

IMPORTED SPANISH 'OLIVE-JARS' FROM EXETER

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Spanish 'olive-jars': 2090, 174, 3031, 3034, 3034.

Sherd 2090 is from a fifteenth century context, while the remainder are all dated to the sixteenth century. The former sherd appears in a fairly hard, rough sandy fabric, with small limestone inclusions, pinkish-white (Munsell 7.5YR 8/2) throughout, and with deep ribbed decoration on the outer surface. The other four sherds are all in a hard, rough sandy fabric, again with small limestone inclusions apparent, generally with a white slip on the outer surface and reddish-yellow (5YR 7/6) inner surface and core. Thin sectioning reveals that all the samples contain a similar range of inclusions, the main features of which are fragments of quartz-micaschist, sandstone, quartzite and limestone, together with discrete grains of quartz, plagioclase and potash feldspar and flecks of mica, set in a fairly clean clay matrix. The fifteenth century sample, No. 2090, appears slightly finer-grained than the other sherds.

It is normally considered that the earlier forms of Mediaeval and post-Mediaeval 'olive-jars' were generally made in Andalusia, more particularly near to Seville or Cadiz (Goggin, 1960,5). The petrology of the Exeter sherds would seem to confirm this, for there are many points of similarity in fabric between this material and the Roman amphora type Dressel 20, known to have been made in the region of the River Guadalquivir between Seville and Cordoba (Peacock, 1979).

The Exeter sherds were compared with Spanish 'olive-jars' from Southampton dated to the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries, and agreed well in thin section (pers. com. Roberta Tomber). This clearly demonstrates similarities in fabric of these vessels over a long period of time, and strongly suggests that they share a common area of origin.

#### References

- Goggin, J. M. (1960) The Spanish Olive-jar : An Introductory Study (Yale Univ. Pub. Anthropol. 62).
- Peacock, D. P. S. (1979) 'The amphorae', in Wainwright, G. J. Gussage All Saints (London, 1979), 72.