



Supply, Production, and Consumption in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia: The Ceramics of the Santo Domingo Convent (Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries)

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Abstract

This paper studies the ceramics recovered during archaeological missions carried out between 2000 and 2004 at the Santo Domingo convent in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia. We explore the morphotypological and chronological characteristics of the ceramics used during the Early Modern era, shedding light on their typological evolution over time. We analyzed the city's supply patterns within the context of the intensive interactions between Europe and the Americas. Finally, we examine the socio economic and cultural dynamics of the city, focusing on the relationship between the Native American population, European settlers, and enslaved Africans.

Keywords Colombia · Spanish empire · Early modern age · Ceramics · Caribbean

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Introduction

Cartagena de Indias was founded in 1533. Initially named San Sebastián de Calamar, after the nearby pre-Hispanic settlement known as Calamarí. Its significance in the context of European maritime expansion and the asserting of the Spanish colonial empire is undeniable. Its genesis is largely attributed to its strategic location in a bay bathed by the Caribbean Sea (Fig. 1), featuring unique natural defensive features (Borrego et al. 2009:184–185; Jaramillo 2009:94–96; Vidal Ortega 2004:121–126). As one of the most vital ports of the Spanish colonial empire during the *Carrera de Indias*, it served as a crucial stopover for the ships of the *Tierra Firme* fleet sailing from the Iberian Peninsula to Portobelo in Panama. Additionally, the port served as



Fig. 1 Cartagena de Indias bay

a pivotal trading hub for products from the interior of the Viceroyalty of New Granada, via the Cauca-Magdalena rivers route (Cipolla 1999:40–41; Laviana Cuetos 2006:27–30; Vidal Ortega 2004:123–133). From the beginning of the seventeenth century onward, Cartagena became one of the few ports in the Spanish empire authorized to receive enslaved Africans brought by the Portuguese from West Africa (Vidal Ortega and Castillo 2015:432–433, 437–439; Vidal Ortega and Elias Caro 2012:8–17).

The city's economic importance justified significant investments in a massive defense system (Fig. 2, also see Fig. 1). An urban bastioned wall was erected, initially encompassing a perimeter of over 3,000 m and boasting 14 bastions, which were later extended and reinforced. Additionally, an extensive defensive network was constructed to safeguard the harbor entrances at Bocagrande (Santángel and San Matías castles) and particularly Bocachica (San José and San Fernando forts), as well as within the inland bay (Santa Cruz and San Juan de Manzanillo forts), culminating in the formidable fortress of San Lázaro or San Felipe de Barajas (Álvarez 2016:367–371; Segovia Salas 1987). However, despite these defenses, the city still faced repeated attacks. Some of these assaults were particularly noteworthy for their devastating impact, such as Francis Drake's raid in 1586, Baron de Pointis' incursion in 1697 and Edward Vernon's siege in 1741, the latter resulting in an unexpected Spanish victory (Vidal Ortega 2007:98; Zapatero 1989:135).

The first urban plans began to emerge only after the city's significance for shipping and commerce became apparent (see Fig. 2). The city was laid out according



Fig. 2 Plan of Cartagena de Indias, with the fortified system and main buildings

to a fairly regular street grid, centered around three main squares that served as focal points for public life and the residences of the prominent colonial elites. These squares included the *Plaza Mayor* (currently *Plaza de Bolívar*), serving as the religious and political hub with the Cathedral and the Governor's House; the *Plaza de la Aduana* (or *Real*, or *del Mar*), positioned opposite the port and surrounded by the *Casa de Contratación* [lit. House of Commerce], the slaughterhouse, and the main shops, where major public festivities were held; and *Plaza de la Yerba* (currently *Plaza de los Coches*), where the slave market was situated. The less affluent areas were situated away from this urban center; housing artisanal production zones, with the Getsemaní neighborhood being particularly notable. Alongside the governor's palace, the cathedral, the customs house, and, later, the palace of the Inquisition, the convents emerged as significant structures in this colonial city, primarily due to their social and welfare functions (Borrego et al. 2009:186–189; Therrien 1989:112–113).

The Santo Domingo convent stood as one of the city's prominent buildings, being the first complex of religious orders erected between 1534 and 1539. The original structure, built from perishable materials, was situated at Plaza de los Coches; however, it succumbed to a significant fire in 1552. Reconstruction efforts began around 1570, using stone and mortar, at the Plaza de Santo Domingo, an open space centrally located within the city and near the sea. Despite these efforts, by the end of the seventeenth century, the construction remained incomplete. This convent housed the city's first educational institution around 1580. While it attained university status as *Estudios Generales* in 1644, this role eventually transitioned to the Jesuits, who established the convent of San Pedro Claver in 1605 (Díaz n.d.b:5–6; Isaza Londoño 2005:58; Reyes Rodríguez 2010:40–49; Vidal Ortega 2007:82–89). Numerous sources document the financial hardships faced by the Dominicans, which contributed to the delay in completing the construction. Constant pleas for donations were made, as the friars had limited income. Unlike other regions in the empire where religious orders financed themselves through rents from their estates, such a practice was unfeasible in Cartagena de Indias due to the agricultural poverty of the region. Chaplaincies, involving the celebration of masses in memory of loved ones, served as another source of funding. However, wealthier merchants, including the Portuguese and Flemish, often Jews or new Christians, showed little inclination to contribute to a religious order closely associated with the Inquisition (Vidal Ortega 2007:99–100).

Due to its strategic position facing the Santo Domingo bastion, this religious complex underwent adaptation for military purposes from 1740 onward, amid British assaults on the city. This transformation not only resulted in structural damage to the building but also led to the decline of the religious community. Subsequently, during the independence movements, the complex was once again repurposed for military use (Reyes Rodríguez 2010:53–54; Vidal Ortega 2007:107–117). By 1826, the Dominicans lost all their assets and revenue sources, prompting the cessation of activities in this convent. The friars were subsequently relocated to the Santa Marta convent in 1833. The building then became part of the episcopal curia and served as a seminary (Reyes Rodríguez 2010:54; Therrien et al. 2000:29; Therrien et al. 2002:25).

The Santo Domingo convent stands as one of the few buildings in Cartagena de Indias where archaeological excavations have been carried out. Other notable sites include the Casa de la Inquisición (Urrego 1994:48–50), the convent of San Pedro Claver (Therrien 2007:33–40), the bastion of San Ignacio (Del Cairo and Garcia 2010), and specific areas of the city where water drainage and storage systems were discovered, constructed to address water scarcity (Uprimny and Lobo Guerrero 2007:46–53). The San Francisco convent more recently underwent excavation, but these remain unpublished. Existing publications are relatively scarce and predominantly focus on the analysis of structural remains, with studies on archaeological materials being rare. An exception is the *Catálogo de Cerámica Colonial y Republicana de la Nueva Granada* (Therrien et al. 2000), which includes a chapter on ceramic assemblages recovered in Cartagena de Indias. In another publication, Therrien (2007) delved into the consumption habits of the Jesuits and Dominicans, discussing the continued use of Indigenous ceramics alongside the acquisition of European ceramics. More recently, Báez Santos (2019) defended a master's thesis on the consumption of ceramics produced at the hacienda de San Barnabé in Tierra Bomba, based on materials recovered from several sites in the city, including the Santo Domingo convent. However, there remains a lack of comprehensive studies of these materials, adequately contextualized in stratigraphic terms and adequately illustrated. This is the task we have undertaken and the focus of this paper.

The goal of this paper is to contribute to the understanding of Cartagena de Indias during colonial times by examining the ceramics recovered from excavations at the Santo Domingo convent. Through the different strata, our aim is to discern patterns of ceramic consumption during the Early Modern era. This analysis of the ceramic assemblage will serve as a foundation for exploring the dynamics of the Spanish Empire presence in this region, particularly the interactions between the Native American population, European settlers, and enslaved Africans during the initial centuries of Iberian rule. A key question addressed in this article is to discuss the influence of the Indigenous traditions on the colonial city, particularly as reflected, for example, in ceramic consumption. We examine the continuities and/or ruptures in the use of Indigenous ceramics during colonial times, as well as the formal and decorative changes in Native American ceramics resulting from contact with Europeans and Africans. Additionally, we explore the city's supply and trade networks to assess the proportion of imported ceramics in local consumption and how this commerce influenced the establishment of colonial potteries that produced ceramics in the European tradition.

The Archaeological Site: Former Excavations and Study Methodology

The Santo Domingo or *San José de los Predicadores* convent is situated within the block bordered by *Callejón de los Estribos* (35th Street) to the south, *Calle de Santo Domingo* (3rd Street) to the east, where the *Plaza de Santo Domingo* is located, and *Calle de Gastelbondo* (36th Street) to the north. The western section of the block remains undeveloped, adjacent to the Santo Domingo bastion.

The complex occupies an area of around 5,500m². The main façade, facing the Plaza de Santo Domingo, includes the church entrance, oriented east–west, and serves as the entryway to the convent, extending northward. The façade likely dates back to 1580 and exhibits influences from Spanish and Italian Renaissance architecture, featuring Baroque decorative elements (Marco Dorta 1951, *apud* Isaza Londoño 2005:62). The convent complex comprises four two-story wings arranged around a central cloister. Notable features include the sacristy situated at the southwest end, adjacent to the apse, and the chapter room located at the center of the opposite wing of the cloister, to the north (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3 Plan of the Santo Domingo convent, with excavated areas. Adapted from Therrien et al. 2000: 40 and Díaz (n.d.a)

Archaeological interventions were conducted at the convent between 2000 and 2004, following a restoration project funded by the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID). The first excavation, spanning 2000 to 2001, was overseen by Monika Therrien. Thirteen test pits were excavated across various areas of the complex, including the cloister, ambulatories, sacristy, and chapter house; following the natural stratigraphy (Therrien et al. 2000:7). A subsequent intervention took place between May, 2002 and April, 2003, directed by Camilo Díaz Pardo. Forty-one 1 × 1 m test pits were excavated throughout the complex, with focus on the cloister and the south wing, adjacent to the church, where a necropolis was discovered. Additional test pits were carried out in the north, east, and west wings, as well as on the upper floor, particularly in the area corresponding to the *Cuarto del Prior* [lit. prior's room], on the northeast flank. Most of the test pits were excavated using artificial levels, with depths of around 10 or 20 cm; however, the natural stratigraphy in the necropolis area was followed (Díaz n.d.a:20–21).

As a result of these interventions, two major phases of the building's construction were identified based on overlapping circulation layers: the first phase concluded in the second half of the seventeenth century, while the second phase occurred during the eighteenth century. A dirt floor was uncovered in the south wing, interpreted as part of a previous wooden structure where the friars resided at the end of the sixteenth century. Moreover, several structures related to water supply, such as cisterns and tanks, were discovered. Additionally, a necropolis was found in the south ambulatory next to the church, yielding 22 non adult individuals. The funerary practices were indicative of an epidemic event (Rivera 2004). In the *Cuarto del Prior*, a significant quantity of *botijas* filling a vault was documented below the circulation layers (Díaz n.d.a:18–20; Díaz n.d.b:8–10, 45–48).

Our study aimed to analyze the archaeological remains based on the aforementioned provenances, distinguishing materials from the two field seasons according to the defined intervention areas: in 2000 and 2001, excavation unit (EU) and stratum; in 2002–03, sector, grid square, and level. In many cases, contextual information had been lost, leading to the exclusion of materials from consideration for Minimum Number of Vessels (MNV) purposes. Furthermore, only the strata corresponding to the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries were considered, while later contexts were disregarded. A graphic and photographic documentation of all fabric groups and formal types was conducted, utilizing decontextualized material only when unique ceramics, forms, or decorations were present. We adopted a chronological approach based on the stratigraphy solely for materials recovered during the 2000 and 2001 interventions.

Our work was conducted in two phases. The first phase involved the development of one of the authors (BCS) master's thesis, which took place between September and December, 2019 (Santos 2022). During this period, the assemblage stored in the archaeology laboratory of the Universidad del Norte in Barranquilla was analyzed. Subsequently, we discovered a significant number of remnants from excavations at this site in a warehouse at the San Pedro Claver sanctuary, which had not been previously studied. The second phase occurred between March and April 2022 and encompassed the study of the entire assemblage, which had since been relocated to the laboratory of the Universidad del Norte. During this phase, research was

also conducted at the Santo Domingo convent itself and at the Cartagena de Indias Historical Museum (MUHCA), where two other groups of materials are housed as part of museum collection. This mission involved all the authors and was part of the project Construction of Early Modern Global Cities and Oceanic Networks in the Atlantic: An Approach via Ocean's Cultural Heritage (CONCHA). The project aimed to understand the development of port cities along the Atlantic coast from the late fifteenth to early sixteenth century. One of the CONCHA's goals is to provide highly specialized training to senior and junior scholars and technicians from various participating institutions and countries through academic exchange and research missions.

Ceramic Makes and Types

The ceramic assemblage recovered from the Santo Domingo convent comprised a total of 3,608 fragments (NISP, Number of Individual Specimens), with a Minimum Number of Vessels (MNV) of 971 (Table 1). Interestingly, the excavation report from 2002–03 mentions 7,035 finds, however, it is unclear what this figure corresponds to, so we are using these data solely as a relative indicator (Díaz n.d.a:21–23). Upon macroscopic observation of the pastes, 27 distinct groups were identified, including hand-built pottery, and wheel-thrown unglazed, lead-glazed, and tin-glazed earthenware, among other residual categories. Both local productions and imports were identified, primarily of European origin, but also originating from other American and Asian regions.

Hand-built ceramics, known as *Crespo*, are the most abundant type (MNV = 29%; NISP = 37%), made using a coiling technique of pre-Hispanic tradition. These productions were defined by Alicia Dussán de Reichel (1954), based on the excavation of the Crespo archaeological site, located 4 km northeast of the colonial city. However, this ceramic tradition is not limited to this area but corresponds to a late cultural horizon that spans a vast territory of the Colombian Caribbean, from the banks of the Magdalena River to the plains of what is now de Córdoba department. Archaeologically, they have been referred to as the Malibúes, the Native peoples who experienced the first impact of the European conquest of the mainland.

The diversity of ceramics was classified into three groups (Therrien et al. 2002:47–50). The *Crespo fino* [lit. thin *crespo*] is characterized by its fine-grained paste, mostly featuring thin walls and well-smoothed or burnished surfaces; this is the most frequently decorated variety (Fig. 4). The *Crespo café arenoso* [lit. sandy coffee *crespo*] features coarse pastes with many inclusions, and is associated with larger, thick-walled forms, specifically kitchenware (Fig. 4). Lastly, the *Crespo rojo arenoso* [lit. sandy red *crespo*] comprises good quality pastes, and is quite versatile in formal terms, although it mainly includes objects used for food preparation (Fig. 5). At the convent, 12% of MNV and 11% of NISP correspond to *Crespo fino*, 6% of MNV and 9% of NISP to *Crespo café arenoso*, and 11% of MNV and 18% of NISP to *Crespo rojo arenoso*. These data nuance the idea that *Crespo rojo arenoso* was the most widely used variety in the colonial period (Therrien et al. 2002:47–49). Indeed, a significant percentage of all these types of pre-Hispanic tradition was

Table 1 Characterisation and quantification of ceramic groups from the Santo Domingo convent

Ceramic groups		Types	Firing	Paste		Core color	Surfaces		Forms	Decoration	NISP	MNV										
				Texture	Inclusions		Outer	Inner														
Coarsewares	Crespo	Hand-built	Café	Reducing	Compact, sandy and coarse	Sand, mica, feldspar, quartz	Hue 10YR5/2, Hue 7.5YR6.1	Smoothed or burnished	Smoothed	Bowl	Finger impressed	8	8									
										Cooking pot	-	22	19									
										Plate / Budare / Arzpero	-	9	9									
										Pot	-	5	5									
										Undetermined	-	262	20									
										Bowl	-	53	47									
			Fino	Reducing	Compact, sandy and fine	Mica, feldspar, quartz	Hue 2.5YR4/1, Hue 7.5YR4/6	Smoothed or burnished	Smoothed	Cooking pot	Incised (codens / chains); impressed or stamped; applied (coffee beans)	40	21									
										Platter	-	4	2									
										Undetermined	-	295	45									
										Bowl	Excised	40	37									
		Rojo arenoso	Reducing and oxidizing (irregular)	Compact, sandy	Quartz, feldspar, ceramic	Hue 5YR5/4, Hue 7.5YR5/2	Smoothed or burnished	Smoothed	Cooking pot	Painted, applied	75	40										
									Globular cooking pot	Applied	12	12										
									Plate	-	4	4										
									Pot	-	2	2										
									Undetermined	-	518	8										
									Jug	Modelled	3	3										
									Cooking pot	-	1	1										
									Open form	-	1	1										
	Wheel-thrown	Reducing and oxidizing (irregular)	Compact, sandy	Quartz, feldspar, ceramic	Hue 5YR5/4, Hue 7.5YR5/2	Smoothed or burnished	Smoothed	Pot	-	10	7											
								Undetermined	-	45	1											
	Tonalá	Hand-built	-	Oxidizing	Compact, sandy	Quartz, mica, limestone, black minerals and ferruginous elements	Hue 2.5YR5/4	Burnished	Smoothed	s/d	White painted	2	2									
		Despresante arrastrado fino	-	Reducing	Compact, sandy	Quartz	Hue 5YR5/2	Burnished	Smoothed	Cooking pot	White painted	2	2									
		Molded	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-								
	Cartagena rojo	Compacto	-	Oxidizing-reducing; oxidation	Compact, sandy	Quartz, mica, ceramic	Hue 10R5/6, Hue 2.5YR6/4, Hue 7.5YR6/4	Reddish washed; burnished	Smoothed	Pipe	Relief milled lines	1	1									
										Basin	Pinch marks	4	4									
										Bowl	-	3	3									
										Chamber pot	-	2	1									
										Cup	-	2	2									
										Jug	-	2	1									
										Pan	-	3	3									
										Pitcher	-	2	2									
										Plate	-	6	1									
										Pot	-	8	8									
										Storage jar	-	1	1									
										Shove	-	5	5									
										Undetermined	-	60	11									
										Wheel-thrown	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
		Botijas	Compacto fino	-	Oxidizing-reducing	Compact, sandy and fine	Quartz, mica, ceramic	Hue 10R5/6, Hue 2.5YR6/4, Hue 7.5YR6/4	Reddish washed; burnished	Smoothed	Bowl	-	7	7								
	Candle holder										-	1	1									
	Chamber pot										Pinch marks	1	1									
	Closed form										-	6	4									
	Cup										-	9	2									
	Jar										-	21	7									
	Plate										-	14	13									
	Pot										-	2	2									
	Undetermined										-	81	21									
	Bowl										-	1	1									
	Candle holder										-	1	1									
Chamber pot	-										1	1										
Cooking pot	-										6	3										
Cup	-										2	2										
Wheel-thrown	-		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-									
Orange micaceous	Compacto	-	Oxidizing	Compact	Quartz, mica, limestone, black minerals and ferruginous elements	Hue 2.5YR6/6, Hue 7.5YR6/3	Lead-glazed / unglazed	Lead-glazed / unglazed	Botija	Lead-glazed (inner)	223	68										
										Unglazed (inner)	741	75										
										Cup	Modelled	1	1									
										Undetermined	-	4	4									
										Cup	-	6	1									
										Plate	-	5	1									
										Yase	-	3	3									
										Undetermined	-	14	6									
										Cup	-	9	2									
										Jug	-	11	3									
										Pot	-	6	3									
										Undetermined	-	24	16									
										Feldspar-inlaid redware	-	Reducing-oxidizing	Compact	Quartz and ceramic	Hue 5YR6/6, Hue 2.5YR5/6	Reddish wash	Smoothed	-	-	-	-	-
	Bicocho ware	-	Oxidizing	Compact, fine	Limestone	Hue 2.5YR8/2	Smoothed	-	-	-	-	-	-									
Greyware	-	Reducing (?)	Compact, hard and fine	-	Hue 10YR4/1	Smoothed	Smoothed	Hidrocráneo	Pinched; molded	13	6											
Palomos	Molded	-	Oxidizing	Compact, hard and fine	-	Hue 2.5YR5/4	Burnished	-	Pipe	Striped with geometric and naturalistic motifs	1	1										
Burnished undetermined pottery	Wheel-thrown	-	-	-	-	-	Burnished	-	-	-	90	15										
Undetermined	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	73	25										

part of the daily life of this religious complex. Moreover, 1% of MNV and 2% of NISP consist of a wheel-thrown variety of *Crespo rojo arenoso*, called *rojo arenoso torneado* [lit. wheel-thrown sandy red] (Fig. 5), representing a combination of European and pre-Hispanic techniques (Therrien et al. 2002:49–50).

Table 1 (continued)

Ceramic groups			Types	Firing	Paste		Surfaces		Forms	Decoration	NISP	MNV								
					Texture	Inclusions	Core color	Outer					Inner							
Lead-glazed pottery	Cartagena rojo compacto lead-glazed	-	Reducing-oxidising; oxidising	Compact, sandy	Quartz, mica, ceramic	Hue 10R5/6, Hue 2.5YR6/4, Hue 7.5YR6/4	Lead-glazed	Lead-glazed	Bowl	-	1	1								
									Chamber pot	-	2	2								
	Reyware / Taches Noires	-	Oxidising	Compact, hard and fine	Limestone	Hue 2.5YR5/6	Lead-glazed	Lead-glazed	Cup	-	1	1								
									Jar	-	1	1								
	Marmorizzata	-	Oxidising	Compact, hard and fine	-	Hue 10R3/4	Lead-glazed / unglazed	Lead-glazed	Jug	-	1	1								
									Pot	-	1	1								
	Seville lead-glazed	-	Oxidising	Poorly compact, sandy	Quartz, limestone and ferruginous elements	Hue 7.5YR7/4	Lead-glazed	Lead-glazed	Bowl	Swirled or mottled underglaze design in dark brown	1	1								
									Plate	-	4	3								
	Undetermined	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Undetermined	-	2	2								
									Lead-glazed	Lead-glazed	Basin	-	1	1						
Tin-glazed pottery	Mayólica Cartagena	-	Reducing-oxidising; oxidising	Compact	Quartz, mica, ceramic	Hue 10R5/6, Hue 2.5YR6/4, Hue 7.5YR6/4	Tin-glazed	Tin-glazed	Lead-glazed	-	11	5								
									Lead-glazed	-	3	2								
									Lead-glazed	-	7	3								
									Lead-glazed	-	15	4								
									Lead-glazed	-	10	4								
	Sevillian tin-glazed	-	Oxidising	Compact, soft and fine	Quartz, limestone and ferruginous elements	Hue 10YR7/3/ Hue 7.5YR7/3	Tin-glazed	Tin-glazed	Chamber pot	Concentric semicircles, bands with cross-hatching, laces, peaches, floral / naturalistic, geometric and zoomorphic motifs in cobalt blue or blue and green	18	22								
									Plate	-	1	1								
									Plate	-	20	5								
									Plate	-	107	48								
									Pot	-	6	3								
									Undetermined	-	88	24								
									Italian tin-glazed	-	Oxidising	Compact, soft and fine	Quartz, limestone and ferruginous elements	Hue 10YR7/3/ Hue 7.5YR7/3	Tin-glazed	Tin-glazed	Bowl	Columb Plain, Yayal Blue on White, Isabela polychrome, Santo Domingo, Sevilla Blue on Blue, Sevilla White	6	5
																	Escudilla	-	5	2
																	Plate	-	108	43
																	Plate	-	3	3
	Plate	-	6	6																
	Chamber pot	-	7	6																
	Chamber pot	-	1	1																
	Jug	-	1	1																
	Mexican tin-glazed	-	Oxidising	Compact	-	Hue 10YR8/3	Tin-glazed	Tin-glazed	Undetermined	-	42	12								
									Plate	-	13	8								
									Plate	-	6	4								
									Plate	-	1	1								
									Plate	-	1	1								
	French tin-glazed	-	Oxidising	Compact, hard	-	Hue 2.5Y8.5/2	Tin-glazed	Tin-glazed	Plate	Thin blue bands surrounding dashes	1	1								
									Plate	-	1	1								
									Plate	-	1	1								
									Plate	-	1	1								
									Plate	-	1	1								
	Delft tin-glazed	-	Oxidising	Compact	-	Hue 2.5Y8.5/2	Tin-glazed	Tin-glazed	Plate	Floral/naturalistic	1	1								
									Plate	-	2	2								
									Plate	-	2	1								
Portuguese tin-glazed	-	Oxidising	Compact	Mica and ferruginous elements	Hue 2.5Y8/4	Tin-glazed	Tin-glazed	Undetermined	Geometric and floral/naturalistic	2	1									
								Plate	-	3	3									
Undetermined	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Undetermined	Blue geometric motifs	2	2									

Table 1 (continued)

Ceramic groups			Types	Firing	Paste			Surfaces		Forms	Decoration	NISP	MNV
Stoneware	Stoneware				Texture	Inclusions	Core color	Outer	Inner				
			-	Reducing	Vitreous	s/d		Salt-glazed	Salt-glazed	s/d	-	10	7
Porcelain	Chinese porcelain	Wheel-thrown	-	Oxidising	Highly vitreous	s/d	-	Tin-glazed	Tin-glazed	Bowl	Sapphire blue floral /	1	1
										Plate	Aquatic plants	1	1
											Panel with swastika designs (zank porcelain)	1	1
											Polychrome with Chinese ink outline	1	1
											Undetermined	1	1
										Pot	Holey rock with floral motifs	1	1
Kaolin	Pipe	Molded	-	Oxidising	Soft, fine and purified	s/d	-	Smoothed	Smoothed	Undetermined	Undetermined	1	1
										Pipe	Relief moulded naturalistic series of milled lines with "ring of pearls" edges	6	6

Furthermore, the residual presence of two other hand-built formed ceramics was identified. The first, known as *Desgrasante arrastrado fino* [lit. thine dragged degreaser], was produced in the Boyacá region, located in the interior of Colombia, approximately 800 km south of Cartagena de Indias, in what was the territory of the Muisca people. It is part of the so-called *Altiplano Cundiboyacense* style, a domestic variety that includes forms used in the colonial period since the second half of the seventeenth century, which differ from the pre-Hispanic ones, although they share the same production techniques (Therrien et al. 2002:66–71). The second include a residual production probably imported from present-day Mexico, known as *Tonalá* ceramics. This pottery is characterized by a red slip, burnished on the outer surface, with very thin walls and hand-built. It has been reported at numerous archaeological sites associated with Spanish colonization, with reports of this pottery even found in Spain, Portugal, and the Netherlands. Deagan (1987:43–44) referred to it as Mexican red painted earthenware. However, since the origin of this ceramic group has not been confirmed by archival sources or paste analysis, Rovira and Gaitán (2010:45–47) call it Fine red pottery. It resembles the so-called *búcaros*, vessels used to refresh and perfume water at the table (Covarrubias, 1996:209).

The local wheel-thrown ceramic productions that imitated European ceramics have been defined based on archaeological contexts in the city and the workshops at San Barnabé estate workshops in Tierra Bomba, a property of the Society of Jesus, thought to have operated from 1650 to 1767 (Báez Santos 2019; Marco Dorta 1988:220; Therrien et al. 2002:28, 50). These ceramics were produced by enslaved Africans (Báez Santos 2019:60; Therrien 2007:39–40). However, there is no information on guilds and cofradías of local artisans in Cartagena de Indias; there is only an inventory of this workshop from 1770 that includes the workers, which was studied as part of an undergraduate thesis that was never published (Fandiño 2000). It is known that there were several other ceramic production centers near the city, however there is no information about the majority (Báez Santos 2019:121–125). These ceramics are characterized by compact, homogeneous, fine-grained pastes with some inclusions. Irregular firing results in shades ranging from reddish-orange to cream; and the surfaces are sometimes burnished (Figs. 6 and 7). Regarding unglazed earthenware, two types were defined: the *Cartagena rojo compacto* [compact red] and *Cartagena rojo compacto fino* [thin compact red], differing only in the thickness of

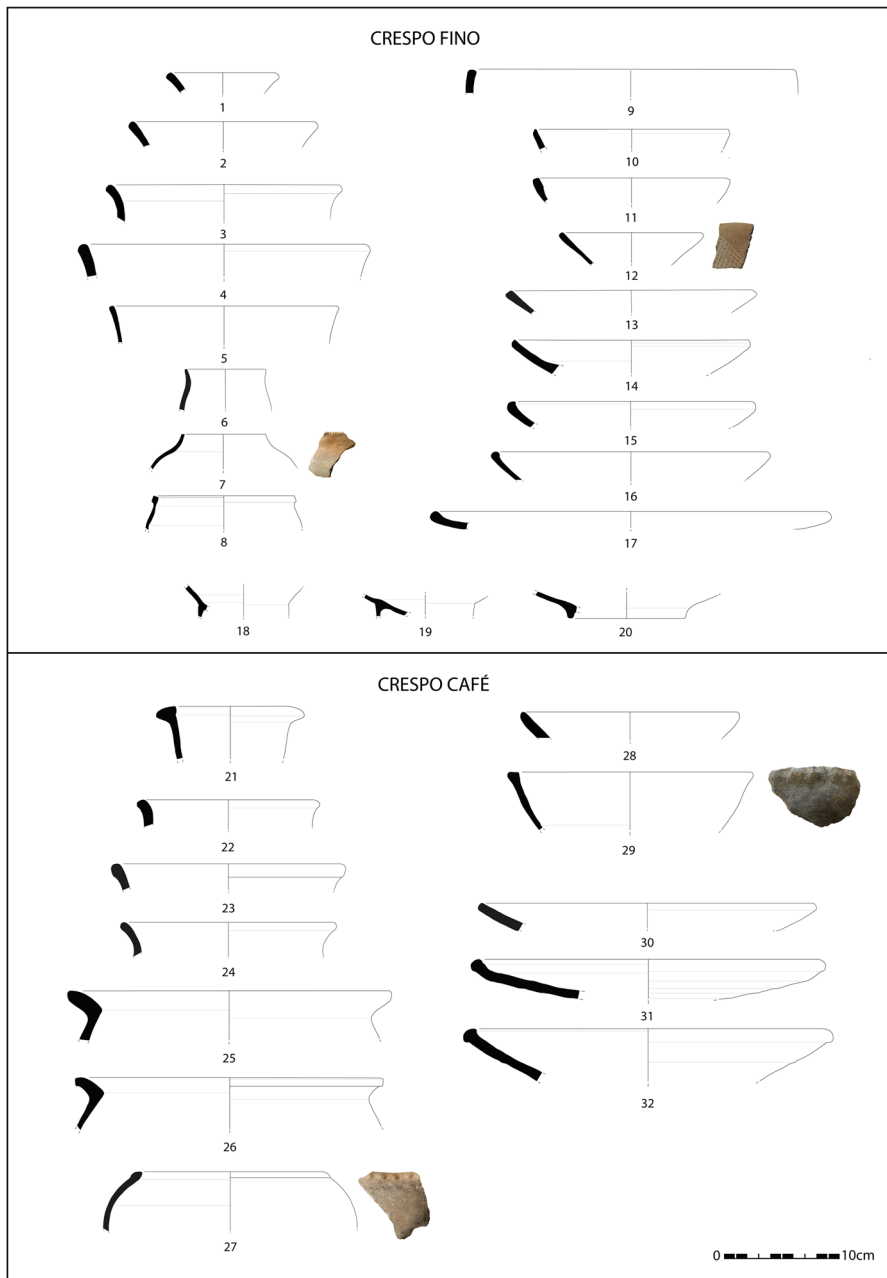


Fig. 4 Crespo fino: cooking pot (1–8), bowls (9–16), plate/budare/arepero (17), undetermined bases (19–21). Crespo café: cooking pots (21–27), bowls (28–29), plates /budares/areperos (30–32)

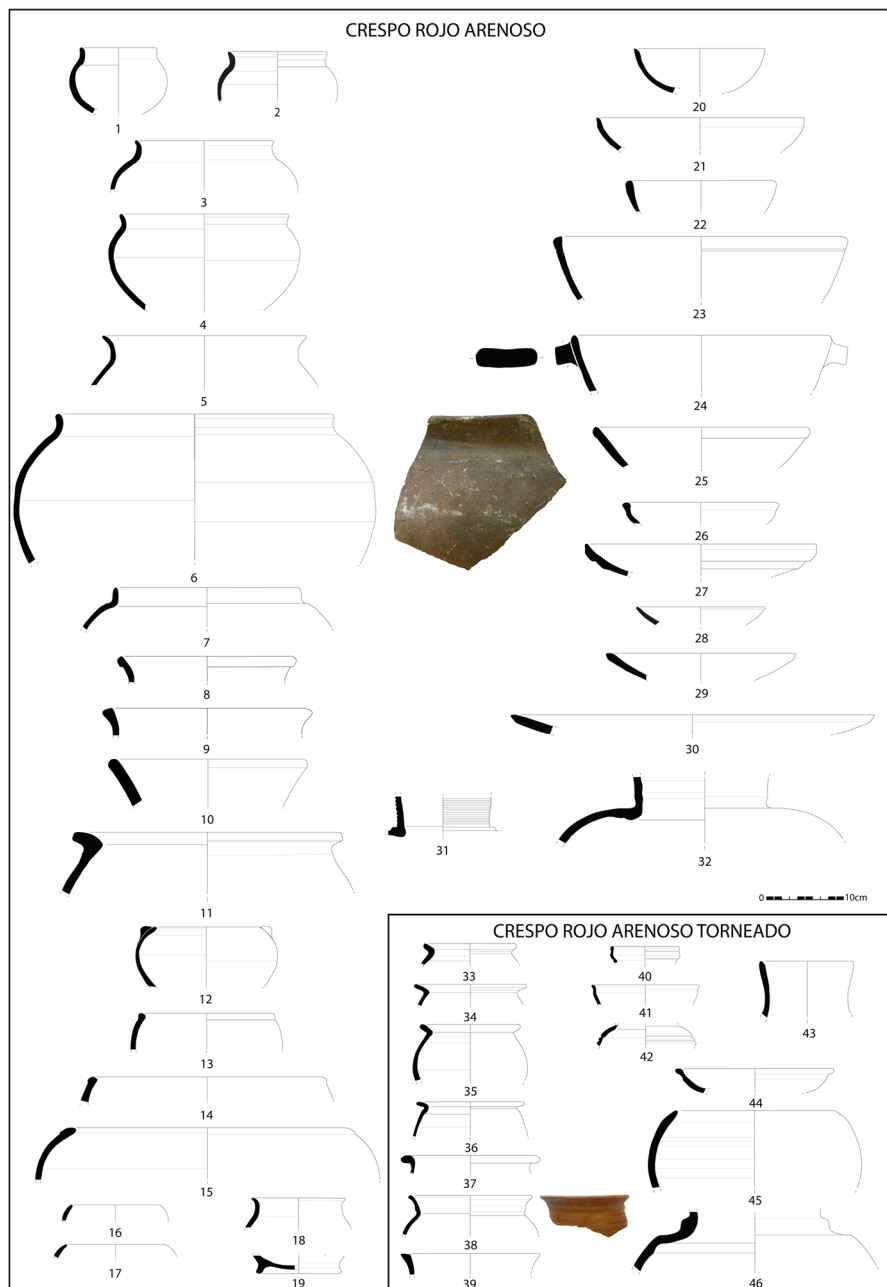


Fig. 5 Crespo rojo arenoso: cooking pots (1–17), pots (18–19), bowls (20–29), plate/budare/arepero (30), undetermined (31–32). Crespo rojo arenoso torneado: pots (33–39), jugs (40–43), bowls (44–45), jar (46)

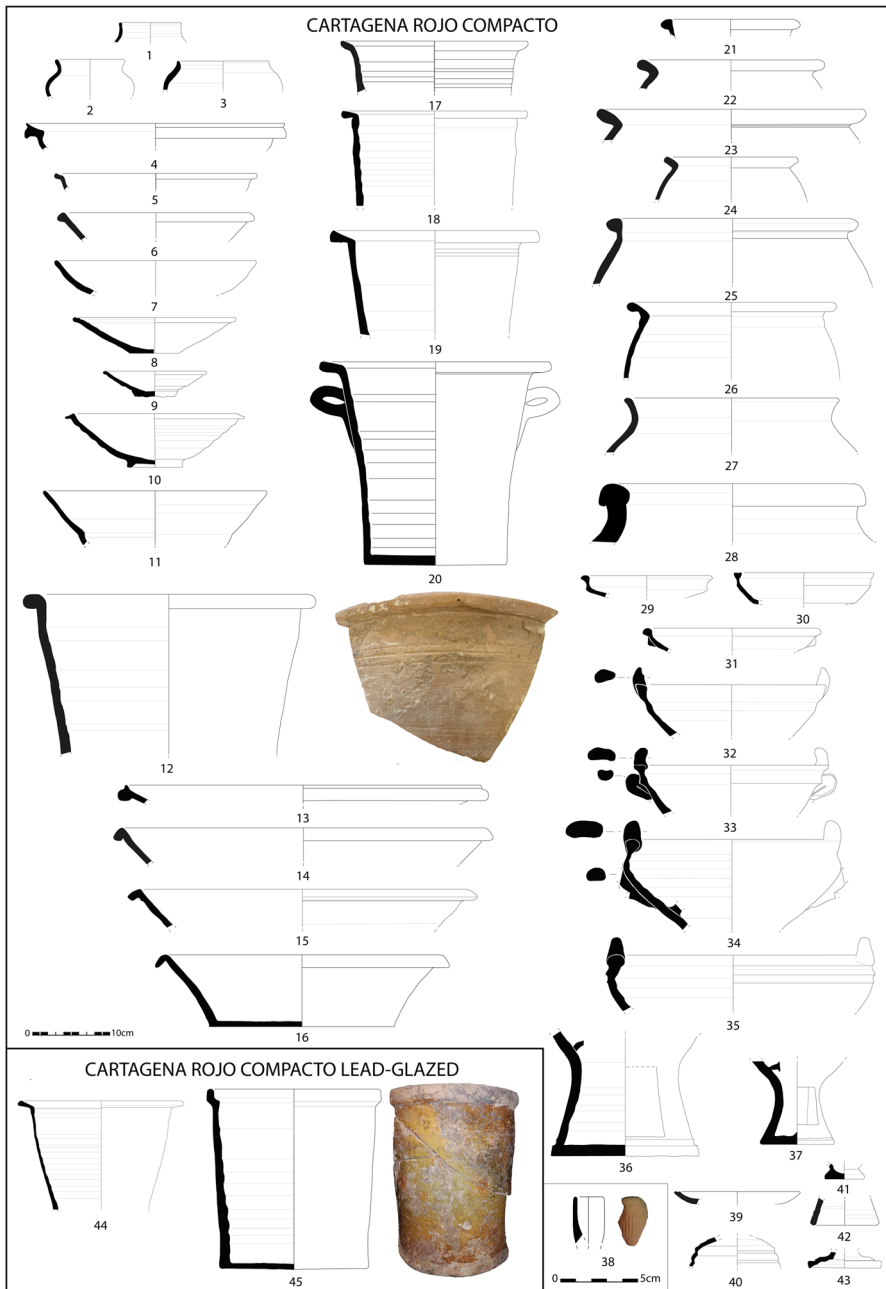


Fig. 6 Cartagena rojo compacto: cups (1–2), pot (3), bowls (4–7), plates (8–12), basins (13–16), chamber pots (17–20), jugs (21), pots (22–28), pans (29–31), stoves (32–37), pipe (38), undetermined (39–43). Cartagena rojo compacto lead-glazed: chamber pots (44–45)

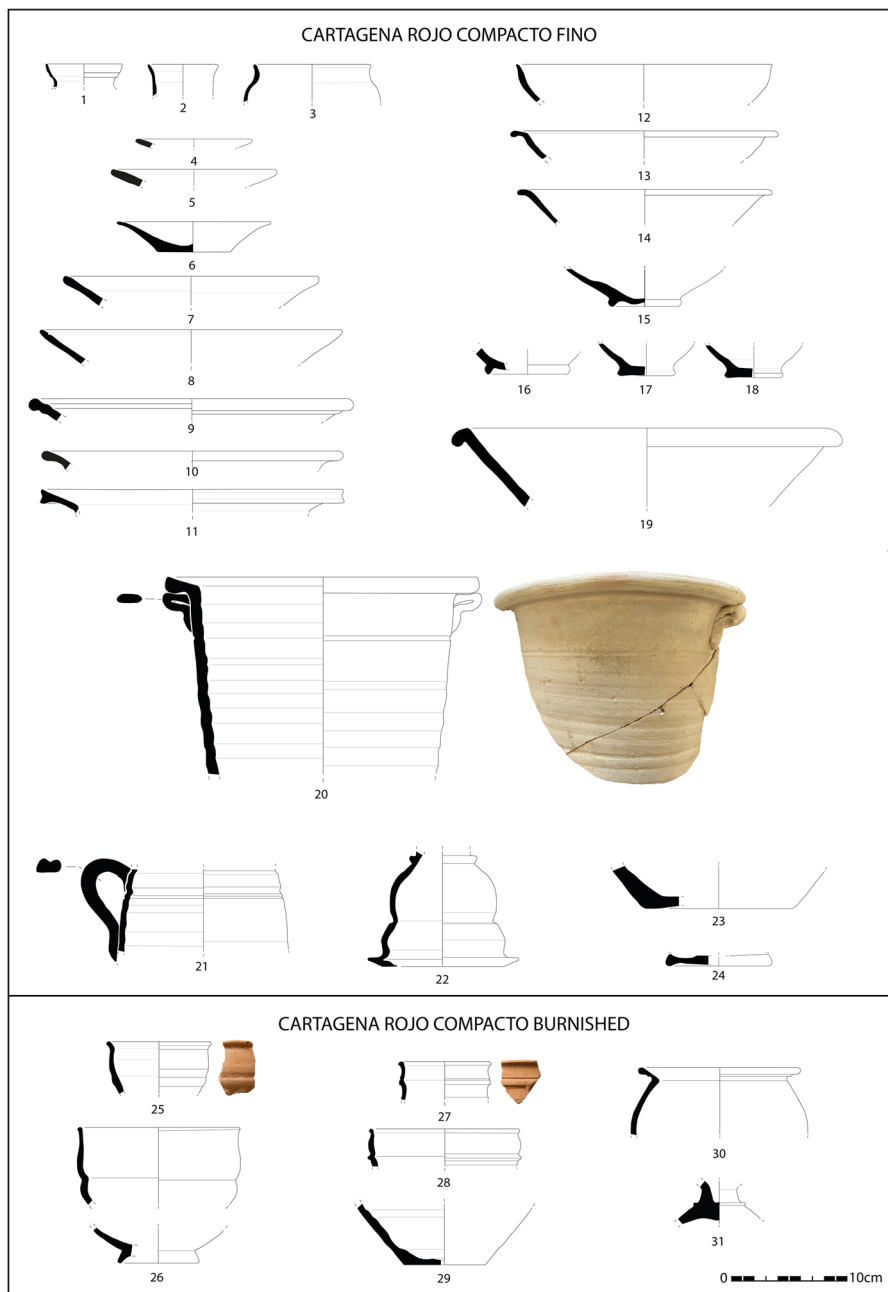


Fig. 7 Cartagena rojo compacto fino: cups (1–2), pot (3), plates (4–10), basin (11 and 19), bowls (12–18), chamber pot (20), jug (21), undetermined (22–24). Cartagena rojo compacto burnished: cups (25–26), jugs (27–29), pot (30), candle holder (31)

the walls and the granularity of the inclusions (Therrien et al. 2002:50–51). They account for 4% and 6% of MNV and 3% and 4% of NISP respectively. Among the former, there is an abundance of utensils for food preparation (basins, stoves), transport and storage (jars) and hygiene (chamber pots), while the latter mainly include tableware (bowls, plates, cups, and jugs). Additionally, there is a fabric with similar features but with a burnished finish, totaling 3% of MNV and 1% of NISP.

Botijas are the most abundant form of imported ceramics, constituting 15% of MNV and 27% of NISP (Fig. 8). Due to their formal and technical characteristics, all these objects are attributed to the Sevillian productions (Amores Carredano and Chisvert Jiménez 1993:286–287; Avery 1997:92; Deagan 1987:30–35; Goggin 1960; Marken 1994:41–138), distinguishing them from the types made in America (Rice 1994, 1996; Rice and Van Beck 1993; Weaver, 2015). *Botijas* are coarse earthenware with a globular or oval shaped and a ring neck, used to store and transport wine or olive oil, as well as other liquids and dry goods (Deagan 1987:30–35; Goggin 1960). The versatility of products they could transport explains their widespread distribution (Sánchez 1996:139). They were particularly abundant in coastal and harbor contexts during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Once their transport function was fulfilled, *botijas* were often repurposed, frequently as architectural elements: providing structural support for vaulted ceilings, acting as protection against humidity; aiding soil drainage when buried under pavements, improving building acoustics; and serving decorative purposes (Amores Carredano and Chisvert Jiménez 1993:283; Avery 1997:92–103; Azkarate and Núñez 1991:166; Gutiérrez 2000:58–60). This technique was employed in the church of the Santo Domingo convent, where sand-filled *botijas* were discovered in the vaults (Díaz n.d.a:21; Therrien et al. 2002:91). Fragments of these vessels were also found in stratigraphic contexts, indicating their use as transport or well water containers. In all cases, the specimens correspond to the medium style and type A, except for a possible C or D style bottom, according to Goggin's classification (1960:11–30), indicating a dating from the second quarter of the seventeenth century to the first quarter of the following century (Avery 1997:109–120).

Other unglazed earthenware imported from the Iberian Peninsula was recorded, but in very small percentages (Fig. 9). On one hand, the Andalusian type known as *Bizcocho* ware was identified, representing 2% of MNV and 1% of NISP; predominantly cups and jugs. Dating back to the fifteenth century, this production became popular in the following centuries (Amores Carredano and López Torres, 2009:565–566; Pleguezuelo 2000:134–136), spreading across the Caribbean in the first half of the sixteenth century (Deagan 1987:43). On the other hand, the presence of a production described by Hale Smith (1962:71; *apud* Deagan 1987:35–40) as Greyware, associated with *hidrocéramo* (water containers) forms, was attested, representing less than 1% of the total. Its Iberian origins do not rule out a possible American production, attested in contexts ranging from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, more often in the eighteenth century (Deagan 1987:35–40). A residual number of ceramics of Portuguese origin can be included in the Merida-ware type (Hurst et al. 1986) or orange micaceous, found in American contexts between the second half of the sixteenth century and the second half of the seventeenth

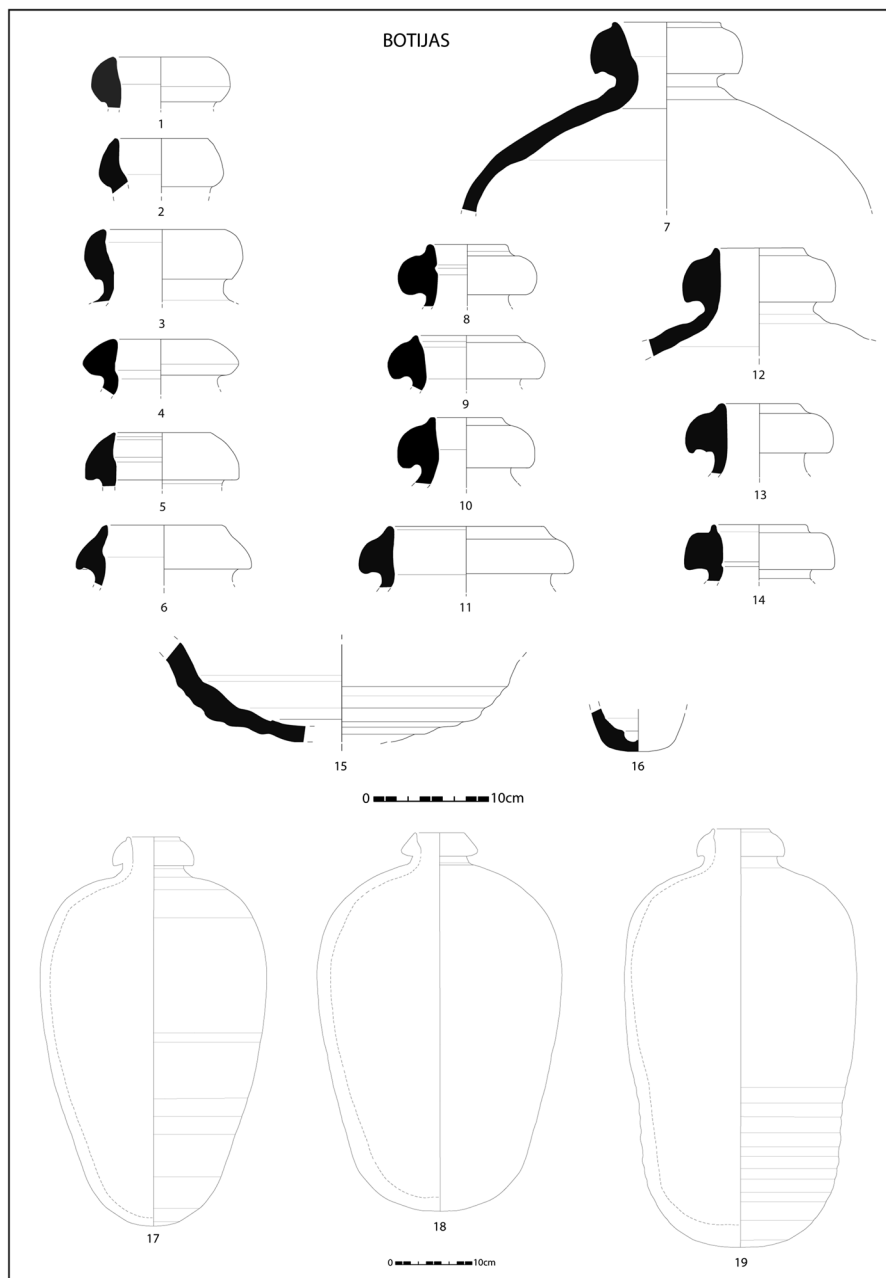


Fig. 8 Botijas (1–19)

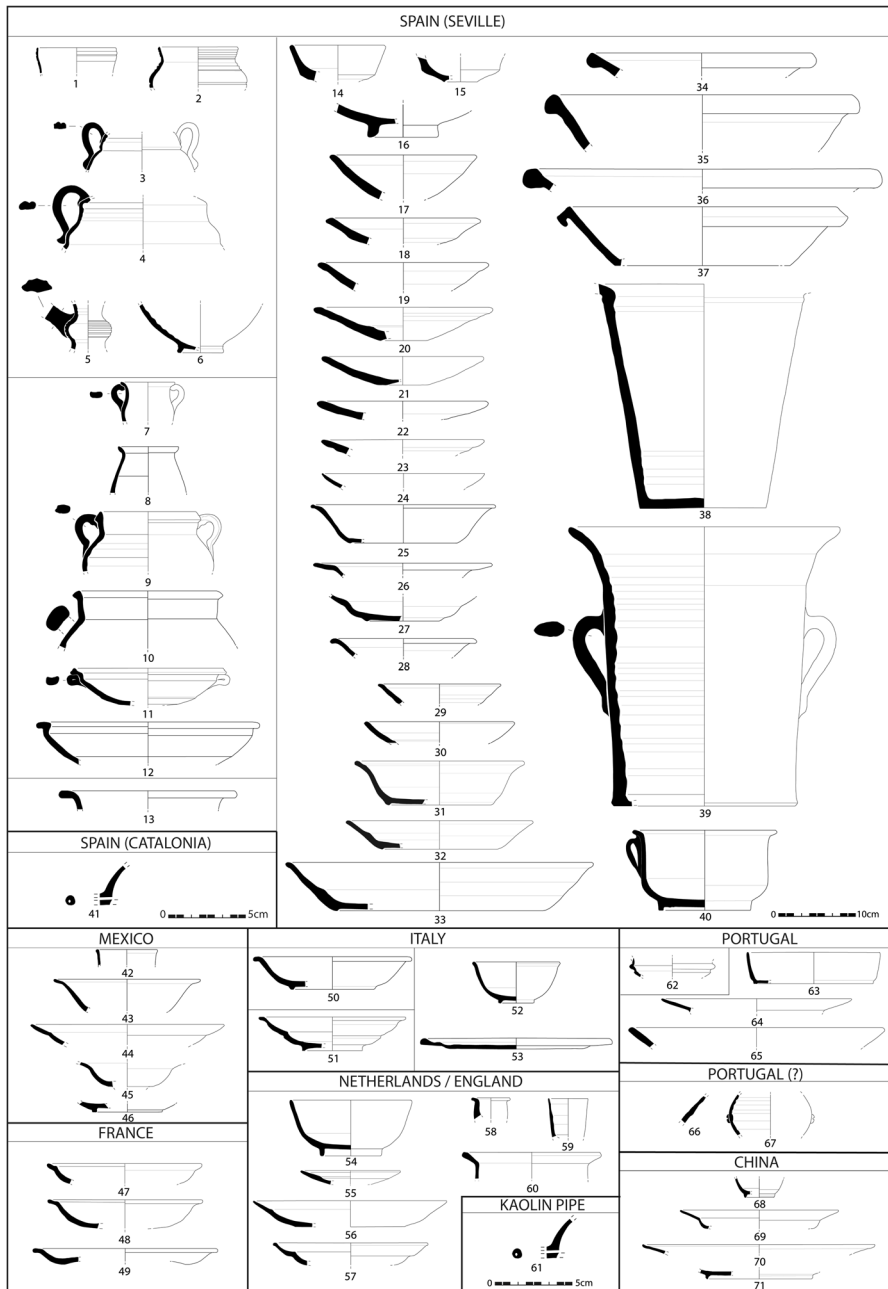


Fig. 9 Imported pottery – Spain (Seville): bizcocho ware: cup (1–3), jug (4), undetermined (5–6); El Morro: cooking pot (7–10), pan (11–12); plain green lead-glazed: chamber pot (13); tin-glazed: escudillas (14–16), plate (17–33), basin (34–37), chamber pot (38–40). Spain (Catalonia): pipe (41). Mexico: bowls (42, 43), plate (44–46). France: plate (47–49). Italy: ligurian plate (50); Marmorizzata plate (51); Reyware or taches noires: bowl (52), plate (53). Delftware: bowl (54), plate (55–57), undetermined (58–60). Kaolin pipe (61). Portugal: orange micaceous: cup (62), undetermined (66–67); tin-glazed: covilhete (63), plate (64–65). Chinese porcelain: bowl (68), plate (69–71)

century (Deagan 1987:40–41; Gutiérrez 2000:74–79, 2007:64; Newstead 2013). This group included a fragment of fine modelled and burnished pottery, also attributable to Portuguese workshops. Lastly, there were cups with stone inlays on the surface, corresponding to around 1% of the assemblage, also of possible Portuguese origin (Sardinha 2012:789–790). This feldspar-inlaid redware has been identified in Caribbean contexts since the sixteenth century, but imports were quickly replaced by local productions (e.g., a seventeenth-century kiln from Panamá Viejo) (Mendizábal et al. 2024; Rovira 2001), in the pottery-production center of Puebla (Mexico) and in Venezuela (Kottmann 2015:112). These local manufactures lasted until the twentieth century, at least in Mexico, with Cuernavaca being renowned (Deagan 1987:41–43; Fairbanks 1966:430–432).

Lead-glazed earthenware accounts for 3% of MNV and 2% of NISP. This represents a low percentage, indicating its limited use both in the kitchen and at the table in this Dominican complex. Three different types have been identified. One type includes honey, green and orange-brown glazes from Seville, the latter known as the *El Morro* type; this group comprises kitchenware and hygienic vessels (Fig. 9). These were quite common in American colonial contexts from the 1490s to the 1550s but became less prevalent afterward (Amores Carredano and Chisvert Jiménez 1993:289; Deagan 1987:48–49; Goggin 1968:227). The other two groups share many features with the local *Cartagena rojo compacto* productions and are thus believed to have a local origin. They encompass a variety of objects, distinguished only by the greater or lesser brightness and density of the glaze (see Fig. 6).

The residual presence of *Marmorizzata* productions from the Italian region of Pisa in the convent is noteworthy (see Fig. 9). Its occurrence in American territories can be dated between 1600 and 1650 (Blake 1981:103–105; Deagan 1987:47; Gutiérrez 2000:91–92). Fragments of Reyware or *taches noires* have also been identified. These productions originated in the eighteenth century in Savona-Albisola, Italy (Blake 1981:114–120), and have been present in American contexts since the second quarter of the century (Deagan 1987:51–52; Therrien et al. 2002:94).

Tin-glazed earthenware accounts for 28% of MNV and 17% of NISP. Local productions of *Mayólica Cartagena* predominate, totaling 11% of MNV and 7% of NISP (Fig. 10). Featuring very similar pastes to the aforementioned *Cartagena rojo compacto* (Báez Santos, 2019:51, 73; Therrien et al. 2000:61; Therrien et al. 2002:51, 173), they exhibit multiple influences from European decorative motifs, which are difficult to distinguish at this stage of the research. These mainly include tableware (plates and bowls) and chamber pots. Several Sevillian wares with similar percentages (8% of MNV and 5% of NISP) are also present (see Fig. 9), with the plain white or Columbia plain and blue on blue Seville varieties clearly standing out (Gutiérrez 2000:44–51; Pleguezuelo and Pilar Lafuente 1995:228–244). These types are frequently found in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century American contexts (Deagan 1987:54–64; Goggin 1968:117–135; Lister and Lister 1982:45–61). Some productions from the second half of the eighteenth century, possibly also originating from Triana, are also present (Schávelzon 2001:32–36).

Fragments of Italian tin-glazed earthenware are residual, amounting to just 1% of the total (see Fig. 9). These include productions from the Liguria region, featuring dark blue over light blue decoration using the *berettino* technique,



Fig. 10 Mayólica Cartagena: bowls (1–3 and 13–15), plates (4–11), basins (16–17), chamber pots (18–21)

which was common in American contexts, especially from the second half of the sixteenth century (Beltrán De Heredia and Miró 2010:41–49; Deagan 1987:70; Lister and Lister 1982:72–75). Montelupo sixteenth-century ceramics are also represented (Berti 1997:129–134; Blake 1981:101–103; Deagan 1987:68–69; Lister and Lister 1982:71–72). The delftware productions, with a residual presence in the convent (see Fig. 9), originate from the Netherlands and England, are found in American contexts from the second quarter of the seventeenth century onward (Florida Museum of Natural History 2023). Portuguese tin-glazed earthenware is also residual (see Fig. 9), and – excepting one item dating from the first half of the seventeenth century – can be dated to between the second half of this century and the following century (Casimiro 2013:365). The presence of Portuguese productions in the Americas, in territories not colonized by the Portuguese, must have been more prominent than it is given credit for (Casimiro 2013; Wilcoxon 1999:1–8). Lastly, we identified a fabric that has parallels with French productions (see Fig. 9), featuring decorations of the Normandy blue on white type, dating from 1690 to 1785, and *Moustiers* blue on white, from the last quarter of the seventeenth century (Rosen 2021:97–98; Walthall 1991:80–105; Waselkov and Walthall 2002:62–78). These productions only include tableware.

Tin-glazed earthenware from the Mexican production center of Puebla also accounts for less than 1% of the total, but there are three distinct groups (Fig. 9). On the one hand, *Abó* productions (Goggin 1968:169–173), dating from 1650 to 1750 (Deagan 1987:79–81; Therrien et al. 2002:100). On the other hand, the *Puebla* blue on white wares, from 1675 to 1800, correspond to the most frequent productions found in eighteenth-century Spanish-American archaeological contexts (Deagan 1987:77–79; Florida Museum of Natural History 2023). In decorative terms, these two productions appear to be influenced by Chinese porcelain and the Spanish productions of Talavera de La Reina (Goggin 1968:169–173, 190–195). The *Puebla* polychrome style, also originating from this pottery center, was produced from 1650 to 1725 (Deagan 1987:81–82; Goggin 1968:173–182; Therrien et al. 2002:100). All items are tableware.

The stoneware finds, which use the salt-glaze technique, total less than 1%. Associated with German workshops in the Rhine Valley or English workshops, its production intensified from the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century onward, being exported all over the world; they have been present in American contexts since the middle of the sixteenth century (Beltrán De Heredia et al., 2012:78; Deagan 1987:103; Martín et al. 2008:66–71; Martín and Rovira 2012:21). Chinese porcelain is also scarce (see Fig. 9). It has been found sporadically in other American contexts since the mid-sixteenth century (Deagan 1987:96–103; Miyata 2016:32–44; Therrien et al. 2002:101). Several different items are included: a brimmed plate displaying aquatic plants, from the Jiajing reign (1521–66) to the early years of the seventeenth century; a *kraak* porcelain brimmed plate with swastikas on its panels, from the Wanli reign (1572–1620); a small pot showing a rock with floral motifs, and a cup with a vegetal motif in sapphire blue, both from the Kangxi reign (1662–1722); and a plate featuring polychrome decoration with a China ink outline, produced between 1740 and 1760.

Finally, three distinct pipe types were identified, with a residual presence (see Fig. 9). One group features kaolin paste, indicative its northern European origin. Another strongly resembles the *Cartagena rojo compacto* productions, suggesting it could be a local production. Lastly, one item corresponds to the productions of Palamós, in Catalonia, known as reed-stem, manufactured since the end of the eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century (Belt-rán et al. 2012:112–115; Orihuela and Viera 2015:13–15, 2016:17–21).

Discussion

The materials from the Santo Domingo convent attest to the predominance of local ceramics, which account for 55% of MNV and 54% of NISP, over imports, which represent 35% of MNV and 37% of NISP. Additionally, there are several pieces of undetermined origin, comprising 9% of MNV and NISP despite being one of the busiest commercial ports in the Spanish Caribbean. This dominance of local ceramics reflects the early years of American colonization when Indigenous population produced most of the ceramics according to their traditions, even in contexts dominated by Europeans (Deagan 2012:17–19). This pattern can be attributed to the complex supply logistics of overseas territories within colonial empires, which had limited capacities. Furthermore, the relatively small number of Europeans who settled in the Americas underscores the significant contribution of Native American populations to the establishment of colonies (Blanco 1991:58). These Indigenous populations were likely substantial in number and served as a vital labor force in the development of colonial cities until the arrival of enslaved Africans (Ruiz 1996:11 *apud* Ardila 2009:36–37).

During the first half of the sixteenth century, colonies established the first craft guilds, manufactories, and regional trade networks for various products, including ceramics, glass, textiles, tanning, coinage, and metallurgy. This development aimed to maintain European customs while addressing the cost of transportation, leading to the production of ceramics following European tradition in colonial potteries (Deagan 1987, 2002:31). This production was prominent in Mexico, Peru, and Panama. These colonial potteries utilized manufacturing techniques such as the wheel and high-temperature firing kilns to meet the increasing internal demand (Deagan 2012:17–19; Kottmann 2015; Lister and Lister 1974, 1982, 1987:218–252; Mendizábal et al. 2024; Rovira 2001; Schreg 2010). Initially, these productions mimicked European decorative motifs, but over time, they evolved to incorporate local decorative techniques and motifs. Consequently, imported ceramics were primarily reserved for high-quality products or containers used for storage and transportation (Báez Santos 2019:19–20; Deagan 2012:17–19; Therrien et al. 2002:50). This transition highlights the gradual localization of ceramic production in the colonies, as reflected in the shift from replicating European styles to developing distinct local decorative traditions.

In the Santo Domingo convent, the majority of imported materials consist of *botijas* (15% of MNV and 27% of NISP), followed by various types of tableware with diverse origins (Fig. 11). Spanish imports, particularly from Seville, dominate

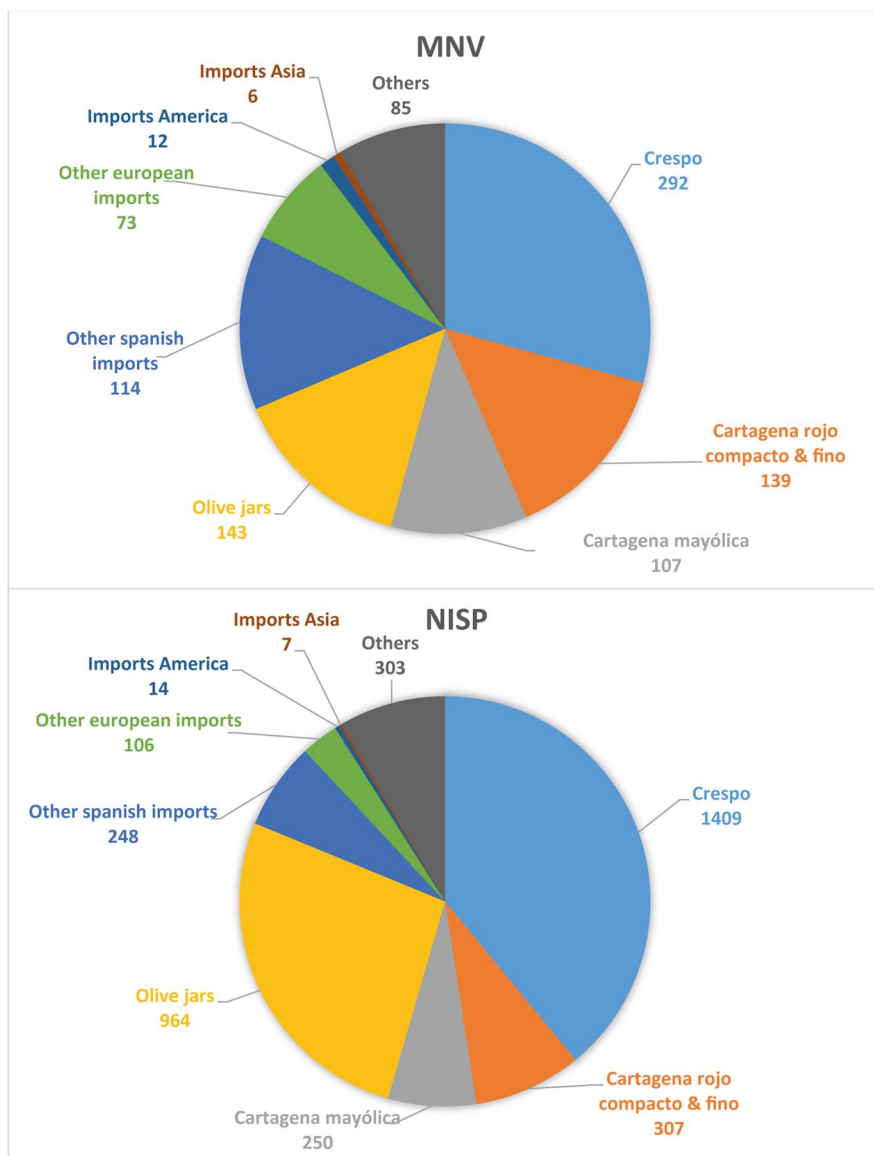


Fig. 11 The proportion of ceramic groups in the Santo Domingo convent

the European production, representing 26% of MNV and 34% of NISP. Analysis of imports in stratigraphic terms (Table 2), despite limited data, does not reveal a clear pattern regarding Andalusian *botijas*. In general, they are present in all strata, which suggests that they circulated throughout the convent's existence, reflecting continuous imports of Iberian foodstuffs by the friars. It is noteworthy that this indicates a privileged socioeconomic context at the heart of the city. Moreover, tin-glazed

Table 2 Presence of the main ceramic groups by stratum (E) in excavation units (EU) of the Santo Domingo convent

Productions	UE1			UE2			UE3						UE6			UE7			UE8			UE10			UE15																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																											
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earthenware, of both Spanish and Italian origin, appears to be more prevalent in older levels, particularly in EU3, EU7, EU8 and EU10, though less so in EU1, EU6 and EU15. Lead-glazed earthenware of probable Iberian origin also seems to be more abundant in older levels, specifically EU3, EU6, EU8. Similarly, unglazed earthenware, such as orange micaceous or feldspar-inlaid ceramics, is primarily found in older levels like EU1, EU3, EU10 and EU15. In these instances, it seems that imported pottery has been supplanted by locally produced ceramics over time.

Imports from other American colonial areas, which do not exceed 1% of MNV, originate exclusively from the Viceroyalty of New Spain, centered in present-day Mexico. These imports include types such as *Tonalá*, *Abó*, and *Puebla* types. These ceramics are found in colonial America, particularly in the Isthmus of Panama, an interoceanic route connecting the mines of Potosí, in the Viceroyalty of Peru and Cartagena de Indias through the ports of Nombre de Dios (until 1596) and Portobelo (from 1597 onward) in low frequencies (Martín and Rovira 2012). On the other hand, Mexican majolica is more common in Cuban archaeological contexts, such as Havana and Nuevitas, whose commercial connection was more direct (i.e., Domínguez 2014:19, 55, 65; Hernández et al. 2013:179).

In terms of the local production economy, there is a prevalence of the pre-Hispanic *Crespo* tradition (30% of MNV, 39% of NISP) compared to European influenced ceramics (25% of MNV and 15% of NISP) (see Fig. 11). Analyzing the scarce stratigraphic data about those productions of pre-Hispanic tradition (see Table 2), the *Crespo café* has a greater weight in the older levels, such as in EU3, EU7, and EU10, while it is non existent or is relatively scarce in the upper strata. This also applies to the *Crespo fino* variety, for example in EU3, EU7, and EU10, although this is not so clear in other areas of the excavation. The opposite occurs when it comes to the *Crespo rojo arenoso*, with greater weight in more recent deposits, for example in EU3, EU6, EU8, or EU15. These data somewhat emphasize the idea that the manufacture of these three varieties was interrupted at different moments during the colonial era (Therrien et al. 2002:47–49): while it is true that *Crespo café arenoso* might only have been produced until the seventeenth century and that *Crespo rojo arenoso* is the most enduring variety, possibly until the eighteenth century, it is no longer confirmed that *Crespo fino*, the most refined production, ceased to be manufactured in the sixteenth century. In contrast, data from this convent seem to reveal the continuity of these productions throughout the colonial period, as an essential element of the convent's daily life. Moreover, local productions of ceramics of European tradition, *Cartagena rojo compacto* and *Cartagena rojo compacto fino*, only appear or are more prominent in more recent deposits, in EU1, EU6, and EU8, although this is less evident in EU3 and EU7 (see Table 2). The same can be said regarding the lead-glazed earthenware of probable local production, as well as the *Mayólica Cartagena*, which is more abundant in the upper strata of virtually all the test pits.

Considering the materials studied by Therrien, this author interprets the prevalence of a higher percentage of ceramics of Indigenous tradition in this context, as opposed to other contexts in the city, because of possible conflicts between the Dominican order and the Jesuits, who owned the San Barnabé estate. In addition, there was greater interaction between the Dominican order and the Indigenous community, given its evangelizing mission (Báez Santos 2019:191–192; Therrien

et al. 2002:24–25; Therrien 2003:35, 2007:45). Nevertheless, this Tierra Bomba pottery was not the only one in the city that produced the *Cartagena rojo compacto* and *Mayólica Cartagena* types. In fact, the production of these ceramics continued after the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1767 (Báez Santos 2019:55; Therrien et al. 2002:50). It is not likely that conflicts over spiritual jurisdiction prevented the Dominicans from acquiring these items, as they could certainly find them on the colonial city's market. These types were indeed widespread and not exclusively made by the Jesuits, being common not only in archaeological contexts of Cartagena de Indias and the Colombian (Tolú) and Venezuelan (Falcón) Caribbean, but also within the former viceroyalty of New Granada (Guaduas and Clemencia), or in Panama (Portobelo) and Cuba (Báez Santos 2019:119–120).

The prevalence of *Crespo* ceramics of Indigenous tradition suggests that they served as a versatile and affordable option widely utilized in the colonial context, particularly for kitchenware. The relatively simple production process of hand-built ceramics likely contributed to their widespread adoption by colonial society (Therrien et al. 2000:48). Moreover, these ceramics were well-suited for cooking over fire, a crucial function in colonial households. In contrast, wheel-thrown ceramics produced in kilns may have been less suitable for this purpose due to the limitations of the clays available in Tierra Bomba, leading to a reliance on pre-Hispanic tradition for most cooking vessels. This technological duality, where hand-built ceramics were used for everyday cooking tasks, has been observed in other regions as well, such as the western Mediterranean, where similar factors influenced ceramic production methods (Picon 1995:142–146).

Absolutely, the greater initial familiarity of local populations with their own ceramic productions, compared to imported models and techniques, likely played a significant role in the prevalence of Indigenous ceramics in colonial contexts (Báez Santos 2019:19–20; Therrien et al. 2002:47–50). Additionally, the adaptability of these ceramics to local diets and culinary practices cannot be overlooked. It is more than likely that Indigenous communities had a preference for these familiar forms, possibly as a means of preserving cultural identity or simply due to taste preferences. Unlike other aspects of colonial life that may have led to confrontation with colonizers, the preference for Indigenous ceramics was likely a practical matter with clear functional utility, making it a relatively uncontroversial aspect of colonial daily life. Documented examples such as Santa María la Antigua del Darién (Arcila 1987), Santa Fe la Vieja (Ceruti 2005), Nativity Fort in En Bas Saline (Deagan 1987), Panamá Viejo (Martín and Rovira 2012), Mendoza (Prieto 2012), and Valdivia (Urbina and Adán 2018) support this notion. Therefore, it may not have played a significant role in the broader process of cultural assimilation faced by local communities under Spanish colonization.

Indeed, the colonial influence on ceramics of pre-Hispanic tradition, known as *Estilo Crespo Colonial*, is evident (Therrien et al. 2000:48–50). The arrival of the Spanish led to the disappearance of certain decorative motifs described in pre-Hispanic *Crespo* varieties by Alicia Dussán de Reichel (1954:181; Lámina II). However, the presence of "atypical" motifs described by the same author (Dussán de Reichel 1954:181; Lámina III), which do not align with typical pre-Hispanic styles, suggests the adoption of European techniques and traditions (Therrien et al. 2002:47–48). In terms of decoration, colonial ceramics introduced techniques such

as stamping or impression on wet clay using carved implements, and the application of finger-imprinted cordons near the rim, possibly of African origin (Meyers 1999:211, *apud* Therrien et al. 2002:49), though such practices were also common in Europe. The involvement of enslaved Africans in ceramic production, due to the decline of the Native population and the rise of the slave trade, contributed to a syncretic “Euro-Afro-American” social phenomenon in Cartagena de Indias (Díaz n.d.a:21; Therrien et al. 2000:12, 2002:48–49). This phenomenon reflects the complex dynamics of colonial society, shaped by the subjugation of Indigenous populations, the impact of European diseases, and the exploitation of African labor. The resulting cultural fusion is evident in various aspects of material culture, including ceramics, and continues to be observed in contemporary Cartagena and other ex-colonies like Panama (Ardila 2009:36; Calvo Stevenson and Meisel Roca, 2009:5; Deagan and Cruxent, 1993:67; Deagan 2012:16–17; Hofman et al. 2014; Schreg, 2010), although this subject demands deeper research.

Final Remarks

Cartagena de Indias held significant importance within the Spanish colonial empire due to its strategic location. Situated on the northern coast of present-day Colombia, it served as a crucial entrepôt between Europe and the Viceroyalties of New Granada and Perú, as well as other territories of Spanish America. Surprisingly a handful of archaeological excavations have been conducted in this city, resulting in a limited number of scientific studies, despite being a World Heritage site since 1984. One notable excavation focused on the Santo Domingo convent, which was the first conventual structure built in Cartagena and remains one of the city’s significant architectural landmarks. The excavation of this area occurred on two separate occasions, but unfortunately, there was little articulation between them, leading to scarce stratigraphic data. The analysis of ceramics from the colonial period unearthed from these excavations aimed to enhance our understanding of the material culture of this city. By examining consumption patterns, occupation dynamics, and trade networks, this study sought to shed light on the city’s historical development and its role in regional commerce.

During this work a significant diversity of ceramic productions and forms was observed at the site. As a result, we verified that the Indigenous *Crespo* ceramics are prevalent and span the entire occupation period, primarily comprising vessels used for cooking directly over the fire. In more recent layers there is an abundance of locally produced ceramics which replicate European forms and decorations. Furthermore, ceramics imported from Europe are a minority and primarily found in the older levels, with Andalusian *botijas* being an exception. Imports from other regions of America and Asia are minimal.

To summarize, it is essential to underscore the Indigenous contributions to the colonial city, characterized by the ongoing use of pre existing ceramics with gradual modifications and adaptations. Additionally, we would like to highlight the resilience of the colonial city, which swiftly endeavored to fulfil its supply needs through local productions, thereby lessening its reliance on the metropolis. However, identifying the African influence remains challenging at this time.

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Declarations

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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