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TABERNA 1 FROM *MIROBRIGA* (SANTIAGO DO CACÉM, PORTUGAL): CERAMIC EVOLUTION OF THE LATE ANTIQUE LEVELS

The aim of this article is to introduce a methodological approach to the study of Late Antique contexts and ceramics in the Iberian Atlantic area. We present the example of the Roman town of Mirobriga*, located in the southern area of Lusitania, near the Atlantic coastline, a middle-sized settlement, with an ongoing occupation in the Roman and Late Antique periods. The recent project of the excavation of its market sector allowed the identification of the last circulation levels in taberna 1, as detailed here, related to Late Antique/post-Roman phases of occupation. The imported and local typologies of these phases constitute important indicators of change, concerning typologies and fabrics, and the contribution of both to our knowledge of the transition between so-called Roman and post-Roman models.*

Lusitania – commercial sector – coarse ware fabrics – Roman period – Suebic-Visigothic period

1. Introduction. Location and previous interventions. Architectural aspects of taberna 1

Located in the western façade of the Roman province of Lusitania (**fig. 1**), Mirobriga has been known since the 16th century, having been investigated from the 18th century onwards. Systematic excavations began in the 1940s with the discovery of a bath complex that led to the uncovering of a second set immediately to its side. The TABMIR Project of the Universidade Nova de Lisboa, started in 2016, aims to study the commercial activity in the town.

Located in an intensely commercial area at the heart of Roman *Mirobriga*, in the vicinity of the forum (**fig. 2**), taberna 1 was previously excavated, in the 1960s, under the supervision of Fernando de Almeida; this uncovered most of the building. Unfortunately, we have no record nor data concerning what was found in the building during these campaigns. Nevertheless, the 1960s campaigns did not reach completely the last circulation levels from the late 5th/early 6th century AD, and as such these remained available for the intervention and research of the TABMIR project.

The building, built in *opus incertum*, was designed and constructed as a single-phased structure, not having any traces of major remodelling or enlargement. To date, no trace of wall-plaster has been found in either room, while the mortar on the walls of tabernae 1 and 2 shows signs of final smoothing, suggesting the mortar was itself the final covering of the walls, at least in these two rooms.

Having a rectangular shape, of 2 *septem pedes*[1] (4,15 m) wide, approximately 4 *septem pedes* (7,99 m) long and an area of 378 *pes quadratus* (33,15 m^2), taberna 1 presents a wide doorway. It is one *septem pes* (2,07 m: average measure applied in *Mirobriga*) wide, with a carved groove in the threshold, ending on a circular hinge. This is characteristic of the commercial spaces of this sort, which were locked by the means of wooden boards (Adam 2014: 346), so asserting our interpretation as to its function. Aside from the original cut to the bedrock, which allowed the construction of the building in itself, the shale rock was levelled in order to create a horizontal plane on which the pavement could be set. *Taberna* 1 has also been revealed to have had two different flooring heights on the bed rock.

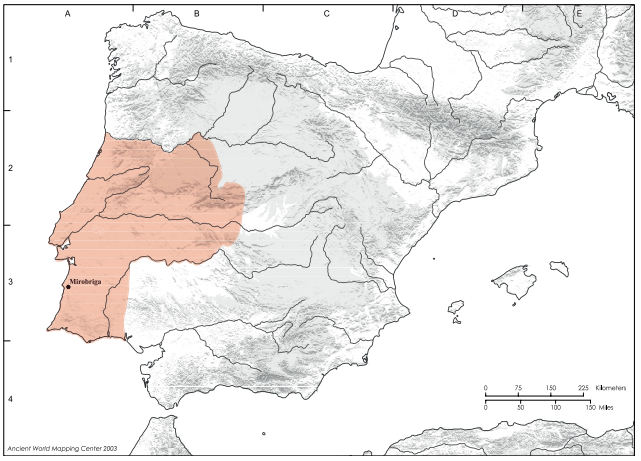

Fig. 1. Location of the Roman town of Mirobriga (Chãos Salgados, Santiago do Cacém) in the Iberian Peninsula.

1 One *septem pedes* is the mesure identified as a possible module used in several buildings in the site.

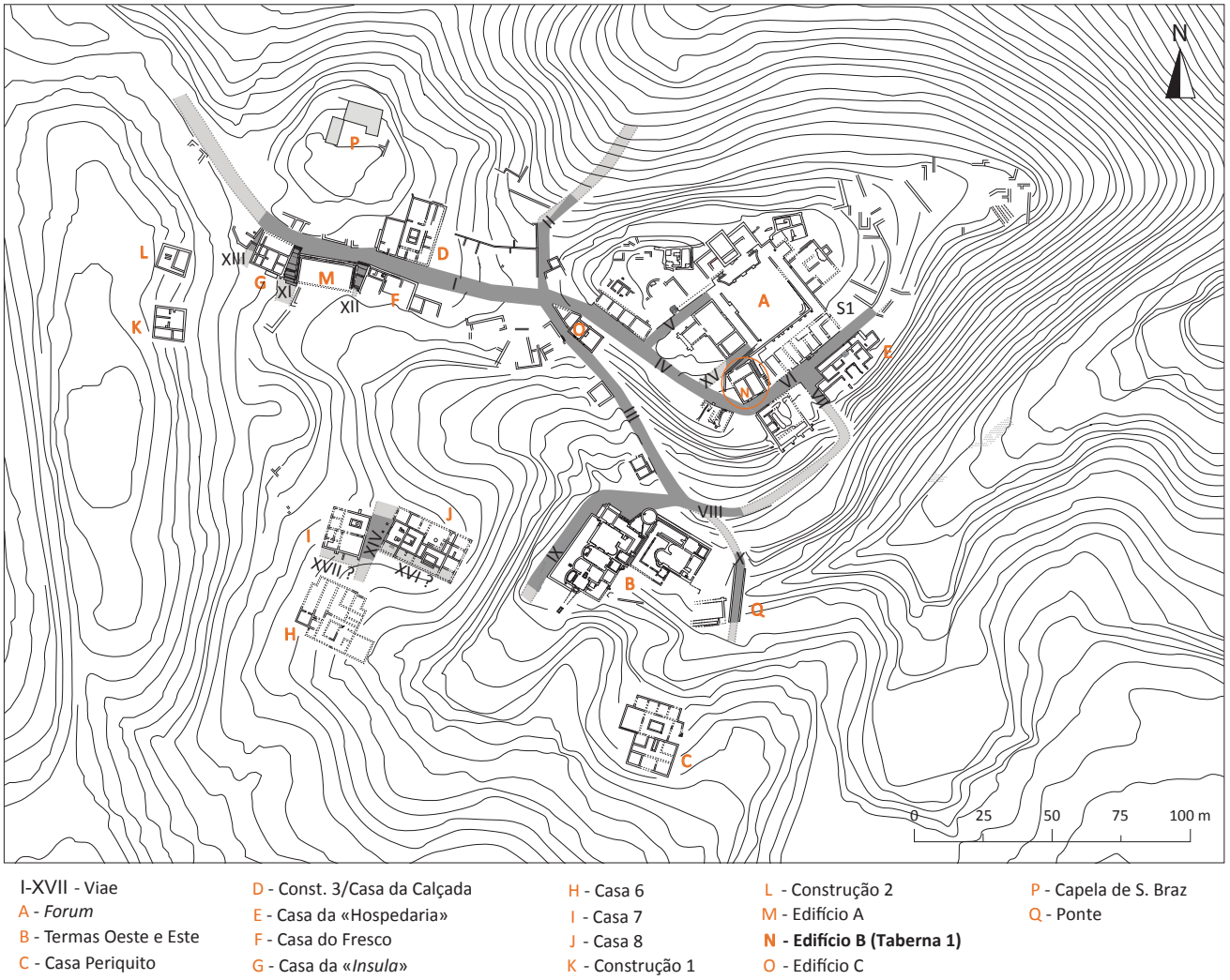

Fig. 2. Location of *taberna 1*, inserted in the commercial sector of Mirobriga.

2. Ceramological assemblage: features and discussion

As mentioned before, *Mirobriga* is located near the western façade of the Iberian Peninsula, a territory which was part of the province of *Lusitania* during the Roman Empire. The political framework completely changed from 409-411 AD onwards, when the actions conducted by Vandals, Suebi and Visigoths from AD 411 provoked intense changes in economic and urban structures, at least until the 460's, the last decade described by Bishop Hidatius in his works (Leguay 1993).

This political change naturally led to cultural alterations, but these continue to be inconclusive from an archaeological point of view, particularly for the dating of archaeological layers. It is usually impossible to give an irrefutable chronological dating, given the lack of fine wares in the Atlantic façade, especially in areas that did not play an important role as maritime ports. In this sense, research on Late Antique contexts in the modern Portuguese territory remains underdeveloped. It still faces strong limitations in recognizing layers produced during the Suebic-Visigothic period, between c. 409-411 and 711 AD (the moment of the Arabic invasion of the Hispanic territory).

Taberna 1 has produced some relevant layers for understanding its creation in the Early-Empire and its survival during the Suebic-Visigothic period, which continued at least until the beginning or first half of the 6th century AD.

No circulation levels from the Imperial phase were recorded inside *Taberna* 1. This situation is common across the residential sector of the town, where the Roman levels lay immediately above the bedrock or pavements of the houses. SU 1008 is thus the sole circulation level recorded in *Taberna* 1, where previous excavations have cut part of it, but without leaving any stratigraphic record. SU 1008 contains a large amount of ceramics and glass, but a large part of its finds is residual (**tab. 1**). This layer that, apparently, goes under the threshold of the building and proves that its narrowing was carried out at the same time of the formation of this Late Antique SU. With regard to this stratigraphic aspect, we may stress that the strong leaching of the sediments in this sector of the site did not allow to clearly distinguishing the circulation level from the occupation level. Therefore, SU 1008 combines both.

SU 1002, laying on SU 1008, is a thin corrupted level produced by the circulation inside taberna 1, after the excavation of Fernando de Almeida in the 1960's. It has a different

sedimentary nature, but its statistics matches the results of SU 1008, without any detected intrusion (**tab. 2**). Nevertheless, we must stress that it concerns a corrupted layer produced by the circulation of people from 1960's onwards.

For a correct definition and ceramological discussion, several fabrics – nine with some variants – among the local/regional coarse wares were established. A relatively small number of ceramic fragments, mostly unclassified, was not credited to any fabric yet. They all present, with some small variations, the same mostly quarzitic matrix, consistent with regional geological characteristics:

1a – Compact clay. Small-sized, angular hyaline quartz and some small-sized muscovite. Scarce feldspar and iron-rich inclusions;

1b – Granular clay. Angular, fine, hyaline quartz. Scarce dark inclusions and calcite;

1c – Granular clay. Angular and demi-rounded hyaline quartz. Scarce feldspar, dark inclusions and very small-sized iron-rich inclusions;

2a – Compact clay. Small/medium-sized, rounded hyaline quartz. Brown-red chamotte. Scarce feldspar and fine, dark inclusions;

2b – Granular clay. Small and middle-sized inclusions: rounded hyaline quartz, scarce muscovite, fine, dark inclusions and feldspar;

2c – Granular clay. Small, rounded hyaline quartz; scarce, small feldspar and fine dark inclusions;

2d – Granular clay. Small and middle-sized hyaline quartz; scarce chamotte;

3 – Slightly compact clay. Some rounded, middle-sized hyaline quartz; scarce fine muscovite and biotite, dark inclusions and middle-sized calcite;

4a – Slightly compact clay. Rounded, middle-sized hyaline quartz; strong presence of small-sized quartz; chamotte; scarce muscovite;

4b – Granular, barely-fired clay. Small-sized inclusions: muscovite and biotite; rounded hyaline quartz; some possible middle-sized phyllite;

5a – Granular clay. Rounded, angular hyaline quartz; some muscovite and biotite; scarce middle/large-sized, angular white-quartz;

5b – Barely compact clay. Small-sized, rounded hyaline quartz; some middle-sized white-quartz and middle-sized dark inclusions; scarce feldspar and biotite;

6a – Slightly compact clay. Small and middle-sized hyaline quartz; some middle-sized dark inclusions; scarce fine calcite, biotite, muscovite and feldspar;

6b – Slightly compact clay. Fine hyaline quartz, calcite and other inclusions; middle-sized, rounded hyaline quartz; scarce dark inclusions;

6c – Slightly compact clay. Middle-sized, rounded and angular hyaline quartz and dark inclusions; scarce feldspar, calcite, fine muscovite; possible scarce, middle-sized olivine.

7 – Slightly compact clay. Small-sized inclusions: angular hyaline quartz, biotite and possible rock fragments.

8 – Fine-grained clay. Hyaline quartz and some fine muscovite. Scarce feldspar?

9 – Middle-grained clay. Strong presence of middle-sized inclusions: semi-angular hyaline quartz, some muscovite, scarce calcite; 197non-classified inclusions.

Class	Origin	Fabric	Type	Sherds	MNV	MNV Prod.	% MNV Prod.
Amphorae	*Lusitania*, Tagus/Sado		Dr.14 or Alm. 50	1	1	3	100
			Lusitana 3	1	1		
			Alm. 51c	1	1		
			Unc	10	0		0
	Total			13	3	3	100%
Building Ceramics	Local/Regional		*Tegulae*	4	4	4	100
	Total			4	4	4	100%
Coarse Ware	Local/Regional fast-wheel (80%)	1a	Lid	1	1	2	5
			Unc.	5	1		
		1b	Small Jar	1	1	6	15
			Lid	4	4		
			Unc.	5	1		
		1c	Lid	4	4	7	17
			Deep Plate	1	1		
			Olla	1	1		
			Unc.	6	1		
		2a	Lid	1	1	2	5
			Unc.	4	1		
		2b	Flagon	1	1	3	7
			Jar	1	1		
			Unc.	7	1		
		2c	Unc.	1	1	1	3
		2d	Unc.	1	1	1	3
		4a	*Olla*	1	1	5	12
			Unc.	1	1		
			Unc. RO	1	1		
			Unc. OR	1	1		
			Unc. R	1	1		
		4b	Unc.	1	1	1	3
		5a	Unc.	7	1	1	3
		5b	Unc. RO	1	1	2	5
			Unc.	3	1		
		6a	Small Jar	1	1	2	5
			Unc.	1	1		
		6b	Unc.	3	1	1	3
		7	Unc.	8	1	1	3
		8	Unc.	1	1	1	3
		9	Unc.	1	1	1	3
		n/a	Unc.	8	1	2	5
			Plate/Lid	2	1		
	Total			86	39	39	100%
	Local/Regional slow-wheel (20%)	4a	Jar	1	1	4	40
			Olla R	1	1		
			Unc. R	2	1		
			Unc. RO	2	1		
		4b	Unc. R	2	1	1	10
		5a	Unc. R	1	1	3	30
			Unc. RO	1	1		
			Unc.	1	1		
		5b	Unc.	1	1	1	10
		6b	Unc. R	1	1	1	10
	Total			13	10	10	100%
Terra Sigillata	South Gaulish		Drag.18	1	1	3	37,5
			Drag.29, 30 or 37	1	1		
			Drag.24/25	1	1		
	South Gaulish-Marmorata		Unc.	1	1	1	0
	Hispanic - La Rioja		Drag.27	1	1	1	12,5
	Hispanic - Andújar		Drag.15/17	2	1	1	12,5
			Unc.	1	0	0	
	ARS A		Hayes 6c?	1	1	1	12,5
			Unc.	1	0		
	ARS C		Hayes 50 ?	1	1	1	12,5
	Total			11	8	8	100%
Glass	Black		Bracelet	1	1	1	25%
	Uncoloured Green		Plate (ring foot)	1	1	1	25%
	Uncoloured		Bell shaped bowl (var.1)	1	1	2	50%
			Plate with ceramic profile	1	1		
			Unc.	8	0		
	Total			12	4	4	100%
Final Total				**139**	**68**	**68**	**100%**

Table 1. Quantification of SU 1008.

Class	Origin	Fabric	Type	Sherds	MNV	MNV Prod.	% MNV Prod.
Amphorae	*Baetica*, Coastline		Unc.	1	1	1	33
	Lusitania, Tagus/Sado		Dr.14, var. B	1	1	2	67
			Dr.14 / Alm.50	4	1		
			Unc	22	0		
	Total			28	3	3	100%
Coarse Ware	*Baetica*, Coastline		Unc.	3	1	1	1
	Local/ Regional fast-wheel (80%)	1a	Jar	1	1	3	6
			Lid	1	1		
			Unc.	7	1		
		1b	Lid	1	1	3	6
			Casserole	1	1		
			Unc.	8	1		
		1c	Lid	1	1	4	9
			Jar	1	1		
			Olla	1	1		
			Unc.	1	1		
		2a	Jar	1	1	6	12
			Flagon	1	1		
			Jar/*olla*	1	1		
			Plate/Lid	1	1		
			Deep Plate?	1	1		
			Unc.	6	1		
		2b	Deep Plate	1	1	4	9
			Cup	1	1		
			Plate?	1	1		
			Unc.	7	1		
		2c	Unc.	2	1	1	2
		2d	Jar	1	1	4	9
			Casserole	1	1		
			Deep Plate	1	1		
			Basin	1	1		
		3	Basin	1	1	6	10
			Deep Plate	2	2		
			Flagon	1	1		
			Unc.	3	1		
			Unc. RO	1	1		
		4a	Unc.	1	1	1	2
		4b	Unc.	1	1	1	2
		5a	Unc.	7	1	2	4
			Unc. RO	4	1		
		5b	Unc.	1	1	1	2
		6a	Unc.	4	1	1	2
		6b	Deep Plate	1	1	2	4
			Unc.	3	1		
		6c	Unc.	2	1	2	4
			Unc. RO	1	1		
		7	Unc.	7	1	1	2
		8	Unc.	6	1	1	2
		9	Unc.	1	1	1	2
		n/a	Unc.	21	1	5	10
			Bowl	1	1		
			Jar/*olla*	1	1		
			Olla	2	1		
			Lid	1	1		
	Total			126	50	50	100%

With regard to the technological vectors of continuity, as concerning fabrics, groups 2c, 4a, 5b, 6b, 7 and 8 were already present in the Flavian period, in Hole 1 (=SU 1021) and SU 1016 - in small quantities, as well as reducing (R) or reducing/oxidised (RO) firings. In these strata from the Early Empire there is only one fragment (intrusive?) produced by slow wheel, which we deem quite inconsequential due to its lack of typological classification.

This framework changes strongly in SU 1008 (a Late Antique level that erased almost completely the SUs from the Early Empire and completely the Late Roman phases), the dating of which may vary between the late 5th century and the early/first half of the 6th century AD. Fast-wheel, mostly oxidised firings occurred among 80% of the MNV, while 20% belong to slow-wheel productions that vary between reducing and reducing-oxidised fabrics, as are barely known in the contexts of the Early Empire (intrusive?) at

Class	Origin	Fabric	Type	Sherds	MNV	MNV Prod.	% MNV Prod.
Coarse Ware	Local/ Regional Slow Wheel (20%)	4a	Jar/*olla*	2	2	5	41
			Unc.	1	1		
			Olla RO	1	1		
			Unc. OR	1	1		
		4b	*Olla*?	1	1	2	17
			Unc. RO	1	1		
		5a	Unc. RO	1	1	1	8
		6a	Unc.	1	1	1	8
		6b	Unc. R	1	1	1	8
		n/a	Unc. R	3	1	2	18
		n/a	Unc. RO	1	1		
	Total			14	12	12	100%
Storage	Local/Regional		*Dolium*	10	3	3	100%
Fine Coarse Ware	Local/Regional		Small jar	1	1	1	100%
Lamps	*Augusta Emerita*		Unc.	1	1	1	100%
Thin Walls	Baetica (with barbotine decoration)		Unc.	2	1	1	33.3
	Unc.			4	1	1	33.3
	Italia			1	1	1	33.3
	Total			7	3	3	100%
Terra Sigillata	South Gaulish		Drag.37	1	1	1	11
	Hispanic - La Rioja		Drag.27	2	2	4	45
			Drag.15-17	2	2		
			Cup	2	0		
			Unc.	4	0		
	Hispanic-Andújar		Drag.15-17	2	1	1	11
			Unc.	2	0		
	ARS A		H.9b	1	1	3	33
			H.50 a/b	2	2		
			Unc.	1	0		
	Total			19	9	9	100%
Glass	Uncoloured		Unc.	1	1	4	100
			Isings 106/ chamfered rim	1	1		
			Isings 116 high bell-shaped bowl	1	1		
			Windo glass?	1	1		
			Unc	5	0		
	Total			9	4	4	100%
Pompeian Red Slip Ware	*Hispania*		Deep Plate	1	1	1	100%
Final Total				**216**	**87**	**87**	**100%**

Table 2. Quantification of SU 1002.

Taberna 1 and completely absent in the residential sector of *Mirobriga*.

A Late Antique, generic dating of this SU 1008 can be supported firstly by the glass assemblage. It includes a barely preserved fragment of Isings 116/high bell-shaped bowl, still of uncoloured glass, which points to a period before the late 6th and 7th centuries and finds some parallels at Marinha Baixa-Aveiro (late 5th-first half of the 6th centuries AD) (Quaresma, Sarrazola and Silva 2015).

Nevertheless, above all, this chronology matches with Escadinhas de São Crispim's sector at *Olysipona*-*Olisipo*-Lisbon, where the assemblage of local/regional coarse ware from 500-525 and 525-550 AD gives a statistical parallel. For 500-525 AD the assemblage of 75 MNV contains 1/3 of slow wheel and less than 1/5 of reducing or reducing-oxidised fabrics; for 525-550 AD, the assemblage of 14 MNV contains 100% slow wheel and 2/3 of reducing or reducing-oxidised firings (Quaresma 2020).

In an intervention in Setúbal, the levels dated to the second quarter of the 6th century showcase the importance of the reducing, reducing-oxidised and oxidised-reducing fabrics of the context, forming 54 % of the total of ceramic fragments

(statistics made following the cataloque of the authors Silva and Coelho-Soares 2014: 309 and note 2).

Another significant context in the Lusitanian territory is the industrial fishing complex of Lagos, mainly the levels dating to the first decades of the 6th century, which present an important assemblage of manual-and-slow-wheel made coarse ware. Contrary to the other sites cited before, the firing of these fragments is mostly oxidised, which is still relatively normal at this stage (Ramos et al. 2007: 87).

In the region of Madrid (Vigil-Escalera Guirado 2003), research points to a similar situation as at Escadinhas de São Crispim, with 15% of slow wheel attested during 500-525 AD,

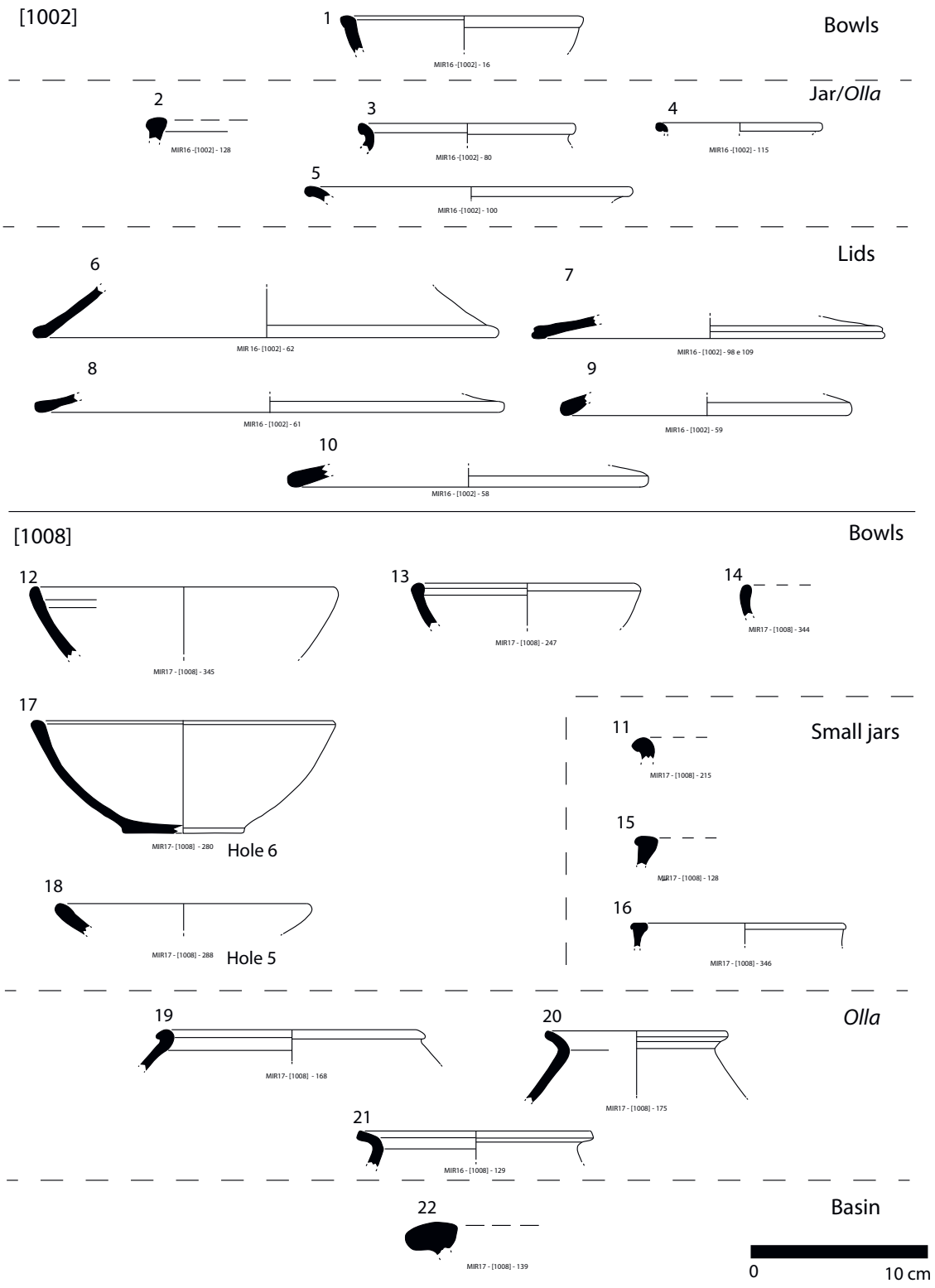

Fig. 3. Coarse wares from SUs 1002 and 1008.

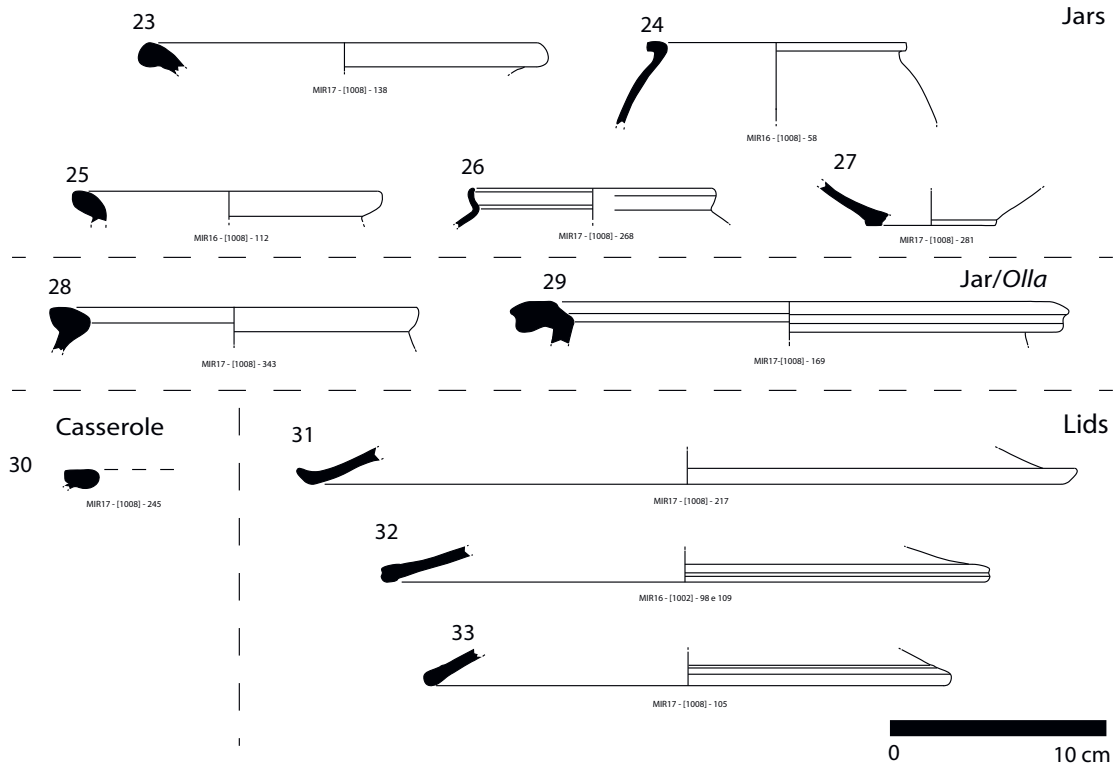

Fig. 4. Coarse wares from SU 1002.

50% at 525-550 AD and 75% at 550-575 AD. This ceramological framework concerning the local/regional coarse ware points to the late 5th/early 6th centuries AD as the period for the formation of SU 1008 at *Taberna* 1 at *Mirobriga*. Nevertheless, the lack of stratigraphic studies does not allow a rigid dating. It can possibly start earlier and finish later than this gap.

3. Final remarks

Generally speaking, we witness a continuity of typically Roman ceramic traditions, both in typological and manufacturing terms, up until the beginning of the 5th century AD. Somehow, however, over this century – despite the difficulties that studying these types of contexts entail – we see a deviation from these models. Both in Lisbon and Setúbal, as well as in the region of Madrid (as mentioned above) fabrics are, usually, coarser and of reducing firings, while there is a gradual substitution of the previously used open forms, such as plates, for closed ones, mostly pots and jars, and the *olla* becomes the main form. These characteristics are intrinsic to several sites of the Iberian Peninsula and there is evidence of this pattern of transition in the coarse wares of *Taberna* 1 at *Mirobriga*. The most consistent data seem to be the still-secondary role of slow wheel and reducing firings, as well as the general continuity of fabrics from the Imperial phase. These aspects lead us to consider that SU 1008 (and SU 1002's content, taking into account that this layer does not contain any ceramological intrusion) may not be dated that far from the early 5th century and its statistical values may point to the early 6th century AD, matching it to the results from Lisbon and Madrid.

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