

Baetican olive-oil trade under the Late Empire: new data on the production of Late Roman amphorae (Dressel 23) in the lower Genil valley

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From the Julio-Claudian era until around the third quarter of the 3rd c. A.D., the amphorae that H. Dressel referred to as the Dressel 20 type in his table of amphorae discovered at the *Castra Praetoria* and, to a lesser extent, at Monte Testaccio, was used to transport olive oil from *Hispania Baetica* to Rome and the NW provinces of the empire. The artificial mound of Testaccio, just over 40 m high and covering an area of 2.2 ha,¹ is a huge dump composed mainly of Dr. 20 amphorae, standing near the Emporium on the left bank of the Tiber. As has been acknowledged, its abandonment, a direct consequence of the construction of the Aurelian Walls² from 271 onwards, did not signal the end of olive-oil imports from *Baetica*.³ In a similar way, the end of Dr. 20 production, in c.260-270, does not point to the end of oil-amphora production in that province and, more precisely, in the Guadalquivir basin where this form originates. As M. Beltrán Lloris demonstrated,⁴ over the course of the last quarter of the 3rd c. a smaller type, known as Dr. 23, progressively replaced the Dr. 20, with the result that Baetican olive oil continued to circulate in the Roman West at least until the middle of the 5th c.,⁵ although the amount of produce imported to Rome was much less than at the height of production of Dr. 20. Nonetheless, one has noted a number of Dr. 23 amphorae within the actual structure of buildings constructed between the start of the 4th and start of the 5th c., including the Circus of Maxentius, the Mausoleum of Helena and even the Chapel of Santa Maura.⁶ In *Germania*, Baetican olive oil maintained a significant market share throughout the 4th c.; the best illustration is the church of St Gereon (Cologne), where somewhere between 400 and 1200 amphorae are believed to have been used in its construction.⁷ During the first half of the 5th c. the same type also abounds in the W Mediterranean, especially in the W part of *Narbonensis*⁸ and Catalonia.⁹

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- 1 E. Rodríguez Almeida, *El Monte Testaccio: ambiente, storia, materiali* (Rome 1984) 109.
 - 2 A. Aguilera Martín, *El Monte Testaccio y la llanura subaventina. Topografía extra portam Trigeminam* (Rome 2002) 218.
 - 3 J. Remesal Rodríguez, *La Bética en el concierto del Imperio romano* (Madrid 2011) 157.
 - 4 M. Beltrán Lloris, *Las ánforas romanas en España* (Zaragoza 1970) 514.
 - 5 D. Bernal Casasola and M. Bonifay, "Importaciones y consumo alimenticio en las ciudades tardorromanas del Mediterráneo nor-occidental (ss. VI-VIII d.C.): la aportación de las ánforas," in A. García (ed.), *Espacios urbanos en el Occidente mediterráneo* (Toledo 2010) 107.
 - 6 L. Lancaster, *Concrete vaulted construction in Imperial Rome* (Cambridge 2005) 69, 77 and 79.
 - 7 H. González Cesteros, "La llegada de ánforas hispanas a Germania durante los últimos siglos de la dominación romana. Una cuestión para el futuro," *Cuad. Prehist. Arq. Univ. Autónoma de Madrid* 36 (2010) 111.
 - 8 Y. Solier, *La basilique paléo-chrétienne du Clos de la Lombarde à Narbonne* (RANarb Suppl. 16, 1991); P. Abauzit, "Lupatus et alii, fabricants d'amphores tardives," *Archéologie en Languedoc* 23 (1999); G. Duperron, *Arles et Lyon, ports fluviaux de l'Empire romain: le commerce sur l'axe rhodanien du Ier s. av. J.-C. au VIIe s. ap. J.-C.* (Montpellier, forthcoming). The E part of *Narbonensis* was further supplied with olive oil from N Africa and the East through the port of *Massalia*, which played an important rôle in the redistribution of those products: see M. Bonifay, M.-B. Carre and Y. Rigoir, *Fouilles à Marseille. Les mobiliers (Ier-VIIe s. ap. J.-C.)* (Aix-en-Provence 1998) 371.
 - 9 P. Berni Millet, *Las ánforas de aceite de la Bética y su presencia en la Cataluña romana* (Barcelona 1998); J. A. Remolà Vallardú, *Las ánforas tardo-antiguas en Tarraco (Hispania Tarraconensis)*