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TITLE

Retrolgical examination of a Gallo-Roman sherd from Saint-Christoly, Bordeaux. A comparison with Class E ware fabric

PETROLOGICAL EXAMINATION OF A GALLO-ROMAN SHERD FROM
SAINT-CHRISTOLY, BORDEAUX. A COMPARISON WITH CLASS E
WARE FABRIC

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A small sherd (5gms weight) from excavations at the Gallo-Roman site of Saint-Christoly, Bordeaux (inside the north-west corner of the Roman walled city of Burdigala), was submitted for detailed study under the petrological microscope. In the hand-specimen the sherd resembles the fabric of post-Roman Class E ware vessels, and therefore may possibly be from an antecedent form. Accordingly, the object of the analysis was to see how the fabric of the Saint-Christoly sherd compares with Class E ware material previously analyzed from the British Isles (Peacock and Thomas, 1967; also Thomas, 1981). A possible origin in the Aquitaine region of France for Class E ware has been proposed by Peacock and Thomas (*ibid.*), although this suggestion has recently been challenged (Campbell, 198).

The sherd from Saint-Christoly is in a hard, rough sandy fabric, with grains of quartz protruding through the surfaces, grey (between 10YR 5/1 - 7.5YR N5/) surfaces, light grey (10YR 7/1 - 7/2) core. In previous analyses of Class E ware sherds heavy mineral separation was selected as a useful method for characterization and as an aid to indications of source, due to the high quartz content of the fabric

(Peacock and Thomas, 1967). Unfortunately, the Saint-Christoly sherd was too small to allow this technique to be employed, as normally some 17-25gms weight of sherd is required (Peacock, 1967). However, a thin section was prepared from the Saint-Christoly sherd and this was studied under the petrological microscope. This showed a groundmass of subrounded quartz grains, average size up to 0.15mm, with a scatter of larger grains (some of them polycrystalline) up to 2mm across, together with flecks of mica, argillaceous material and some reddish-brown iron oxide.

The composition and texture of the inclusions in the Saint-Christoly sherd compare very favourably with previous thin sections of Class E ware from Abercorn and Dunadd (Peacock and Thomas, 1967). However, due to the ubiquity of quartz this evidence by itself cannot be pushed too far in establishing a clear link between Class E ware and the earlier Gallo-Roman sherd, or in indicating a common area of origin. It does suggest though that further analyses on these lines might prove profitable.

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