

Final Remarks

The archaeological site RAJG.19, known as “Casa dos Mosaicos”, and located in the historic centre of Setúbal, revealed important Roman architectural remains of residential and urbanistic character.

Previously other archaeological excavations in the city centre discovered several *cetariae* units specialized in fish sauces and fish-salting productions and also a *figlina* dedicated to the manufacture of the Dressel 14 amphorae.

Thus, the identification of a *domus* with mosaic floors and walls painted in fresco at the site RAJG.19, built in the second half of the first century AD and refurbished maybe at the first half of the third century, as well as the respective urban integration revealed a social class that could correspond to the top of the local elite, certainly integrated in the successive hierarchical scales that organized the Roman Empire political-administrative structure.

Prior to the construction of the *domus*, the site was used as a dump for rejected and broken pieces of probable nearby Roman kilns. The fragments found in the dump belong to early Lusitanian amphorae from the Augustan-Tiberian period; this evidence withheld the fish-salting production cycle of the Lower Sado region. Their fish-salting factories were concentrated in the *vicus* of Tróia and in *Caetobriga*, but they also spread over the Arrabida coast, until Sesimbra bay.

Another relevant aspect offered by the excavations at the RAJG.19 site was the large diachronic span of its occupation, which allowed us to think about the evolution of the human occupation of Setúbal, from the Iron Age to the Islamic Medieval Age.

With the crisis of the Roman world, which settled in Setubal as early as the third century and intensifies from the end of the fourth century, the productive activity focused on fish sauces and salted fish acquires a smaller scale, but the favourable natural harbour conditions held by the mouth of the Sado continue to support a relatively dynamic Atlantic-Mediterranean maritime trade. During Late Antiquity, V-VI centuries, despite the general decadence that is felt, here came “echoes” of the Eastern Mediterranean. Christianity, that is reported in Lower Sado and Troia seems to specialize in funerary and religious functions: it is worth mentioning the Paleo-Christian sanctuary decorated with late Antiquity frescoes and an ensemble of lamps

whose decoration also discloses the new religious ideas.

An important contribution brought by these archaeological excavations consisted in the identification of a funerary occupation of the High Middle Ages. The uncovered collective grave, built on the top layers of the late Roman occupation, revealed the existence of a fishermen's community, chronologically centred in the seventh century; the stable isotope evidence of their bone remains indicates a diet based on marine resources. The appearance of this grave denies the idea of a total depopulation of Setúbal during the High Middle Ages, but does not invalidate the assumption of a cycle of de-urbanization initiated in the late-Roman period and maintained until the beginning of the fourteenth century.

Medieval Islamic occupation is represented in RAJG.19 by silo pits that were most likely inside huts in their initial phase as storage structures and ended up as domestic refuse disposal structures from the 11th-12th centuries. The Islamic necropolis recently identified by us in the highest area of the northern slope of Santa Maria hill suggests the existence of a permanent Islamic settlement in the downtown of Setúbal.

The access to the Iron Age antecedents of *Caetobriga* was very limited in the approximately 80m² excavated in extension, because for the most part this area was occupied by Roman architectural remains. Thus, in the small surveys we could carry out till the bedrock, we identified an occupation of the Orientalizing period (VII-V BC. centuries).

With the exception of a bread-baking oven and a wall adjacent to it, no other structures were found. The material culture collected was inside colluvium layers that were deposited in pits opened by erosion in the friable pliocenic sandstone bedrock. Probably torrential rains have affected the occupation layers of the Iron Age, not only in RAJG.19, but also in most of the sites of the hill of Santa Maria where we have carried out archaeological interventions.

(Translated by Barbara Polyak)

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