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Medieval Ceramics

THIS JOURNAL was conceived to meet the need for an annual publication devoted to all aspects of pottery studies from the early Saxon to the post-medieval period, including theoretical, methodological and analytical aspects of pottery research.

An annual conference is held (usually in June) and meetings of regional groups take place at more frequent intervals. The Medieval Pottery Research Group has many Continental members whose work overlaps with that of British members. *Medieval Ceramics* welcomes offers of appropriate articles on all aspects of ceramic research for publication.

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The cover design by Maria Geals shows the rim and upper decorative portion of a rare 15th-century Valentian Lustreware plant pot, probably used to grow sweet smelling herbs such as basil . This vessel was discovered in Moorgate, London in 2010 during excavation of Moorgate and Finsbury Circus (sitecode XSP10) for Crossrail. The image has been photographed by Andy Chopping of MOLA (Image: © Crossrail)

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Late Roman and early medieval ceramics from São Martinho de Dume (Braga)

A preliminary analysis

Raquel Martínez Peñín,* Luis Fontes** and Francisco Andrade***

The main objective of this study is to analyze the ceramics, both imported and local, which were recovered from the Late Antique and early medieval phases of activity revealed by several excavations carried out in São Martinho Dume, Portugal. After characterising the ceramics collected during this archaeological work, the assemblage is compared with contemporary material from the city of Braga.

Introduction

This paper presents a characterisation and analysis of the Late Antique and early medieval ceramics recovered during archaeological excavations in São Martinho de Dume, Portugal, undertaken between 1993 and 2010 (Fontes and Gaspar 1997; Fontes 2006; 2011a; 2012; 2014; Fontes and Carneiro 2011; Fontes, Braga and Osório 2011). This is a period which has long been neglected in the region of north western Iberia, where studies have focused on material of prehistoric and Roman date. Pottery of the Late Antique period was first published in the 1980s (see Gutiérrez González and Bohigas Roldán 1989 for a brief study of material from Galicia), although artefacts were often published without the benefit of well defined stratigraphic sequences. The 1990s saw further material published, with material being recovered more routinely from secure stratigraphic deposits (Gutiérrez González 1995, 69–87). It was at this time that it became possible to generate a stronger understanding of ceramic production in northern Portugal and Spain in this period (Martínez Peñín 2013; Fernández Fernández and Bartolomé Abreira 2016).

The main objective of the current study is to present a preliminary analysis of the material from Dume, in order to characterise the ceramics found at the site and to recognise any similarities with assemblages recently excavated in the city of Braga (Martínez Peñín 2013). To this end, a large number of ceramic vessels from these periods have been analysed and the range of types present attest to the importance of São Martinho de Dume during Late Antiquity (4th-7th centuries) and the early medieval period (8th-11th centuries). Unusually, the assemblage was associated with a well defined stratigraphic sequence, permitting precise dating of the contexts from which the pottery was recovered. Some of the pottery found during excavations in the 1980s and 1990s has previously been studied by Alexandra Gaspar, and her study forms the starting point for this paper (Gaspar 2000; 2003).

Site location and chronology

São Martinho de Dume is located in the vicinity of the city of Braga, on the left bank of the River Cávado (Fig. 1), and is closely linked to the evolution of this urban centre. The origins of the city of Braga (*Bracara Augusta)* date to the Augustan period (27 BC–AD 14) and the information retrieved from various excavations shows that this was a planned city, which has grown considerably since its foundation (Martins 2000; 2009; Martins and Ribeiro 2013; Martins *et al.* 2012; Martins *et al.* 2014). Several public buildings (a forum, theatre, and thermal baths) have been identified, as well as part of the sanitary system below the main street *cardo maximo.* Excavations in different parts of the city also located several high imperial houses (*domus*) (Martins 2009; Martins *et al.* 2012; Martins and Ribeiro 2013).

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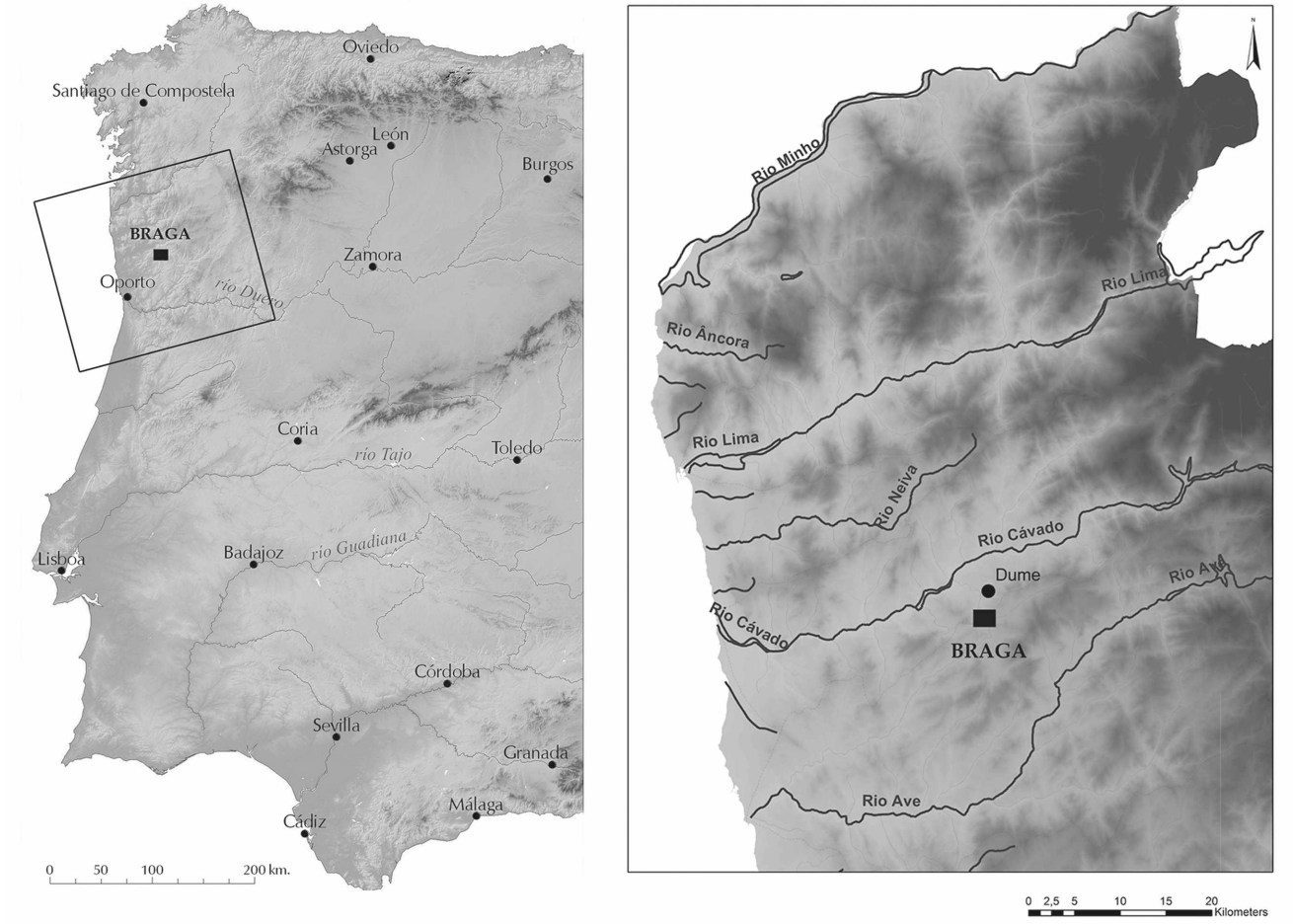


Figure 1. The location of Braga and Dume within Portugal (Image: Authors).

During the late 3rd to early 4th centuries *Bracara Augusta* grew, becoming the capital of the new province of *Gallaecia*, created by Diocletian. The most significant change was the construction of a defensive wall, similar to those in Lugo, Astorga, León and Gijón. In the 4th century the city became an Episcopal seat, promoting the construction of more public buildings, and was thriving economically (Fontes *et al.* 2011; Martins and Ribeiro 2013). During Late Antiquity (5th-6th centuries) the Suevi, a Germanic group from central Europe who remained in the area until 585, settled in the region and Braga was transformed into the capital of their kingdom (Arce Martínez 2005, 128).

This period saw the construction of several churches, such as those of the São Victor, São Vicente and São Pedro, and the Falperra Palace. Several monasteries were also constructed, the most notable being São Martinho de Dume. This new religious building reused some material from the buildings of an imperial villa that had previously occupied the site (Martins 2009; Martins *et al.* 2012; Martins and Ribeiro 2013; Martins *et al.* 2014). In the mid 6th century the Suebi king, Charraricus, ordered the construction of a basilica, dedicated to St. Martin of Tours, located below what is now the modern parish church (Fontes 2006; 2011b; 2012; 2014).

In the late 6th century an important political change occurred when the Swabian Kingdom became overrun by the Visigoths (Fontes 2012). During the following centuries (7th-8th centuries) parts of Braga continued to be inhabited. Public buildings, such as the theatre, were reused and transformed into domestic structures (Fontes *et al.* 2011). The early medieval period (8th-11th centuries) is marked by the construction of a new city wall in the north-west part of the city, where the Romanesque cathedral would later be built, becoming the epicentre of political and religious power in the city and marking a major transitional phase in the development of the city (Fontes and Lemos 1997).

Documentary evidence reveals the importance of the monastery of São Martinho de Dume in the 7th and 8th centuries (Fontes 2011b, 313–34). In AD 877 it was donated by Alfonso III to the bishopric of Mondoñedo, and this was confirmed three decades later (Costa 1965, 38; 1997, 50). Architecturally no major changes seem to have been made to the São Martinho de Dume buildings between the 6th century, when the villa was occupied and transformed, and the last quarter of the 9th century, when the Galician monastery of Mondoñedo became the episcopal centre for this area and São Martinho de Dume was rebuilt

as a parish church (Fontes 1990; 1992; 2006; 2008; 2009; 2011b; 2012).

Archaeological excavations in São Martinho de Dume

Systematic excavations have taken place at São Martinho de Dume since 1987 and have revealed an occupation sequence dating from the 1st century AD to the present day (Fontes 1987; 1990; 1992; 2011a; Fontes and Carneiro 2011; Fontes *et al.* 2011). The development of a Roman villa during the late Roman Empire can be traced archaeologically (Fontes 1987; 1990; 1992; 2006). One of the most interesting discoveries was the identification of a Suebi basilica of royal patronage dated to the mid 6th century (Fontes 2006).

During Late Antiquity the site was transformed into a monastic complex (Fontes 2006). The majority of the ceramics presented in this paper originated from the early stage of these buildings (6th-7th centuries), which are contemporary with contexts found close to the baths of the Roman villa (Fontes 1990; 2006) (Fig. 3). A few centuries later, in the early medieval period (9th-10th centuries), refurbishing occurs mostly in the basilica although some burials continue to be made next to the first necropolis. Building work ceased in the late 9th or early 10th century (Fontes 2012) (Fig. 4). The early medieval pottery presented in this paper corresponds to this phase, when the episcopal seat moved from Dume to the Galician village of Mondoñedo (Andrade Cernadas 2002).

The material reported upon here is derived from a series of stratigraphic units associated with the Late Antique stage of occupation (UEs1636, 1781, 2046 and 2098), and secondly to the early medieval period (UEs2031, 2033 and 2217). Common Roman types, including products from eastern and north Africa and local products, occur in the earlier stratigraphic units.

Late Antique pottery (4th-7th centuries)

The classification of the Late Antique ceramic fabrics from the São Martinho de Dume excavations was undertaken by macroscopic inspection of the clays and inclusions. At this preliminary stage, full quantification of the material has not been undertaken. Not all of the finds were locally produced and several imports can be identified, including Gallic/Gaulish Terra Sigillata forms (DSP), African Red Slipware (ARSW), and Phocaean (Late Roman C) and Hispanic/Spanish Terra Sigillata (TSHT). Local products are mainly redwares with red slips and a light grey fabric. Gallic (DPS) imports are rare, consisting of single sherds of Rigoir 1A, Rigoir 3B and Rigoir 6C, all dated to the 5th and 6th centuries (Rigoir 1998, 101–7). The African imports (ARSW) (Hayes 58A, Hayes 59, Hayes 59A, Hayes 59B, Hayes 61, Hayes 61, Hayes 76, Hayes 91, among others) are frequently found in the excavations of the monastery and within the city of Braga. These vessels date from the late 4th to late 6th centuries (more than two hundred specimens). Specimens of Late Roman C are less common, though a few examples have been found of Hayes 3 and Hayes 8, which were made between the 5th and 6th centuries (less than fifty sherds). Finally, the Hispanic (TSHT) vessels, which are commonly recovered in the archaeological interventions in Braga and the São Martinho de Dume (in the Palol 1, Palol 2, Palol 3, Palol 4, Palol 8, Palol 9/11, Ritt. 8 or Drag. 37T, among others) are present in small quantities. These all date from the late 4th to late 6th centuries.

Local copies of imported ceramics were sometimes made, usually characterised by a red slip or grey colour (they are known as Late Grey Wares). The locally made red slip wares have a homogenous paste with small inclusions, are wheel-thrown and are mostly fired in an oxidizing atmosphere. The inner and outer surfaces are smoothed and covered by red slips of different shades. These seem to be imitating some imported red slip wares and are found in contexts of late 4th or early 5th-century date.

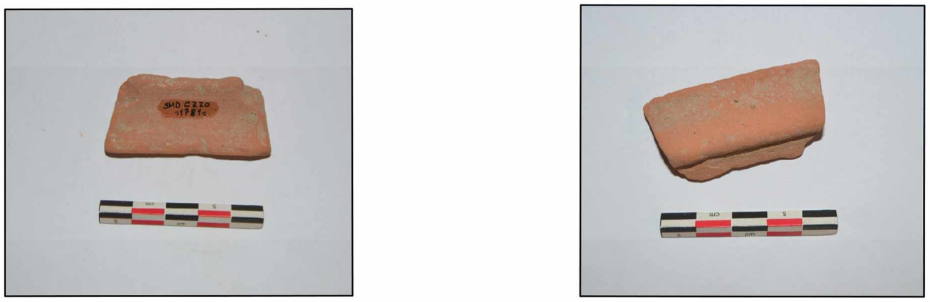
Late Grey Ware objects also have homogeneous fabrics and very small inclusions. Vessels produced in this ware are wheel-thrown with smoothed surfaces, and were fired in a reduced kiln atmosphere, giving them a black or dark grey colour. Vessel forms are similar to the red slip wares, with imitations of African Hispanic and Gallic Late Antique forms. These products date to the late 4th-7th centuries.

Finewares were outnumbered by a large assemblage of 5th-7th century coarsewares. Coarseware fabrics are less homogeneous and the inclusions – mica, quartz and feldspar – are quite variable in size. Although the majority were wheel-thrown, some were hand built having very irregular bases and rough walls. They were fired in a reducing atmosphere. The forms are simple and can be identified as cooking pots, bowls, plates and jugs. At São Martinho de Dume most of the Late Antique material is associated with the construction levels of the Basilica and monastery in the 5th and 7th centuries and include imports and local products.

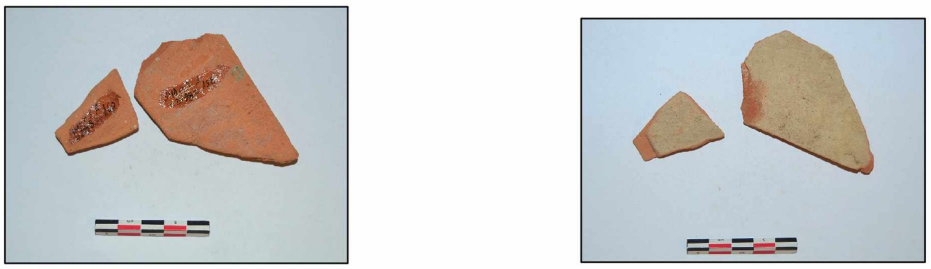
The presence of Late Antique pottery in the thermal baths area facilitated the dating of the collapse of these structures. Local products, together with African C and D wares and some amphorae sherds from Tunisia, dating from the 4th-6th centuries, were found on the site (Fig. 2.1). Similarly, there are several examples of Late Roman C (Hayes form 3), dated between AD 400–580 (Fig. 2.2), and amphorae (Fig. 2.3). Imported Hispanic wares (TSHT) also occur. These were occasionally reused to produce circular objects, whose function will be discussed below (Fig. 2.4). The locally made red slip wares match the African ARSW D imitations, such as the type Hayes 61B dishes, which date between AD 400–450 (Fig. 3.1).



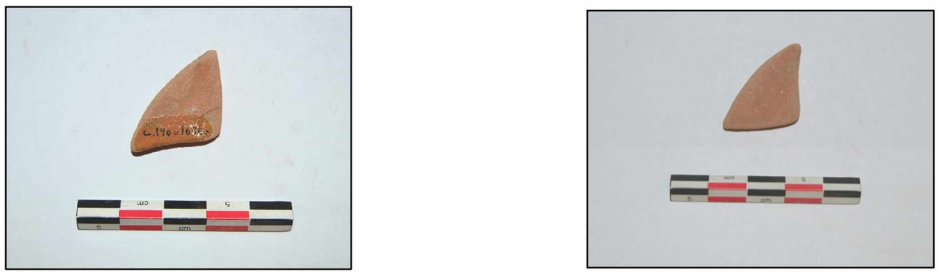
1. Tunisian Amphora



2. Hayes 3 (Late Roman C)



3. Amphora from Focea (Late Roman C)



4. Sherd from Hispania (TSHT)

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Figure 2. Examples of imported pottery from São Martinho de Dume. (Image: Authors).



1. Hayes 61B (ARSW D Imitation)



2. Rigoir 22 (Gallic Imitation)



3. Jug (Common Late Grey Ware)



4. Pot (Common Late Grey Ware)



5. Bowl (Common Late Grey Ware)

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Figure 3. Locally produced imitations of imported wares from São Martinho de Dume. (Image: Authors).

Some Late Grey Ware products were an attempt to reproduce Gallic Rigoir 22 objects, which were manufactured throughout the 5th century (Fig. 3.2). Late Grey Ware is represented in a narrow range of forms, occurring as jugs, pots and bowls, dated to the 5th-6th centuries (Fig. 3.3). Several examples of pots with rounded thickened rims were also found, having concave necks and globular bodies (Fig. 3.4), as well as several bowls with rounded rims and hemispherical bodies (Fig. 3.5).

Early medieval pottery (8th-11th centuries)

The largest quantity of pottery from the excavations is of early medieval date. The majority was associated with the abandonment phase of the monastic site, although it was scattered throughout the stratigraphic sequence. The vessels seem to have been made mostly using a slow potter's wheel. These were fired in kilns or open fires, within a reducing atmosphere. It is important to note that there was no imported pottery from this phase.

A limited range of forms are present, with closed shapes dominating the assemblage. These objects likely fulfilled a range of functions (cooking and food preparation, lighting, food consumption, among others), probably being supplemented by serving vessels in other materials. Difficulties in acquiring ceramic vessels can be inferred from the repair of a number of vessels with staples. Two holes were carefully drilled on both sherds and the fracture filled with clay, before being fastened with vegetal fibres.

The most frequent shapes are jugs with narrow, tall necks, beveled rims and cooking pots with globular bodies with one or two handles connecting the rim to the body (Fig. 4.1). Medium sized pots are the second most common shape and are morphologically similar to Late Grey Ware vessels, suggesting some continuity from the Late Antique period. Rim forms are more varied from the 6th century onwards with thickened, rounded and beveled rims with outer or inner flanges occurring (Fig. 4.2). Additionally, a large number of circular disks were produced by reusing broken pot sherds. Potential uses for these include gaming pieces and lids for narrow necked vessels. Larger examples may have been used as lids for cooking pots, jars and other vessels (Fig. 4.3). Trefoil mouth jugs were also recognised with straight necks, globular bodies and handles connecting body to rim (Fig. 4.4). Metal production is evident through the large quantity of crucibles recovered, some of which contain melted metal residues. These vessels have ovoid bodies, concave bases and possible trefoil rims which would have facilitated pouring (Fig. 4.5).

Circular lids with beveled rims and a central knob as a handle were also recovered. These lids, which vary in diameter, would have been suited to covering both small and midsize vessels (Fig. 4.6). The Plates are flared in shape with a rounded rim presumably to accommodate a lid; these were found in variable diameters (Fig. 3.7; 4.10). Bowls occur in two different shapes, with flared or hemispheric bodies. Rims are straight, rounded or beveled inside (Fig. 4.8). The cooking pots have flared necks, thickened rims, slightly curvy bodies and flat bases. These have two handles with rectangular sections (Fig. 4.9). An unusual object with a grey fabric was dated to this phase. It may be a small mould. It was found close to the crucibles, but did not contain any melted metal residue. (Fig. 4.11).

Various forms of decoration were used in the early medieval period, including impressed dots produced with a comb, applied clay, incised wavy lines, crosses, linear incisions and moulding.

Conclusion

This study highlights the importance of the excavations at São Martinho de Dume for understanding the development of Braga's hinterland from the late Roman to early medieval periods. The pottery confirms that this site was continually occupied throughout this period.

The presence of imported pottery in the Late Antique period is demonstrative of trading links with other parts of the Iberian peninsula. The African pottery may have arrived indirectly from southern territories. The imitation of some of these shapes indicates that these were desired objects and probably difficult to acquire, leading to local reproduction. Imported ceramics and their imitations have also been found within the city of Braga itself, for example at the theatre. The proliferation of imitations seems to be the result of the inability of trade to meet the local demand. The problematic political, social and economic circumstances of this period may have restricted the trade flows of these products, resulting in local imitations.

The amount of early medieval pottery found in São Martinho de Dume has significantly increased our understanding of the types of pottery being manufactured and consumed in this period. These ceramics present little formal variety and are mainly cooking pots or jars, probably used in the preparation and serving of food and drink. Our knowledge of such material is, to date, very limited as assemblages from urban centres are typically very fragmented. The early medieval vessels found in São Martinho de Dume are related to the last moments of this site as a monastery, when the episcopal seat was transferred to Mondoñeno, triggering the abandonment of the site.



Figure 4. Early medieval pottery from São Martinho de Dume. (Image: Authors).

Acknowledgments

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Résumé

L'objectif principal de cette étude est d'analyser les productions céramiques, aussi bien importées que locales, qui ont été documentées dans les phases d'occupation tardo-antiques et alto-mediévales individualisées dans les différentes campagnes de fouilles réalisées à São Martinho de Dume.

Après avoir conclu la caractérisation des productions recueillies dans cette zone archéologique, nous effectuerons une analyse comparative avec les céramiques, de même chronologie, déjà identifiées dans la ville de Braga.

Zusammenfassung

Das Hauptziel der vorliegende Studie ist es, sowohl die importierte als auch die lokale Keramik-produktionen aus den späten Stadien der römischen Besetzung und hochmillteralterlichen Phase, die in den verschiedenen Grabungskampagnen in São Martinho de Dume identifiziert wurden, zu analysieren.

Nach der Einstufung der Produktionen die in dieser archäologischen Stätte gefunden wurden, begann eine vergleichende Analyse mit der Keramik, der gleichen Chronologie, die bereits in Braga identifiziert wurden.