



Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory

Mr. Collin Boustead
PO Box 298
HOWARD SPRINGS
NT 0835

Dear Mr. Boustead,

I am writing regarding the earthenware jar found at Shoal Bay, which you deposited with MAGNT for identification last year. As I informed you in our recent phone conversation I have not been able to positively identify its origins to date, although both Australian and Indonesian peers whom I have questioned are in consensus that it appears to be of southern European (Portugese or Spanish) origins.

Nevertheless I thought you might be interested to know that, after speaking to you, I mentioned your jar in a conversation with David Price from Wollongong University who specialises in thermoluminescence (ThL) authenticity dating of early ceramics. He told me that last year a similar shaped vessel, broken at the neck, was found in a fisherman's net off the coast of Cape Howe on the NSW/Victorian borders.

David tested this ceramic and the results gave an age at plus/minus 450 yrs BP - ie about 16th century. He has never published these results as he was uncertain of their accuracy for this particular object and their controversial potential. As you may be aware there has been some debate now for years regarding the proposition that the Portugese circumnavigated Australia at a very early date before the arrival of either the Dutch or English!

In connection to this it would probably be very interesting to get your jar ThL dated by Wollongong University. This would require four small sample holes drilled in the bottom of the vessel and the test cost is \$200 with a nominal charge of only \$50 if the results are unconvulsive. Unfortunately I realize that this is not a cheap matter to consider for results that may not always necessarily be conclusive.

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