



# CERAMICS AS A STORY:

## WHAT THEY TELL US ABOUT MISSION SITES



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### ABSTRACT

Ceramic typologies have been prominent in North American archaeological research since the inception of the field. The various types of ceramics can give archaeologists insight into diet, social practices, religious ceremonies, and a wealth of knowledge about the locations in which they were found in. Ceramics found at Spanish mission sites in La Florida can tell us of the native tribes that made their homes here—such as the Apalachee—their eventual assimilation into Spanish culture, and of Spanish culture itself and how it was counter-influenced by the local population.

During the summer of 2022, Dr. Tanya Peres of Florida State University led a field school at the Bryan site (8LE6256) for the purpose of locating the lost mission of San Antonio de Bacuqua—home to the Apalachee Revolt of 1647. Over the course of my research in Dr. Peres' Archaeology Lab where we rough sorted the material that was excavated, we discovered a multitude of potsherds ranging from olive jar, majolica, Leon-Jefferson clay earthenware, and complicated stamped pieces.

My research will discuss the three main ceramic types that are most likely to be found at mission sites in Florida and their uses during the seventeenth century as well as the specific ceramic types found at the Bryan site and what they can further tell us about the Apalachee and Spanish peoples. This analysis will utilize pre-existing databases to determine type, potential dates, and the functionality to aid in discovering the vessel form and what it was used for.

### METHODS

- Rough sorting through field specimen bags that included a variety of artifacts; ceramics, beads, burnt clay, charcoal, wattle and daub remnants, etc. from the Bryan site
- Further sorting all material that was found by cataloguing them based on temper, weight, type of artifact, color, and what level of the excavation it was found in
- Analyzing ceramic materials after cataloguing and comparing them to other ceramics found from different mission sites to aid in establishing provenance
- Comparing and contrasting different vessel forms from the Apalachee as well as the Spanish that were occupying La Florida between the late sixteenth century to the eighteenth century



Figure 1. Plain ceramic, body piece sand tempered, c. 1550-1750



Figure 2. Olive jar ceramic, body piece c. 1550-1750



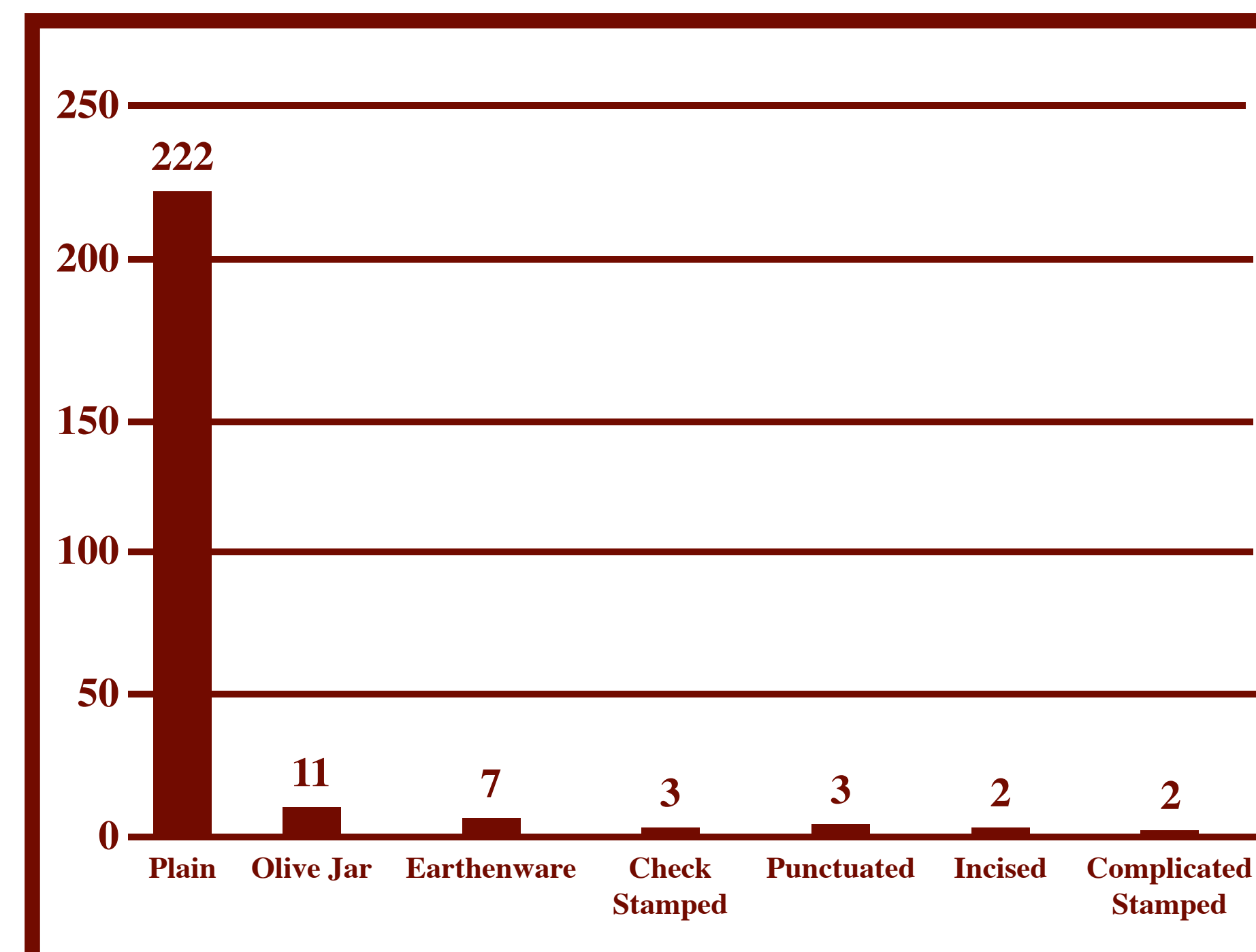
Figure 3. Complicated stamped ceramic, body piece, grog tempered, c. 1550-1750



Figure 4. Check stamped ceramic, body piece, grit tempered, c. 1550-1750

### RESULTS

- After analyzing the ceramics from the 2022 Bryan site field school, we see that three main vessel types were being used (Marrinan and Peres 2021).
- The plain vessel type would have been used for storage, cooking, and shipments of foodstuffs and goods to other mission sites.
- Olive jar is the second most prevalent ceramic in the assemblage. Olive jar would have been used for storage as well. Unlike the plain ceramics, olive jar was likely shipped from mainland Spain to mission sites across La Florida (King 1974).
- The check stamped ceramic would have similar uses to the plain and olive jar. A cooking vessel lightly decorated, a vessel used for storage, or possibly a vessel constructed by the Apalachee for the sole purpose of trading amongst other mission sites.



### DISCUSSION

- From the data collected so far, we can determine that the majority of ceramics found at various mission sites throughout Florida are direct products of the Apalachee people, with hints at Spanish influence scattered throughout. For Spanish typed pottery that was unearthed, the counterinfluence of the Apalachee is prevalent in different stamping patterns, firing techniques, and the temper of the ceramic itself.
- In relation to the Bryan Site and the possible lost mission of San Antonio de Bacuqua, the functionality speaks to a type of plain ceramic that was being used, most notably for the purpose of cooking, day to day use, or storage – all of which would increase the odds of this being the lost mission site. While pottery made by the Apalachee was common throughout their settlements, findings of this level speak to the production of this pottery instead of common day to day use that would be most prevalent and focused on a central hub.
- A tentative date range of the early seventeenth century on to the mid-eighteenth century could be narrowed down further after a continuation on temporal analysis and comparing to different types found from this period. What we have currently that the ceramic types can tell us speaks to a rich history in our own backyard, one worth further excavation and discovery.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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