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Post-medieval pottery between (its) borders

edited by

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Preface

The popularity of post-medieval archaeology has not yet reached a level characterised by a regular stream of publications on this particular period. Checking the current offer of publishers that print archaeological literature, one would likely find only a handful of titles on the Early Modern period at the end of the list. Moreover, these works mostly focus on a relatively narrow range of topics or process just a single find assemblage. Only a few comprehensive studies on post-medieval archaeology have been published for individual countries in Europe, though the gaps are at least partially filled by journals. The research tradition understandably does not stretch as far back here as in the case of antiquity and prehistory, and in many countries post-medieval archaeology has established itself as a distinct subject in the discipline only recently.

The situation is no different in the Czech Republic. The absence of regular meetings or conferences with a post-medieval subject and the lack of publications in this field forced us to search – first and foremost for ourselves – for a solution to this problem. It cannot be said that Early Modern archaeology has been ignored entirely in academic studies. Quite the contrary: we can state with satisfaction that the number of such works has mostly increased in recent years. And yet, very few scholars devote themselves intensively to this subject in the Czech Republic. Influenced by these circumstances, issues are addressed by the same circle of researchers, and questions and their answers recently seem to be stuck in the same old cycle without any possibility for fresher impulses.

Of course, communication and shared experience within the field, even among just a small group of scholars, is always beneficial and helpful in many respects. However, this country was missing any type of regularity in the form of meetings that would build on the better research structure of the 1980s and the years 2006 to 2014. Repeated efforts

by existing groups focused traditionally on medieval archaeology to expand into the post-medieval period unfortunately missed the mark.

This situation was the initial impulse for creating a common professional platform that could serve to address issues related to post-medieval archaeology in Bohemia. But for this type of activity to have any meaning, it was necessary to expand beyond the country's borders, as this was the only way to broaden horizons previously concentrated mainly on domestic matters and launch a stimulating discussion. The first attempt at an informal meeting (more accurately a workshop) confirmed that personal contacts and communication are in fact the right path towards reducing our current frustration over the possible stagnation in the development of post-medieval archaeology in this country.

We therefore wanted to primarily conceive the first official working meeting planned for the spring of 2018 in Prague as a workshop in the broader sense of the word. The unanticipated interest, especially from foreign scholars, subsequently led to a four-day conference entitled EUROPA POSTMEDIAEVALIS and the creation of the coveted platform with the aim of bringing together people in the field and discussing approaches to various issues in Early Modern archaeology in Europe.

The conference with a planned biyearly periodicity set the goal of searching for topics in post-medieval archaeology that reflect their current situation while simultaneously being of interest to a broader group of scholars. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that the central theme pursued by generations of scholars across Europe proved to be Early Modern ceramics, the large assemblages of which are for many of us the bread and butter of our daily lives – a delight and often a headache resulting from their further processing. The overall satisfaction of participants with the results of the first conference then inspired us to publish the individual articles and make them available in this way to the broader



professional community. A great deal of work went into the creation of the first EUROPA POSTMEDIAEVALIS anthology and this undoubtedly had an impact on the resulting form of the publication.

To our surprise, we were able to gather articles from literally all corners of Europe. Their subject in particular reflects the current status of research on Early Modern pottery in individual countries, and as we expected, many of them proved to have much in common. As the first year of the conference was entitled ‘Post-Medieval Pottery between (its) Borders’, efforts were made to use this name as a criteria in selecting the presented articles. Their choice was to follow currently addressed issues in the broadest possible area of Europe, and the conference divided the works into four areas and poster sections. For the most part, we decided to maintain this division to ensure that the resulting image of post-medieval pottery research was as diverse as possible.

As such, anthology articles come from the Czech Republic, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia and Switzerland. The borders of Europe are then crossed by a single, though no less interesting, article from the islands of Cape Verde. And yet, the borders that to a certain extent determined the direction of the first year of the conference were meant to be more than just geographical or political. Our goal was to concentrate on the field and research approaches as such, and in this sense borders were intended as possibilities for or, on the other hand, limits to knowledge, be it as part of interdisciplinary cooperation (the application of natural science analyses), in determining the age of pottery assemblages (elaborating dating intervals), in investigating distribution networks of identified pottery products (the regional or superregional scope of products), and other related issues. The lone diversion from this theme is a text on the subject of Early Modern fortifications in Bohemia.

The preparation of the anthology and individual articles, including intensive communication with domestic and foreign researchers, became an important impulse for us to expand the borders of our own our research activities. We hope that the articles presented in this anthology inspire further work, thought and discussion. Last but not least,

the articles serve as study material for those who come into contact with Early Modern material culture in their work.

In addition to editors, graphic artists and proof-readers, this anthology is also the work of professional reviewers, whose helpfulness, thorough reading and comments often had a major impact on the final appearance of the text. We should also mention the responsible approach of the majority of authors, as without their cooperation the publication of this conference anthology would have simply remained on the theoretical level.

We would also like to thank all those who from the very beginning supported our efforts to organise an international conference, especially our home institutions – the Institute of Archaeology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague, Czech Republic, and the Centre for Processing, Documentation and Recording of Archaeological Finds. Our gratitude also goes to all those who contributed to the preparation and the successful course of the conference. Finally, we would like to thank all of the archaeologists who placed their trust in us and attended the first year of the conference and those who believed that the conference anthology would see the light of day and that the efforts that went into its preparation would lead to the desired goal of its publication.

1 | Pottery Throughout Europe







Pottery Use and Social Inequality in Mid-18th Century Lisbon. An Initial Approach

Tânia Manuel Casimiro – José Pedro Henriques – Vanessa Filipe – Dário Neves

Abstract

On the morning of 1 November 1755, a large portion of Lisbon was destroyed in an earthquake followed by a tsunami and a fire that lasted for several days. Several contexts destroyed on that peculiar morning reveal what type of pottery was being used in mid-18th century households. This paper focuses on discoveries from three different sites in Lisbon reflecting three different social environments in which pottery was used in the most basic activities: a poor house located close to the city wall, a 'middle class' dwelling and a palace belonging to an important noble family, all of which were destroyed on that day, reveal what people were using on a daily basis.

🔑 *destruction context – Lisbon – social environments – consumption*

1. INTRODUCTION

Around 9:30 on the morning of 1 November 1755, almost the entire population of Lisbon was attending mass inside the city's churches when a huge earthquake shook the city, killing a large number of its citizens, a third of its population some say (PAICE 2008). Churches, palaces and houses fell to the ground on that particular day, and it took decades for the city to be rebuilt. What was a catastrophe at that time is today an extraordinary opportunity to learn about the daily lives of Lisbon inhabitants and their consumption habits.

This paper studies the ceramic collection associated with the excavation of three archaeological sites (**Fig. 1**) in Encosta de Santana (ES), Largo Duque de Cadaval (DC) and Praça D. Pedro IV, also known as Rossio (RO), and discusses their domestic ceramic uses and in what way can they reflect social inequalities, a subject often approached (BEAUDRY ET AL. 1991)

Although only ceramics are analysed in this paper, the collections of metal, glass, wood and bones are essential in the study of the daily lives of these populations. With the exception of DC, a palace built a few years after 1640, it is not possible to say when these domestic structures started to be used as homes, since, if no excavation was made below the ground at RO, in ES the construction was made over an agriculture area located close to the city walls and was thus a post-medieval, possibly an early 17th-century building (MURALHA ET AL. 2002, 245). However, all of them had the same fate and were destroyed on the same day. According to their location and cartographic documentation for Lisbon in the 17th and 18th century, as well as the material culture associated with the sites, it is possible to infer the social and economic base of the people living in those houses. While ES reveals what can be called a low-income family, the other two sites are associated with noble and possibly



culture found inside was very consistent, suggesting it belonged to the same house. The structures were well preserved on the level floor and while the yard, a private area with a direct exit to a main street and a water well, had a cobbled floor, the other two were covered with red floor tiles. One of these inner compartments seems to have been used as a kitchen. The typology of its construction with a well, a tank with the walls covered in tiles, and the material culture found inside, including a knife on the floor and a redware pot close to the well, used as a water container, suggests this use. Wells and cisterns are common features of 17th- and 18th-century kitchens, especially in wealthy homes (MARQUES/FERNANDES 2006). Although the stove area was not found¹ the cooking pots found in this area all had soot marks. While the other compartment has no especial feature that would help us recognize its use, the abundance of objects inside, some of them large storage vases *in situ*, may indicate its use as a pantry.

The DC excavation is the one we can relate to a specific family. This was one of the main palaces of the Duke of Cadaval, a noble title created in 1641 as a consequence of the Restauração, when the Portuguese monarch regained the throne from Spain after 60 years of the Iberian Union. This was one of the richest families in Lisbon. The architecture of this site suggests this wealth, since not only was this a huge building, it was also highly decorated (CASIMIRO/BARBOSA 2017). The number of tiles identified within the earthquake's rubble suggests that most of the walls were covered with this decorative solution not only on the ground level but on the first floor as well (CASIMIRO ET AL. 2018). On the other hand, columns and other architectural decorations also suggest a sumptuous environment. In the excavated area it was possible to recognize at least an outside area, once again with a cobbled floor, a main entrance or lobby that would give access to large stairs and other compartments with various functions. The ceramics presented in this paper were found inside one of the compartments with mid-18th century occupation. Although a large variety of objects were found inside, pottery

¹ The preservation of the site suggests it is still there, but the commercial nature of the excavation did not permit a further investigation.

is not among the most abundant, since tiles and metal objects surpass it.

There is documented evidence that a large number of the buildings affected on that morning were visited by servants and slaves, who recovered all that could be saved from the rich houses. This may have happened to this palace, since only very fragmented artefacts were found (SOUSA 1955; PAICE 2008, 166).

These three locations reveal three different types of inhabitants. In ES this house was occupied by lower class people. The material culture inside suggests this since many artefacts were found broken yet complete, only locally produced items were recovered, things with a low market value. As for the other two sites, the house in RO reveals great wealth with the number of imports used as tableware surpassing the amount of local ware, and DC was the house of one of the richest families in the kingdom.

3. DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION

Discussing the domestic uses of pots is not a simple task considering that most of them did not have one single use or that similar shapes were used for different functions. While the study of 18th-century pottery and its use seems to have been on the mind of archaeologists in Europe and even in North and South America for decades (DAWSON/KENT 2012; MILLER 1991; PEARCE 2000; CESSFORD ET AL. 2017), in Portugal it is still inexistent and, in fact, except for a few papers, there is no research on the topic (CASIMIRO 2011). In fact, the majority of post-medieval pottery research stop in late 17th century and archaeological contexts relating to domestic use are rarely studied.

The ceramics found at these three different sites suggest that pottery was in fact a constant presence in the life of 18th-century Lisbon inhabitants, who used it to cook, to drink and eat from, as well as in other activities. It is not possible in this paper to perform a specific analysis of each ceramic type and shape, so a decision was made to approach the collections in a more general way. **Table 1** presents the MNV for each site, although one has to bear in mind the numbers reflect some different site-spe-



	NMI		
	RO	ES	DC
Tin glaze ware	25	30	10
Redwares	36	68	22
Glazed wares	30	19	10
Porcelain	51	1	5
Stoneware	1		
Total	143	118	47

Table 1

cific formation. While RO is a context that was never disturbed after 1755 and ES seems to have suffered the same fate, DC may have in fact been disturbed and some objects recovered after the cataclysm. In this sense, although we believe that the amounts in RO and ES correspond to what was in use in those dwellings at the time, we are not sure for DC.

The majority of the artefacts found associated with these three production sites were produced locally, in Lisbon, using red clays. Varying from light red to dark brown in colour, the pots have a homogeneous fabric with small-medium quartz, lime and micaceous inclusions. The pots were all wheel-thrown. Most of the vessels have no surface treatment, although a few have a lead glaze, a mixture of sand and lead oxides covering the redware body, waterproofing their surface. Although some tableware, especially drinking cups, were made with this clay, the majority of these ceramics correspond to kitchen or storage ware. As for tableware the local production is essentially white tin glaze also produced in Lisbon, generally called faience. Their body was made with a soft, light, buff clay and the surface covered with a lead-tin glaze. In mid-18th century, these ceramics were essentially white or decorated with blue and purple (CASIMIRO 2013). The imports identified in these contexts are essentially Chinese porcelain with some occasional English or Dutch ware.

Kitchenware includes all objects used in the act of cooking food or in some related activity. After tableware, cooking pots and their lids are the second most frequent find in any of the three mentioned contexts, although in a higher amount in ES

(27%) and RO (25%), especially since these sites were not revisited after the catastrophic event. Portuguese 18th-century recipe books shed some light on what these cooking pots were used for. Stewing, boiling and frying are among the most recurrent actions. Different recipes may implicate a preparation of the pot prior to its use by letting it soak with water for a few days or just covering the walls with lard (CASIMIRO/GOMES, in press). Stewing and boiling pots (*panelas*) have flat bases and globular bodies with vertical or horizontal handles and semi-circular rims (Fig. 2). These could be glazed or unglazed. Through recipe books, it is possible to conclude that surface treatment was actually related to the type of food prepared inside a vessel. Frying pans (*frigideiras*) are hemispherical forms with a flat base, with or without handles (Fig. 3). Most of the food in 18th-century Lisbon was made inside ceramics cooking pots, since metal vessels, either from copper or iron, are rarely mentioned in documents.

In the RO excavation, fragments from three very distinct cooking pots were found and should be analysed carefully. Although specific studies, including archaeometric analysis, are being conducted on these pots, they have generally been assumed to be pots related to African populations (SIMÕES 2015; OLIVEIRA/BROCHADO 2016; Fig. 4). The type of house excavated in RO would have been occupied, based on the material culture and urban location, by a type of group that could in fact own African slaves, so this could actually be an indicator of different identities sharing the same domestic space.

Tableware is the most abundant type of pottery found in Lisbon households in this period used to individually eat and drink from. In RO, 47% of the total collection corresponds to plates and bowls, either porcelain or tin glazed, and in ES, 32% corresponds to tin glazed plates and bowls. Locally made objects were at the table of the people living in these houses, although in different amounts. While blue on white faience in ES made up the total amount of objects with plates (*pratos*) and bowls (*taças*) used for food consumption, in RO porcelain seems to have occupied the primary role. Portuguese faience was used at the daily table of Lisbon people at least since 1635/1640, although

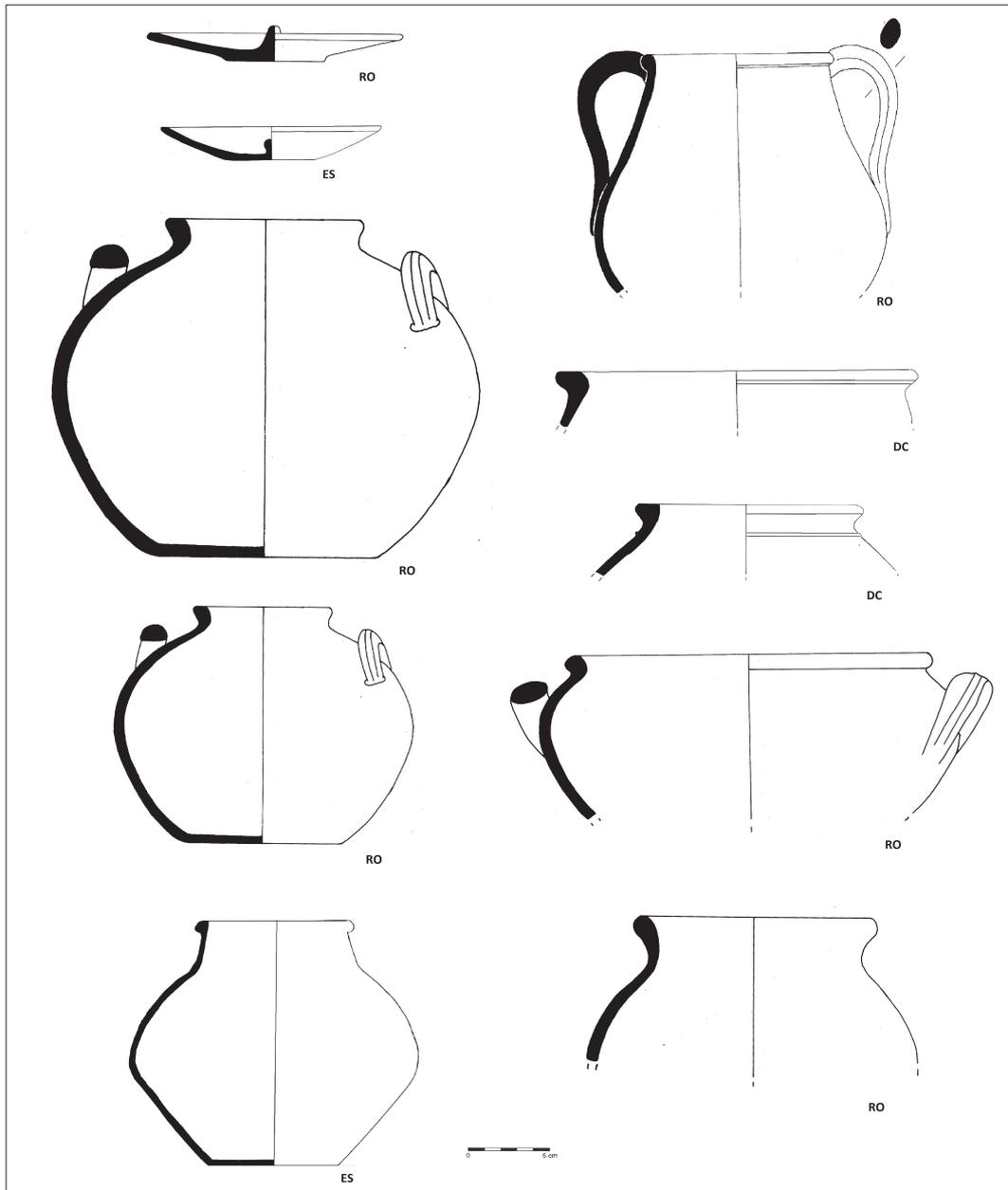


Fig. 2: Cooking pots (*panelas*) from the three sites.

we can trace the production of tin glaze ware in Lisbon at least to the first half of the 16th century. Initially, the forms produced followed Spanish production, though it rapidly started to reproduce the shapes and decorations of Chinese porcelain (CASIMIRO 2013). Though many types of objects were produced, plates and bowls are among the most frequent forms and were used mostly for consuming food (Fig. 5). A bowl found in ES was produced roughly 100 years earlier (CASIMIRO 2013, 358), which may indicate an object worth keeping.

While wine seems to have been consumed mostly from glass cups, water was drunk primarily from ceramic cups (*púcaros*). In fact, Portugal was internationally known for the quality of its cups, and they were widely exported to Europe and the New World (NEWSTEAD/CASIMIRO 2018). It is not possible to make a social distinction based on these particular cups since they were equally used by both rich and poor. A foreign visitor to King D. Sebastião was shocked when he saw the king drinking from one of these cups during a meal, surprised by the fact that the king was not drink-

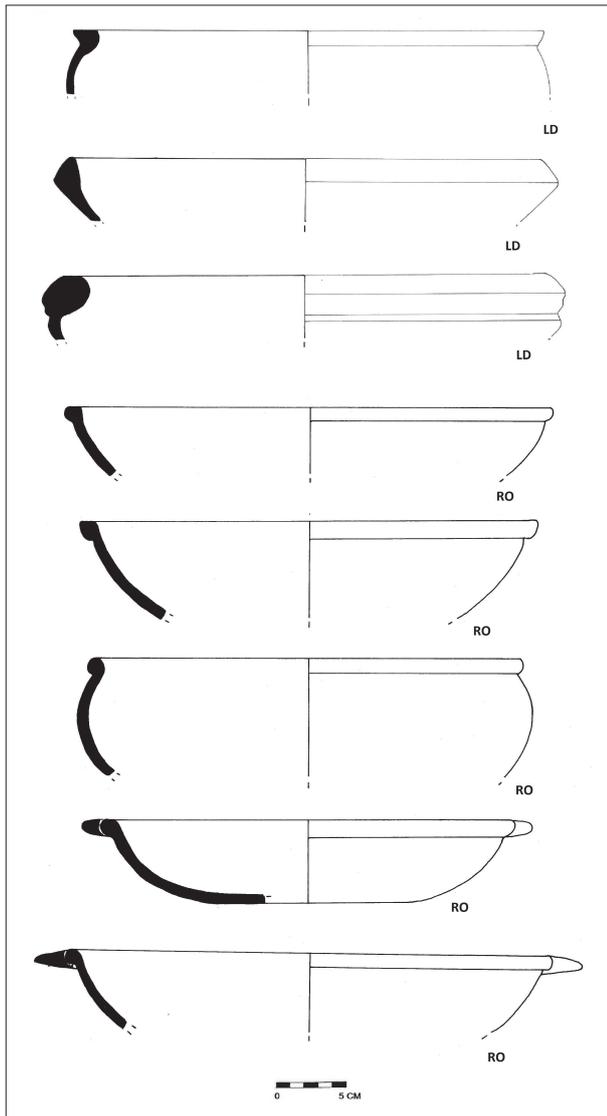


Fig. 3: Cooking pots (*frigideiras* and *tigelas de fogo*) from the three sites.

ing from a silver vessel (VASCONCELLOS 1921, 20). These could be plain or decorated with incised lines and flowers, which could in fact reveal differences in acquisition prices (Fig. 6).

As for imports, the aforementioned porcelain from China was on the top of the list in the mid-18th century. Porcelain imports into Lisbon started in the early 16th century after the first voyages to India, although they became abundant about a generation later. The desire for these products remained stable for more than 150 years, with a decrease in late 17th century possibly related to political and economic changes both in China and in Portugal. We would have to wait until the late

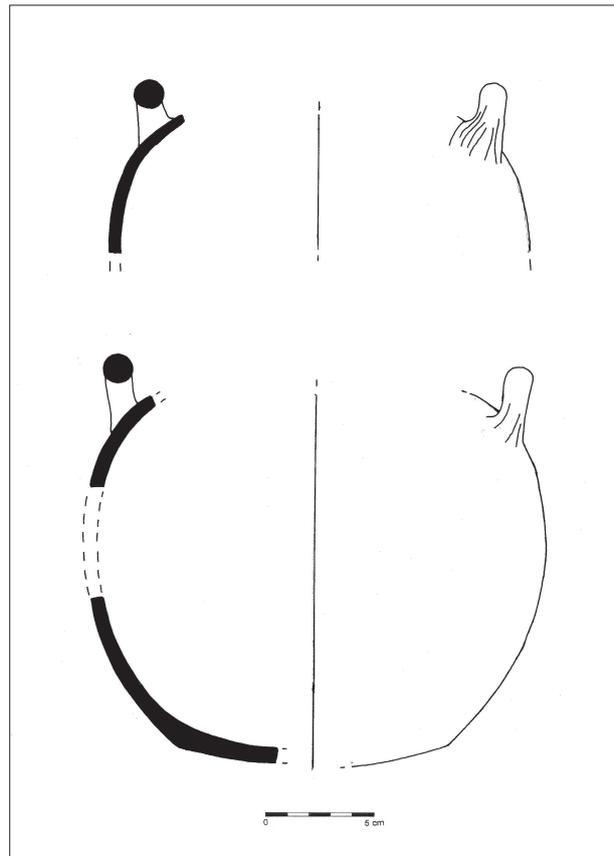


Fig. 4: Cooking pots usually related to African users.

17th century and the full establishment of the Qing dynasty to recover the trade and assist the constant growth in this type of ceramics in the archaeological record. Although six porcelain objects were recovered in the DC excavation and just one in ES, the RO house provided a large quantity, most of them found in the pantry compartment. In fact, porcelain represents 67% of all tableware, 85.7% in the case of this compartment. The majority of this porcelain was produced (Fig. 8) during the reign of the emperors Yongzheng (1723–1735) and Qianlong (1723–1795), with some occasional artefacts produced under Emperor Kangxi (1668–1722).

It is quite interesting that some of the objects found here and one of the plates in DC can be dated to the Ming dynasty during the late Jiajing (1522–1566) and Wanli (1573–1619) periods, revealing that these objects were highly appreciated and actually maintained for several generations instead of being discarded. While the reasons these items were kept are just theories, it is quite possible that they could

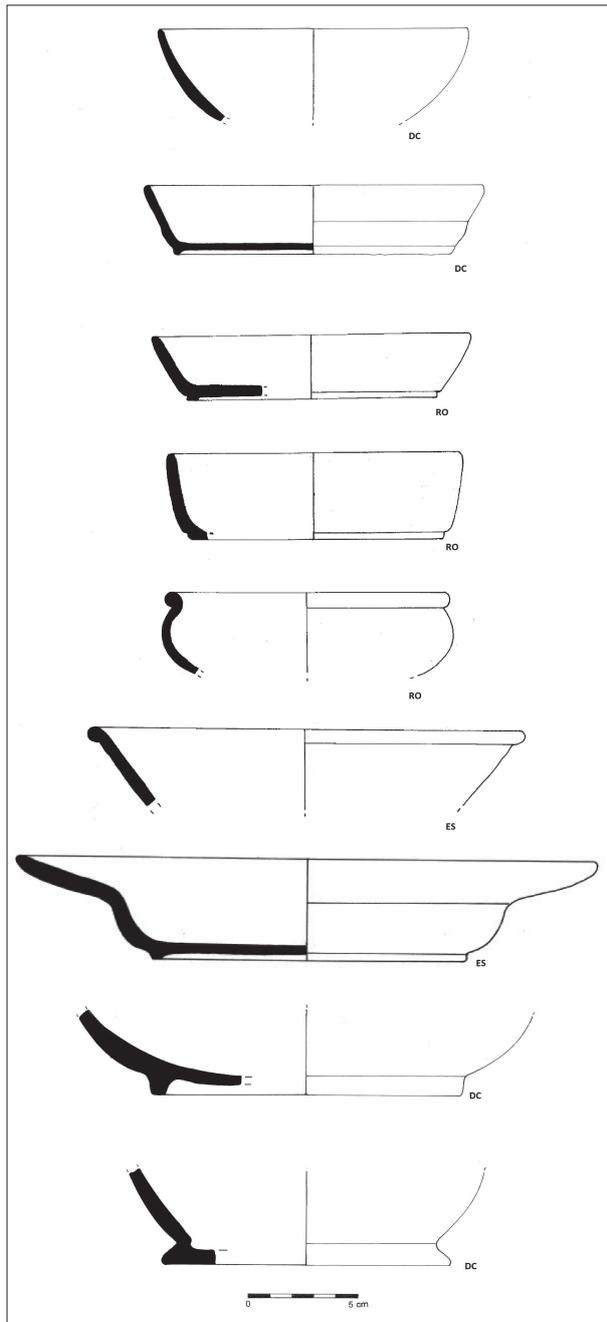


Fig. 5: Tin glaze ware.

have been seen as family heirlooms or kept for their economic value. The majority of the forms identified at the sites under analysis are plates, bowls, one teapot and cups for drinking this beverage, which in fact may indicate the social standing of this household in the mid-18th century.

Their decoration is essentially blue on white floral motifs with occasional human representations, although a few pink family objects and brown

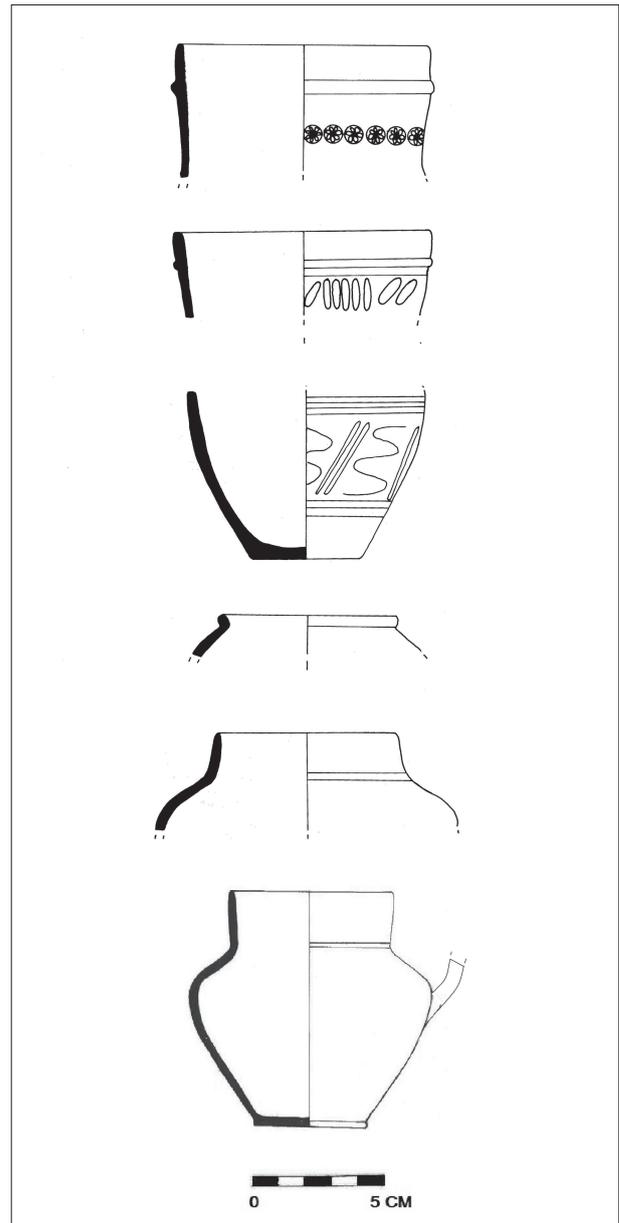


Fig. 6: Red ware drinking cups.

Batavian ware was also recovered. The absence of large tureens and platters intended for serving food indicates that these objects were essentially used to eat from and not for serving purposes. It is curious that none of the objects found at any of the three sites can be clearly identified with this function, though large flared bowls lead and tin glazed may have served such a function.

The analysis of porcelain collections in Portugal from a consumption and not an artistic point of view is rare, and none of the small number of sites that were actually studied had such an accu-



Fig. 7: Storage pots (RO).

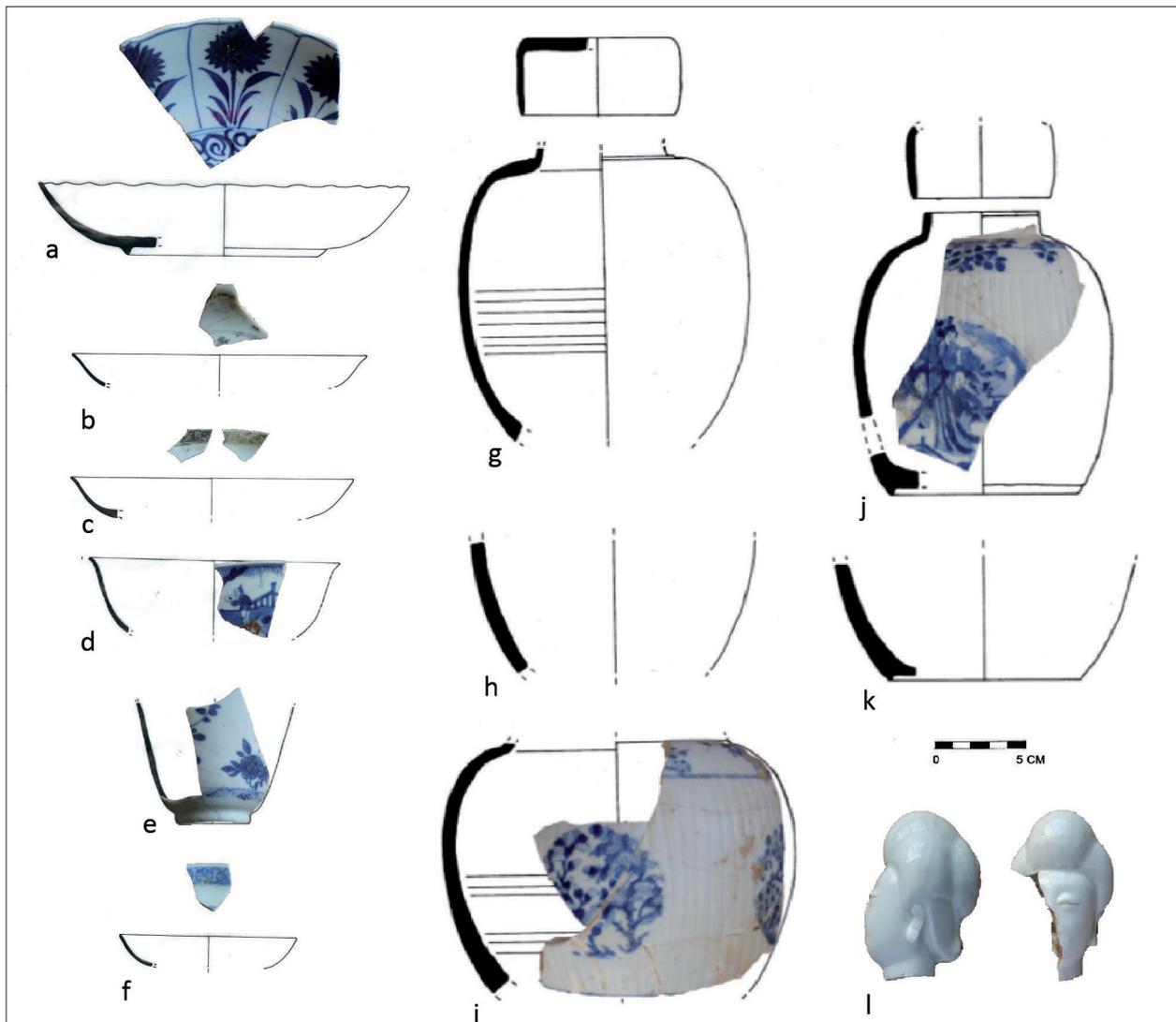


Fig. 8: Porcelain (RO).



rate chronology. However, it is possible to say that the objects found in RO make up one of the most consistent collections in Portugal with similar decorations, while the others have larger formal and decorative variety (FERREIRA ET. AL 2017; HENRIQUES 2012).

Minor imports also used at the table include one white undecorated salt-glazed stoneware bowl, possibly made in England, and the remains of one Delft plate.

Of all the sites, only RO and ES provided unglazed storage pots. What was actually stored inside is difficult to establish, though it is possible that a large portion of the costrels (*cântaros*) found in ES and the two large pots from RO were used to hold water (Fig. 7a). The shapes of these objects associated with its unglazed surface suggests such a use. In addition, one of the large pots found in RO was close to one of the wells, perhaps indicating its final use. A large lead glazed yellow pot has sparked debate among our team members (Fig. 7b). It has a shape similar to the 16th-17th-century chamber pots used

in Portugal. However, due to its large size and its location in the pantry area, we believe it was probably used to deposit some organic kitchen remains that would have been subsequently used to feed animals.

However, storage could also have been accomplished in delicate porcelain imports, possibly holding exotic commodities. In the house's yard, five pots and two lids of Kangxi porcelain produced around 1700 were found (Fig. 8g–k). These seem to have all belonged to the same collection and have similar decorations, all with circular medallions on their outer walls where either flowers or female figures are represented. Once again, we have a type of object that survived for at least two generations.

Although not corresponding to objects used to cook, eat or store, the head of a *Guanyin* statue, in *blanc de chine* and produced in the Dehua kilns, was found inside one of the wells in RO (Fig. 8l). This would have been a very expensive object related to a wealthy context, and it is therefore no surprise that it was found inside a household in downtown Lisbon.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to discuss the use of pottery in mid-18th-century Lisbon based on the information determined from three archaeological sites, all of them sharing their formation day, 1 November 1755. It is a difficult task to accomplish in such a short paper, and much more about the relationship between people and things and things and people, shape and function, the importance and significance of decoration and its semiotic implications, as well as the social base of consumption, social discourse, social differences, and how these ceramics reflect cultural identity, could have been said. In this sense, this paper is conceived as an introduction to more detailed studies planned for the future.

Nevertheless, it is safe to say that in the mid-18th century different social classes were using similar pots as unglazed cooking pots, which are a constant presence at all the sites. The type of food preparation could in fact have a shared cultural background independent of the social class. Nevertheless, lead glazed cooking pots were only observed in RO and DC, which may indicate that these were more expensive than non-glazed objects.

If cooking pots suggest a similar cultural taste in food, tableware indicates that the consumption of food was completely different. Most of the tableware and porcelain with forms such as cups and teapots to consume exotic beverages was retrieved from the wealthier sites, while in the ES only Lisbon ware was found. Faience plates were very inexpensive. In 1700, a convent in Évora bought 15 dozen white faience plates for 2,670 réis, and two years later, the price was maintained at 180 réis per dozen (MANGUCCI 2006, 3).



During this same period a chicken could be purchased for 180 *réis* (FAÍSCA 2012). Whether it was decorated or not, Portuguese faience was never so valuable to be mentioned in wills, in contrast to imported Chinese porcelain or Spanish and Italian ceramics. This seems to be another factor to consider that ES was not a rich home. There are no imports, and except for the faience plate produced in the mid-17th century, the quality of all the other ceramics is far from exceptional.

But how did people and pottery relate in Lisbon in the mid-18th century? That wealthy consumers preferred to eat from imports instead of locally made objects is an established fact. The type of decoration on faience, for example, is the result of at least two centuries of decorative evolution, a palimpsest of different influences and tastes, reflecting the global importance of Portuguese voyages, something that Lisbon residents were well aware of. On the other hand, while in ES we can find only one plate that may actually have been kept for a few generations, in RO and DC that preservation exists in porcelain with a few plates that originated in China in the 16th century. What can this tell us about how people connected and cared for these commodities? Although unpublished, several 16th-century Ming plates were found in the 18th-century layers of the archaeological excavation of the Marialva palace owned by one of the richest and most influent families in the country. Were they evidence of past relatives and thus a family memory? While we will probably never know, it should be mentioned that the preservation of older objects is at least frequent at other archaeological contexts resulting from the 1755 tragedy.

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