

The fish processing and conservation industry of the Roman period in *Olisipo*. The archaeological center of Rua dos Correeiros

The archaeological intervention conducted in the space presently occupied by the Archaeological Center of Rua dos Correeiros (Fundação BCP) in Lisbon, took on a salvage nature (in the scope of the building renovations) and occurred between 1991 and 1995.

The realization of this “extensive sounding” in the “Baixa Pombalina” of Lisbon revealed the history of the city from a diachronic-stratigraphic perspective, with a clarity and richness not suspected by the traditional vision of the archaeology of Lisbon, according to which, this city, owing to the continuous occupation of the same territorial space and, principally, to its various and destructive seismic episodes, would not preserve in its sub-soil clear evidence of its past.

In reality, both the structural groups as well as the stratigraphic sequences convey a typically urban archaeological reality, in which the dominant characteristics are the density, the superposition, and the complex intersection of constructions and successive destructions. Nevertheless, it was possible to outline in a more or less continuous, or fragmented form, seven large structural and stratigraphic groups, corresponding to seven determining phases in the urban evolution of the ‘baixa’ of the city of Lisbon: the Iron Age II phase (with orientalizing influence), the Roman-Republican period, the Imperial Roman period, the Islamic occupation, the Medieval Christian period, the Modern/Pre-Pombaline period, and the Pombaline and post-Pombaline period.

This diachrony of occupation, long, almost continuous, and superimposed, produced structural and stratigraphic contexts in diverse states of conservation, of which stand out those attributable to the Roman Imperial period, dated to between the 1st and 5th centuries AD, in large part constituted by an industrial complex for the processing and conservation of fish. Of the same epoch, there was also identified a group of structures annexed to the manufacturing area (storage facilities and a well), substituted in the Later Empire by a residential structure endowed with baths, in such a way that the entire group was extended to the north by a road which accessed *Olisipo* by the southwest.

It was sought to integrate the realities known about the site, within the urbanism of *Olisipo*; the industrial production at the site could be placed and integrated within geographic realities more vast — the Tejo estuary, Lusitania, the West Mediterranean and the Empire. The manufacture of amphorae and the extraction of salt, as they were economic activities integrally linked to the production of fish preserves, deserve special attention, particularly at the regional level.

In relation to the industrial complex, which is located on terraces, accompanying the different levels of the shores of the Tejo marsh which run to the west of the intervened area, we proposed a configuration of 7 unities, contiguous with each other and where are visible the salt tanks — the *caetariae* — the open-air work areas — patios and small tanks for washing, as well as are glimpsed some walls delimiting the factories and spaces of communication between these.

With the object of situating chronologically, in a more vigorous form, the moment of construction and abandonment, as well as the diverse phases of renovation and restructuring of spaces visible in the industrial structures, which affected the stratigraphic analyses

of the strata of abandonment, the *amphorae* and *terra sigillata* were predominantly utilized. Also considered, on the other hand, was the characterization of the productive capacity of this industrial complex, by comparison with others of the western Mediterranean, seeking to define orders of importance.

In conclusion, the production, commercialization, and consumption of fish preserve is a characteristic of the Classical world, namely, of ancient Rome, and represents one of the most significant economic activities. The production appears in the Imperial period to have been very localized in the region around the straits of Gibraltar. The consumption was apparently generalized, being verified the existence of a considerable diversity of production, adequate and appropriate for the different socioeconomic classes. The objective of the present work is to contribute to the characterization of the role played by Olisipo in this cultural and economic framework.