

PORTUGUESE COARSEWARE IN NEWFOUNDLAND, CANADA

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RESUMO Este texto discute a questão da cerâmica comum portuguesa (*Portuguese coarseware*) encontrada na Terra Nova (Newfoundland), no Canadá. Esta cerâmica é detectada frequentemente em contextos ingleses desta ilha de finais do século XVI e do século XVII, assim como em sítios de outros países relacionados directa ou indirectamente com o comércio português seiscentista. Apresentam-se aqui os diferentes fabricos e formas da cerâmica comum portuguesa encontrada na Terra Nova, juntamente com uma breve reflexão acerca dos factores sócio-económicos subjacentes à sua circulação no Atlântico.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE Terra Nova, Portugal, faiança comum, século XVII

1. INTRODUCTION

Portuguese coarseware, which has previously been called 'Merida-type ware' by Anglo archaeologists, is commonly found in late sixteenth- through seventeenth-century English contexts, on the island of Newfoundland, Canada (Hurst, Neal and Van Beuningen, 1986). The ware is also found elsewhere, in contexts which had an association, either directly or indirectly, with early modern Portuguese trade (Kirkman, 1974; Sassoon, 1981; Allan and Barber, 1982; Hurst, Neal and Van Beuningen, 1986; Martin, 1979; 1995; Gutiérrez, 2000; 2007). In Newfoundland, the ware is associated with many of the early English settlement sites on the island and study of it therefore provides insight into trade networks supplying Newfoundland during the seventeenth century (Mills, 2000; Crompton, 2001; Tuck and Gaulton, 2002; 2003; Mills and Tuck, 2004; Pope, 2004a; 2004b; Gaulton, Tuck and Miller, 2009). This paper will define and describe Portuguese coarseware form and fabric variation as well as explore possible production areas for the ceramics found in Newfoundland. It will conclude with a brief discussion of the socioeconomic factors which facilitated the consumption of this ceramic type in Newfoundland. The findings presented and discussed in this paper are from research undertaken for my MA thesis, which was completed in 2008 (Newstead, 2008).

2. BACKGROUND

Portuguese coarseware has been called 'Merida-type ware' by Anglo archaeologists for the last several decades. This confusing label stems from work by John

Hurst, who initially identified the ware in Britain in the 1960s (Hurst, Neal and Van Beuningen, 1986). Although he originally published that the ware was produced in Merida, Spain, he acknowledged that it was likely Portuguese-produced in subsequent publications (Hurst, Neal and Van Beuningen, 1986). Hurst's ceramic research has been hugely influential on Anglo historical archaeology and this resulted in the 'Merida-type ware' label being widely adopted; despite the ware's acknowledged Portuguese provenance. In Newfoundland, we have more recently been calling the ceramic 'Portuguese Redware', as only the red type of Portuguese coarse earthenware has been found on the island (Newstead, 2008). We have yet to recover any examples of black Portuguese coarse earthenware. In this paper, however, I have chosen to use the broader label of 'Portuguese coarseware'. I suggest that this is the most appropriate English label for the ceramic type; the name is simple and properly reflects the ware's Portuguese provenance.

Despite the initial naming error, Hurst's research was instrumental in promoting the identification of Portuguese coarse earthenware on British and colonial sites. Subsequent to Hurst's initial publication, Portuguese coarseware has been found in various British and colonial coastal contexts dating from the late-medieval period through the seventeenth century (Allan, 1984, p. 109-111; Hurst, Neal and Van Beuningen, 1986; Deagan 1987; Allan and Barber, 1992, p. 226-229; Martin, 1995; Gutiérrez, 2000; Brown, 2002, p. 37-39; Gutiérrez, 2007). Peter Pope first identified Portuguese coarseware in Newfoundland in his 1986 MA thesis (Pope, 1986). From that point onward, the ware has been consistently found on sixteenth and seventeenth-century

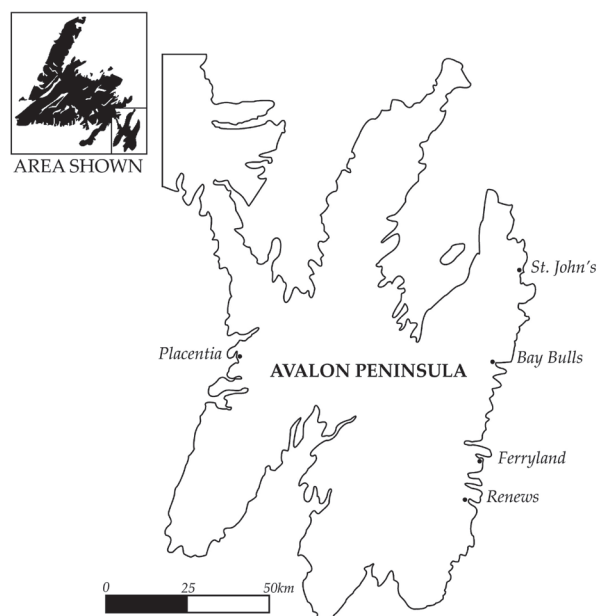
English sites on the island (fig. 1). To date, thousands of sherds have been recovered along with a number of complete vessels. The seventeenth-century settlement site of Ferryland has presented alone over 9000 identified sherds, with the potential for more to be found among those labeled as “unknown” (Tuck and Gaulton, 2003; Gaulton, Tuck and Miller 2009). However, the ware identifications in Newfoundland were often inconsistent. The fault for these inconsistencies does not lie with the people identifying the ceramics, but rather with the sources they were utilizing for identification criteria. The sources that were being utilized for identification were lacking both a comprehensive set of potential fabrics as well as a correct, complete vessel typology for potential forms. The research I undertook for my MA aimed to clarify future identifications by establishing a typology of forms and fabrics for the Portuguese coarseware found in Newfoundland (Newstead, 2008).

In order to compile appropriate and correct typologies for the Newfoundland collections, I made a research trip to Portugal in the autumn of 2006. This research trip involved examining hundreds of examples of Portuguese coarseware vessels from over twenty different sites in Portugal (fig. 2).¹ The research also involved gathering Portuguese-language sources on locally produced coarse earthenware and meeting with many archaeologists and curators who have worked with the material in order to facilitate the identification of these ceramics in Newfoundland. An important part of my MA work was to disseminate Portuguese-language research to archaeologists in Canada. The language barrier and accessibility issues have tended to discourage Anglo archaeologists from consulting Portuguese-language sources. This research trip allowed me to access sources that were difficult or impossible to obtain from Canada and gave me the opportunity to inform archaeologists working with Portuguese coarseware in Newfoundland and elsewhere about the relevant research being undertaken in Portugal. In addition to the source material, a small selection of diagnostic, seventeenth-century sherds was brought back to Canada for direct comparison to sherds found in Newfoundland, these adding to the sherds we had in our reference collection from Portugal in 2005.

Due to the amount of material available, the collections in Newfoundland were sampled. The aim of the research was to present an overview of potentially occurring Portuguese coarseware forms and fabrics in a pan-Newfoundland context, therefore a sampling strategy focused on diagnostic quality, form and fabric

diversity with lessened emphasis on specific archaeological context was applicable. With this more general strategy, the research was able to incorporate collections that were poorly provenienced, but were rich in form and fabric diversity.²

2. See acknowledgements for a list of collections.



1. Map of Newfoundland, Canada, with main areas for Portuguese coarseware finds noted.



2. Map of Portugal, with main site areas in project noted.

1. See acknowledgements for a list of collections.

3. FABRICS AND FORMS

3.1 Fabrics

For this research, ceramic fabrics were examined visually as well as tested for elemental composition.³ This paper utilizes the results of the visual examination of the sherds, rather than presenting the elemental composition data generated for this project. Portuguese coarseware fabrics have previously been researched both petrographically and chemically (Williams, 1984; Gaulton and Mathias, 1998; Castro, Dordio and Teixeira, 1999; Brown, 2002; Sousa, Silva, and Gomes, 2003; Cranfill, 2004). However, many of these studies have been preliminary, particularly when examining ceramics from non-Portuguese contexts. The base of compositional data is building for ceramics from

Portuguese sites and this, combined with further research into production areas, will provide a context and motivation for further, in-depth compositional studies of exported Portuguese coarseware.

In the Newfoundland collections, Portuguese coarseware predominantly falls into three main fabric types. The difference in fabric seems to be correlated with specific vessel forms. All types of Portuguese coarseware in Newfoundland share some basic fabric characteristics.

1. A significant amount of mica with muscovite being the most prominent, although biotite is also present. Mica is always visible on the surface of the ceramic.

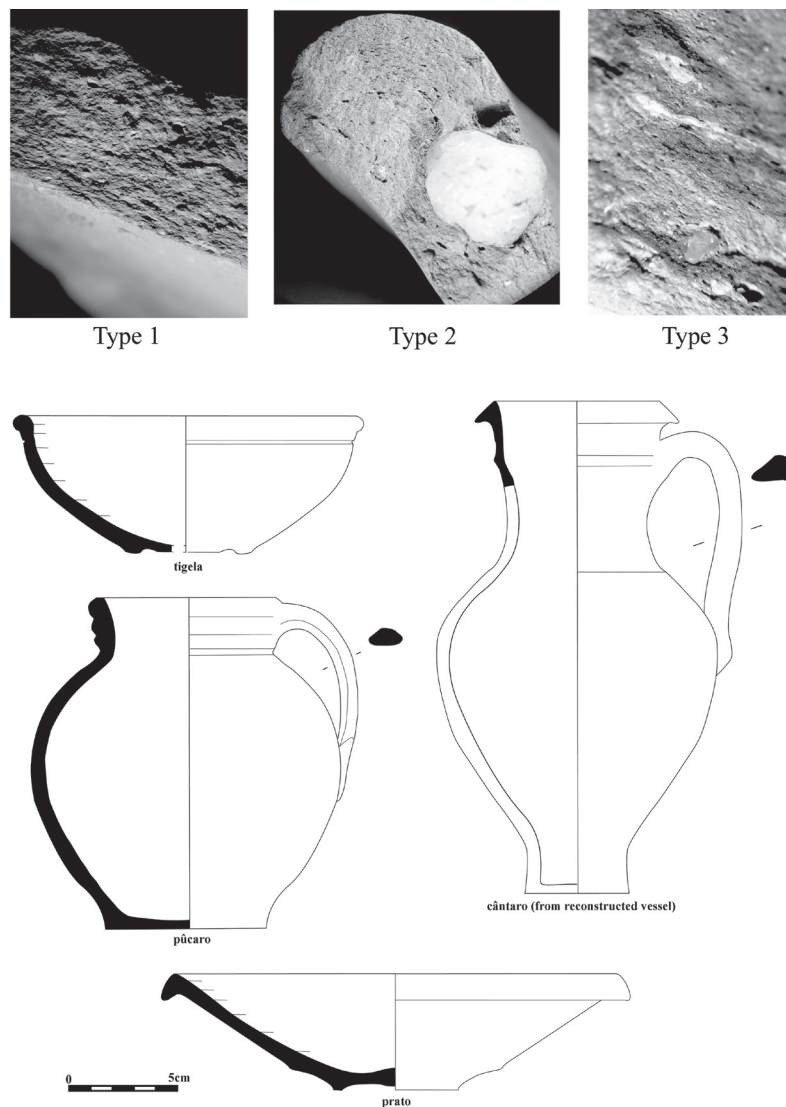
2. Inclusions of quartz, feldspar and grog.⁴

3. A colour which has orange tones.

Beyond these basic characteristics, the sherds can be grouped into three main types (fig. 3).

4. The quartz inclusions range from clear through opaque and white. The grog inclusions are earthenware, with their colour tones being comparable to the overall fabric colour tones.

3. LA-ICP-MS testing was performed on 28 sherds in 2007. See Newstead, 2008 for complete results.



3. Top: Photos of Portuguese coarseware fabric types found in Newfoundland. Bottom: A selection of Portuguese coarseware forms from the Newfoundland collections.

Type 1, Coarse Brown-Orange: A homogenous fabric which contains a large amount of quartz, feldspar and grog inclusions. The quartz inclusions range in size from very small to large, with some quartz visible poking through the surface of the ceramic. Quartz occurs in both clear and opaque forms. The fabric has a coarse appearance and is medium-hard. The colour of this fabric tends to be in the brown-orange range. It is associated in the Newfoundland collections with vessels that are unburnished or glazed. It is also associated with some of the larger vessels, and occasionally with olive jars, as will be discussed below.

Type 2, Smooth Orange-Red: A homogenous, compact fabric which contains quartz, feldspar and grog inclusions. The feldspar and grog inclusions are very small, with the quartz inclusions ranging in size from very small to very large. Occasional very large white, opaque quartz inclusions are typical in this fabric. These quartz inclusions are often seen poking through the surface of the fabric. The fabric is regular, smooth and compact in appearance. It is also relatively hard. The colour of this fabric is an orange-red. This fabric is the most recognizable Portuguese coarseware fabric and is associated with vessels that are burnished.

Type 3, Soft Marbled: A soft, marbled fabric which contains quartz, feldspar and grog inclusions. The quartz inclusions range in size from very small to large, with some quartz which pokes through the surface of the fabric. The fabric is marbled with an orange-pink clay and a soft, powdery white material. The marbling can occur in parts of the fabric, or throughout. This fabric is associated with the olive jar forms, particularly with jars that have been slipped with white.

Early-modern ceramic production in Portugal produced a range of ceramic types, often dependant on the area of production (Resende, 1986; Sardinha, 1990; Rego, 1993; Catarino, 1995; Diogo, and Trindade, 1995; Real *et al*, 1995; Amorim, 1996; 1998; Silva, 1996; Gaspar and Amaro, 1997; Alves *et al*, 1998; Barreira, Dordio and Teixeira, 1998; Osório and Silva, 1998; Teixeira, 1998; Castro, Dordio and Teixeira, 1999; Gutiérrez, 2000; Alves *et al*, 2001; Bettencourt *et al*, 2003; Bettencourt *et al*, 2003a; 2003b; Alves and Rieth, 2004; Bettencourt, Carvalho and Pinto, 2005a; 2005b; Bettencourt and Carvalho, 2007; Barbosa, Casimiro and Manaia, 2008; Gomes, 2008). The Newfoundland collections do not demonstrate the full range of ceramic production from Portugal. The Newfoundland coarse earthenware can be most closely connected to the productions originating in Aveiro and Lisbon. This will be discussed in further detail below. Although not all of the production types have currently been identified in Newfoundland, there is a possibility that they do occur in small quantities but

have yet to be recognized. It has therefore been important to recognize the full production range of Portuguese coarseware from this period. It has also been useful to recognize all the production types in order to situate the possible production area for Newfoundland Portuguese coarseware within the greater system of regional ceramic production in Portugal.

Although mica is a defining characteristic of Portuguese coarseware, it is also common in other wares from Western Europe and England. In a place like Newfoundland, which has a great deal of early modern ceramic material from all over Europe, this can lead to misidentification. However, Portuguese coarseware seems to have a greater amount of mica than most other wares, with the mineral being apparent on the surface of the vessels. When identifying Portuguese coarseware in contexts where other highly micaceous wares occur, like French Landieul or English North Devon Smooth, one must use a combination of the ware's fabric attributes, such as inclusions, as well as vessel form, if possible, to be sure of an identification.

3.2 Forms

There is a solid basis of previous typological work related to early modern coarse earthenware in Portugal. There is not yet a pan-Portuguese typology for coarseware, however there is now some consistency in vessel form names and descriptions among archaeological projects and publications (Alves *et al*, 1998; Barreira, Dordio and Teixeira, 1998; Bettencourt *et al*, 2003a). After consultation with Portuguese archaeologists familiar with coarse earthenware, it was determined that most of the Newfoundland forms fit into the developing Portuguese typological system. As far as possible I have used the Portuguese names for the vessel forms found in Newfoundland (figs. 3 and 4). The use of Portuguese names clarifies the description of forms and will lessen the inherent biases which happen when utilizing, for example, English vessel names for Portuguese forms.⁵ It will also facilitate discussion between Portuguese and English researchers, as it will lessen confusion when attempting to describe specific vessels. Although sometimes imprecise, the Portuguese nomenclature is better than using terms designed for English ceramics.

The overall Portuguese coarseware assemblage in Newfoundland is characterized by coarse vessel forms. There have been very few examples of finer forms and fabrics, such as those seen with *ceramicas modeladas*, recovered on the island. The majority of the forms that

5. For example: Beaudry *et al* 1983 describes the milk pan, a form similar to the Portuguese *alguidar*.

have been found in Newfoundland represent storage vessels or coarse table/utilitarian ware (Newstead, 2008).

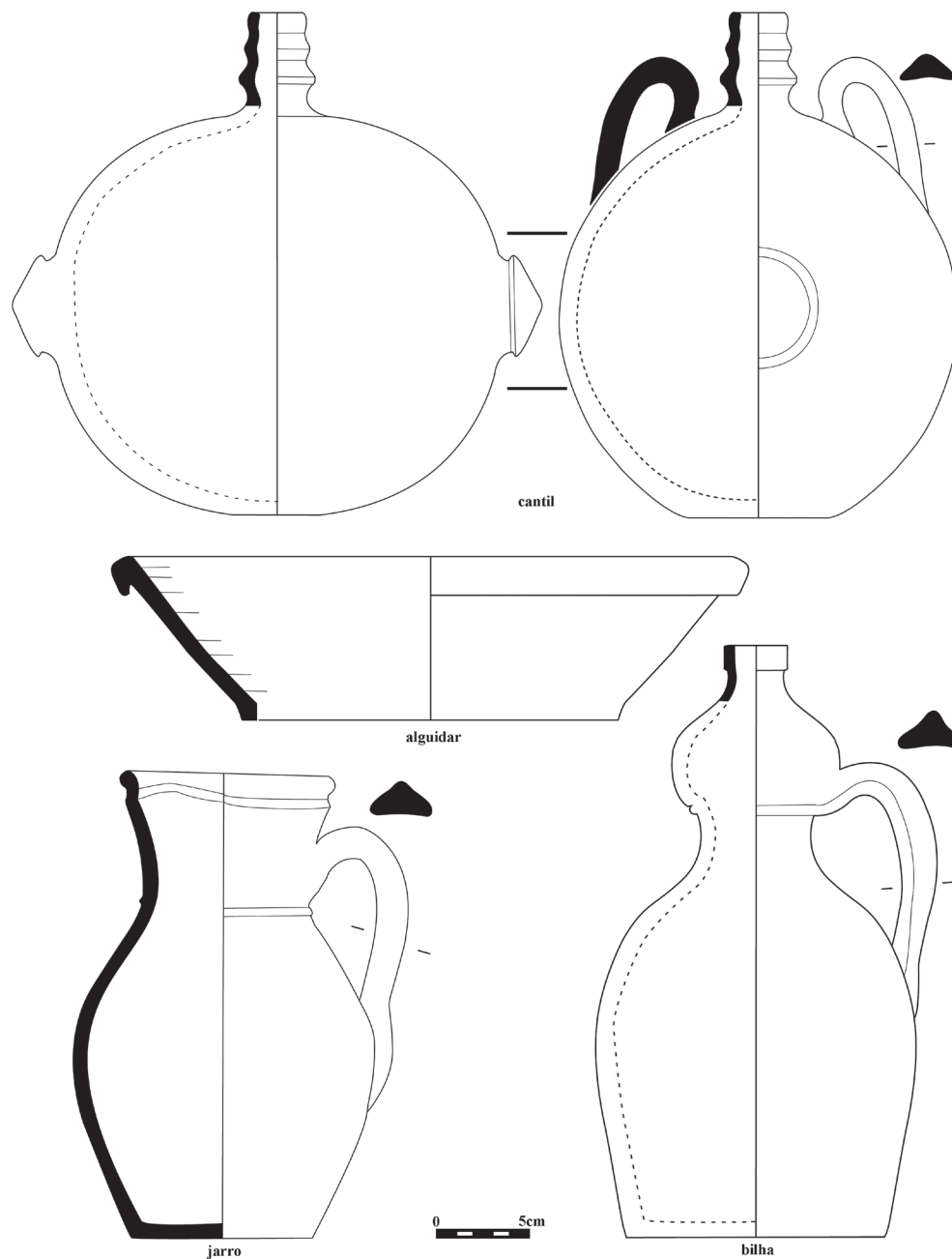
3.2.1 The Jars

The storage or 'olive' jar is the most common of the Newfoundland Portuguese coarseware vessels. When pictures and descriptions of the Portuguese coarseware jars were shown to various archaeologists in Portugal, the repeated response was that these vessels were rare in contemporaneous Portuguese contexts, but it was likely that they were produced in Portuguese kilns (Hurst Hurst, Neal and Van Beuningen, 1986; Pope, 1986; Gutiérrez, 2000; Crompton, 2000; Paulo Dordio, 2006, pers. comm.; Patrícia Carvalho and José Betten-

court, 2006, pers. comm.; Claudio Brochado, 2006, pers. comm.; António Marques, 2006, pers. comm.; António Silva, 2006, pers. comm.; Gutiérrez, 2007; Barbosa, Casimiro and Manaia, 2008). It could be suggested that due to their common appearance in collections outside of Portugal and rarity inside of the country, these vessels were produced for an export market.

Portuguese coarseware 'olive' jars are distinct from Spanish 'olive' jars, both in fabric, but also in rim and body form (fig. 5) (Goggin, 1968; James, 1988). They come in slipped and glazed varieties, although the slipped vessels are more common. The jars all have two incised rings near their bottom and triangular rims. Many of the jars exhibit the Type 3 fabric.

S. Newstead



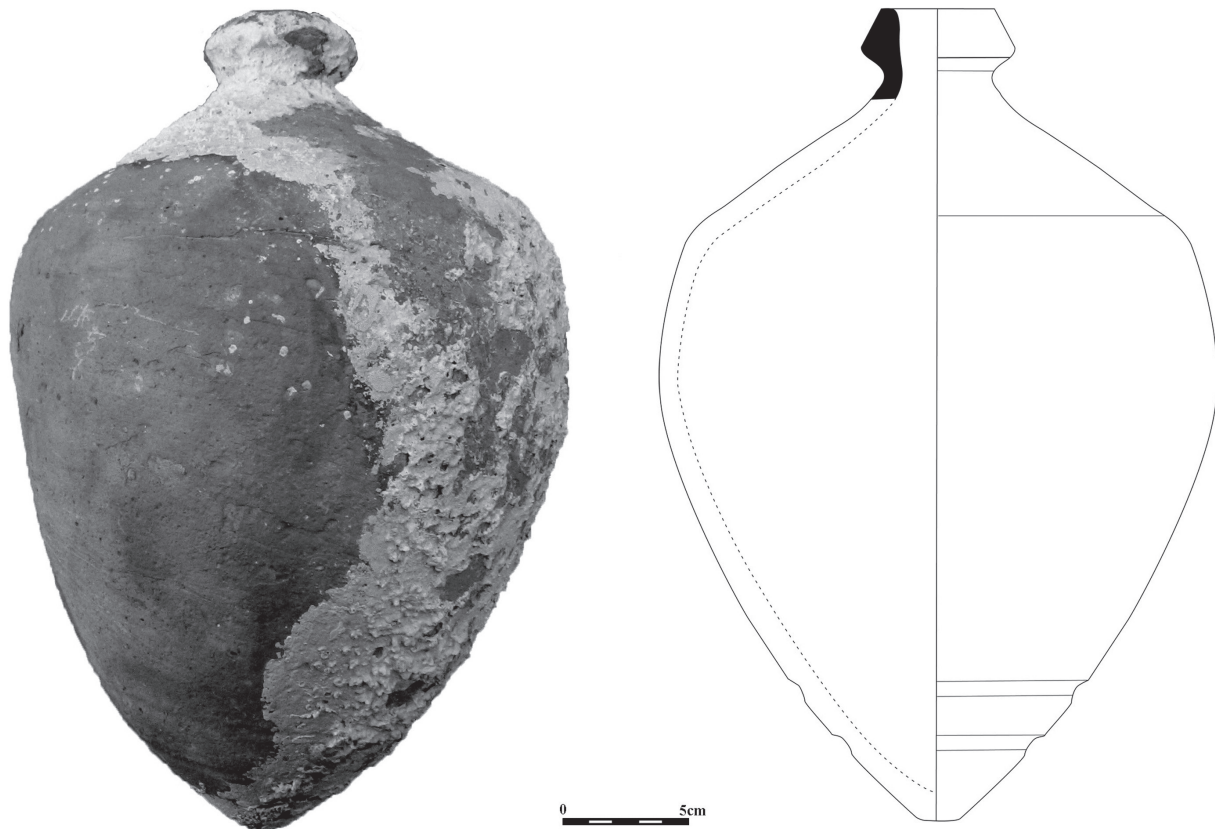
4. A selection of Portuguese coarseware forms from the Newfoundland collections.

A high percentage of jars occur at sites in Newfoundland where Portuguese coarseware is found in quantity. For example, a valid estimation for the proportion of jar sherds in Ferryland's total Portuguese coarseware collection would be 29 to 30%. Their presence may be related to the foodstuffs that were being utilized on English ships and in the nascent colonies on the island. Although the common English name for these vessels suggests that they were predominately used for shipping olives, it is more likely they were used for shipping and storing wine or oil. Their relatively homogenous size and shape suggests that they were being produced for a specific storage task. There is not a great deal of evidence that these jars were being used in a context other than storage, as burned or use-worn sherds are uncommon in the Newfoundland collections. If they were being used solely for storage and were not being commonly reused in any capacity, it makes sense if they were viewed as disposable, thereby making their abandonment in Newfoundland more likely. This is in contrast to the higher quality Portuguese coarseware serving and multi-use vessels, which would have had a higher rate of curation and a range of reuse.

4. PRODUCTION

The most important areas of production for Newfoundland Portuguese coarseware were the areas closely associated with port cities which Newfoundland-bound ships frequented. The two main ports were Lisbon, which had its own production and Porto, which was known for selling earthenware from Ovar/Aveiro kilns as well as kilns in Prado and Braga (Barreira, Dordio and Teixeira, 1998; Paulo Dordio, 2006, pers. comm.; António Silva, 2006, pers. comm.). A third, less major port that received Newfoundland-associated ships is Aveiro itself (Innis, 1929; Abreu-Ferreira, 1995). These cities had active English or French involvement in the flow of goods being shipped and this likely facilitated the export of Portuguese ceramics (Abreu-Ferreira, 1995; 2004). There are several other regions known for early modern ceramic production, such as the Alto Alentejo. Each area produced distinctive ceramic types, although there are overlaps in vessel forms, finishing techniques and fabric composition (Resende, 1986; Sardinha, 1990; Rego, 1993; Catarino, 1995; Diogo, and Trindade, 1995; Real *et al*, 1995; Amorim, 1996; 1998;

5. Newstead



5. A Portuguese coarseware jar from Newfoundland. From the Collections of the Rooms, Provincial Museum, Newfoundland.

Silva, 1996; Gaspar and Amaro, 1997; Alves *et al.*, 1998; Barreira, Dordio and Teixeira, 1998; Osório and Silva, 1998; Teixeira, 1998; Castro, Dordio and Teixeira, 1999; Gutiérrez, 2000; Alves *et al.*, 2001; Bettencourt *et al.*, 2003; Bettencourt *et al.*, 2003a; 2003b; Alves and Rieth, 2004; Bettencourt, Carvalho and Pinto, 2005a; 2005b; Bettencourt and Carvalho, 2007; Barbosa, Casimiro and Manaia, 2008; Gomes, 2008). It is unlikely, however, that all of Portugal's earthenware production zones are represented in Newfoundland contexts.

The majority of securely identified Portuguese coarseware in Newfoundland exhibits characteristics very similar to the ware produced in the Aveiro region. The Newfoundland forms and fabrics are analogous to contemporaneous samples from Porto and Aveiro that were produced in the Aveiro region. The ratio of glazed to unglazed ceramics in the Newfoundland collections is also similar to seventeenth-century contexts containing Aveiro-produced ceramics in Porto (Castro, Dordio and Teixeira, 1999). One sees in the Newfoundland collections many Aveiro-style vessel forms with a smaller number of vessel forms that could be attributed to areas like Lisbon.

The potential production origin of the Portuguese coarseware jars warrants a more detailed discussion. They do not occur normally in Portuguese contexts, and yet are the most numerous Portuguese coarseware vessel type that occurs in Newfoundland. On first glance they are visually dissimilar to typical Aveiro-style form and fabric. However, upon closer examination of the fabric, the jars exhibit many similarities to the known Aveiro fabrics. The inclusions are the same, the general colour is similar and the jars often exhibit one of the main Aveiro-style fabric markers, which is the large opaque quartz inclusions. The main differences are the marbling of the fabric and its softness. The jars are often slipped with white, but they can be burnished, plain or glazed; all three of the latter result in sherds that are very similar to the Aveiro style. More tellingly, when tested for trace elements, the jar sherds matched well with the other Newfoundland sherds that had been visually identified as being from Aveiro. The jars, then, may have been produced in Aveiro but from lesser quality clays and with less care than the other Aveiro vessels. They may also have been mass produced for an export market for basic storage use, resulting in lower quality expectations. This being said, Portuguese jars are still of much higher production quality than typical Spanish jars of the seventeenth century (Goggin, 1960; Sassoon, 1981; James, 1988). Their fabric is finer and their vessel shape is more regular. This fits with historians' assertions that ceramic production was being regulated in Aveiro from the late

sixteenth century onwards, leading to quality vessel production (Bettencourt, 1995). The Aveiro region was also known for actively marketing its wares outside of the region, which would make production of a vessel almost exclusively for an export market part of a larger ceramic production and marketing context (Bettencourt, 1995).

5. DISCUSSION

Portuguese ceramics arriving via English ships to Newfoundland are an excellent reflection of long-standing trade relationships between the English and Portuguese. These relationships were well established by the seventeenth century: formal commercial contact between England and Portugal began in the thirteenth century (Shillington and Chapman, 1970; Shaw, 1989, p. 15; Childs, 1992). By the fifteenth century, English merchant communities had been established in most of the major ports in Portugal, with Lisbon and Porto having the largest number of English merchant families (Childs, 1992, p. 205).

Although the Portuguese had an early association with the island of Newfoundland, with their seafarers exploring and exploiting the resources of the area from the late-fifteenth century onwards, their direct presence in Newfoundland's waters declined at the end of the sixteenth century (Abreu-Ferreira, 1997; 1998; Pope, 2004a, p. 12-20). As Portugal's direct contact with island lessened, the English fishery in Newfoundland began to fill the sustained Portuguese demand for salted cod. Portugal was a good market choice for English-caught cod during the seventeenth century. Portugal produced goods that were readily saleable in England and Newfoundland, such as wine, fruit and olive oil. These commodities, when traded for Newfoundland cod, could make an English merchant profit, as the cod had a lower value when brought directly to English markets (Pope, 2004a, p. 91).

Commercial transactions were often conducted through English merchants living in Portugal (Shillington and Chapman, 1970; Abreu-Ferreira, 1995; 2003; Shaw, 1989; Studnicki-Gizbert, 2007). This local presence of English merchants may have affected the types of ceramics that the English were acquiring. There are some fundamental differences in the makeup of Portuguese coarseware from coastal archaeological collections in Portugal versus those Newfoundland, notably the absence of black coarse earthenware on the island, an attribute which is ubiquitous in seventeenth-century Portuguese collections containing red coarse earthenware. The main reasons for these differences may have been due to the goods inside the vessels, rather

than the vessels themselves, but whether this difference may be partially due to an Anglicization of the ceramics available for trade to Newfoundland-bound ships is an interesting thought. The strong trading connections between the English and Portuguese are not solely reflected materially in Newfoundland by the appearance of Portuguese coarseware. Portuguese *faiança* is also well represented at Ferryland, with mid-seventeenth-century contexts often containing a higher than average amount when compared to other contemporary English sites (Stoddart, 2000; Pope, 2004a, p. 373). Ferryland also has the only examples of Portuguese fine earthenware (*púcaros*) in North America, which could be attributed to the close merchant connections between Newfoundland and Portugal (Tuck and Gaulton, 2002).

Adding to these situational factors of consumption was the maritime culture which placed the people involved in the Newfoundland fishery at the cusp of the evolution of consumer behaviour which was happening in earnest through the seventeenth century. The maritime community in Newfoundland was connected to a dynamic web of trade networks which stretched across the Atlantic. This connection facilitated the access to foreign goods, such as Portuguese earthenware and fostered a culture where consumption of these goods was acceptable for a wide range of society (Pope, 2004a). The maritime community in Newfoundland was not a poor one. The Newfoundland cod fishery was a risky, but lucrative economy (Innis, 1940; Matthews, 1968; Cell, 1969; Pope, 2004a). One can then infer that there was a certain amount of disposable income available to people working in the Newfoundland economy. This income would have made Portuguese goods, such as wine and ceramics, more accessible and viable for a wide range of maritime consumer. The values and structure of the seventeenth-century maritime community associated with Newfoundland encouraged the consumption of exotic goods, while the availability of a degree of disposable income to a wide range of society facilitated the acquisition of these goods (Pope, 2004a).

6. CONCLUSION

Research on Portuguese coarseware in Newfoundland and other export contexts is still only in its preliminary stages. Further research into production areas needs to be continued, as does research of the forms and fabrics of the ware. The next stage is to associate vessel forms and fabrics with specific archaeological and temporal contexts in Newfoundland and to see if any patterns emerge suggesting changes in consumption over time. More elemental testing of the ceramic and archival research into the trade of Portuguese coarseware will also be useful in further research. This work represents an initial attempt at greater contact between archaeologists and researchers working in Portugal and Newfoundland. The close historical ties between the Portuguese and Newfoundland maritime communities make continuing contact a worthwhile undertaking. Further collaboration will result in new and innovative perspectives on early modern North Atlantic trade and social connections; perspectives that could be difficult to obtain in isolation.

7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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