

TRACING THE BASQUE PRESENCE IN EASTERN CANADA DURING 16th AND 17th CENTURIES THROUGH POTTERY REMAINS: THE EXAMPLE OF THE LEAD GLAZED POTTERY PRODUCED IN BILBO

Sergio Escribano Ruiz ¹, Jaume Buxeda i Garrigós ², Marisol Madrid i Fernández ², Julio Nuñez Marcén ¹, Agustín Azkarate Garai-Olaun ¹

¹ Universidad del País Vasco – Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea (UPV-EHU), (sergio.escribano@ehu.es, julio.nunez@ehu.es, agustin.azkarate@ehu.es)
² Cultura Material i Arqueometria UB (ARQUB, GRA CPE), Universitat de Barcelona, ((buxeda@ub.edu, mmadrid@ub.edu)



Tecnolonial Impacto tecnológico en el Nuevo Mundo colonial
Aculturación en arqueología y arqueometría cerámica
Impacte tecnològic en el Nou Món Colonial
Aculturació en arqueologia i arqueometria ceràmica
Eragin teknologikoa Mundu Berri Kolonialean
Akulturazioa zeramikaren arqueologia eta arqueometria
Technological impact in the colonial New World
Acculturation in pottery archaeology and archaeometry

INTRODUCTION

Circa 1530, Basque whalers arrived to the eastern coasts of Québec, Labrador, and Newfoundland, establishing seasonal settlements. This presence lasted until the end of the 16th century, even if, in some cases, new evidence suggests that they could have come back again.

The study of this Basque presence in the Strait of Belle Isle was especially developed in the 1970s by S. Huxley, and, during the 1980s, circa 12 whaler sites were identified on the southern coast of Labrador. Two of them, Red Bay and Chateau Bay, were extensively excavated, providing evidence for the presence of Basque pottery, some of them possibly produced at Bilbo.



EH10 - THE KAOLINITIC POTTERY FROM BILBO

Produced at Miribilla area (Bilbo), according to several sources: written documents (1648), toponyms (*La taberna de los Olleros –the potter's tavern-*), ethnographic evidence (Ollerías, Legutiano), and archaeological remains (trivets). However, no workshops have been identified so far.

Production seems to be attested from the beginning of the 16th century to, at least, the 18th century.

This pottery seems to have had an intensive regional distribution in the area of Biscay (Bilbo, Lekeitio, Durango, Orduña, Gerrickaitz, Balmaseda, etc).

Moreover, it is possible that this pottery was distributed in the areas of Basque presence, like Petit Mécatina (Québec). In that sense, written documents indicate the existence of pottery providers from Bilbo that were serving the ships involved in New World expeditions, at which Biscayan sailors were also usually enrolled.



ARCHAEOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS

From an archaeological point of view this production can be described as follows:

PASTE

Hard and compact, fine grained and rough to the touch.
Color: mostly white although yellowish and pinkish shades can be observed.
Main Inclusions: abundance of possible small size mica, transparent quartz, and iron aggregates.

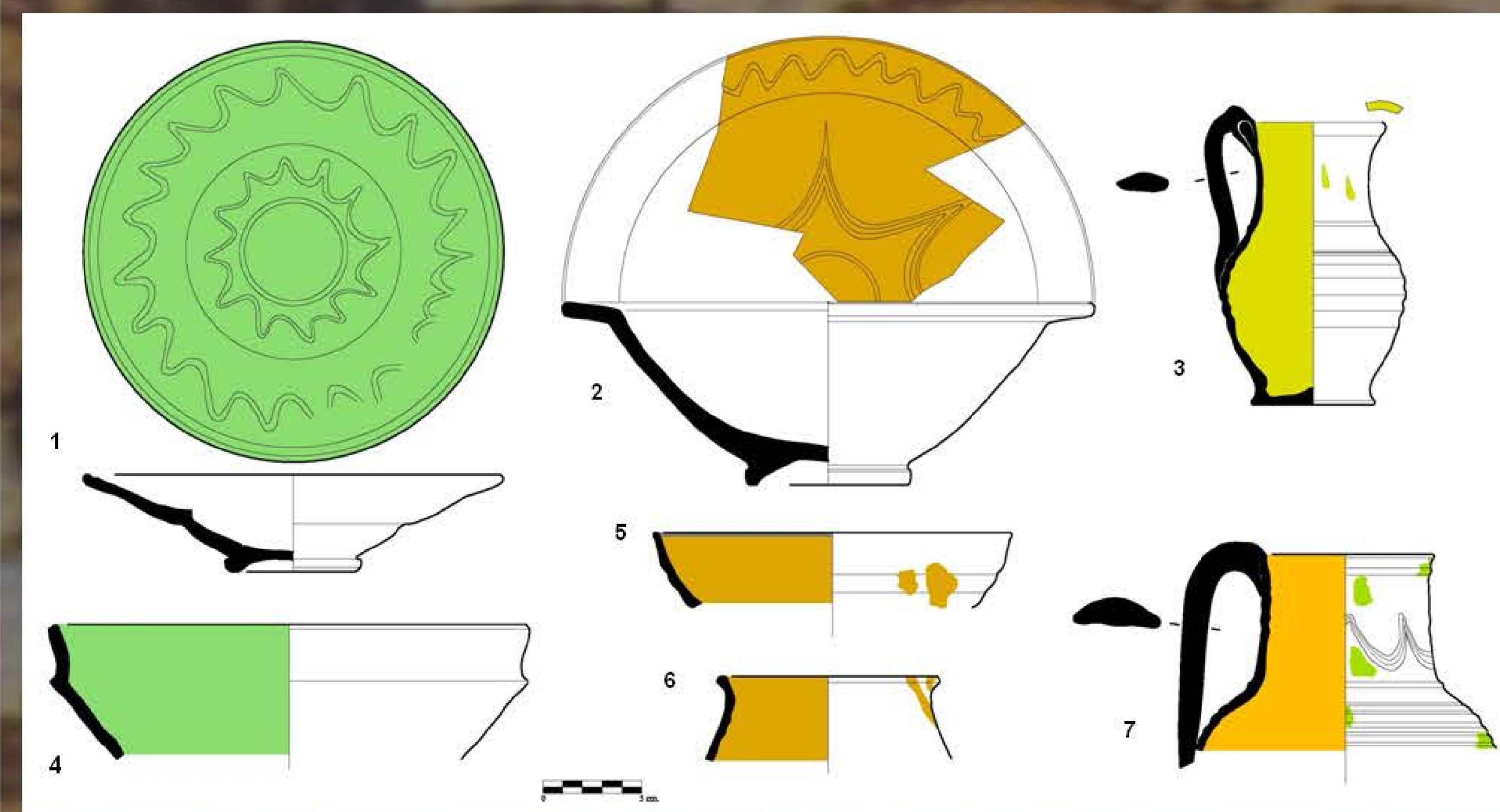


GLAZE

Application: mainly at the internal side of the vases.
Shades: green, honey or halfway between them.
Darker shades are achieved by producing a thicker layer of glaze, usually by scratching the decoration design before the biscuit of the paste.

USUAL SHAPES

Liquids service. Pitchers: *jarro* (3), *cántaro* (7). Bottles (*redoma*).
Food service. Plate (1), dish (2), bowl (4), *escudilla* (5).
Preserving jars. *Orza* (6), *tinaja*.
Multifunction. *Lebrillo*.

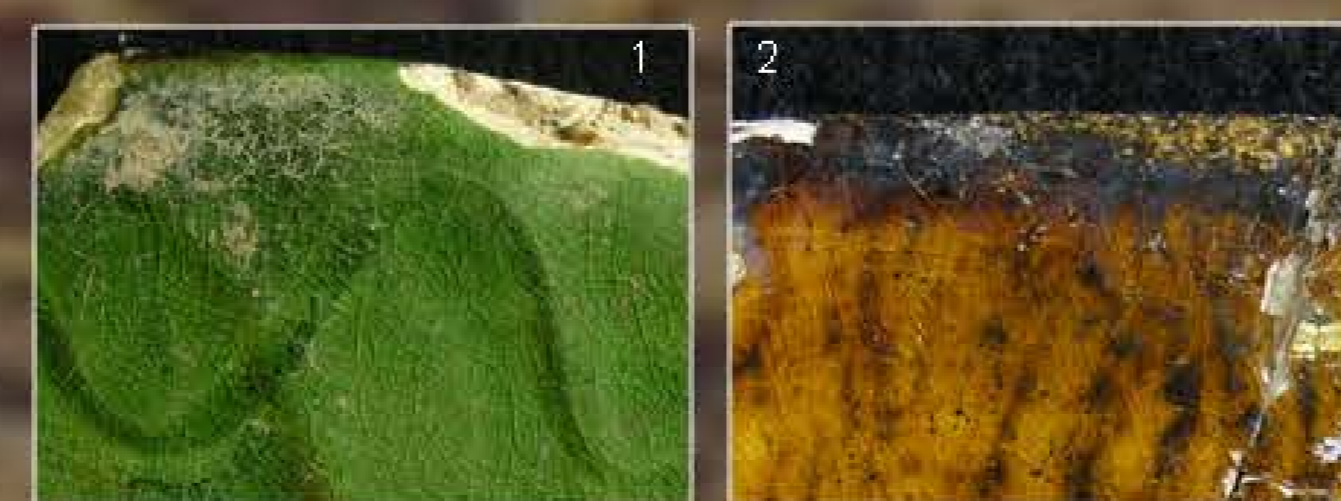


DECORATION

There are two different decoration systems that can be present together in the same pot:

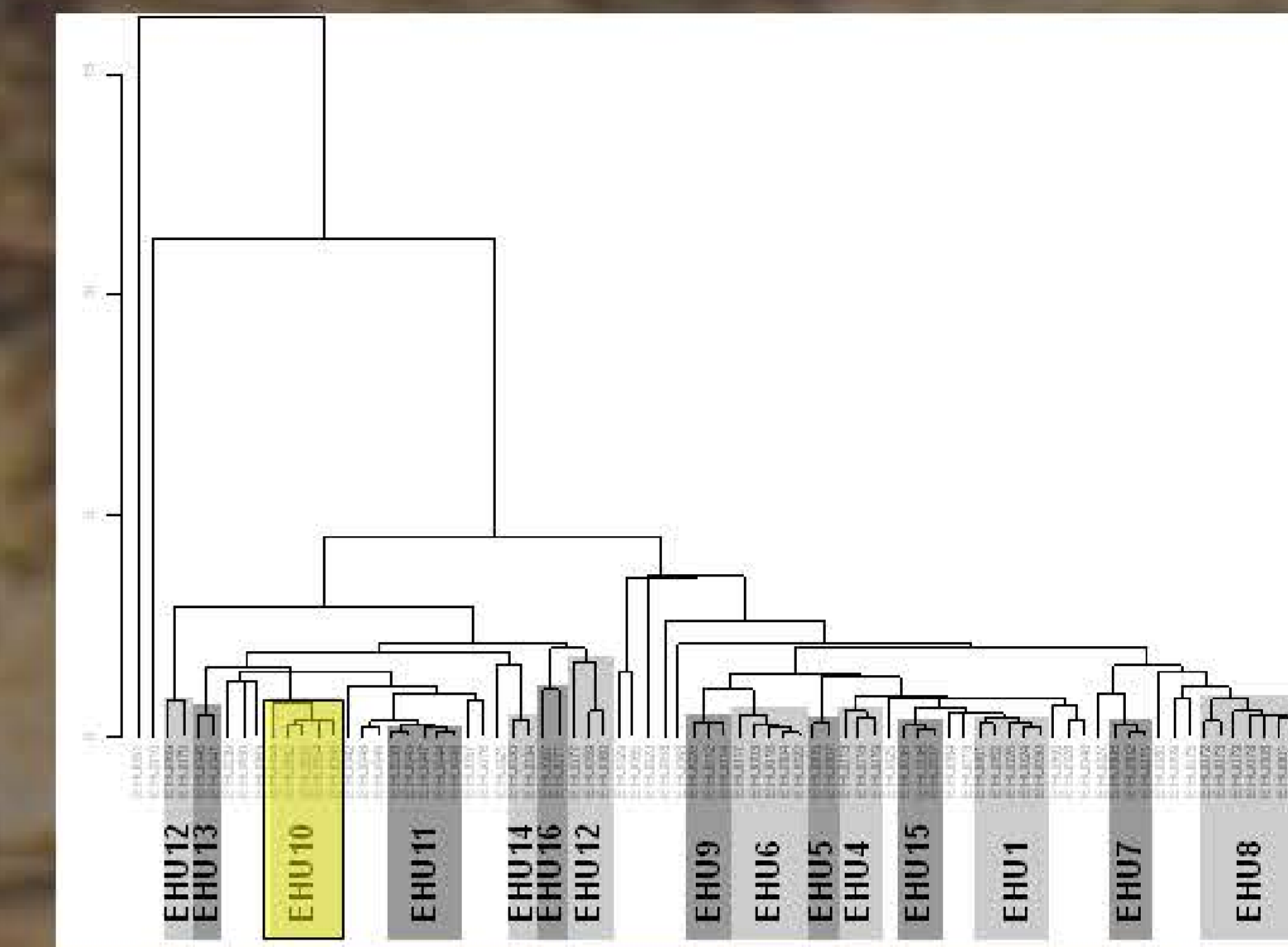
- **Incision:** one (1) or three (3) reiterative curvilinear lines. It is mainly found on open vessels (dishes and plates) although sometimes it can also be found in closed vessels (jugs and *cántaros*). These lines are by scratching the decoration design before the biscuit of the paste, resulting in a thicker layer of colored glaze (4).

- Other color effects possibly achieved by accumulation of glaze (2).

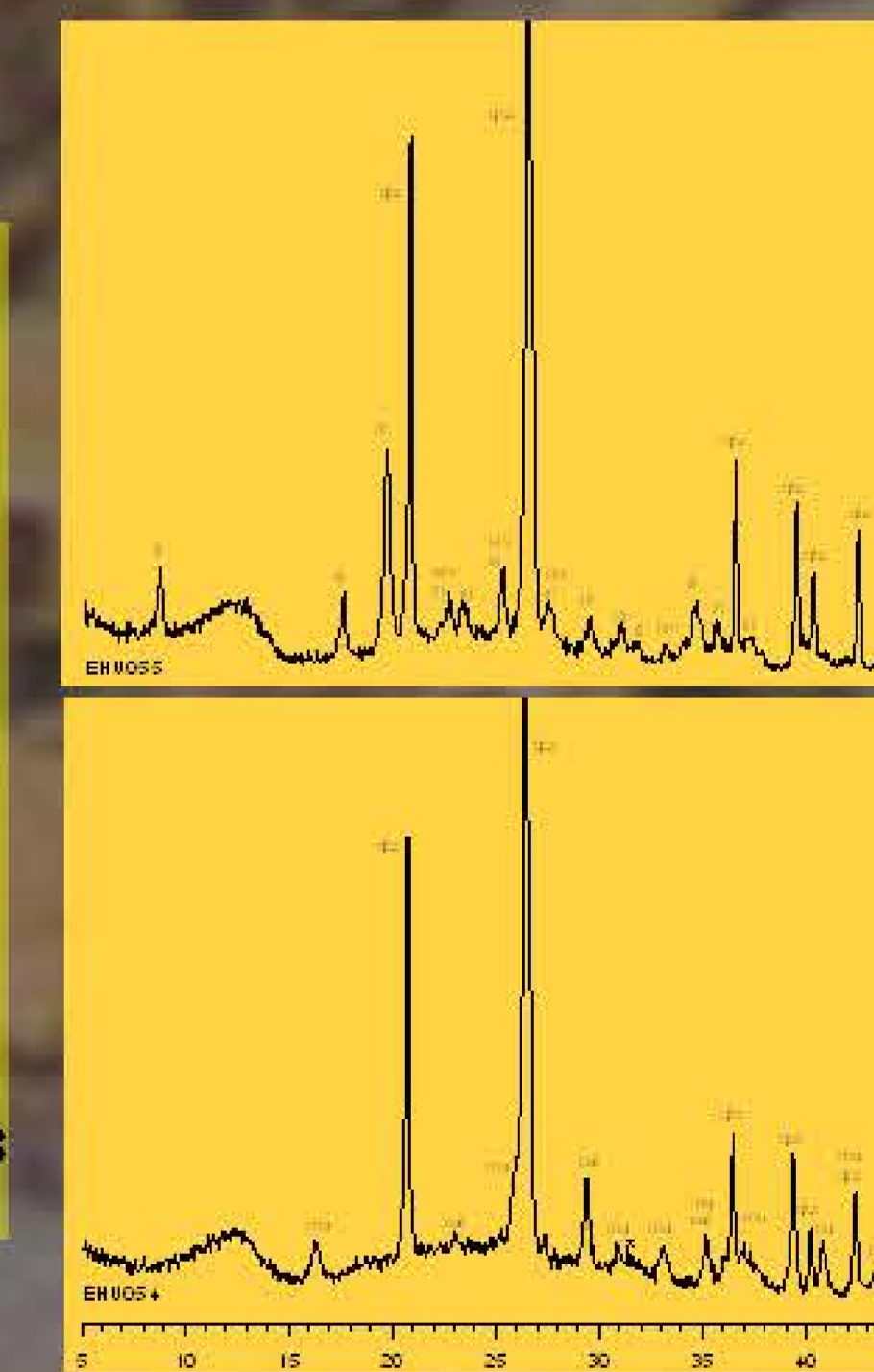
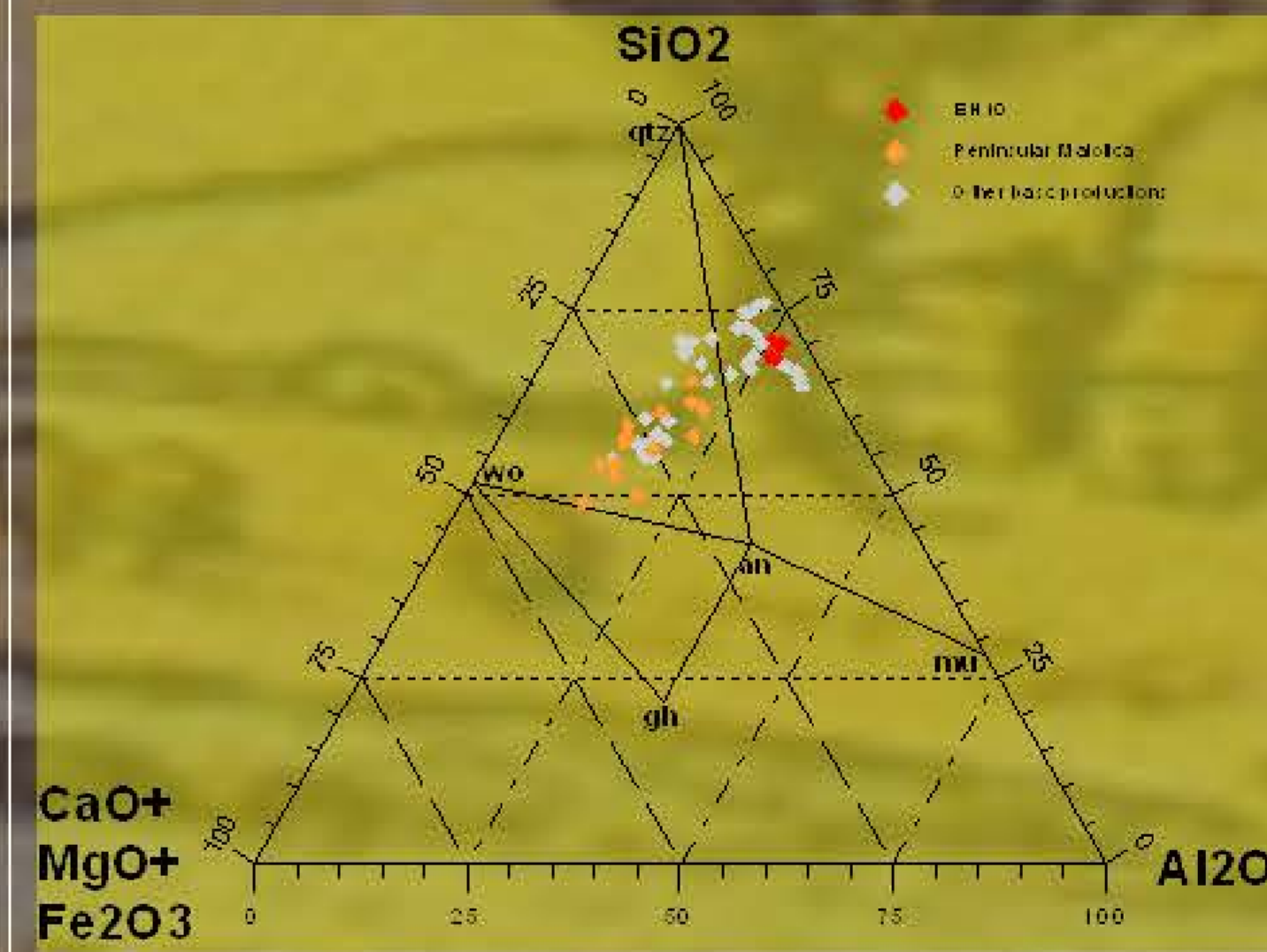


ARCHAEOMETRIC CHARACTERISTICS

EH10 is chemically clearly different from other productions identified to date in the Basque Country. Technologically, it is made out of low calcareous kaolinitic clays from the Bilbo area, most probably mixed with illitic ones in order to improve workability. Equivalent firing temperatures are estimated in a wide range from below 950 °C to 1050 °C.



TECHNOLOGY



FINAL REMARKS

The development of TECNOLONIAL research project has enabled, for the first time, the identification of several productions in the Basque Country, among them EH10. The archaeological characteristics of this production are similar to several sherds recovered at Petit Mécatina as well as other sites from Newfoundland, Québec, Labrador, and Ottawa. A closer archaeological study of the pottery remains of these sites, together with its archaeometric characterization will be the basis for a better identification of the possible distribution of Basque pottery in Canada.

This research framework might also enable to deepen the cultural processes undergone by the local societies after the contact with the Europeans by using the evidence provided by pottery technology.



These goals may be easier to fulfill with the collaboration of the Canadian archaeological community for the identification and finding of the pottery productions from Basque origin. Because of that I decided to end this poster asking you the question that follows:

HAVE YOU SEEN THIS PRODUCTION BEFORE ?

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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