

Maiolica

by Timothy Wilson

Tin-glazed earthenware is known in Italian as *maiolica* and in other European languages sometimes as *faïence* or *delftware*. It is a technique that owes its origin to the Islamic world but its diffusion through Europe to the Italian Renaissance.

Maiolica was not the only type of ceramics made in Renaissance Italy. Incised slipware and earthenware decorated by marbling with slips, or in other ways, were made in large quantities all over fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italy, and formed a high proportion of everyday ceramics, especially in northern Italy; they had the advantage of not requiring tin, which had to be expensively imported. The technique of incising slipware goes back through the Byzantine and Islamic worlds to Tang China; in Europe, Italian slipware was part of a long tradition of European slip-decorated earthenwares, from Cyprus to Stoke on Trent, but only occasionally (as in Renaissance Ferrara) developed links with higher-status art forms or artistic aspirations above the level of folk-pottery¹.

Chinese porcelain, by contrast, was intensely admired and enjoyed great prestige. It was more-or-less successfully imitated in several Italian centres, of which the most successful - and the only one for which surviving examples have been identified - was the project carried out under the patronage of the Medici Grand-Dukes of Tuscany in the 1570s and 1580s². However, these projects were always princely prestige projects and the technological difficulties and lack of suitable materials meant that they were never commercially viable. The experiments faded out by the early 17th century and the developments in France and Germany that eventually led to the manufacture of true porcelain in Meissen after 1708 owed nothing to the experimentation of Renaissance Italy.

Maiolica, therefore - the “pottery of humanism”, as it has been called³ - is not only reasonably regarded as the quintessential ceramic art of the Renaissance, but is also the one which most clearly demonstrates the impact of the Italian Renaissance on the rest of Europe⁴.

The fact that a ceramic glaze could be rendered opaque white by the addition of tin oxide, providing a good base for painting, had been known in the Islamic world since its discovery in Iraq about 800AD⁵. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries Islamic potters in Malaga, in the Islamic kingdom of Andalusia, applied lustre to tin-glazed earthenware to produce products, most famously the great lustred vases of the Alhambra, of an ambitious brilliance without precedent. Malaga lustre was deservedly admired and developed extensive export markets throughout the Mediterranean and to northern Europe⁶. In the 14th century the centre of gravity of the industry moved up the east coast of Spain, to Paterna and especially Manises, in the Christian kingdom of Valencia, and their export business became even more extensive. Around 1400 the “Merchant of Prato”, Francesco di Marco Datini, regularly dealt with commissions of large consignments of Manises lustreware for the affluent merchant families of Florence⁷. This was known to Italian clients as *maiolica*; the word in origin may have been a variant of the Spanish phrase *obra de malica* (Malaga ware) but some of the Italian recipients took the word as referring to the island of Majorca, not far from Valencia and a major trans-shipping port, and believed that the wares were made there. In fact, *maiolica*, though it owes its name to Majorca, was not made on the island at this time⁸. In the sixteenth century, the word gradually expanded its meaning until it acquired its meaning in modern Italian, describing any tin-glazed earthenware whether lustred or not.

In Italy, as throughout most of the Mediterranean littoral, the tin-glaze technique was widely diffused by 1300⁹. In the thirteenth and much of the fourteenth century, the decoration of most so-called *maiolica arcaica* in northern and central Italy was executed mainly or only in manganese purple-brown and copper green; but after about 1300 a blue made from imported cobalt was introduced¹⁰, this was followed by a yellow derived from antimony and a range of oranges derived from iron, to produce a wide range of possible colours - only a good, even red proving difficult. Around 1460 some Italian potters learnt the Islamic secret of applying metallic lustre in a third, reducing, firing, and in two Umbrian towns, Gubbio and Deruta, this iridescent lustre became economically important around 1500, adding considerable value to pottery over a long period of time. The exact process by which Italians learnt the tin glaze and lustre techniques from the Islamic world remains uncertain: references to craftsmen with Islamic names are virtually non-existent in Italian documents¹¹. According to a

record made by a Sienese chronicler in March 1514, Galgano di Belforte, a potter of Siena, went to Valencia “and with the help of the merchant Battista di Goro Bulgarini, disguising himself in poor clothes and, in the guise of an assistant in the pottery business there, secretly observed and came to understand the colouring of lustred pottery (literally “golden vases”) there, and this month came back with the skill to Siena”¹². There is no evidence in fact that lustre was successfully made in Siena, whereas the technique had been known at Deruta, not far away, for half a century by 1514; but the story serves as a reminder that technology transfer can happen in various ways¹³.

In the first half of the fifteenth century, if a wealthy Italian patron wanted colourful and glamorous ceramics for display, something which might be an ornament to rooms of a house more prominent and public than the kitchen, he would order lustreware from Spain; locally made pottery was for more day-to-day use. Towards the end of the century, there is evidence that the increasingly sophisticated and ambitious pottery made in some parts of Italy, with its new range of colours and elegance of ornament (including *all’antica* motifs), was beginning to catch the interest of influential and discriminating patrons. In April 1490, Lorenzo de’ Medici wrote to a member of the Malatesta family who had sent him a gift of pottery, thanking him and attributing values of rarity, novelty and excellence to them: *se le cose più rare debbono essere più chare, questi vasi mi sono più chari et più li stimo che se fussino de argento, per esser molto eccellenti et rari, come dico, et nuovi a noi altri di qua*¹⁴. There is an element of polite rhetoric here, but no Italian would have thought of expressing himself in these terms about Italian-made pottery fifty years before. It may have been Lorenzo himself who commissioned a jar, now in Detroit, which has the arms of Medici impaling Orsini; Lorenzo married Clarice Orsini in 1469 (fig. 1)¹⁵. The jar was made in the Florence region, perhaps in the rising specialist pottery centre of Montelupo Fiorentino, and, though the potter could not make lustre, both the form and the floral decoration (called *fioralixi* by a Tuscan merchant in 1480¹⁶) imitate the prestigious and still considerably more expensive lustreware imports from Manises. After the death of Lorenzo, the vase was at the Medici villa of Poggio a Caiano and recorded in an inventory there - the earliest known inventory reference to an identifiable individual surviving piece of Italian maiolica¹⁷. For the first time, it seems that we can catch an Italian potter, carrying out an armorial commission for a wealthy Italian client, seeking to compete directly with the prestigious Spanish imports; before much

longer, so rapid was the development of Italian maiolica, that it had entirely conquered the top of the home market.

In similar vein to Lorenzo, in 1486 the Ferrarese ambassador to the court of Matthias Corvinus, King of Hungary, wrote to Eleanora Duchess of Ferrara saying that if she wanted to make a gift to her sister Beatrice of Aragon, Queen of Hungary, she should send her some Faenza pottery, *lavoreri da faienza di terra*, at which Beatrice *ne farà più festa che se fussino darzento*¹⁸. Not long afterwards a maiolica service (fig. 2) was made for Queen Beatrice (or jointly for her and the King), bearing the impaled royal arms. It was not, however, made in Faenza, but by potters from another booming maiolica centre, Pesaro¹⁹.

Increasing control of colours and mastery of *disegno* allowed Italian pottery painters to develop a range of pictorial effects, which culminated around 1500 in the development of full *istoriato*, in which the entire surface of a maiolica plate was covered with narrative subjects, painted in polychrome and with spatial perspective drawing²⁰. It was never more than a tiny part of the overall production of any ceramic centre, but *istoriato* remained for sixty years the apex of maiolica manufacture and the basis of its sporadic aspirations to be taken seriously as an art form²¹. Although there is a danger that its disproportionately high rate of survival, both above ground and in archaeological excavations, may lead us to over-rate the prestige and significance of ceramics in the sixteenth century (as in other periods of history), there is evidence that *istoriato* and some other forms of ceramic decoration were appreciated by some of the most discriminating patrons of the Renaissance. It featured often in gifts between women²². When in the autumn of 1524 Eleanora Gonzaga, Duchess of Urbino, who had recently returned with her husband Francesco Maria Della Rovere to resume control of their Duchy of Urbino, wanted to send a present to her mother Isabella d'Este, widow of the Marquess of Mantua, she commissioned a set from the best Urbino maiolica-artist of the time, Nicola da Urbino, which was painted mainly with subjects from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*; Eleanora sent it to her mother saying she hoped it might be used at Isabella's country villa at Porto:

Pensando io di volere visitare V. Ex.tia cum qualche cosa de quelle che dano questi paesi, et chi gli potessero piacere a questi tempi non trovando cosa che mi paresse al proposito: Ho facto fare una credenza de vasi di terra, Quale la

*mando a v .Ex.tia per Baptista mio Credentiero pnte exhibitore, per havere li maestri de questo nostro paese qualche nome di lavorar bene, et se piacerà alla ex.tia v. mi sera di contento, et lei se ne fara servire a Porto per essere cosa da villa accettando el Bono animo mio in cambio de quanto vorrei chella fusse: che certo desiderarei potegliela mandare de tante gioye rare, essendo mio debito de non pensare ad altro più che di poter servire e fare cosa grata.*²³

Even a glamorous maiolica service like this was much cheaper than a *credenza* in precious metal. In 1530 the agent of Isabella's son Federico Duke of Mantua reported that he could get nearly 100 pieces of Urbino *istoriato* maiolica for 25 scudi²⁴. In 1525-6 a silver-gilt salt designed by Giulio Romano for Federico cost 31 ducats for materials and 20 ducats for the goldsmith's labour, not counting payment to Giulio²⁵. A *scudo* and a ducat were approximately equivalent, so it seems that the materials and labour of one silver-gilt salt cost about twice as much as a 100-piece Urbino maiolica *credenza*. However, the value placed on the maiolica is not entirely measurable in money terms: in the context of the elegant society with which Isabella surrounded herself in her private places, such ceramics had a cultural value of their own; such a *cosa da villa* constituted a conversation piece and a sign of taste and humanist culture²⁶.

At these and more modest social levels, ceramics were being made in more varied and specialized forms, for more self-consciously elegant and elaborate dining habits and reflecting a developing "culture of commodities"²⁷. This has been interpreted by Richard Goldthwaite as an index of the beginnings of a modern "consumerist" society²⁸. Pottery remained, however, of relatively modest importance in the overall economy of all except one medium-sized city - Faenza - and a few small towns - Deruta, Montelupo, Castel Durante, Castelli - which developed as specialist centres of maiolica production in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.

Most of the tin used by maiolica potters in Renaissance Italy was mined in Cornwall, though the trade was controlled by merchants based in the Low Countries and it was known in Italy as "Flanders tin"²⁹. Vannoccio Biringuccio of Siena, who died in 1539, wrote of tin in his *Pirotechnia*:

*La minera sua, anchor ch'io non la vedesse mai, perche in puochi luochi par
che se'ne generi, pur secondo che da alcuni pratici ho sentito, il piu, & il
meglior che nelle provincie d'Europa si truovi, e quel che si cava in
Inghilterra, & ancho ho sentito dire truovarsene in certi luochi della Fiandra,
& in Boemia, & nel ducato di Baviera, ma che per la stranezza de môtî e
luochi, aponto non vi so recitare³⁰.*

Paradoxically, the very shortage of tin in Italy meant that tin-glazed pottery was more widely used than north of the Alps, because in France and Germany and England, pewter - relatively rare in Italy - was widespread in taverns and on the tables of the "middling sort". Montaigne, passing through southern Tuscany in September 1581 commented that:

*Considerando la pulitezza di questi vasellamenti di terra, che paiono di
porcellana sî sono bianchi e netti e tanto a buon mercato, che veramente mi
paiono più gustevoli per lo mangiare che il stagno di Francia, massimamente
brutto come si trova nelle osterie³¹*

Potters in the 16th century readily travelled to where their skills were marketable, where economic circumstances were favourable, or where materials were available and this mobility of labour seems to have played a key role in the rapid development of the industry around 1500. The lustreware industry in Gubbio was dominated by Maestro Giorgio, a Lombard³². A key figure in the development of early-sixteenth-century maiolica in Siena, Maestro Benedetto, was from Faenza³³. The most individual and aspirational painter of the Urbino school, Francesco Xanto Avelli, was from Rovigo³⁴. The famous workshop set up in the outbuildings of the Medici villa of Cafaggiolo was founded by men from Montelupo, who were of slavonic descent³⁵. In mid-sixteenth-century Venice, the principal workshops were run by men from Le Marche, Giacomo da Pesaro and Francesco di Pietro da Castel Durante³⁶. Sometimes we can trace the movements of enterprising and talented individuals throughout a whole career: Francesco di Bernardino, known as Francesco Durantino, was from Castel Durante; by 1537 he was working in Urbino; in 1547 he took over a workshop at Monte Bagnolo outside Perugia; around 1566 he was in the service of the Duke of Savoy in Turin, where Piccolpasso considered that he *ha superato in questo esercizio, dico in tutta la fabrica dell'arte da fondamenti sino al compimento di essa*³⁷; he later

worked in and near Rome³⁸. In each place the activity of a technically experienced and artistically proficient potter could lead to the development of skills locally.

Rulers and city governments recognized that a flourishing ceramic industry and innovation in it were of economic value to a city and that, at its best, the industry could add to a city's prestige; they took steps to attract and retain key workers, to protect them from damaging competition, and to encourage innovation. In 1498, the Masci, the leading lustreware-making family in Deruta, claimed in their *catasto* return that their *maiolica* (lustrewares) are "beautiful and unprecedented and sold throughout the world, and on account of this the city of Perugia is glorified and grows in fame"³⁹. In a debate in the city council of Urbino in 1511, a speaker claimed that artisans such as potters should be pressurized into living within the city and not in outlying villages for economic reasons and because "the arts are a decoration and an ennoblement to cities"⁴⁰. In 1519 a brief Pope from Leo X granted fiscal immunities to Maestro Giorgio, who had come to Gubbio from Lombardy and created a successful business of lustreware manufacture, on the grounds that he was an excellent master of *maiolica* and that his work, sold abroad, brought both honour and profit (in customs revenues) to the city⁴¹. In 1569, an edict of Guidobaldo II, Duke of Urbino, recognized an innovatory achievement of Giacomo di Girolamo di Lanfranco of Pesaro in developing a method of fired gilding on pottery and granted him in appreciation of it a monopoly and fiscal immunities⁴². The various protectionist edicts⁴³, privileges, and exemptions for the pottery industry are a revealing historical source that has not yet been comprehensively studied in a broad economic history context.

Maiolica in exceptional cases could be seen as suitable for diplomatic gifts and the Dukes and Duchesses of Urbino in particular took opportunities to showcase the excellence of their local maiolica by commissioning appropriate gifts to influential people⁴⁴. In 1528, just after the Sack of Rome, the ducal agent at the court of Clement VII at Orvieto wrote to the Duchess urging her that it would be a good moment to send the Pope a service of pottery, because he had just used up a service that he had from Faenza, but "quickly, quickly, for the time is right"⁴⁵. In 1548, as Vasari recorded, Duke Guidobaldo II commissioned a series of designs from Battista Franco and had services made from them as gifts for the Emperor Charles V and for the powerful cardinal Alessandro Farnese, his own wife's brother⁴⁶. Around 1560, the

Fontana family led the introduction into Urbino maiolica of a new decorative type, with meticulously painted grotesques on a white ground, which was appreciated at the highest levels and came to supersede *istoriato* as the preferred style for high-status gifts. As again narrated by Vasari, Duke Guidobaldo commissioned in 1560 or 1561 a new set of designs, portraying the campaigns and triumphs of Julius Caesar, from Taddeo and Federico Zuccaro, for a maiolica service which he sent as a gift to King Philip II of Spain⁴⁷. A similar virtuoso *credenza* (fig. 3), painted with subjects from the Spanish romance *Amadis of Gaul* and inscriptions in Spanish, was made about the same time, probably as a gift to Philip or another grandee of Spain⁴⁸. In 1566 Pope Pius V instructed his cardinals to use maiolica rather than precious metal at table and in March 1568 it was reported that: *il Duca di Urbino ha mandato a donar al Papa una bellissima credenza de piati de majolica historiati con figure, de' quali Sua Santità si vuole servire più che delli argenti*⁴⁹. In the 1590s the sister of the Duke of Urbino sent armorial services of grotesque-painted Urbino maiolica as presents to the wives of two Spanish Viceroys of Naples⁵⁰.

Municipalities as well as princes used ceramics as prestige gifts. In 1556-7, the town council of Castel Durante commissioned a maiolica vase with military subjects, grotesques, and heraldic devices as a gift to the French Cardinal François de Tournon on the occasion of a stay in the town⁵¹. It was on this occasion that the Cardinal (according to Piccolpasso) suggested to Cipriano Piccolpasso that he compose his *Tre libri dell arte del vasaio*. This work, surviving in Piccolpasso's illustrated manuscript, but not printed till the nineteenth century, claimed artistic status for maiolica by devoting to it a treatise in the classical form; it still provides us with most of our technical knowledge about Renaissance maiolica techniques. It may be - though the surviving manuscript was apparently never sent to France - that de Tournon was interested in using such a treatise to help promote and develop the maiolica industry in the Italian manner in France.

In 1535 two of the leading men at the French court, Cardinal Antoine Duprat, Chancellor of France, and Anne de Montmorency, Grand-maître of France, had been the recipients of the earliest *istoriato* services made for foreigners (fig. 4). These were made in the workshop of Guido Durantino in Urbino, and there seems every likelihood, though no specific documentation has been found, that the two services

were in some degree diplomatic gifts⁵². Montmorency himself, later in life, played an active role in the encouragement of a native French industry of artistic ceramics, patronizing each of the three outstanding manifestations of French Renaissance courtly pottery - the maiolica of Masseot Abaquesne of Rouen⁵³, the mysterious pottery of Saint-Porchaire⁵⁴, and Bernard Palissy⁵⁵.

This princely interest only concerned a tiny pinnacle of the production of Renaissance maiolica potters. Other successful pottery centres such as Faenza, Montelupo, and Deruta, produced maiolica on a very large commercial scale and developed successful and wide-ranging markets. Around 1540, potters in Faenza began exploiting a new thick white glaze decorated in a much more rapid style known as *compendiario* and sometimes modelled into complex and fantastic shapes. According to Piccolpasso the glaze was *malamente oggi detto Bianco faentino*, since it had in fact been personally invented by Alfonso I, who was Duke of Ferrara from 1505 to 1534; whether or not this was the case, it was the commercial potters of Faenza who most effectively exploited its potential⁵⁶. “Faenza white” was a dramatically successful product and accelerated the tendency for wealthy and noble families to use ceramics instead of silver as their tableware. Faenza workshops won numerous commissions for unprecedentedly large orders from Italy and abroad: one for Camillo Gonzaga, Count of Novellara, in 1590, consisted of 610 pieces⁵⁷.

One of the factors in the mobility of artisans, and one that particularly affected Faenza, appears to have been the growth of Protestantism. Faenza was a hotbed of Protestant ideas from the 1530s, until it was stamped out by severe action by the Inquisition, which established a centre at Faenza, culminating in a series of public executions in 1569⁵⁸. Protestant ideas were particularly prevalent in the artisan class and over a quarter of those denounced to the Faenza tribunal of the Inquisition were potters. There is inadequate specific documentation to prove that some Protestant-inclined potters left Faenza and took the new Faenza white maiolica technique to more tolerant places, but the hypothesis seems plausible. Certainly in the sixteenth century Faenza potters took their skills and their style elsewhere: the earliest marked piece of maiolica from Turin, for instance, is a pierced dish dated 1577; it is scarcely distinguishable in style from Faenza wares, and is convincingly attributed to Alessandro Ardente of Faenza, who was working in Turin from 1572 to 1595⁵⁹.

Ultimately, from the end of the sixteenth century, tin-glazed pottery somewhat in the tradition of “Faenza white” was to become a celebrated industry of Anabaptist communities which grew up in Moravia, but no direct link between these German-speaking “Habaner” potters and emigrant Italian protestants has been proven⁶⁰.

The Italian pottery imports found in archaeological excavations in Britain, the Low Countries, and the New World⁶¹ reflect the fact that most of the trade through the Atlantic passed through the Tyrrhenian sea ports, principally Pisa and Genoa. The greatest proportion of pottery imports into Britain in the sixteenth century was from Montelupo, shipped through Pisa, followed by maiolica from Liguria, shipped through Genoa⁶². In the Low Countries, alongside imports from Montelupo and Liguria, excavations have produced quantities of *compendiario* which are of “Faenza white” type; which of these imports were made in Faenza and which by Faenza-trained potters working elsewhere is a question which perhaps only a programme of scientific clay analysis will resolve⁶³.

During the sixteenth century, therefore, Italian maiolica potters created a range of innovative products which, having successfully driven Spanish lustreware off its position at the top of the market, developed new ranges of attractively decorated tableware which encouraged increased demand at all social levels and to widening markets. This process was accelerated by a willingness of potters to travel to where their skills would be best valued and by the establishment of policies by rulers and communities to encourage potters to come to, or remain in, their own states. More or less the same factors operated on an international level.

The earliest *credenza* made for a princely family outside Italy was the one already mentioned (fig. 2), made for the humanist king of Hungary Matthias Corvinus and his Italian queen. About 1515 some leading merchant families of Augsburg and Nuremberg, for whom trade with Venice was a pivotal activity, acquired a taste for Venetian maiolica, decorated in blue and white in imitation of Chinese porcelain or of Islamic pottery. In 1515 Regina Meuting (whose mother was a Fugger) married Johann Lamparter von Greiffenstein of Augsburg and at that time or soon afterwards they commissioned (or received as a gift) a service which included the plate in fig. 5⁶⁴. Other South German, Swiss⁶⁵, and sometimes Austrian⁶⁶ families became regular

clients of the Italian maiolica potteries. Among the most prestigious tableware commissions was a spectacular and varied set of “Faenza white”, made in 1576 for Albrecht V, Duke of Bavaria, and supplied by the Bettisi workshop in Faenza (fig. 6)⁶⁷; over 120 pieces of this service survive, mainly still in Munich. A few years later, in 1585 Albrecht’s successor, Wilhelm V, received a gift of Urbino maiolica from the Duke of Urbino; he liked it so much that he asked for some more, noting, in the stricter spirit of the Counter-Reformation, that the painters should be asked to avoid the more *risqué* mythological subjects, *che siano avertiti i Pittori a non porvi cosa alcuna che tenga del dishonesto*⁶⁸.

An early example of the impact of the Italian maiolica tradition on a German artist is the work of the painter Bartholomäus Dill Riemenschneider (c1500-49), son of the great sculptor Tilman Riemenschneider. He settled in northern Italy and although in 1528-30 arrested and accused of Protestantism, he worked for Cardinal Bernardo Cles at his palace in Trento. He probably painted tiles with spirited grotesques for the Cardinal’s private chamber (which were admired by Montaigne); certainly by him are a series of mythological subjects painted onto tiles for a notably un-Italian purpose, to adorn large free-standing tiled stoves of the sort favoured north of the Alps⁶⁹ (fig. 7).

By the early years of the 16th century the quality, indeed the artistic supremacy, of Italian maiolica, compared to all other ceramics being made in Europe, was widely manifest. Markets were beginning to develop abroad, and enterprising potters began to emigrate to take their skills to new markets, in particular to trading cities with established communities of Italian merchants.

Among the earliest of these was a man who was both one of the most brilliant and most mysterious of maiolica artists. Niculoso Francisco⁷⁰ is recorded in Triana, the established potters’ quarter of Seville, in 1498. During a career of thirty years or so in Seville, he made a series of remarkable large-scale tile pictures and introduced the Italian maiolica palette to Seville⁷¹. No record of him before he went to Seville has been found in Italian documents and his origins are unknown - he was sometimes called “Pisano”, but the word at the time in Seville meant nothing more specific than “Italian”. There is nothing in Italy to compare with his great tile pictures (fig. 8); they

were virtually a new art form, one which was to have a long history in both Spain and Portugal.

In the rich commercial cities of the Low Countries, Italian maiolica had superseded Valencian lustreware as the preferred luxury ceramic import by the end of the fifteenth century. Emblematic of the change are two beautiful pictures painted at Bruges. When Hugo van der Goes painted his great altarpiece for the Florentine merchant Tommaso Portinari around 1475, he placed near the Virgin a Valencian albarello containing lilies⁷²; but when a decade or so later Hans Memling painted a delightful still-life on the back of a portrait (perhaps of another foreign merchant), he made its centrepiece an Italian maiolica jug; this was probably one made in Pesaro, which had evidently found its way to Bruges (fig. 9)⁷³.

In the twenty-five years following, as Bruges declined, at least three Italian potters established themselves in the great and growing commercial metropolis of Antwerp⁷⁴. The most successful of these was Guido di Luca Savini, who settled in Antwerp around 1508, successively married two local women of some property and took the name Guido Andries. He is described in Antwerp documents as Venetian, and may have worked for a time in Venice before leaving Italy, but he was in fact from Castel Durante, the rising specialist pottery town in the Duchy of Urbino. The fashion for maiolica tableware was not yet established in northern Europe and the mainstay of Guido's business, rather than the tableware which was the main product of nearly all maiolica potteries in Italy, seems to have been pharmacy jars and pavement tiles. Among his commissions for pavements were some tiles at The Vyne in Hampshire, southern England, and a floor for the Cistercian Abbey of Herkenrode in Flanders (fig. 10). After his death in 1541 his widow married another Antwerp potter of Italian descent, Franchois Frans, who continued the business with success.

Guido himself was invited by Henry VIII to settle in England and establish the industry there, but declined. In the next generation his sons and potters trained in the workshop spread the Antwerp version of Italian maiolica further afield. One of his sons, Frans Andries, went to Seville and in 1561 undertook to teach the technique of Italian maiolica (*a pisano*) to a local potter. Another pottery painter thought to have been trained in the workshop of Franchois Frans, Jan Floris (a member of a famous

family of artists), also travelled to Spain and worked at Plasencia, Madrid and Talavera; he was appointed by Philip II *maestro de azulejos* of the Escorial in 1562⁷⁵. Another son of Guido, Joris, set up as a potter in Middelburg in the northern Netherlands. A third son, Jasper moved to England and established himself in Norwich in 1567, in association with another Antwerp potter, Jacob Jansen. In 1570 Andries and Jansen petitioned Queen Elizabeth for a privilege to come and set up a pottery in London, noting that they had come to England “to avoid persecution and for their conscience’ sake”, that they had been the first to introduce “the said science” into England, that they had been to trouble and expense finding suitable materials in England, and that they had been making pavement tiles and vessels for apothecaries in Norwich “very artificially” for three years⁷⁶. Subsequently a pottery was indeed set up in Aldgate, east of the city of London, run mainly by Jansen, and it is from this seed that the extensive English tin-glaze industry, later known as “English delftware”, grew. The plate in fig. 11, in a style derived from Antwerp Mannerism, and with an inscription in English in praise of Queen Elizabeth, was no doubt made by one of the Flemish potters settled in London⁷⁷.

A similar impact of potters from Antwerp settling in Haarlem, Utrecht, Amsterdam and Delft played a decisive role in the development of maiolica production in the northern Netherlands, culminating in the great industry of Delft⁷⁸.

The origin and development of the maiolica industry in the northern Netherlands, and more specifically in England, can thus be traced directly to two Italian families who settled in Antwerp early in the 16th century. The religious divide which culminated in the “Spanish fury” of 1576 was certainly a factor which encouraged Jasper Andries, a Protestant, to leave Antwerp, and some of the potters who moved to the Protestant northern Netherlands also did so to avoid religious persecution or conflict. The petition to Queen Elizabeth shows how the patronage of rulers who saw advantages in developing native industries could be an essential support to commercial viability and how the claim to freedom of religion could be adduced in support of such petitions.

The tradition of “faience” in France is also traceable to the impact of identifiable Italians.

From 1517/8 Girolamo Della Robbia of Florence worked for François I, providing architectural decorations in in *terracotta smaltata* for royal buildings such as the fantastic Château de Madrid in the Bois de Bologne (destroyed in the French Revolution)⁷⁹. However, after Girolamo's death (when he was described as *noble homme architecte du roi*) in Paris in 1566, no workshop remained making tin-glazed sculpture. Commercial entrepreneurialism in the provinces was to have a more lasting impact than direct royal patronage in Paris.

The presence of Italian potters is documented in the great commercial city of Lyon, which like Antwerp had a large Italian community, from 1512, when potters described as "Florentines" are recorded in the city. Archaeological finds from Lyon include fragments of albarelli and other wares decorated in the style of contemporary ware from Montelupo were probably made by these immigrants⁸⁰. Subsequent Italian potters known to have been active in Lyon included Sebastiano Griffio, Filippo Seiton, and Giovanfrancesco and Cristoforo Pesaro, all from Genoa, and Giulio Gambini and Domenico Tardessir, from Faenza⁸¹. In 1581, Gironimo Tomasi, a maiolica-painter who had been trained in Urbino and subsequently (from 1576 to 1581) worked in Savona, moved to Lyon; the following year he painted and signed there the earliest fully documented example of French maiolica in the Italian style to survive (fig. 12)⁸². The scene of *Pharaoh's rod* makes use of a woodcut in one of the popular Bible picture books which were being published by Lyon publishers; these inexpensive volumes, printed in large numbers and various languages, were a favourite source for maiolica painters back in Italy as well⁸³. Maiolica in Lyon, however, seems to have had only intermittent commercial success and Gironimo died there in poverty in 1602⁸⁴.

By that time, however, a more vigorous and durable industry had been established at Nevers. In 1565, Luigi Gonzaga, by marriage to Henriette de Clèves, had become Duke of Nevers and encouraged Italian artists including glassmakers and potters. A series of Italian potters settled in Nevers, including Giulio Gambini of Faenza, who moved from Lyon, and members of an important Ligurian family the Corrado, who assumed the name Conrade in France. The dish in the Louvre (fig. 13), painted with a design that goes back to Raphael's *Galatea*, is marked in an a sort of Franco-Italian *FESI A NEVRS* and was probably a fruit of a collaborative venture between Gambini and Agostino Corrado (Augustin Conrade). A high proportion of Nevers production in the first half of

the seventeenth century was plain white, in the tradition of “Faenza white”⁸⁵, and gradually the term *faïence* became established in French; in 1644 Anthoine de Conrade was appointed *fayancier ordinaire* to the King. Nevers became one of the cradles of a faïence industry that in the later 17th and 18th century spread to many parts of France⁸⁶.

Maiolica is an industry which shows with exceptional clarity how Italian artisans and artists took over a technique that was essentially Islamic in origin, transformed it into something entirely characteristic of the *disegno*-driven and technically innovative culture of the Renaissance Italy, and produced a range of products that expanded demand at home and abroad. The potters had marketable skills; ceramic historians can track their movements partly by art-historical analysis of styles of painting, but what mattered most at the time was more often technical ability, the experience to know what clay, what glazes and what pigments would work together and fire satisfactorily. The potters who travelled abroad to take their technical and artistic skills to new markets, whether purely commercial or in some degree under royal, civic, or aristocratic sponsorship, created in the countries to which they went new national traditions. During the 17th century, these developed in central and northern Europe into forms of artistic expression that now seem to us entirely characteristic of the cultures in which they matured. Correspondingly, the exports of Italian maiolica diminished and, as Italian maiolica lost its technical and artistic cutting edge, the decisive role of Italian emigrant craftsmen in European pottery faded into history.

Illustration captions

1. Vase/jar, maiolica, with the arms of Medici impaling Orsini. Florence region, 1469 or later. Detroit Institute of Arts.
2. Dish, maiolica, with the arms of Matthias Corvinus, King of Hungary, and his wife Beatrice of Aragon. Pesaro (or possibly by potters from Pesaro working in Buda), c1490. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
3. Dish, maiolica, with scenes from the Spanish romance, *Amadis of Gaul*. Probably by Orazio Fontana, Urbino or Turin, c1562-5. Metropolitan Museum of Art.
4. Flask, maiolica, with mythological figures, from the service made for Anne de Montmorency. Workshop of Guido Durantino, Urbino, 1535. Musei Civici, Turin.
5. Plate, maiolica, with the arms of Johann Lamparter von Greiffenstein and his wife Regina Meuting plate. Venice, c1515-20. Grassi-Museum, Leipzig, no. 201.99.
6. Six pieces, maiolica, from from the service supplied by the workshop of Don Pino Bettisi to Albrecht V, Duke of Bavaria, 1576. Residenzmuseum, Munich.
7. Stove tile, maiolica, *Jason and Creusa*, by Bartholomäus Dill Riemenschneider, 1546. V&A C402-1927.
8. Panel, maiolica, with *The Visitation*, by Niculoso Francisco “Pisano”, 1504. Alcazar, Seville.
9. Reverse of *Portrait of a young man*, by Hans Memling, Bruges, c1485. Thyssen collection, Madrid.
10. Tiles, maiolica, from the Abbey of Herkenrode, workshop of Guido Andries, Antwerp, c1532-3. Musées royaux, Brussels.

11. Dish, maiolica, with a view of a city (perhaps the Tower of London) and an inscription celebrating Queen Elizabeth. London (Aldgate pottery), 1600. Museum of London, no. C84..

12. Dish, maiolica, with *Pharoah's rod*. Signed on the back *GTVF leon* (Gironimo Tomasi Urbinate Fecit, Lyon), 1582. British Museum, MLA 1959,4-1,1.

13. Dish, maiolica, with *Galatea*, marked *1589 FESI A NEVRS*. Nevers, probably workshop of Giulio Gambini and Agostino Corrado, 1589. Musée du Louvre.

[There are 13 illustrations here. I will hope, as discussed with Prof Goldthwaite, to be allowed them all; but if one has to be eliminated, it should be the Amadis dish.]

NOTES

¹ Stephan 1987.

² Cora and Fanfani 1986; Wilson 1993; Spallanzani 1994; see Wilson 1993, p. 234, and Spallanzani 2002, for other documented attempts to make porcelain in 16th-century Italy

³ Rackham 1930.

⁴ All subsequent treatments of the subject are indebted to the lucid synthesis by Liverani 1937.

⁵ For a potter's revealing account of the tin-glaze tradition, Caiger-Smith 1973. For a recent overview, Hess 2004 [*check book behind Julian's exhib*].

⁶ Gerrard *et al.* 1995.

⁷ Spallanzani FORTHCOMING.

⁸ Spallanzani FORTHCOMING

⁹ Among the vast archaeological literature on medieval Italian maiolica and its wider Mediterranean context, see for instance Ravanelli Guidotti 1992; Soler *et al.* 1992; for the southern Italian context: Naples 1997; and for a recent synthetic summary on the diffusion of lustre, Soler 2002.

¹⁰ For the chronology of *maiolica arcaica bleu*, see Gelichi 1992, p. 74.

¹¹ For Medici porcelain, on the other hand, there is a tantalizing reference to a mysterious *levantino* who *aveva indicato il mezzo per riuscire* to Grand-Duke Francesco de' Medici (Wilson 1993, p. 235).

¹² The manuscript of Tizio's chronicle is in the Biblioteca comunale di Siena: B.III.12, c.

484: *Galganus de Belforte Senensis figulus olim a Hyeronimo Scintilla scolastico Hispano Valentiam perductus, atque ibidem a Baptista Bulgarino mercatore Senensi adiutus vili habitu delitescens, et veluti Minister opificio figulino ibidem intendens auratorum vasorum colorem furtim percipiens, et animadvertens, peritus Senam mense hoc martio reversus est.* I am indebted to Philppa Jackson for this slightly corrected transcript of the document published by Guasti 1902, p. 324.

¹³ For a survey of the development of lustre in Italy, see Wilson 1996B.

¹⁴ Quoted from Berardi 1984, p. 43, note 40; dated by Kent to 1490. [*BETTER CITE FUSCO AND CORTI 2006, doc. 76?*] Compare the earlier letter of Pope Sixtus IV of 1478 thanking Costanzo Sforza of Pesaro for a gift of pottery: *non rem fictilem, sed vel aurum vel argentum putemus*, Berardi 1984, p. 44, note 56; or Ciaroni 2004, p. 191.

¹⁵ Middeldorf 1955. It cannot be excluded that the vase was made for Lorenzo's son Piero, who married Alfonsina Orsini in 1487.

¹⁶ Spallanzani 1986.

¹⁷ Spallanzani 1974.

¹⁸ Wilson 1999, note 16, with references.

¹⁹ Bettini 1997; Wilson 1999, note 6 for further references.

²⁰ For attribution of the earliest dated example of *istoriato* (1498) to Pesaro, see Wilson 2005.

²¹ Syson and Thornton 2001, p. 229-81; Wilson 2003C.

²² Wilson 2003-4, pp. 177-8.

²³ The letter, in the Archivio di Stato di Mantova, was discovered and published by Palvarini Gobio Casali 1987, pp. 211-2, note 29.

²⁴ Mallet 1981, p. 167.

²⁵ Holman 1997, p. 95.

²⁶ Syson and Thornton 2001, *passim*.

²⁷ Jardine 1996, chapter 6.

²⁸ Goldthwaite 1997. Compare Güll 2002.

²⁹ Piccolpasso 1980, II, p. 54.

³⁰ Biringuccio 1550, fol. 15v.

³¹ Montaigne 1992, p. 206. Montaigne wrote this part of the *Journal de Voyage* in Italian; for his earlier, less appreciative reaction, see *ibidem*, p. 85, finding Florentine earthenware not very clean. The more enthusiastic view was perhaps a reaction to encountering some variant of "Faenza white".

³² Biganti 2002; 2002B; Thornton and Wilson FORTHCOMING.

³³ Luccarelli 1984 and 2005.

³⁴ Thornton and Wilson FORTHCOMING

³⁵ Berti 1997-2003, IV, pp. 313-6. Fowst 1972 gives examples of German potters involved in the Italian pottery industry.

³⁶ Alverà Bortolotto 1988.

³⁷ Piccolpasso 1963, p. 242; it seems increasingly likely that this Francesco Gnagni mentioned by Piccolpasso is the same person as Francesco Durantino, but no reference to him has yet been found in Turin documents.

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- ³⁸ Wilson 2004.
- ³⁹ Biganti 1987, p. 215: *maiolica et eorum laboreria pulcra et inaudita vendunt per universum orbem et propter hoc civitas perusina gloriatur et in fama crescit et omnes mirantur.*
- ⁴⁰ Wilson 2003, p. 154: *artes decorant et nobilitant civitates.*
- ⁴¹ Nicolini in Spoleto 1982, p. 24: *ultra honorem quem ex dicto artificio apud quascunque nationes ad quas vasa a te confecta deferuntur, maximum lucrum et utilitatem in dohanis habuerunt.*
- ⁴² Bonali and Gresta 1987, p. 196, doc. 212.
- ⁴³ See for example Alverà Bortolotto 1981, p. 18; Berardi 1984, p. 48; Goldthwaite 1997, pp. 181-3.
- ⁴⁴ Wilson 2004.
- ⁴⁵ Spallanzani 1994, p. 129.
- ⁴⁶ Clifford and Mallet 1976; for more recent bibliography, Wilson and Nepoti in Dal Poggetto 2004, p. 205, note 29; pp. 422-4.
- ⁴⁷ Gere 1963; Wilson 1996, pp. 368-77; Wilson and Vossilla in Dal Poggetto 2004, pp. 205-6, 221-2.
- ⁴⁸ Wilson in Dal Poggetto 2004, p. 205, fig. 2; Thornton and Wilson FORTHCOMING.
- ⁴⁹ Ballardini 1923, p. 46.
- ⁵⁰ Negroni 1998, p. 108; Wilson in Dal Poggetto 2004, p. 207, with other instances of diplomatic gifts of maiolica by then Dukes and Duchesses of Urbino.
- ⁵¹ Piccolpasso 1980, I., pp. xxii-xxiii; Dupuy 2003; Wilson in Dal Poggetto 2004, p. 205.
- ⁵² Crépin-Leblond and Ennès 1995, pp. 52-67; Wilson in Dal Poggetto 2004, pp. 204-5; Thornton and Wilson FORTHCOMING.
- ⁵³ Vaudour 1981. Insofar as Abaquesne, seemingly a strange original genius, was influenced by Italy, the influence may have been mediated through Antwerp.
- ⁵⁴ Wilson 1993, pp. 242-63.
- ⁵⁵ Amico 1996.
- ⁵⁶ Piccolpasso, book 2; Piccolpasso 1980, II, p. 61.
- ⁵⁷ Marsilli 1982, p. 34. Some “Faenza white” services are listed in the comprehensive study by Ravanelli Guidotti 1996, p. 569.
- ⁵⁸ Marsilli 1985, p. 10.
- ⁵⁹ Ravanelli Guidotti 1996, pp. 43-4. I know of no evidence whether Ardente was of Protestant inclination.
- ⁶⁰ Ballardini 1932; Marsilli 1985; Marsilli in Ravanelli Guidotti 1996, pp. 51-62.
- ⁶¹ Deagan 1987, pp. 67-71.
- ⁶² Hurst 1991.
- ⁶³ Baart 1983, 1986, 1991, and 2002; Gaimster 1999. It may be that in due course it will be shown that some of the white wares attributed by archaeologists to Faenza, found outside Italy (as far afield as Mexico City), were in fact made in other places.
- ⁶⁴ Szczepanek 2004B, p. 89; on Nuremberg, Lessmann 2004.
- ⁶⁵ Schnyder 1980.
- ⁶⁶ For an *istoriato* service made for Nikolaus Rabenhaupt von Suche, Chancellor of Lower Austria, and his wife, who was from the Augsburg family who had commissioned fig. XXX, see Wilson 1987, no. 210.
- ⁶⁷ Hager 1939; Szczepanek 2002 and 2004; Ravanelli Guidotti 1996, pp. 178-83.
- ⁶⁸ Gronau 1932; Szczepanek 2002; Wilson in Dal Poggetto 2004, p. 207.
- ⁶⁹ Ravanelli Guidotti 1995, pp. 369-70; Marsilli in Ravanelli Guidotti 1996, pp. 54-7; *Allgemeine Künstlerlexikon* 27 (Saur; Munich and Leipzig 2000), pp. 391-2
- ⁷⁰ Ray 1991; Ray and Plegezuelos FORTHCOMING
- ⁷¹ Frothingham 1969, pp. 1-20.
- ⁷² For the dating, Sander 1992, p. 246
- ⁷³ Eisler 1989, pp. 106-15; Wilson 1999, p. 6, figs 1.2-1.4. What is surely the same jug appears in another Memling painting, the *Madonna and Child* in Berlin. See in general Strauss 1972.
- ⁷⁴ For Antwerp pottery, all previous literature is superseded by Dumortier 2002; see also Veeckman 2002.
- ⁷⁵ Dumortier 2002, pp. 50-52, 237; Plegezuelos in Veeckman 2002, pp. 123-44.
- ⁷⁶ Britton 1986, pp. 18-29; Dumortier 2002, pp. 56-7, p. 228-9; two other brothers of Jasper, Joris and Lucas (a merchant), lived in England for periods.
- ⁷⁷ Britton 1986, p. 105; the date may possibly be read as 1602, rather than 1600.
- ⁷⁸ Dumortier 2002, pp. 52-6.
- ⁷⁹ Gentilini 1992, II, pp. 362-9.

⁸⁰ A typical albarello is Wilson 2003, no. 38; for the archival and archaeological evidence from Lyon, see Rondot 1892, p. 27; Horry 2003, p. 108.

⁸¹ For the documents: Rondot 1892; Damiron 1926.

⁸² Wilson 2003.

⁸³ Leutrat 2003 and other essays in Rosen 2003.

⁸⁴ Sfeir-Fakhri 2003.

⁸⁵ Rosen 2003B, p. 137.

⁸⁶ Taburet 1981; Guillemé Brulon 1997; Rosen 2003.