

Introduction

Santarém, on the right bank of the Tagus River, is 78 kilometres northeast of Lisbon (see figure 1). Situated on a plateau, it commands an extensive view of the surrounding countryside. Strabo described the great fertility of this part of Lusitania and also mentioned that the Tagus is large and sufficiently deep to allow passage of ships carrying as many as 10,000 amphorae. In later times ‘*Santarin*’ was the second Portuguese city most cited by Arabic writers, after ‘*al-Usbuna*’ (now called Lisbon). *Santarin* was noted for its great fertility and cereal, fruit and vegetable production — thanks largely to the waters of the Tagus, which were, in the opinion of many Arabs of the time, comparable to those of the Nile (Carabaza Bravo, 1996).

Between 1994 and 2001, Ana Margarida Arruda and Catarina Viegas of the University of Lisbon excavated some 1750 m² of the Alcáçova (= the fortified enclosure) de Santarém. The hand-collected faunal remains, mostly mammal bones, from their excavation form the subject of this report. They derive from 18 levels — most dated to the Iron Age, Roman and Moslem periods. As table 1 shows, 39% of the animal bones derive from the Moslem period, 33% from the Roman period and 17% are from the Iron Age. The bones are contained in some 90 numbered crates, which will be stored in the Santarém Municipal Museum. Approximately 9000 identified bones and teeth were recorded.

TABLE 1

The stratigraphic sequence at Alcáçova de Santarém with dates and the period codes used in this study of the fauna.

Code	Period	Century	“Main period”	Fauna%
CONTEMP	Contemporary	?	2	+
MOD2	Late Modern	?	2	1%
MOD1	Modern	AD 16 – 18	2	2%
MED3	late Medieval	AD 14 – 15	2	3%
MED2	Medieval 2	AD 13	3	1%
MED1	Medieval 1 Moslem	AD 9 – 12	3	39%
R/MED	late Roman/early Med.	Mixed deposits	—	2%
ROM5	late Imperial Roman	AD 4 – 5	4	3%
ROM4	Roman Imperial 3	AD 2nd half 2 – 4/5	4	3%
ROM3	Roman Imperial 2	AD end 1 – early 2	4	4%
ROM2	early Roman Imp & Imp 1	last 1/4 1 BC – mid 1 AD	4	10%
ROM1	late Roman Republican	end 2 BC	4	13%
Fe8	Iron Age	3 BC	5	10%
Fe7	Iron Age	6 – 4 BC	5	1%
Fe6	Iron Age	6 – 4 BC	5	+
Fe5	Iron Age	6 – 4 BC	5	1%
Fe4	Iron Age	6 – 4 BC	5	1%
Fe3	Iron Age	8 – 6 BC	5	1%
Fe2	Iron Age	8 – 6 BC	5	1%
Fe1	Iron Age	8 – 6 BC	5	2%
Br2	Bronze Age	11 – 9 BC	—	+
Br1	Bronze Age	11 – 9 BC	—	—

“Fauna %” provides a very approximate indication of the proportion of total number of recorded Santarém bones in each period. Thus there are 6% in post Islamic levels, 39% in the Moslem level, 33% in the Roman levels, and 17% in the Iron Age levels. “Code” denotes the period abbreviation used. Data within the main periods, post—Moslem, Moslem, Roman and Iron Age were, for many of the analyses, pooled. Their numerical codes are indicated under “Main period”. “+” denotes the presence of very few bones. The “R/MED” material is mixed and has not been studied in detail.



FIG. 1 – Plan of the excavations at Alcáçova de Santarém with a small-scale map of Portugal to show the site's location.

The purpose of this report is to describe these faunal remains and interpret some of the changes they show in the course of the succession at Santarém. They are important for two main reasons. First they form a large collection, perhaps one of the largest excavated to date in Portugal, which will provide a baseline of data for comparison with other Portuguese zoo-archaeological collections. Second, the bones come from a long succession of layers that spans over two thousand important years of Portuguese history encompassing the arrival and decline of Roman civilization and the later Moslem rule, and hence provide an opportunity to study the development of the fauna and man-animal relations from Iron Age through to Moslem times.

Brief historical outline (from Arruda and Viegas, 2002)

Santarém has been a populated centre since the beginning of the first millennium BC and subsequent Roman and Moslem occupations of the town were equally intense. Today it is the capital of the Ribatejo — one of the 12 administrative regions of mainland Portugal.

Iron Age Santarém may have had a population as large as 1000. Phoenician navigators, who sailed into the Tagus estuary, probably visited Santarém and are thought to have had an important influence upon the region. They are, for example, often credited with the spread of the chicken in Europe (see Hehn, 1888). This was the period in which both the vine and olive began to be cultivated in Portugal.

The **Roman** occupation dates from the 2nd century BC. During the second quarter of the 1st century BC the town was extensively re-constructed — an event related to the foundation by Julius Caesar of the *Praesidium Iulium Scallabis* in 61 BC. Roman Santarém became one of the three *conventus iuridicus* of Lusitania as mentioned by Pliny, and was well linked being situated on the main road from *Olisipo* (now Lisbon) to *Bracara Augusta* (now Braga) and which linked *Olisipo* to the capital of Lusitania — *Augusta Emerita* (now Mérida; Viegas, 2001). In her study of the ceramics of Alcáçova de Santarém, Viegas (2001) describes, for example, Roman *terra sigillata* that come from places as distant as Cilicia, Italy, Carthage, France and Spain. Clearly Roman Santarém was both wealthy and well connected.

Unfortunately little is known about the late Roman, or **palaeo-Christian/Visigoth** phase of the history of Santarém, though mid 6th century AD ceramics were found but they are not associated with any structure.

Santarém acquired great importance with the **Islamic** expansion into the Tagus valley, though this importance is known more from written sources than any kind of structural remains. The most significant Islamic finds uncovered in Santarém are the silos — located in most areas excavated. These structures were generally circular and may have served to store cereals and other foods and at the end of the Moslem period were used as rubbish pits.