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CERAMIC CONTEXTS OF THE OCCIDENTAL NECROPOLIS IN TROIA (PORTUGAL)

The recent excavation of an area lying northwest of the so-called Mensa-Tomb Necropolis (excavated in the 1970s) at the site of Troia revealed the continuation of the same funerary area, the whole cemetery having been recently renamed as Occidental Necropolis. Similar rectangular and sigma-shaped mensa tombs were exposed, but heavy disturbance caused by several interventions in the relatively recent past also revealed earlier phases of the necropolis. Relative stratigraphy and tomb type allowed the grouping of some 60 tombs into four main phases.

The ceramics collected in the recent excavation of the necropolis (2021), and especially the sigillata and the amphorae, indicate funerary activity running from the 2nd century until the second half of the 4th century AD.

Troia – Roman necropolis – Mensa tombs – African Red Slip Ware – Amphorae

1. Introduction

The Roman ruins of Troia are located on the southwestern coast of Portugal, set on a sand embankment between the Sado Estuary and the Atlantic Ocean. It was probably an island in Roman times, and today comprises a peninsula (**fig. 1**). Roman remains extend for 2km and multiple investigations have demonstrated an intense fish-salting production from the 1st to the 5th centuries AD (Étienne, Makaroun and Mayet 1994; Pinto, Magalhães and Brum 2014) with vestiges of occupation until the 6th century, or even the 7th (Magalhães, Pinto and Brum 2020).

The importance of the fish-salting industry seems to have created the conditions for the development of an urban settlement, as demonstrated in the construction of some infrastructures to support the daily and ritual life of this community: a residential quarter, a bath complex, a mausoleum, wells, several necropolises and, late in the day, an Early Christian church.

According to the data recovered so far (Pinto, Magalhães and Brum 2018), the first fish-salting workshops were built in the Tiberian period, initiating the first phase of fish-salting here. The archaeological data shows that, after more than a century, there was an interruption of activity, somewhere in the second half of the 2nd century: exactly when is unclear. In the early 3rd century, after an extensive remodeling that subdivided the large workshops into smaller ones, a second phase of production restarted. In the late 3rd century or first half of the 4th century, further remodeling in workshops 1 and 2

occurred, starting a third phase of activity that continued until the second quarter of the 5th century.

In 2021, as part of an environmental impact study to evaluate a touristic project proposed in the area of the Roman ruins, a number of rescue archaeological investigations were developed. In two contiguous areas, more structures of an already known Roman necropolis were exposed.



Fig. 1. Location of Troia.

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The first area (area 1) of excavation took place inside a room of a modern house, where the other one (area 2) was a much larger open space at the east and southeast of the same (fig. 2). In area 1, the current floor of the compartment was c. 1.5m below the top of the archaeological levels in area 2, indicating that the most recent levels of the necropolis had there been removed to build the structure. Therefore, in area 1, only the earliest occupation of the necropolis was preserved. In area 2 the modern and contemporaneous disturbances were restricted, and mostly concentrated to the northwest limit of the area explored. So, here several later phases of the necropolis were preserved.

In this part of the necropolis, it was possible to identify a complex and diverse stratigraphy. There was recorded a succession of deposits of anthropic origin – of greater and lesser extent – as formed by a succession of floors, determinable by the deposition of compacted clayish sediments. These deposits were cut into for the placement of new graves, which reused materials and structures taken from others. They were interspersed with levels of sand laid down by wind action, evidently marking moments with less human presence.

The analysis of the relative stratigraphy and tomb type allowed the definition of four main phases, and a later one with only a few scattered and diverse tombs.

This paper presents the *terra sigillata*, the African Red Slip Ware, the lamps, the African Cooking Ware and the amphorae of the stratigraphic units that contribute to the phasing of the necropolis. The study of these and other ceramic types, as well as of the other artifacts, will be developed in a more extended publication.

2. Ceramics from the different phases of the necropolis

Phase 1 corresponds to a period with cremations and infant inhumations, either in a simple ditch or in a structured grave. Stratigraphy allowed the further definition of three subdivisions in this phase.

In area 1, two large overlapping deposits were excavated, which should correspond to two successive clay surfaces: the S.U. [42] over S.U.'s: [60]=[81]=[93].

In the most recent deposit – S.U. [42], four children were buried: two were inhumed in simple ditches (tombs 56 and 58) and one in a brick-built tomb – tomb 60 (S.U.'s [75] and [82]). A cremation grave was also made – tomb 57 – but was much affected by the later graves 62 and 58.

In the deposits [60], [81] and [93], three newborn babies were buried in simple ditches – tombs 55, 55 and 59. Also a *bustum* type structure – S.U. [100] – was built, inside which tomb 63 was identified. With the exception of tomb 58 (west-east) all the inhumations from the two layers of tombs were oriented southeast-northwest.

Under the earliest surface was a sandy deposit [166], only partially excavated, and not yet clearly interpreted.

With regard to the ceramic finds, this earliest deposit [166] only offered a small fragment of a Baetican volute lamp (fig. 3, 1 no. 19958), possibly form Bailey B / Loeschcke IV / Dressel 10/11. Its shoulder is of type IIIB, equivalent to Malagoli L.7a. Its date spans the reigns of Tiberius to Trajan, not later than the second decade of the 2nd century.

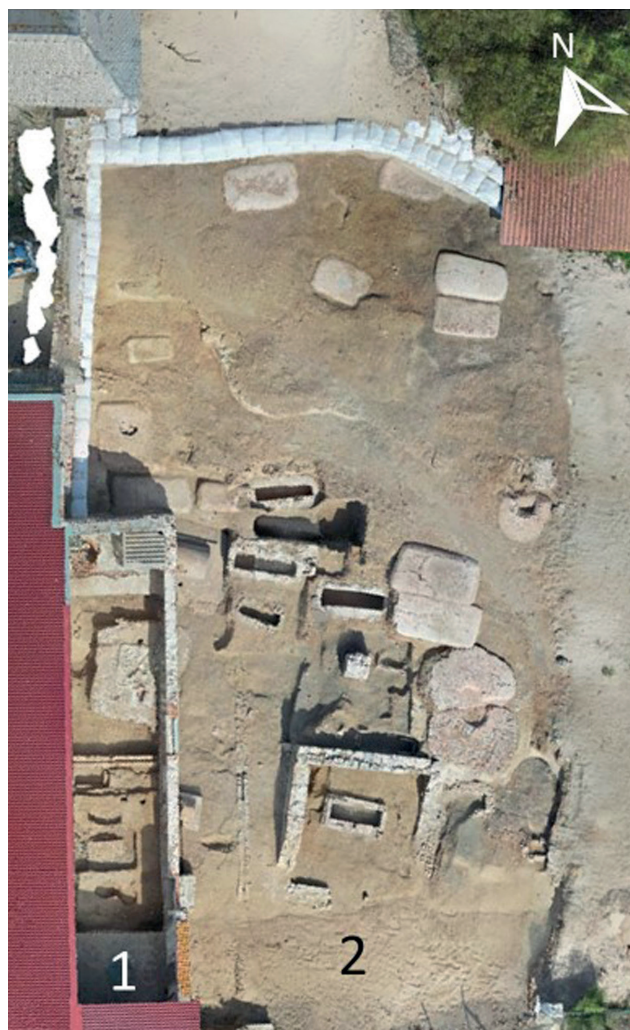


Fig. 2. Aerial view of the necropolis (orthophoto THEIA): areas 1 and 2.

The circulation level where the first tombs were cut ([60]=[81]=[93]) presented Gaulish *sigillata* form Drag. 27 (fig. 3, 2-3, nos. 24375 and 24382), Hispanic *sigillata* form Drag. 15/17 (fig. 3, 4, no. 18996) and Drag. 27, African Red Slip Ware A form Hayes 3B (fig. 3, 5, no. 18998) and Hayes 9A (fig. 3, 6, no. 18698), and finally fragments of Dressel 14 amphora handles.

The deposit [42] that covered the first tombs offered different types of ceramics. The fine wares include Gaulish *sigillata* forms Drag. 27 (fig. 3, 7, no. 18709), Drag. 15/17 (fig. 3, 8, no. 18710), Drag. 24/25 and Hispanic *sigillata* form Drag. 15/17, African Red Slip Ware A forms Hayes 3C (fig. 3, 9, no. 18743) and Hayes 9B. There were also African Cooking Ware forms Hayes 23B (fig. 3, 10, no. 18771) and Hayes 185C (fig. 3, 11, no. 18751). The amphorae were represented by the regional Lusitanian Dressel 14 variant C (fig. 3, 12-13, nos. 18719 and 18721) and the African II A (fig. 3, 14, no. 18730).

The filling of tomb 60, S.U. [75] and [82], presented fragments of Hispanic *sigillata* form Drag. 15/17, unclassifiable fragments of African Red Slip Ware A, regional Lusitanian amphorae Dressel 14 variant C (fig. 3, 15, no. 18930) and

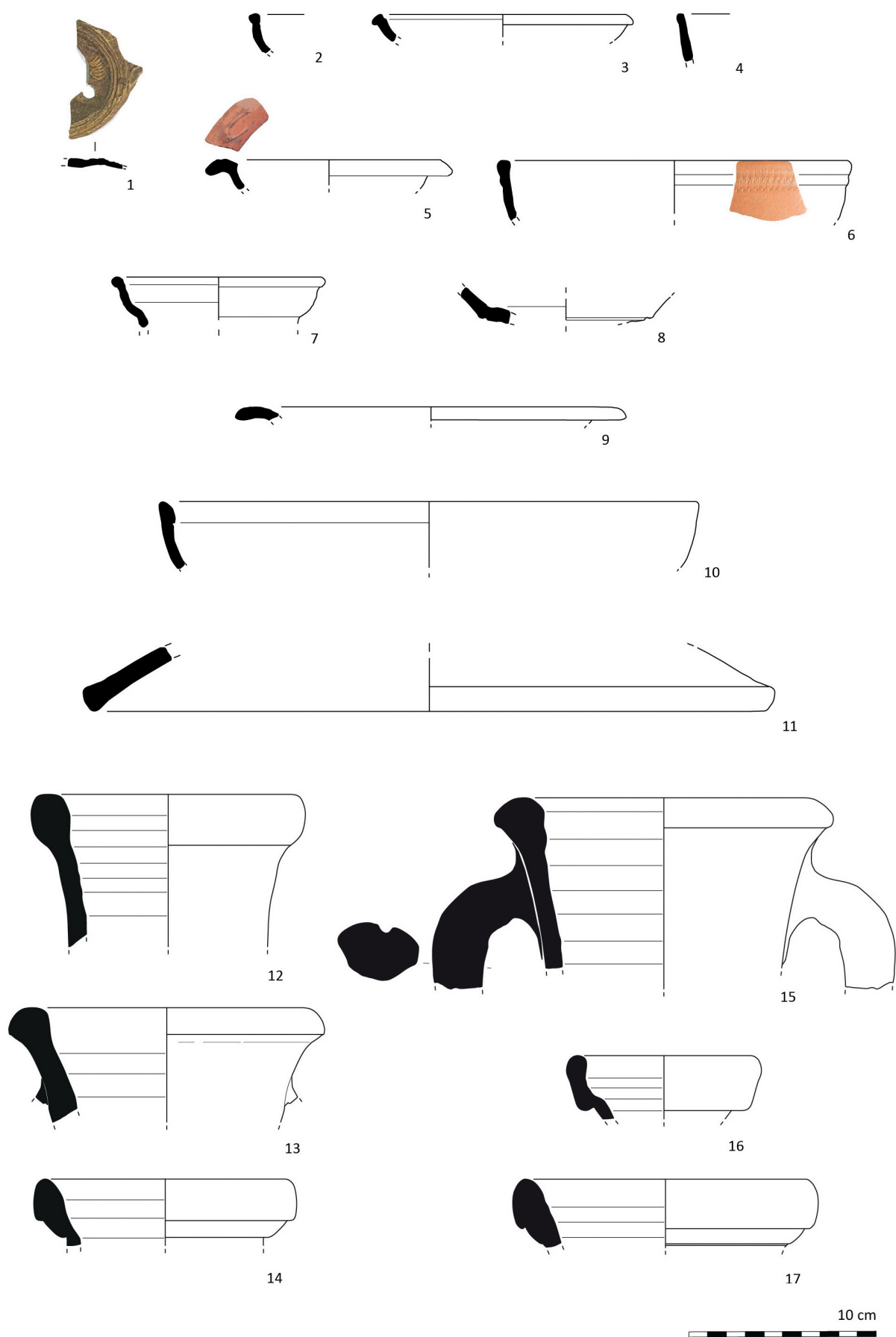


Fig. 3. Ceramics of phase 1.

Lusitana 3 (fig. 3, 16, no. 26111), alongside African II A (fig. 3, 17, no. 19008).

The ceramics above mentioned suggest that the earliest deposits where the first tombs were cut dated to the 2nd century, since they have mainly Gaulish with Hispanic *sigillata* and African Red Slip Ware forms produced in the 2nd century, as well as the regional Lusitanian amphora Dressel 14 var. C, typical of that century. The deposit that covers the first tombs and the filling of one of those tombs also presented Gaulish and Hispanic *sigillata*, as well as the regional Lusitanian 2nd century Dressel 14 amphora. However, slightly later forms also appear, pointing to a second moment of burials: African Red Slip Ware A form Hayes 9B, from the second half of the 2nd century and the first decades of the 3rd century (Hayes

1980: 515; Carandini et al. 1981: 27) and the amphora African II A, under production since the end of the 2nd century (Bonifay 2004: 111). This amphora places the tombs of the second stage at the very end of the 2nd century, if not in the early 3rd century.

One of the most interesting elements of this necropolis is a funerary precinct identified in the large open area 2. Inside was a rectangular brick tomb with the ashes of a cremation with an exceptionally well preserved and unique set of 11 glass vessels and a number of metal, ivory and bone objects, but no ceramics. Danièle Foy dates the glass vessels from the end of the 2nd century to the middle of the 3rd century (Foy and Pinto, forthcoming).

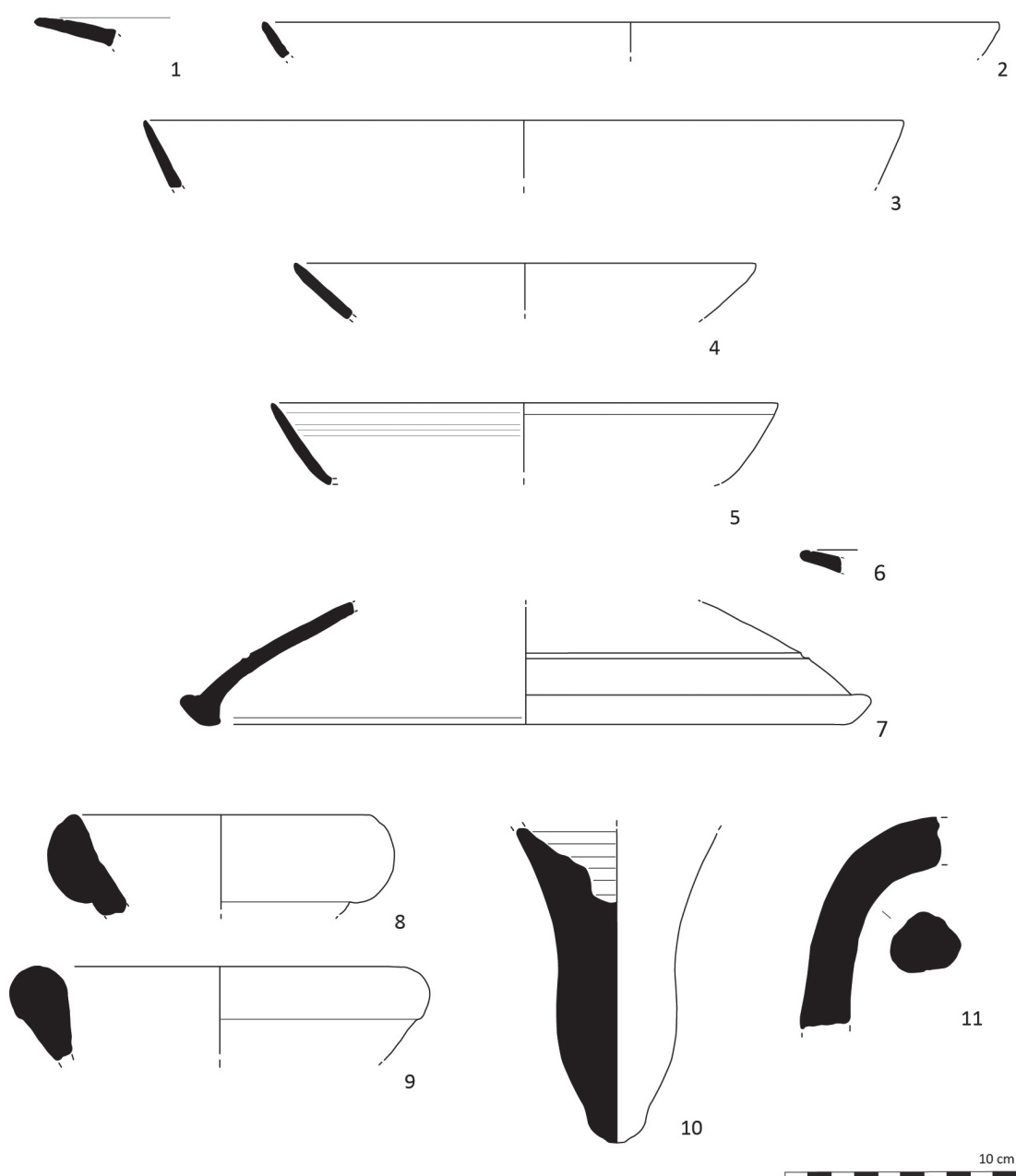


Fig. 4. Ceramics of phase 3.

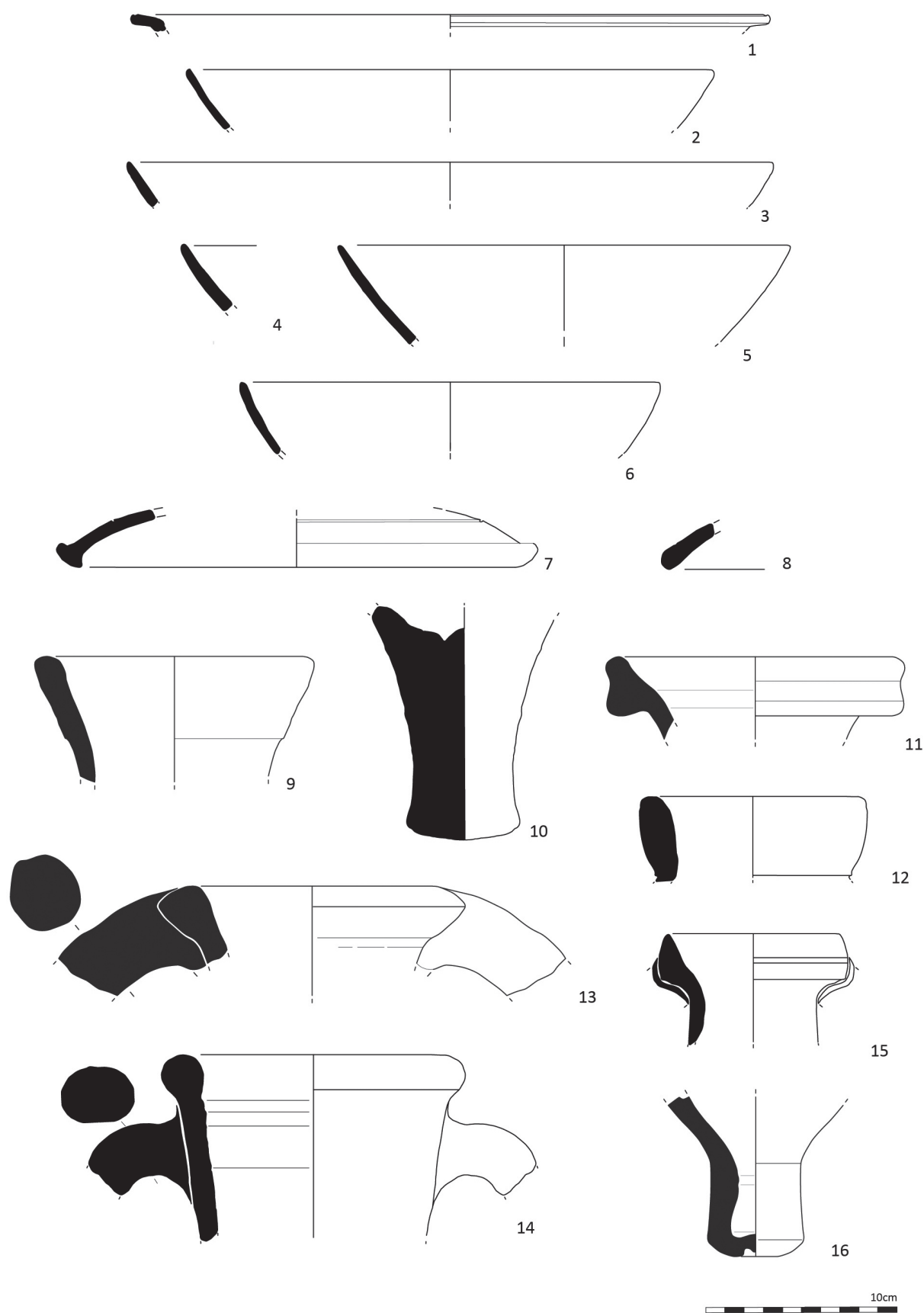


Fig. 5. Ceramics of phase 4.

Even though this tomb and funerary precinct do not have any direct stratigraphic connection yet found with the child tombs of area 1, there are indirect cultural associations, like the funerary rite of cremation and the fact that inside the precinct there were also two newborn inhumations in ditches, very similar to those in area 1. This tomb in its funerary precinct could be from the end of Phase 1, thereby representing a third moment in this phase. Another possibility is to relate this tomb and its funerary precinct to the *cupae* and funerary monuments of Phase 2 that may have either cremations or inhumations (none of them was excavated).

Phase 2 includes *cupae* and funerary monuments that have been exposed, or partially exposed, but, as just stated, not excavated. Therefore, only relative stratigraphy may date this phase.

Phase 3 is marked by the early rectangular *mensa* tombs with an *opus signinum* covering, but without a structured funerary casing to them, as well as by simple graves made of bricks and/or stone. This phase is defined by data from successive and overlapping layers and tombs. They may reuse part of earlier *cupae* as their base, cutting and rearranging diverse sandy and clayey deposits to varying degrees. In this phase, the materials under scrutiny come from the different deposits that were filling tomb 17 (S.U.'s [263] and [302]), tomb 19 (S. U. [332]) and tomb 23 (S.U. [370]).

The most distinctive element in the ceramics of this phase is the appearance of African Red Slip Ware C in forms Hayes 45B (fig. 4, 1, no. 24998), Hayes 50 (fig. 4, 2, no. 24996), Hayes 50A (fig. 4, 3, no. 25000, 4, no. 25190 and 5, no. 24999) and Hayes 51 (fig. 4, 6, no. 24997). Form Hayes 50 is produced over a long period, but variant A is dated between 240 and 325, whilst form Hayes 45B should not circulate after 320, and the presence of Hayes 51 places this phase in the 4th century (Hayes 1972: 65, 73 and 75; Carandini *et al.* 1981: 64–65). The presence of an African Cooking Ware lid form Hayes 182A (fig. 4, 7, no. 25195) (Hayes 1972: 201–203) is residual, and so is the Baetician amphora Dressel 20 / Haltern 71 (fig. 4, 8, no. 24961) and the Beltrán II B, as well as the regional Lusitanian Dressel 14 (fig. 4, 9, no. 24960). Also present are an African II base (fig. 4, 10, no. 24890), a Keay 16, a Mid Roman A (fig. 4, 11, no. 24968) and handle fragments of Lusitanian Almagro 51c. All these amphorae begun their production before the 4th century and do not affect the chronology as indicated by the African Red Slip Ware evidence. Therefore, Phase 3 with its *mensae* without any casing and other simpler tombs should be placed in the first half of the 4th century.

Phase 4 corresponds to the use of *mensa* tombs with masonry cases (at least masonry walls) within which to lay the body. Some of these tombs appear on the west side of area 2, cutting through large clay deposits, such as S.U. [338]. These tombs did not have any grave-goods with the exception of tomb 7 with a complete dish of grey coarse ware.

The ceramics considered for this phase come from the deposit [338] and from the excavated tomb 10 (S.U. [170], [183] and [227]) and tomb 12 (S.U. [206]) (fig. 5).

African Red Slip Ware C dominates with forms Hayes 48A (fig. 5, 1, no. 25078) and Hayes 50, some of which variant A (fig. 5, 2, no. 25079, 3, no. 25081, 5, no. 24169, 6,

no. 24440). We stand out one example with a more flaring wall from the Continental Workshops, namely Sidi Aïch or Henchir es-Srira (fig. 5, 4, no. 25080). African Cooking Ware of an earlier date is represented by forms Hayes 182B (fig. 5, 7, no. 24166) and Hayes 196B (fig. 5, 8, no. 24168).

Imported amphorae are varied and some of them early, such as a Haltern 70 (fig. 5, 9, no. 25054), a Campanian Dressel 2–4 (fig. 5, 10, no. 24054), a Dressel 28 (fig. 5, 11, 25053), an African II A (fig. 5, 12, no. 24565) and a Keay 16 (fig. 5, 13, no. 25052). The regional Lusitanian amphorae are the Dressel 14 (fig. 5, 14, no. 24564) and the Almagro 51c (fig. 5, 15–16, nos. 24124 and 24130), this last form being better represented in this phase than in Phase 3.

The African Red Slip Ware form Hayes 50 is the most common form found on the necropolis, but it is not a good chronological marker since it changed little until the mid 4th century and after that only the fabric is a good marker (Cau, Reynolds and Bonifay 2011: 5) and the ones from the Continental productions are not very common on production sites and require more stratigraphic data to become a good chronological pointer (Bonifay 2004: 196–197).

Due to the almost complete absence of African Red Slip Ware D, and to the absence of the three amphora types typical of the late 4th – first half of the 5th centuries (Almagro 51c variant C, Sado 1 variant B and Almagro 51a–b), this phase could still be placed in the first half of the 4th century, or slightly later.

After Phase 4 with its *mensa* tombs, there is no other coherent assemblage of burials to form a clearly new horizon. One rough child's tomb was built with stone elements bonded with clay and three new born burials were placed in amphora. The best preserved funerary amphora (fig. 6) was lying on the dune, over the abandoned so called “funerary precinct”. It is an African amphora with a transitional form between the African II D and the African III, made in the first half of the 4th century, though repurposed in what has to be a later burial, due to its position atop the stratigraphical sequence and the chronology already evidenced from the previous phases.



Fig. 6. Funerary amphora (tomb 1, no. 23367).

Conclusion

The study of the ceramics of the small portion of the *mensa*-tomb necropolis in Troia as excavated in 2021 has allowed the dating of three of its phases. Phase 1, with child inhumations and cremations, dates from the 2nd century, according to the presence of Gaulish and Hispanic *sigillata* and an early form of ARSW A. A later form of ARSW A and the Africana II A amphora implies that it lasted until the late 2nd – early 3rd centuries.

After a significant Phase 2 with its funerary altars and *cupae*, which cannot be dated without further excavation, comes Phase 3, characterized by *mensa* tombs without masonry surrounds for the body. This dates to the first half of the 4th century, according to the presence of ARSW C with forms Hayes 50 variant A and Hayes 51.

Phase 4, with *mensa* tombs both rectangular and sigma-shaped, all with masonry casings, dates to the first half / mid-4th, according to the presence of ARSW form Hayes 50 from the Continental productions, and to the absence of ARSW D and of the amphorae typical of the second half or late 4th - first half of the 5th centuries.

Previous studies had suggested that *mensa* tombs dated from the mid-second half of 4th century (Pinto 2016: 105-106; Pinto et al. 2022: 116). The data resulting from this study confirms that *mensa* tombs in Troia date to the 4th century, but suggest Phase 4 could be earlier than it was first assumed, in between the first half and the middle of the 4th century.

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