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A sherd from a near complete sixteenth century costrel from Breachacha Castle, suspected of being a Spanish import (Hurst, 1973), was submitted for thin sectioning and study under the petrological microscope as part of a current programme of petrological analysis of 'Merida-type' imports to Britain (in collaboration with John Hurst of the DOE). The sherd is in a hard, fairly smooth sandy fabric, with conspicuous flecks of mica, light red (Munsell 10R 6/8) outer surface, reddish-yellow (5YR 7/6) inner surface and core. Thin sectioning reveals frequent ill-sorted subangular grains of quartz and large plates of muscovite mica, together with some plagioclase and potash feldspar and quartzite. A fairly similar fabric has been noted by the writer for certain 'Merida-type' vessels found at Stonar, Plymouth Castle, Southampton and Guy's Hospital, London. It is, however, likely that late medieval red micaceous pottery was made at other places in Spain besides Merida, as well as in Portugal (Hurst, 1977; Williams, 1979).

The Breachacha Castle costrel fabric is not unlike the red micaceous pottery recovered from two wrecks of the Spanish Armada, the Trinidad Valencera and the Santa Maria de la Rosa (Williams, 1979). On documentary evidence an origin for the red micaceous Armada pottery in or around the Lisbon area seems likely (Martin, 1979). A similar origin for the Breachacha costrel is also a possibility, though there are slight textural differences between the latter vessel and those from the Trinidad Valencera and Santa

Maria de la Rosa which may indicate another source.

Bibliography

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