

# MEDIEVAL AND MODERN CERAMICS AS A TRANSFORMING ELEMENT IN THE CONTEMPORARY PRODUCTION OF FARO DE LIMANES, OVIEDO, SPAIN

Francisco Lara Piñera

Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED)

[flara@geo.uned.es](mailto:flara@geo.uned.es)

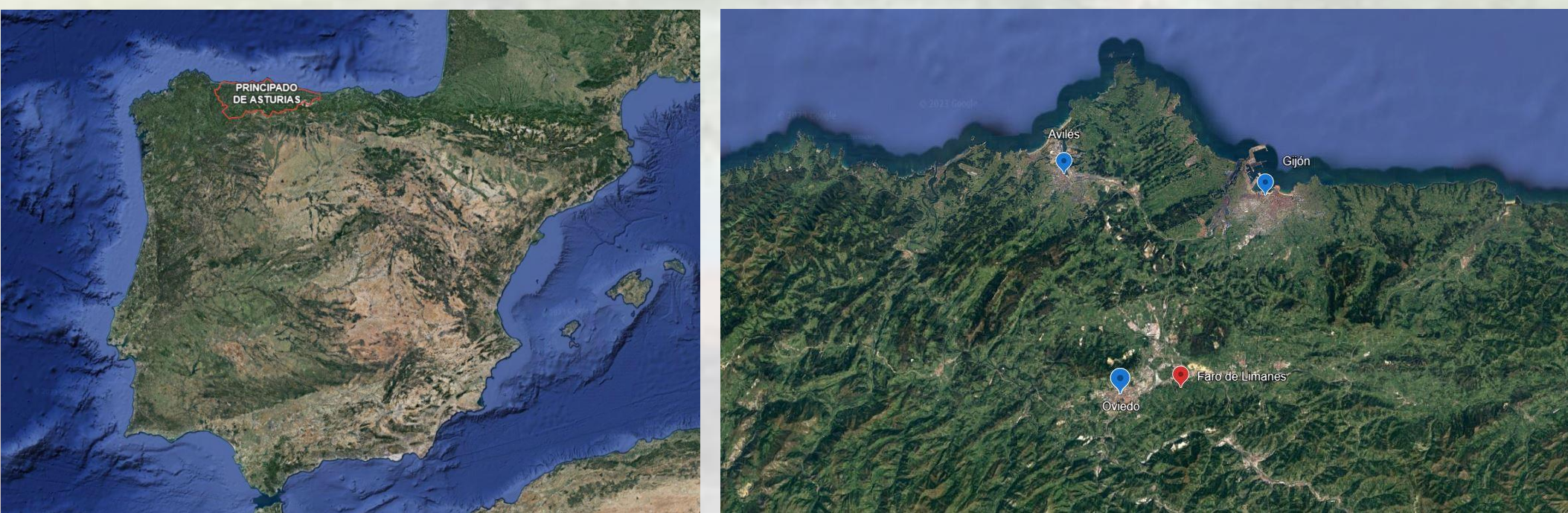


## INTRODUCTION

The archaeological investigations and excavations in the pottery center of Faro de Limanes have influenced contemporary production and have conditioned the work of the potters. The pieces are reinvented following medieval and modern patterns as well as based on the new needs of the population. The study of archaeological pieces allows us to compare the data with contemporary production and understand the evolution of this pottery. It is evident how medieval archeology and modern archeology have been a factor of change in a ceramic production with more than a thousand years of history.

## THE POTTERY CENTER OF FARO DE LIMANES

The village of Faro de Limanes is the largest pottery center in the Principality of Asturias and one of the most important ceramic producing centers in the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula. Its survival over time, from at least the 11th century to the present, the high volume of pieces produced, its ability to adapt to stylistic currents from other peninsular and European areas and the spatial distribution of its productions throughout the northwest of the peninsula, include it among the great peninsular ceramic producing centers of medieval and modern times. The pottery center has been the subject of study since the 70s of the 20th century and five archaeological excavations have been carried out.



## OBJECTIVES

In the traditional contemporary production of Faro de Limanes we appreciate certain features that differ with the data obtained in sets of pieces from archaeological contexts. We believe that there has been a phenomenon of reinterpretation, and it may be related to the research and excavations carried out in the pottery center since 1970. Our objective is to define this phenomenon and expose how the study of medieval and modern ceramic production can cause unconscious changes in production.

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology implemented in this work consists of two complementary parts:

- On the one hand, an exhaustive review has been made of the archaeological works that study medieval and modern ceramic pieces from Faro de Limanes.
- On the other hand, documentary sources from contemporary times that mention the town of Faro de Limanes and its ceramics have been emptied.

The union of both aspects generates a global vision of what we find in the archaeological record and the production that has been developed in contemporary times.

## CERAMIC PRODUCTIONS IN FARO DE LIMANES

In **medieval times**, only black wares were produced. Closed shapes are produced, specifically pots and jugs. The decoration is incised, with vertical and horizontal linear motifs.



In **modern times** Black wares will continue to be produced, but with great typological and decorative differences. At this time, white lead glazed wares with new shapes was developed. This is the case, above all, with plates, bowls and platters. Also honey glazed wares and tin-lead wares were produced.



At the beginning of the **contemporary period**, modern period productions are maintained, which will decrease. At the end of the 18th century, new earthenware factories were developed in the region that were capable of producing more pieces in less time at lower costs. At the beginning of the 20th century, the most notable productions were flower pots and pipes.



Production of flower pots in Faro, 1933

## REINTERPRETATION PHENOMENON

Since the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) ceramic production in Faro had practically stopped, it was the potter José Vega (Lito) and his son José Vega (Selito) who recovered it in the 70s. In this process several factors come into play during recovery:

- Gradual loss of function: On the one hand, traditional ceramics had lost much of their function. Pieces of industrial earthenware, both imported and native to the Principality of Asturias, took over the entire market. The use of metal, glass and plastic containers was already implemented in the kitchen. Therefore, the development of Faro ceramics will focus on a world more linked to aesthetics, selling it as a decorative element, although always with a possible function linked to food.

- Symbiosis between researchers and potters: During the 70s and 80s, the first scientific investigations were carried out on the site by José Luis Feito and Esperanza Ibáñez de Aldecoa. The last potters are a source of ethnographic information for researchers. But at the same time, researchers and their work are a source of resources for potters and their production. In the heat of this joint work, searches are carried out for ceramic remains throughout the area around the pottery, pieces are removed from testars or old kilns. The researchers reflect the extracted materials in their work, creating the first typologies and the first decorative groups. The potters take the extracted materials and pieces from their research as a base and try to reproduce them.
- New ways of making and understanding ceramics that potters implement after knowing and learning in other areas of the Iberian Peninsula

The contemporary production of black wares will focus mainly on jugs. A specific case that exemplifies this new dynamic very well is a type of two-handed jug, a specimen that appeared during the excavations of the Oviedo Cathedral. In the bibliography there is no reference to any other piece with similar characteristics, despite the large quantities of Faro ceramics that appear in archaeological excavations. This piece will be taken as a reference and will be systematically reproduced in Faro.



Archaeological piece Current piece

White lead glazed will be the most prominent production in contemporary times. A specific case of this phenomenon of reinterpretation is the decoration of plates and platters with the *páxara* motif. The *páxara*, that is half fish and half bird, is a decorative motif present on the backgrounds of some modern period pieces, but it is not one of the most common. The potters, observing this motif from the ancient pieces extracted, reproduced it giving it their personal touch and made it one of the most reproduced pieces today. Something similar happens with another highly reproduced emblematic piece, the lead glazed *barbon*, a container intended to contain liquids. In archaeological contexts it is very rare, but today it is a widely reproduced piece.



Archaeological piece



Current piece

Newly created pieces are also developed that are based on shapes and decorations that are reminiscent of modern period pieces, but with a new meaning and function. This is the case of the teapot, the lunch box or the rooster-shaped jug.



Lunch box. Current piece

## CONCLUSIONS

During the 70s, 80s and 90s of the 20th century, an unconscious situation of *quid pro quo* was generated around the ceramics of Faro de Limanes. Historians and archaeologists approach the pottery center to document a production that is already in clear decline. They analyze the entire production process and generate the first typological and decorative classifications. The last potters are responsible for transmitting part of this knowledge, but at the same time they will implement data obtained by researchers in their production.

As the aesthetic factor prevails over the practical in contemporary times, unusual typologies and decorations in archaeological contexts will be manufactured in Faro de Limanes. They will be disseminated as the general tone of the pottery center. The research on medieval and modern ceramics itself acts as a factor of change in contemporary production. It is worth asking how much of the ceramics that are produced today in other areas and are considered traditional have been subjected to processes of these characteristics.

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