clays which were imported from Devon and Dorset, while the flint used in clay bodies and lead glazes was brought in from the south and east coasts of England. A national supply network operated by dealers and carriers brought these raw materials into the area by sea, river and road, while also facilitating the movement out and export via the seaports of the industry’s finished products.

Several eighteenth-century production sites have been excavated in north Staffordshire, but the excavation of the factory waster dump of the potter William Greatbatch offers the clearest archaeological evidence for developments within the pottery industry in the later eighteenth century (Barker 1991). Greatbatch’s manufacturing career spanned the years

1762 to 1782, during which time his factory's wasters were dumped in an adjacent clay pit along with tools, moulds, kiln furniture and saggars. Documentary evidence provides a limited perspective on this factory, but the excavated ceramics demonstrate without ambiguity the development of this factory's products and manufacturing processes during a critical twenty-year period in the industry. Wares were recovered in proportions that reflect both a rapidly changing market and the difficulties of manufacture.

Greatbatch was primarily a manufacturer of creamware, although he produced most of the wares typical of this period. His creamwares underwent stylistic changes during the life of the factory. Elaborately moulded and coloured rococo-style wares made in the form of cauliflowers and pineapples in the 1760s were replaced, in the 1770s, by more restrained vessel forms, often with neo-Classical details. Coloured glazes and under-glaze colours gave way to over-glaze painted decoration which was better suited to the lighter glazes of the later wares. Creamware wasters indicate the establishment of a decorating shop at the factory by the 1770s, but decorated creamwares were always a minority product. The pearlwares, by contrast, are all decorated; numerous finds of practice pieces show decorators' attempts to copy, in under-glaze blue, the Chinese-style landscape patterns which were typical of this new type of ware. The quantities of pearlware, or 'China glaze', present here support the argument for a mid-1770s introduction of this new ware (G. Miller 1987). Pearlware's visual appearance, with a blue-tinted glaze over a white body, and its initial reliance upon Chinese-style decoration, suggest the deliberate copying of Chinese porcelain, which was still widespread, but expensive.

The success of Staffordshire ceramics during the later eighteenth century led to the establishment of factories making Staffordshire-type wares in many parts of Britain, in Europe (Kybalová 1989), and in North America (South 1993). Standardised production developed in part because of the movement of potters, but more significantly because an expanding Staffordshire-based infrastructure supplied everything from moulds to colours and, by the early nineteenth century, engraved copper plates used in transfer printing (Barker 2001: 77–78); by the mid-nineteenth century machinery, brushes, tissue paper and even kiln furniture were being supplied to factories elsewhere in Britain and beyond.

While creamware was produced into the nineteenth century, it was pearlware which was to become the earthenware body of the early nineteenth century, and almost without exception it was decorated in some form. Under-glaze painted decoration in blue or polychrome was common on

teawares, while moulded and painted 'shell edge' defined the less expensive tablewares. By c. 1800, more expensive tea- and tablewares carried transfer-printed decoration. Introduced to earthenware manufacture in the 1780s, transfer-printing allowed the mass production of identically decorated wares with images lifted from an engraved copper plate, increasing standardisation of production even further. Printed decoration, at first mainly in blue, but in a range of colours from the late 1820s (G. Miller 1991: 9), underwent stylistic changes throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries which can be identified and dated with some accuracy from the collector literature (e.g. Coysh and Henrywood 1982, 1989); this accuracy is likely to be the greater when a maker's mark is used. Makers' marks can include a range of useful information (Henrywood 2002: 36–46; Majewski 2002), not least of which is the identity of the manufacturer and occasionally the importer (Figure 12.1c); in the case of printed marks, patterns are often named; a registration mark or number indicates the date of a pattern's or shape's registration and is a useful *terminus post quem* for vessels so marked.

Printed decoration dominated nineteenth-century pottery production, being used on all earthenware bodies introduced from the 1820s. It was the most expensive type of decoration on earthenware on account of the processes involved in its manufacture (G. Miller 1980: 28; 1991).

While archaeologists define white-bodied earthenwares as creamware, pearlware or, from c. 1830, 'whiteware', nineteenth-century manufacturers defined their products by their decoration – printed, painted, dipped and edged. A growing preference for decoration during the nineteenth century significantly changed the composition of excavated ceramic assemblages and has rendered them more open to interpretative analysis using the relative cost of wares to determine spend-profiles (G. Miller 1980; 1991). However, not all wares were decorated, and from the 1850s the popularity of transfer-printed wares declined in the Americas. At this time the North American market came to favour moulded 'ironstone china' or 'white granite', a type which owes little to the patent ironstone wares of the earlier nineteenth century, and which is simply a heavy-duty earthenware. White granite wares were durable and weathered shipment to the country's frontier regions; they were also stylish, emulating the more expensive white French porcelains that were then in vogue. White granite is widespread in archaeological deposits in North America and, more recently, its production and consumption in the United Kingdom have been highlighted (Barker 2001: 85–86). By later in the nineteenth century, American potteries in the Ohio Valley and the north-east were producing large quantities of 'white granite' (Majewski and O'Brien 1987) which laid the foundation for the flourishing hotel ware

industry that took off in the early twentieth century, with manufacturers as far afield as California.

The production of many British factories also included ceramic building materials (Atterbury 2003; D. Hamilton 1978). In the late eighteenth century, painted and transfer-printed tin-glazed earthenware tiles were in high demand for use in fireplace surrounds. Later, Victorian tiles were generally white-bodied earthenwares with transfer-printed or slip-glazed decoration and were used in fireplaces, as furniture insets, and to cover wall surfaces. Other Victorian era products included encaustic tiles, architectural terracotta and brickwork. Architectural ceramics opened up the design possibilities and technology available to architects in Great Britain and its sphere of influence. Buildings were constructed out of refined and virtually impenetrable terracotta, using custom- and ready-made components, frequently with intricate moulded designs. From the 1870s, terracotta became the most important building material for public and commercial buildings in urban Great Britain and in many parts of the world. A variety of architectural components – chimney pots, door and window frames, trusses, finials and other details, drain pipes, roofing tiles, and garden ornaments – were mass produced in terracotta, marketed in catalogues, and used to decorate houses of all market levels (Atterbury 2003).

Porcelains made in Europe from the early eighteenth century have not yet been mentioned. The amount of collector literature devoted to British and European porcelains exaggerates their contemporary significance, for these were expensive wares which would have been beyond the reach of all but the wealthy. Of the English porcelains, those which are likely to have a wider distribution are blue-printed wares from factories such as Worcester and Caughley. Excavations on a number of eighteenth-century porcelain factories, such as Longton Hall in Staffordshire (Cherry and Tait 1980; Tait and Cherry 1978) and Limehouse, London (Tyler and Stephenson 2000), have shed light upon the operations of individual factories and the processes employed there, but have added little to an understanding of the wider contemporary role of porcelain. A large corpus of work by J. V. Owen and colleagues (e.g. Owen and Sandon 2003) focuses on the compositional characteristics of different porcelains in an attempt to correctly attribute them and understand their technological development.

In one area of porcelain production, Britain was to have a significant impact upon the international market. Bone china, introduced in the 1790s, was rapidly adopted by Staffordshire factories and was soon established as *the* British porcelain. A 'soft paste' porcelain, with a body made from a mixture of China clay, China stone and calcined animal bone, it was easily worked,

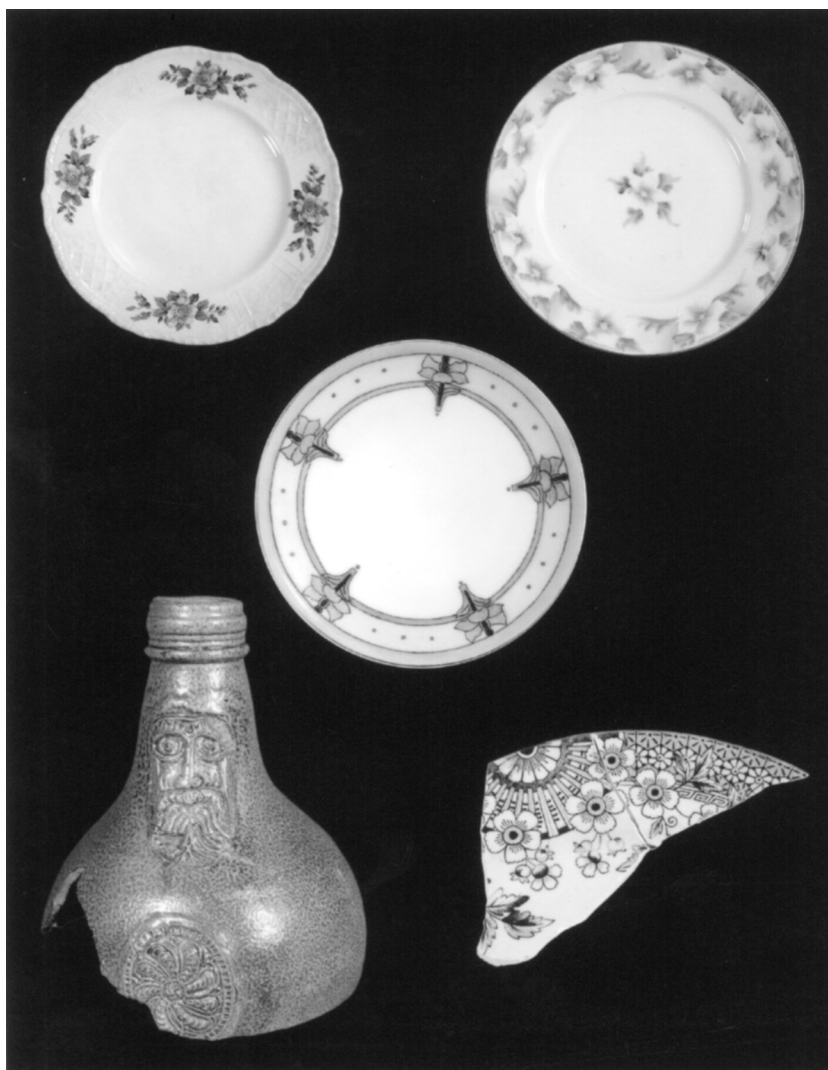


Figure 12.2 Post-medieval ceramics II. Top left (12.2a), small, white bodied earthenware plate with 'cabbage rose' lithos and relief-moulded 'trellis' rim decoration, US manufacturer Homer Laughlin, c. 1920s.

Top right (12.2b), small Nippon porcelain plate with painted floral decoration, c. 1910s, typical of large quantities of Japanese porcelains exported to the West during the first quarter of the twentieth century.

Middle (12.2c), small Bavarian porcelain plate with Art Nouveau decoration painted by an amateur, whose signature appears on the base, c. 1910s. (12.2a–12.2c, photos L. Kain, private collection.)

Bottom left (12.2d), stoneware *bartmann* bottle from moat fill at West Bromwich Manor House, West Midlands; Rhenish, probably Frechen, mid-seventeenth century. This type of vessel was one of the most widely traded seventeenth-century European ceramic wares and is commonly found in British, Caribbean, and North American archaeological assemblages of the period. (Photo D. Barker, courtesy of the Wednesbury Museum and Art Gallery.)

Bottom right (12.2e), white-bodied earthenware plate sherds with brown printed decoration in Aesthetic style, probably English, c. 1870s–1880s. (Photo L. Kain, private collection.) Figure composed by C. Elsner Hayward.

extremely white and very translucent. As such it could be adapted to both the higher and lower ends of the market, and is commonly found as teaware (Figure 12.1d) in nineteenth- and twentieth-century contexts with a limited range of simple decoration, or with no decoration whatsoever. Bone china is known archaeologically from deposits dating to the early nineteenth century onwards in North America though it is frequently misidentified (Majewski and O'Brien 1987).

British and European fondness for transfer-printed decoration did not decline during the later nineteenth century. Printed patterns were frequently embellished with additional painted decoration to create multi-coloured designs. Wares decorated in this manner with Aesthetic and later Aesthetic-derived motifs were popular from the 1870s to c. 1900 when the over-glaze lithographic transfer, or 'decal', effectively replaced under-glaze transfer printing as the major method of decorating ceramics (Majewski and Schiffer 2001) (Figure 12.2a).

The litho transfer process allows for the decoration of ceramics with intricate polychrome designs that mirror fine hand-painting, at prices within the means of the average consumer. Specialist manufacturers produced the lithographic designs which were sold in sheets. At first these were backed with paper and covered with varnish. The designs were soaked in water to soften and remove the backing paper; a sticky size was painted on the ware and the designs applied and rubbed down. The varnish was burned away during firing in an enamel kiln, leaving the completed design. This 'stick-down' lithography was replaced from the 1950s by 'slide' or 'water slide lithography, in which prints were printed onto plastic film and soaked in water to loosen the paper backing. The plastic film carrying the design is slid onto the pot and rubbed down, then burned away through firing.

Lithographic decoration remained the most common decorative technique used on dinnerware into the 1950s, even though coloured slip-glazed wares such as 'Fiesta' produced by the American pottery company Homer Laughlin (and related spin-offs made by other companies) were popular between the late 1920s and the early 1940s.

Traditional European ceramics lost ground to British industrially made wares during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but manufacturers continued to supply local and regional markets with a range of familiar utilitarian products and ornamental wares for which there was no outside competition. British production had increased in scale during the nineteenth century; the industry's success was based upon decorated white-bodied wares of a reasonable quality, which were affordable by the majority of consumers. Their success resulted in emulation at a number of European factories, such

as that of Petrus Regout of Maastricht in the Netherlands which produced British-type whitewares for European and overseas markets for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Bartels 1999: 883–928).

Britain retained its firm grip on the American ceramic market until the last decades of the nineteenth century, when Japanese, German, French, and other European hard-paste porcelains were vying for a share (Majewski and O'Brien 1987: 129). Restrictive tariffs were partly to blame, but consumers were influenced by a combination of factors when making their choices. These porcelains, which are widely found in archaeological deposits from the late 1800s onwards, offered porcelain elegance along with enamelling and gilding (later frequently with lithos), all at a lower cost (Figure 12.2b). Also popular were porcelain 'blanks' which were sold to amateur china painters who decorated them in various styles (Figure 12.2c; Majewski and Schiffer 2001: 39).

In Britain, manufacturing processes changed little between the mid-nineteenth century and the mid-twentieth century, although a degree of mechanisation was gradually introduced as legislation restricted the use of child labour from the 1860s. The manufacture of wares by slip casting became more widespread after 1900; there was a gradual move towards lead-free glazes; and gas and electric 'tunnel kilns' gradually replaced coal-fired ovens. Ceramic literature focuses upon the new stylish 'art-deco' wares which appeared during the 1930s, and upon the designers and artists responsible for them. In reality, however, British manufacturers remained very conservative in the wares that they produced, relying for the most part upon what had been popular with customers for fifty or a hundred years.

TRADE AND EXCHANGE

Archaeological ceramics are of special significance as evidence for trade at a range of geographical scales. They can usually be traced to a particular manufacturing source, and their post-production lives can be charted by combining documentary research with the study of excavated distribution patterns. Such work requires a broad understanding of the economic contexts in which such trade took place, knowledge of the wares produced by manufacturing centres, preferably supported by archaeological evidence from production sites, and the willingness to study ceramic assemblages from a range of domestic sites across a wide geographical area. Studies of ceramics recovered from shipwreck excavations have proved particularly useful in understanding the nature of international trade (Flatman and Staniforth this volume; Staniforth 2003).

The most successful post-medieval ceramics industries were those that supplied wider regional or international markets. The stoneware industry of the lower Rhineland in particular characterises the new contexts of trade in the early post-medieval world. Trade in Rhenish stonewares in north-western and northern Europe was well established during the medieval period, but expanded considerably during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Gaimster's (1997) detailed study of the trade in stonewares in Europe and colonial contexts draws on documentary sources such as customs accounts and port books alongside archaeological evidence from both terrestrial and shipwreck sites (Gaimster 1997: 51). The remarkable scale of the production and trade of Rhenish stoneware vessels was due to a range of factors, including their durable and easily cleaned fine vitrified bodies, and their range of forms for drinking and serving liquids which made a range of uses possible, in wealthier and poorer households alike, and their low cost. These stonewares appear to have been traded as vessels in their own right, rather than as containers for other commodities (Gaimster 1997).

While stonewares from Langerwehe, Cologne and especially Raeren are found throughout Europe in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century contexts, from the mid-sixteenth century overseas markets were served on a vastly increased scale by the expanding Frechen industry (Figure 12.2d). This industry was almost completely geared for foreign trade, shipping the majority of its output down the Rhine to the coastal ports of the Netherlands, whence they were sent across the English Channel to London and other English ports (Gaimster 1997: 55). Documentary sources indicate the increased regularity and size of shipments during the early sixteenth century, and the regular involvement of continental ports such as Antwerp, Dordrecht and Rozendaal (page 79).

John Allan has studied the importation of Rhenish stoneware to Exeter, which increased considerably during the second half of the sixteenth century, although 75 per cent of this trade came through London (Allan 1984: 118). London was the centre for the stoneware trade to England during the reign of Elizabeth I, a position strengthened by the granting of a series of stoneware import monopolies (Gaimster 1997: 80). This pre-eminent position was maintained until the mid-seventeenth century, and Gaimster has calculated that around ten million stoneware vessels were shipped to London during the period 1600–1640 (1997: 82), many being redistributed to other English ports. Thereafter Exeter (Allan 1984: 123) and other English ports were more likely to trade directly with the continent than with London (Gaimster 1997: 82). For more than two centuries, Rhenish stonewares were the largest single category of imported ceramics traded to Britain, but the

importation to London of stoneware bottles from Frechen virtually ceased once John Dwight commenced stoneware manufacture there in the 1670s (1997: 83).

Rhenish stonewares have been found at some early European colonial sites in mainland North America and the Caribbean (Gaimster 1997: 98–100). The strength of Dutch trade in the seventeenth-century Atlantic world appears to have influenced the volume of stonewares recovered through archaeology, but Rhenish stonewares were transhipped to the colonies from London and other English ports (Allan 1999). Just as Frechen brown stonewares dominated the ceramics trade during the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, so grey stonewares with moulded decoration and cobalt blue colouring from the Westerwald became the main German export ware from the late seventeenth century. Westerwald stonewares are well represented on sites on the British mainland and in the colonies; their reduced occurrence from the 1770s appears to have been a result of competition from the growing exports of the developing British refined-ceramics industry.

During the early colonial period, wares from colonial industrial metropolises dominated each country's territory. Spanish ceramics predominated in South America, Florida, Mexico, and the Spanish borderlands encompassing northern Sonora and what is now the US Southwest. French ceramics dominated in Nova Scotia and New France prior to their acquisition by the British in the late eighteenth century. British ceramics, such as tin-glazed wares and North Devon slipwares, were common in Virginia, New England and Newfoundland, while Dutch tin-glazed wares are known from the seventeenth century in what is now New York state. The appearance of other wares corresponds with later immigrants, often maintaining a dominant local position within newly settled areas which had a distinct cultural or ethnic identity. From the mid-eighteenth century, this picture changed, as ceramic assemblages came more to reflect the global complexities of trade (Lawrence 2003).

Growing trade with the east from the sixteenth century brought increasing quantities of Chinese porcelain to the west. Fine, lightweight and translucent, porcelain was a perfect medium for decoration and ideal for the consumption of tea, which was also brought to Europe along with cargoes of spices, silk, cotton, lacquer and exotic woods. From the beginning of the seventeenth century, the key players in this eastern trade were the Vereenigde Ostindische Companie (VOC), the Dutch East India Company, and the English East India Company (EIC) (cf. Flatman and Staniforth, this volume). Together they were responsible for the importation of millions of pieces of porcelain into Europe through Amsterdam and London, from

which ports they were redistributed throughout Europe and the European colonies (see Figure 12.2). Initially expensive items, they were highly prized by the wealthy, but as the scale of importation increased they became more affordable and more widely available (e.g. Allan 1984: 105). Chinese porcelains had a major impact upon European material culture, and upon the products of the developing European ceramics industries that reproduced porcelain forms and decoration and attempted to produce the porcelain body. The massive trade in porcelain, and the popularity of porcelain tea- and tablewares were threatened and ultimately supplanted by the products of Staffordshire's developing ceramics industry.

Staffordshire wares have been found in seventeenth-century contexts in the Caribbean and North American colonies, but from the 1720s Staffordshire refined earthenwares and stonewares began to constitute an increasingly important item of trade. The attention given to Staffordshire ceramics in North America, both by archaeologists and by scholars from a decorative arts background, has highlighted the importance of this market but has at the same time exaggerated its early significance. Despite the large quantities of Staffordshire ceramics excavated on eighteenth-century North American sites, and their frequent mention in newspaper advertisements, Europe rather than North America was the main market for British wares until 1835 (Ewins 1997: 6).

Little synthesis of the archaeological evidence for the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British ceramics trade with Europe has been undertaken, despite its clear significance. Between 1760 and 1780 Josiah Wedgwood, for example, was selling to Russia, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, France, Italy, Germany, Sweden and Turkey (J. Thomas 1971: 116), and he was not alone. Documentary and archaeological evidence for this trade is abundant, and substantial assemblages with British ceramics have been published (e.g. Bartels 1999: 883–936; Thijssen 1991: 29, 112–123). Besides the Staffordshire potteries, other significant participants in the trade with Europe were the potteries of Yorkshire, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Stockton-on-Tees and Sunderland.

Excavated assemblages of unrefined wares of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries can be traced to their sources of manufacture by the characteristics of their ceramic bodies, form and decoration. For tin-glazed wares, a considerable literature on British and European production sites (e.g. Gaimster 1999b; Hurst et al. 1986) exists, and the manufacture of refined 'Staffordshire-type' wares of the mid-eighteenth century was limited to a clearly defined group of centres. In nineteenth-century contexts, the increase in marked wares allows excavated ceramics to be sourced with more

certainty, emphasising the growing importance of Staffordshire, north-east English and Scottish manufacturing. More difficult is the archaeological study of those between production and consumption – ‘middlemen’, dealers, merchants, carriers and retailers. Ewins (1997), however, has charted the development of Staffordshire manufacturers’ trade with North America, demonstrating how Staffordshire manufacturers gained access to the American market and the means by which they were able to respond rapidly to changing American tastes.

As the North American markets for British ceramics expanded during the nineteenth century, other new markets developed. A snapshot of destinations for ceramics exported from Liverpool in April and May 1827 (Customs Office 1827) highlights New York, Boston, and New Orleans as the main recipients of British ceramics, while in Canada, St. John’s, Halifax, Res-tigouche, Miramichi, Montreal, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Québec were regular destinations. South American receiving ports included Bahia, La Guaira, Pernambuco, Rio de Janeiro, Valparaiso and Lima, as well as Veracruz in Mexico, and Bermuda. Barbados, Antigua, Havana, Kingston, St Thomas, St Vincent and Trinidad are amongst the islands of the western Atlantic listed. European ports receiving ceramics including St Petersburg, Lisbon, Gibraltar, Barcelona, Livorno, Naples, Messina, Palermo and Malta, and Tunis are also mentioned. The growing importance of the eastward trade is evident by the inclusion of ‘Africa’, Bombay, Calcutta, Demerara and Singapore. The list is by no means exhaustive. Late nineteenth-century manufacturers’ advertisements represent a significant source here: in 1861, for example, the Staffordshire firm William and James Butterfield advertised ‘All kinds of printed and fancy printed common bodies suitable for the East and West Indies, Australian, Russian, North and South American Markets’ (Harrison, Harrod and Co. 1861).

Historical archaeology contributes much to our understanding of the role of British ceramics in the development of global trade. Ceramics excavated from domestic sites or from the wrecks of trading ships provide a unique record of trade and consumption, while work undertaken on production sites can recover wares destined for export. Foreign-language inscriptions, overseas retailers’ details and importers’ marks are commonly found on a range of nineteenth-century wares, while customers such as hotels and steamship companies can be identified from printed emblems. Archaeological work underlines, for instance, the popularity of flow-blue and flow-mulberry printed wares, together with undecorated ‘white granite’ among North American consumers in the 1840s–1860s, and their use within Britain is confirmed by finds in domestic assemblages.

CONSUMPTION AND CONSUMERISM

While we have described the potential of archaeological studies of ceramic production, trade and exchange, historical archaeologists most commonly engage with ceramics in contexts related to their consumption. A. Martin (1993: 142–143) has usefully distinguished the study of consumption from that of *consumerism*, which extends beyond simple acquisition to denote the complex cultural relationships between humans and consumer goods. The historical archaeology of ceramics has much to contribute to interdisciplinary ‘consumerist studies’ (Majewski and Schiffer 2001). Such work can explore how material goods mark or confer social identity or status, the role of fashion and demand in spurring changes in manufacture, and the ways in which people construct their own meanings for objects produced by themselves or others.

As noted above, George Miller (1980) pioneered the use of documentary materials such as potters’ price-fixing lists, bills of lading and account books to establish price-index values for plates, cups and bowls with various types of decoration for the period 1787–1880. The prices of undecorated cream-coloured (CC) vessels were used as the scale against which to measure changes in the value of the other decorative types. Miller then used the values as the basis for comparing expenditure patterns from various archaeological assemblages after a minimum vessel count had been completed and the forms were grouped by decoration. In his later paper (G. Miller 1991), Miller corrected some misconceptions about the stability of CC vessel prices throughout the nineteenth century and provided more in-depth information on English ceramics exported from the 1780s to the 1880s.

George Miller’s work inspired many studies of ceramics using the CC index, especially in North American historical archaeology. These studies often went beyond simply establishing expenditure patterns to make statements about socioeconomic status and consumer preference (e.g. Spencer-Wood 1987). Researchers generally found no simple correlation between the value of ceramic assemblages and the social and economic situation of the individuals or households that used the assemblages. Klein (1991: 83) notes that multiple factors influence the value of a given ceramic assemblage, including household organisation, size and life cycle; income strategies and external economic conditions. He advises that ceramics should not be used as the sole measure of socioeconomic position, and that other goods, such as foods and textiles, would be more accurate indicators. Klein (1991: 88) and others (e.g. Beaudry 1987) recommend that the household

is perhaps the most appropriate scale for most historical–archaeological research and stress that the artefacts recovered from such excavations should be studied within the social and economic contexts of the people who lived in particular households (King this volume).

Ceramic style is also an important focus of consumerist studies. In ceramics, as in many other areas of material culture, ‘traditional’ and ‘popular’ (or ‘high’) styles coexist (Majewski and Schiffer 2001: 34). In 1930s contexts, for instance, abstract Art Deco table- and teaware forms are often recovered alongside traditional shapes decorated with conventional floral patterns. Historical archaeology is well placed to examine how ceramic styles are juxtaposed in consumption, or repeated or recycled through time in production (Samford 1997).

Combining documentary research and archaeological data from particular middle-class households, Majewski and Schiffer (2001) explore the archaeological evidence for the use of ceramics decorated in the Aesthetic style by residents of late-nineteenth-century downtown San Bernardino, California. The Aesthetic movement, a British art movement which influenced the emergence of Art Nouveau, stressed Japanese influences, in the production of furniture, metalwork, ceramics, glass, textiles, wallpapers and books. By the 1870s, Japanese-like motifs – cherry blossoms, bamboo, birds, fan shapes, reserves with scenes within a scene, and stylised clouds (Figure 12.2e) – were applied asymmetrically on goods of all kinds (Majewski and Schiffer 2001: 36–37). Transfer printing and less frequently enamelling were used to express Aesthetic motifs on ceramic tableware, teaware, toilet sets, tiles, and decorative ware. By the 1890s, the Japanese style had faded in popularity.

Majewski and Schiffer suggest that ‘data from the archaeological record, while challenging to collect, may provide some of the best information on the actual use of these materials by members of different social classes’ (2001: 43). Since such study requires the combination of documentary with material sources of evidence in order to uncover the identity, social class, family composition and ethnicity of a site’s occupants, the most successful work in this field focuses upon household contexts.

For example, during excavations in downtown San Bernardino (Doolittle and Majewski 1997), one of the fifty features excavated was a privy. Documentary sources indicated that this feature lay on the site of the household of the middle-class Whaley family, who had lived in that location from around 1860. Almost 800 ceramic sherds representing 150 vessels were recovered from this feature, and most dated to the 1870s–1880s. Two examples of English-made earthenware vessels decorated in different Aesthetic-style

patterns were represented – a toothbrush holder from a toilet set and an earthenware saucer. Such construction of profiles of ceramic use by particular households, recording the percentage of popular versus traditional wares, or the ranges of forms used, hold the potential for broader comparative studies of the impact of the Aesthetic movement on the consumption of material culture. A household-based approach allows us, for instance, to consider the role of women as the primary purchasers of goods in late nineteenth-century America, a role they increasingly assumed as personal incomes rose and urban retail stores and mail-order catalogues offered increased purchasing options after the American Civil War. The approach also makes the study of the use of material culture by children possible, since numerous complete or partial children's tea sets decorated with Aesthetic motifs were produced (Formanek-Brunell 1993).

The interpretation of ceramics in consumption contexts by historical archaeologists has been diverse. Historical archaeologists have emphasised the ideological properties of artefacts since being introduced to Binford's (1962: 219) concept of 'ideotechnic function' in Deetz's (1977) classic *In Small Things Forgotten*. More commonly in the interpretation of ceramics, however, have been studies of identity, especially ethnicity, through consumer choice or distinctive foodways – for example Griggs' (1999) study of Irish immigrants in New York City, Fitts' (2002) study of Italian immigrants in Jamaica, Queens County, New York, or by Adrian and Mary Praetzelis' (1998) examination of overseas Chinese communities in Sacramento, California.

Studying social status and occupation through ceramics, Dyson's (1982: 361) analysis of eight ceramic assemblages from sites in Middleton, Connecticut dating from 1780 to 1830 identified 'many basic similarities related to common behavior patterns', but aimed to explore changing tastes of the individual households in relation to their worldviews. Examining the changing consumption from painted, blue-on-white chinoiserie motifs to later transfer prints of the Blue-Willow tradition, Dyson suggested that

the classic order based on upper-class British values had given way to the twin movements of local patriotism and European Romanticism. The latter reflected considerable nostalgia for the British world, from which the colonists had so recently separated. (1982: 376).

Brooks (1999) has considered how the emergence of British identity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries influenced the designs of transfer-printed wares. Brooks argues that the negotiation of English, Welsh, Scottish and Irish ethnicities in relation to the emergence of Britishness was worked

out through material culture, including ceramics – especially transfer-printed patterns that presented themes of ‘rural prosperity’, ‘war’ and ‘nationality’. He suggests that cultural affiliation of a particular site’s inhabitants might be assigned through comparative analysis between geographical areas, and corroborated by using other material culture evidence such as gravestone inscriptions.

In an innovative report on the results of the Cyprus Freeway Replacement Project in West Oakland, California, Mary and Adrian Praetzelis (2004) characterise the material culture from segments of the populations of known demographic and ethnic character who had lived in this urban area in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: white Euroamericans, overseas Chinese, and African-Americans. The Praetzelises characterise the material culture from the assemblages using a system of categories derived from South’s (1977a) function-based system. They contend that the material culture associated with particular households is an expression of the values of the families who occupied them.

Studies of historical-period ceramics used by native peoples in North America also show that various groups appropriated British-made wares and used them for their own purposes. Louise Jackson (1991) documents how the Eskimo in south-western Alaska incorporated British transfer-printed, painted, and sponge-decorated teawares into their late nineteenth-century mortuary rituals. Burley’s (1989) work on the Metis of the northern plains of North America indicates that Metis women used British teawares to create social relationships with white traders. In a study of the material culture of the Inuit of Labrador and of Alaska, Cabak and Loring (2000) have demonstrated their participation in the global system, but by selectively adopting European goods – in this case ceramics, and especially sponge-decorated ceramics – and adapting them for use in Inuit foodways.

Another important theme in the studies of ceramic consumption has been the study of the impact of European industrially made goods upon non-European societies, or those geographically remote from industrial activity. For example, archaeological work in the Western Isles of Scotland has examined nineteenth-century crofting communities which were physically remote and culturally distinct from mainland Britain, and which were poor in the extreme (Barker 2005: 112, 118; Symonds 2000). Excavations of nineteenth-century ‘blackhouses’ on Barra, South Uist and the Shiant Islands have revealed material culture which has much in common with that of other marginal or remote groups. These islanders had no real tradition of ceramic use in the preparation and consumption of food or drink, and yet excavated assemblages show that from c. 1800 they were participating

fully in trade with mainland Britain, acquiring and using industrially made white-bodied ceramics to an extent hitherto unknown. The new ceramic wares were adapted to island foodways, which comprised a limited diet of barley meal or oat gruel prepared in a single iron cooking pot, supplemented with potatoes and occasionally fish or cockles (Barker 2005: 112–113). The high proportion of bowls in the blackhouse assemblages is consistent with a diet of this kind, and the choice of bowls reflects their suitability for established habits of food consumption (Symonds 2000: 207). Similarly, in the southern United States, excavations at slave cabin sites consistently produce higher percentages of ceramic bowls than are recovered from assemblages associated with overseers, while they are much less well-represented in groups from the houses of the plantation owners (Otto 1977). Otto (1984: 167) suggests that bowls are a vessel form associated both with poverty and with a diet based upon slow-simmer foods cooked in a single pot.

Bowls excavated in Hebridean blackhouses are mostly of the cheapest decorated types (G. Miller 1991: 6) – slip-decorated and, from the 1830s, sponged. Poverty, a limited diet and an absence of furniture for dining and display might suggest that the Western Isles represented a limited market for industrially made ceramics, and yet the archaeological evidence indicates a more general acceptance of these, and a willingness to participate in mainland British domestic customs and practices. Plates, present in all of the blackhouse assemblages, indicate that a wider range of ceramics was used in the consumption of food, although the documented absence of tables, forks and knives suggests that meals were taken in a more traditional manner. Analysis of use-wear marks on plates holds the potential to determine what, if any, cutlery was used. Contemporary documentary sources indicate the late introduction of tea to the islands, and yet teawares are present at all of the sites; at Balnabodach on Barra, for example, teawares comprise between 20 and 22 per cent of the vessels present in three pre-1850 assemblages (Barker 2005: 113–114).

Whatever the economic circumstances of the crofters, consumer choices were being made in which cost was not the only determining factor. The blackhouse ceramics consistently indicate a preference for decorated wares, including vessels with printed decoration (e.g. Barker 2005: 115), which was the most expensive type of decoration available on earthenware at the time (G. Miller et al. 1994: 234). However, while the presence of more expensive decorated wares argues for a closer examination of the means and motives of the consumer, the high incidence of ceramics with evidence of repair, with holes drilled through the vessels' bodies so that sherds could be joined by metal 'staples', might suggest an owner's inability to afford a

replacement. Repaired ceramics are commonly found in assemblages from remote locations, such as the seasonal fishing stations of Red Bay, Labrador (C. Burke 2000), or in the Inuit camps of Labrador (Cabak and Loring 2000: 24), and their presence on Hebridean sites suggests that the irregularity of supply of goods to these islands might be the main cause for repairs to broken vessels. Such studies aim to integrate knowledge of the history of ceramic studies (technology, trade, and consumerism) with interpretive and comparative analysis.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The admittedly Eurocentric perspective upon ceramic studies in historical archaeology adopted here has aimed to provide a broad introduction to the range of specialist work carried out by practitioners in the field. Many of the methods used are applicable to the study of other ceramic traditions from the historical period. Considering the wares that influenced, or were influenced by, European ceramics allows for a better understanding of the nexus of colonial connections forged from the fifteenth century onwards, but this approach would also apply to other geographic areas and time periods. Fundamental to these studies is an empirical knowledge of the history of ceramic production and technology, grounded in an integration of archaeological and documentary evidence. Although research has been carried out on these topics in Europe and the Americas, the archaeology of the technology and development of Asian ceramics and their use and influence around the globe remains little explored. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century wares from the continent also demand further study. The research highlighted here has primarily focused on tablewares, to the exclusion of the wide range of products that were produced industrially and on smaller scales for use in contexts other than food consumption (e.g. food preparation and storage, dairying, institutional uses). Scholars shy away from the study of these wares because they are often difficult to identify and categorise, which may be linked to their production and use in less industrial settings.

Given the findings of researchers working in the area of trade and exchange, one cannot but be impressed by the global scope and influence of the European ceramic tradition. The consumption of ceramics, however, is intricately bound up with themes such as consumer choice, identity, aesthetics and meaning. To reach their full potential, studies in these areas must be contextualised within larger societal and historical frameworks.

Several recent provocative studies forge new territory in this direction. Alasdair Brooks (1997, 1999) moves beyond cost-based analysis of

transfer-printed wares and links specific patterns with themes in the history of Great Britain and the creation of a British identity. Transfer-printed wares with literary themes are the focus of Gavin Lucas' study of 'reading pottery' (2003), in which he explores the social and individual choices underlying the purchase and use of tablewares depicting scenes from popular early nineteenth-century novels, such as those written by Sir Walter Scott. His argument that manufacture and consumption of 'literary ceramics' is connected to the emerging acceptance of fiction as appropriate reading material in early nineteenth-century Britain is grounded in the context he builds for literature and society 1780–1850. The work of Lucas and Brooks illustrates that interpretive approaches in historical archaeology are leading scholars in new directions, yet their work builds upon the understandings that have been achieved through more traditional approaches to the study of ceramics. This juxtaposition of approaches bodes well for future innovations in ceramic studies in historical archaeology.