

## The consumption of pottery in *Bracara Augusta* in the 1st century: memory, tradition and innovation<sup>1</sup>

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MACHADO, D; MARTINS, M. The consumption of pottery in *Bracara Augusta* in the 1st century: memory, tradition and innovation. *R. Museu Arq. Etn.* 43: 17-30, 2024.

**Abstract:** The pottery of *Bracara Augusta* have been usually studied from an historical and chronological perspective, in which the main aim is to understand the succession of productions or their contemporaneity. This perspective enables the framing of products and fabric to be ordered in a timeline. This approach to time, although dominant in archaeological research, presents some interpretative limitations. In this work, we propose an analysis of this material from a perception of time as memory, based on Bergson (1999) and Deleuze (1999), upon which the present and future are dimensions of a past that is both virtual and constantly updated in the present. This perspective can contribute to a different reading on the diversity of vessels that were consumed in the city.

**Keywords:** Material culture; pottery; *Bracara Augusta*; consumption; memory

### Introduction

The archaeological research of material culture was grounded in the need to organise the vast array of objects found in museum collections in order to give them a sense of intelligibility and organisation. This strategy emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, at a time when major catalogues (*corpora*)

of various types of artifacts accumulated in European museums were compiled. Examples of these include the *Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum* (Pottier 1922), the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (Mommsen 1852), the *De Vasculis Romanorum Rubris capita selecta* (Dragendorff 1894), the *Coins of the Roman Republic in the British Museum* (Grueber 1910), amongst others. Despite the epistemological and methodological advances in archaeological science and the emergence of new methods of dating materials and contexts, the study of material culture has not undergone significant changes. Thus, a significant portion of the analysis of material culture is still conducted today with the aim of classifying objects and identifying their typology.

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When analyzing pottery material for classificatory purposes, *i.e.*, to identify its manufacture, form, and function with the aim of associating it with previously defined typologies or propose a new one, the narrative potential of the pieces are reduced to an approach that separates different productions and, within them, distinct shapes of objects. This creates timelines that only reveal changes in material culture over time. This approach overlooks the capacity of materials to provide inferences about social and economic dynamics, based on the appreciation of the diversity of objects available at a given time, along with the relationships they had with their peers or predecessors, which stand as traces of memory, whether in terms of shape, technology, decoration, or symbolism.

The pottery artifacts identified in *Bracara Augusta* (*Hispania Tarraconensis*), within the scope of the systematic archaeological activity that has been carried out for the past 50 years in the city of Braga (Portugal), have been subject of a significant number of studies that classified them into typologies. At the same time, research have analyzed production sites, formal evolution, and chronology of pieces that were consumed on site. In order to surpass this perspective, our aim is to revisit this material via an analysis that emphasizes aspects associated with memory, highlighting the dialogue between tradition and innovation.

### Production, exchange, and consumption

The population that settled in *Bracara Augusta*, a city that was founded from 15 to 13 BC, began producing pottery in the early decades of occupation, with various productions catering to the diverse needs of their community. In fact, throughout the 1<sup>st</sup> century, the manufactured objects exhibited formal and technological continuity with the characteristic productions of Iron Age settlements located within the region. For this reason, they

are referred to as pottery of indigenous tradition. Additionally, other common productions show variations in terms of the paste used and lacking elaborate finishes or decoration, as they were mainly intended for the kitchen and tableware service of the less fortunate. Its shape variability includes medium and large-sized objects such as pans, pots, frying pan, jars, saucerpans, casseroles, mortars, basins, roasting pans, pitchers, cups, and bowls (Delgado & Morais 2009).

Pieces revealing a more careful finish were also produced, featuring smoothed walls, decorative paintings, or even slip coatings for surface covering, which showed a chromatic effect that also represented a decorative feature. This group of productions includes fine common pottery, painted fine pottery, polished fine grey pottery, and red slip pottery. These forms represent a formal repertoire that includes cups, small pots, bowls, drinking cups, and plates—objects primarily used at the table (Delgado & Morais 2009; Gomes 2000). Local potters also specialised in reproducing exogenous shapes in high-quality items, undoubtedly intended to supply a more demanding clientele within the urban market, in addition to the regional market, specifically within the *Bracaraugustanus* and *Lucensis conuentus*. This group includes pottery workshops from *Bracara Augusta*, which imitated Hispanic *sigillatae* and “fine walls” productions, pieces originating from *Baetica*—as well as fine pieces that were either painted or featured red slips (Delgado & Morais 2009; Leite, 1997; Machado et al. 2022).

The consumption of pottery also included a significant variety of imported products, such as *amphorae* used for transporting food products and tableware. These items followed a standardised formal repertoire and a type of production that focused on exports, achieving considerable rates and volumes. We are definitely dealing with the “systolic phase” of the Roman cultural revolution, as proposed

by A. Wallace-Hadrill (2008), in which the city of Rome, after a “diastolic phase”—characterized by the consumption of Mediterranean objects, including *ornamenta tempa* and decorative items in *uillae* after their display in *triumpha* (Zanker 1988)—, began to export material and symbolic content to its provinces. This phenomenon is well represented by the extensive trade at an imperial level of “arretine pottery” and, later, *sigillatae*, the consumption of which is recognized on a large scale in most major cities of the Empire from the Augustan period onwards. These events can be interpreted as the assertion and recognition of a gradually affirming Roman identity (Jiménez 2017; Woolf 1998).

These imports document the rapid integration of the Iberian Northwest into the major Mediterranean and Atlantic trading routes, as well as the interest of the city’s inhabitants in the productions displayed in the tableware of the Italian and imperial elites. Thus, during the Augustan and Tiberian periods, few Italian *terra sigillata* artifacts arrived in the city, produced in the region of Arezzo and, although less common, in Central Italy. The limited quantity of these objects, especially those associated with the workshop of A. *Titius*, dated to 30–10 BC, suggests a sporadic, individual importation (Delgado & Santos 1984). These Italian products were eventually replaced by pieces from Gallic workshops, especially those coming from La Graufesenque region, between the reigns of *Tiberius* and the Antonine emperors. However, their decline became more pronounced from the mid-Flavian period onwards. Parallel to the decrease in the imports of Gallic *terra sigillata* artifacts, the import of Hispanic wares—mainly coming from the Tricio region—began to dominate, remaining highly active throughout the 2<sup>nd</sup> century (Delgado 1985). In addition, between the Julio-Claudian period and the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century, another noteworthy imported production consisted of fine walled objects from *Augusta Emerita*,

the capital of *Lusitania*, as well as from the province of *Baetica* (Morais 2005).

Between the Julio-Claudian and Flavian periods, *Bracara Augusta* presented itself as a thriving and dynamic urban centre, where a diverse community settled. Amongst the early inhabitants were indigenous people coming from the region’s settlements, who gradually adopted Roman and Italic habits, practices, and symbols in their various activities and ways of life. Although we know little about the pace of these changes, we can infer from the material culture that, by the mid-1<sup>st</sup> century or from the third generation of settlers onwards, local pottery production gradually abandoned the prototypes characteristic of the late Iron Age period, and started adopting the technology and the formal and decorative repertoire of products referred to as being “Roman.” These were coarse pottery, produced with regional clays from the Prado area and used in the production of kitchen and pantry vessels. Alongside this production, known as “Roman common ware,” finer pottery products began to be produced, consisting of tableware that often imitated imported pieces.

### The limits of the historical analysis of pottery productions

What we refer to as a “historical analysis of pottery productions” represents a perspective rooted in historicism, aiming to organise their sequence along a timeline intending to produce a comprehensive framework for the evolution of different production technologies. This synthesis encompasses various categories of analysis, including the origin and morphology of the pieces, types of finishes, and decorative motifs. This analytical perspective is predominant and constitutes one of the cornerstones of archaeological analysis and dating systems for contexts and structures, thus enabling the chronological

reconstruction of sequences and events<sup>1</sup>. In reality, as stratigraphic analysis only enables establishing a relative chronological sequence—that is, arranging different realities based on relationships of anteriority, contemporaneity, and posteriority between them—it is the physical elements present in the sediments that enable a chronological approximation to contexts (Bicho 2006). This explains archaeologists' reliance on the chronology of artifacts, particularly pottery, due to their durability, diversity, and abundance (Harris 1997) 2.

The typological studies of the pottery material coming from *Bracara Augusta* and originating from contexts dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> century allow today for the construction of a quite expressive temporal and productive panorama, as shown in Table 1. The succession of manufacturing processes circulating in the city highlights distinct phases of pottery production and import, thus enabling inferences about the interactions between local potters and the dynamic peninsular and Mediterranean markets. At the same time, this reference study also provides the chronological framework for the excavated contexts in the city, which is essential for establishing the

moments of foundation and renovation of the city's buildings, whether public, such as thermal baths (Martins 2005) or and theatre (Martins *et al.* 2013), or private, such as the Carvalheiras *domus* (Martins 2000).

The earliest productions found in the city, still during the Augustan period, are represented by pottery of indigenous tradition and Italian *sigillata*. These are two radically distinct manufactures. The first documents the settlement in the urban space of inhabitants originating from the castros (hillforts) of the region and shows continuity with the productions made in the Iron Age settlements of the Cávado river valley, which is the region where *Bracara Augusta* was established (Martins 1990). On the other hand, the fine products from Italy, mainly coming from the Tuscan region—which reached a high level of production in the Augustan era and thus justified the social recognition of its potters and workshops to the extent that they began to reference their pieces via the engraving of a stamp (*sigillum*) on the lower part of the base (Ettlinger 1990)—would have been consumed by a population that was already Roman or Romanised, and who had already settled in the city.

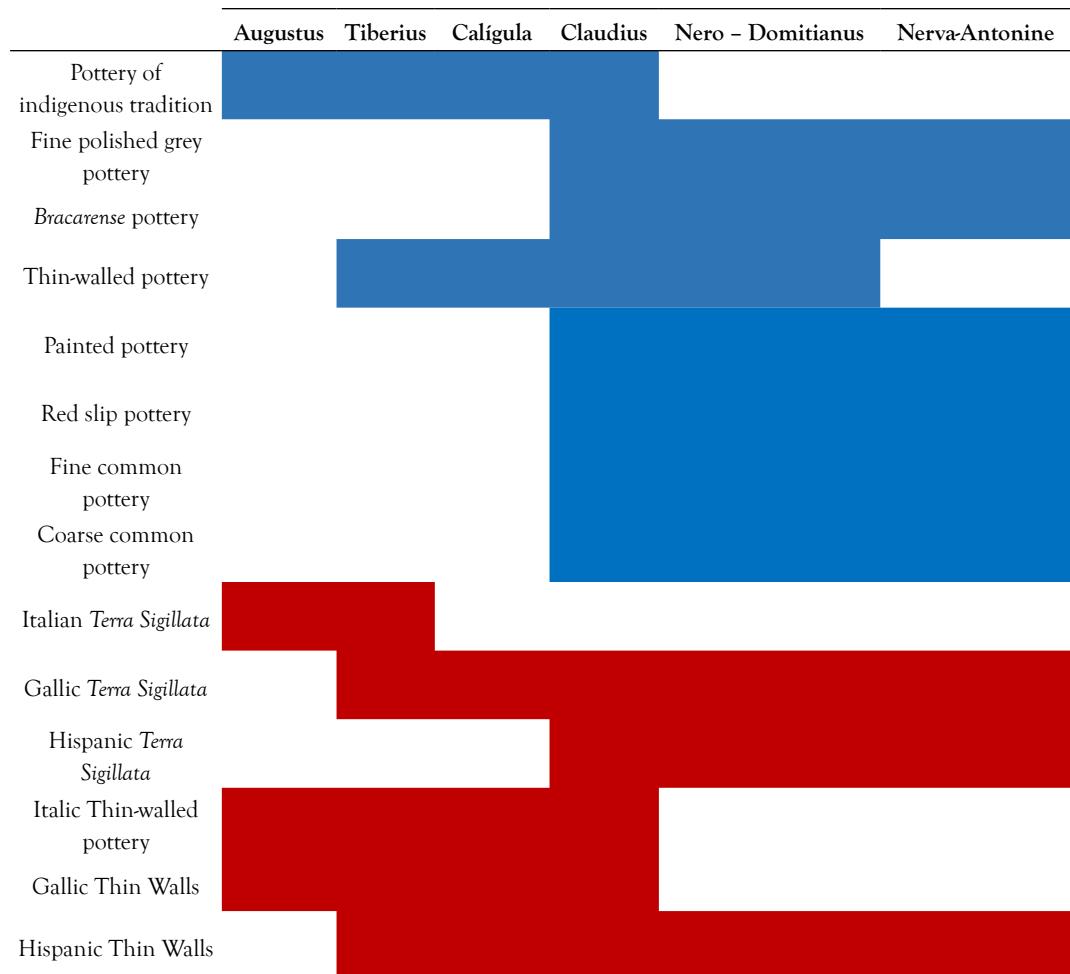
Despite its huge and undisputed contribution to the understanding of the city's evolution, the historical and chronological interpretation of pottery material presents serious limitations when it comes to the social and cultural analysis of objects. In reality, historical studies focused on establishing chronological sequences, in which phenomena are largely explained by what follows them, fall within a historicist perspective criticised by W. Benjamin (2012) due to its apodictic nature. Moreover, this type of analysis creates an inevitable distance from human temporal experience, as people's perception of time does not occur in an historical manner, or in other words, in a sequential organization of events based on causes and effects, but rather in a significantly different way, in which past and future are not opposing points on a line

1 An interesting conversation between archaeologists Gavin Lucas and Laurent Olivier, who have dedicated themselves in various ways to the topic of Archaeology of Time, was published (*cf.* Lucas & Olivier 2022). In that work, the authors discuss the challenges they faced during the writing of their doctoral theses, both completed in the 1990s at the University of Cambridge and how reflections on temporal perspectives remained present in their trajectories as both archaeologists and researchers.

2 With the advancement of dating techniques that leverage a much broader range of archaeological materials, typological analysis of artefacts has become just one of the ways to assign chronologies to contexts. In fact, we now have a much more diverse array of radiometric dating methods at our disposal, which has brought into focus a range of elements that previously received little attention, such as bones, teeth, pollen, wood, mortar, horns, ivories, shells, lithic, conglomerates, pottery, speleofacts, and more. This has significantly broadened the capacity to infer chronologies for contexts, especially when combined with Bayesian modelling (Aitken 1990).

but rather interwoven in the composition of the present. The issue of temporality is a concern that dates back to the ancient world and is present in the inquiries of Augustine of Hippo in Book XI of the *Confessions* (Saint Augustine 2017). Since then, it

extended throughout the intellectual history of the Western world, and even persisted in the previous century as found in the studies of phenomenological perception of being-in-itself and in the world, seen in the works of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1999: 549-580).



**Table 1.** Chronologies associated with local (blue) and imported (red) manufactures identified in *Bracara Augusta*.

**Source:** after Delgado & Santos (1984), Delgado (1985), Morais (2005), Delgado & Morais (2009)<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> The periods associated with the emperors *Nero*, *Galba*, *Otho*, *Vitellius*, *Vespasian*, *Titus*, and *Domitianus* have been condensed into the formula “*Nero-Domitian*” as they do not include any manufactures that started or ended in the middle of the reign of any of them. This was also done to reduce the width of the Table and improve its presentation. However, the “*Nerva-Antonine*” column does not necessarily represent the end of these manufactures during the period when this dynasty ruled the Empire. Its inclusion in the analysis was performed to reference the continuity of the manufactures beyond the chronological horizon established for the analysis, the 1st century, while still respecting the sequence of emperors included.

## Memory and the studies of materials

An alternative to the historical perspective of time can be found in the study by Henri Bergson in *Matter and Memory* (1999). In this work, the French philosopher asserts that the past survives in two manners: via automatic mechanical actions that repeat in order to adapt to circumstances, and via independent memories, in which the past is invoked to provide responses to the present based on their mutual recognition, and thus results in a proposed future as it projects towards it (Bergson 1999: 84-99). While the former proposition relies on the repetition of actions, including reflection and reading, and occurs as a habit, the latter is the result of a more elaborate mental effort that seeks associations of formal, visual, auditory, etc., contiguity between the present and memories of the past.

We can associate the first type of memory from Bergson with habit and with the production work of pottery, that is, their fabrication, which relies upon the repetitive nature of actions. This habit involves knowledge and repetition that enables preparing raw materials, filtrating non-plastic elements, controlling pottery wheel speed, opening and shaping of the clay, adding the final details, and decorating, all of which require physical mastery, particularly one associated with the intimate relationship between the object and the hands that make it. At the same time, this activity is also social, as the potter's learning arises from their integration into a group, from the relationship between a master and an apprentice and, above all, from their skill, as competition with other producers depends on their ability and capacity to meet the demands for requested pieces (Malafouris 2021; Stout 2002).

The second type of memory proposed by Bergson (1999) is associated with independent memories that arise in people's minds to produce responses and meanings, which would be

present whenever pottery pieces were contemplated by individuals, whether when purchasing these objects or during their use. In situations that choices may occur, the items available for acquisition and consumption emerge immersed in networks of multiple meanings, within which no object can be understood outside itself or outside human relations. In this context, even the price of a product can only be assessed as low or high when viewed in light of this network, which considers both the prices charged for similar items by other sellers and the competition among vendors, in addition to people's perception of the value assigned to an object based on the commercial flow that is experienced throughout its existence (Douglas & Isherwood 1979).

The immersion of an object in its network of possible meanings is also the result of processes triggered in the brain after receiving an external signal. The effect is the activation of a broad set of neurons, which is a phenomenon referred to as Kohonen networks (Spitzer 1999). According to this concept, the brain does not make a direct association between the "external" object and the "internal" idea, but rather activates a neural network in search of the most plausible response via traces of visual contiguity between the two elements. Thus, when observing a decorated bowl of the Dragendorff 24/25 type produced in *bracarense* pottery, the process of recognising that object is conducted based on the set of visual features that could be appreciated as follows (Fig. 1): a) the coloration of the external surface refers to a manufacture from the coast of the *conuentus bracaraugustanus*, which exhibits those tones and stands out for producing pieces with high technical skill (Leite 1997); b) the shape of the object associates it with dining habits, possibly during symposiastic activities, with the diner reclined on the *lectus* of a *triclinium* (Delgado & Morais 2009); c) the decoration on the upper part of the wall, near the rim, in *guilloché*, although referring

to a cultural framework of Roman origin, perhaps does not entirely distance itself from the indigenous substrate, especially when compared to the decorative patterns of pottery from the late Iron Age period originating in the Cávado valley (Martins 1987, 1990); and d) the appreciation of the bowl's shape and/or the employed

decorative motif finds a parallel in a set of pieces that have already circulated through the city markets, such as the smooth or stamped Italian *terra sigillatae* of Dragendorff 24/25A type, the Drag. 24/25 Gaulish *terrae sigillatae* with guilloché decoration, or the smooth Hispano *sigillatae* of the same typology (Beltrán Lloris 1990).

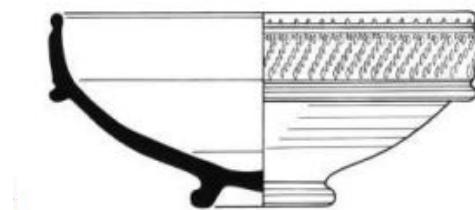


Fig. 1. Bowl with Dragendorff 24/25 shape decorated in *bracarense* pottery.

Source: Delgado; Morais, (2009: Fig. 54).

The way neurons are activated in a Kohonen network also establishes a dialectical process for identifying the object, that is, "it is a bowl," "it is not a plate," "it is *bracarense*," "it is not *terra sigillata*," etc. The network of meanings in which a pottery piece is embedded is summoned by its observer, who needs to establish the principles of contiguity and the recollections that their memory retains, in order to provide responses in the present, in close association with the other products that are presented to them, whether on a merchant's stall or on a banquet table.

In this sense, the notion of present, past, and future is not something separate and distinct from each other, but rather something that coexists. The "presentness" of the *bracarense* bowl on a tavern shelf does not conceal its pasts as a raw material or as an imitation of an imported shape, just as



it does not deny its potential future as an object to be used during a dinner service. This aspect of time was well studied by Gilles Deleuze, a philosopher who dedicated himself to Bergson's work and to whom "the 'present' that endures is divided at every 'instant' into two directions, one oriented and amplified towards the past, and the other contracted, decreasing towards the future." (Deleuze 1999: 39; our translation).

The difference between historical and memorial perspectives in the study of pottery lies in the fact that the relationship between past, present, and future does not occur via the succession of historical times, but via the essence of the temporal notion that allows their coexistence. The limits of historical analysis become even more evident when conducting a deeper investigation of the stratigraphic evolution of this material (Lucas 1995; Olivier 1994: 81-86).

### The pottery of *Bracara Augusta* in the 1<sup>st</sup> century: memory, tradition, and innovation

The first pottery productions identified in *Bracara Augusta* in the early decades after the city's foundation include imported pieces of Italic *terra sigillata* and Gallic and Italic thin-walled items, alongside locally made pieces of indigenous tradition. These latter productions were created by the city's early inhabitants, whose demographic composition indicates a high presence of indigenous communities coming from nearby settlements (Martins & Carvalho 2017; Rocha 2017), foreigners from various areas of Hispania, such as *Clunia*, *Pax Iulia*, and *Arcobriga*, alongside Roman officials (Martins et al. 2012, 2020).

These two groups of productions, both the local and exogenous, differ in terms of the production origin and the technical and morphological repertoire of the pieces. The so-called pottery of indigenous tradition exhibits a clear resemblance to Iron Age manufactures in the Cávado River region (Martins 1990), and are represented by pieces with varied shapes that include utensils for kitchen and pantry use, such as pans, pots of various sizes, frying pans, jars, in addition to tableware, including cups, bowls, goblets, and plates (Delgado & Morais, 2009: 13). On the other hand, the imports of *terra sigillatae* and thin-walled pottery from Italic and Gallic potteries supplied the city with a set of pieces exclusively intended for the table, such as cups, goblets, bowls, and, more rarely, *kantharoi* and *skyphoi* (Delgado & Morais 2009; Morais 2005).

The pottery assets from the Augustan period were oriented into two directions. The first points to a continuation of the local and regional pottery traditions, producing utensils intended for both kitchen use and storage, as well as for the table. The second direction points to innovation embodied in imports, which were primarily used in dining activities. The presence of individual dining pieces, such

as cups and plates, which are characteristic of both groups, suggests a likely shift in dining habits among the early *coloni* of indigenous origin who settled in the city and came from nearby settlements. On the other hand, the absence of kitchen items in the imports, such as pots, suggests that non-indigenous inhabitants who immigrated to *Bracara Augusta*, whether of Roman, Italic, or Hispanic origin, would have used locally produced pieces for their food preparation practices.

After approximately three decades of *Augustus*'s rule, during the period of *Tiberius* and *Caligula*, the type of pottery producers present in the city's markets underwent significant changes. Alongside the expansion of commercial relationships with pottery centers of other provinces, especially of *Galliae* and *Hispaniae*, local producers began to invest in different types of manufacture. Consequently, new imports of Gallic *sigillata* replaced similar Italic pieces during *Tiberius*'s rule, assuming the same functions in table service as their predecessors, and including artifacts as bowls, plates, and cups, some of them with high-footed examples. However, the flow of imported pieces also increased with the introduction of thin-walled pottery coming from *Hispania*, initially from *Baetica* and later from *Lusitania*. Among these, the wares from *Augusta Emerita* are noteworthy and primarily represented by bowls and cups, as well as some *unguentaria* (Morais 2005).

Local producers also demonstrated innovation in their manufacturing over the Julio-Claudian period, driven by a new generation of potters who began producing pieces in workshops that used regional clays from the Prado area. This central circumstance is crucial for assessing the innovative capacity of the *Bracara Augusta* workshops. As demonstrated by Olivier Gosselain (2000) in his ethnoarchaeographic study of African pottery production, the willingness of potters to embrace changes in terms of both techniques and manufacturing procedures is essential and particularly noticeable in the final stages. Changes in

finishes and decorations became more frequent, as they aimed to adapt the pieces to consumers' preferences. Meanwhile, when it comes to techniques employed in crafting vessels, such as the use of the wheel or moulds, the resistances were significantly greater, as mastering a production technique comes from a lifetime dedicated to training and refining the craft. It involves a skill associated with the development of powerful and enduring motor habits (Gosselain 2000: 191-193).

In this sense, the analysis of changes in productions based on generational shifts among potters proves to be a fruitful approach within the memory theory of Bergson. This approach encompasses the perspective of habit, which addresses technical continuities, as well as the recognition that fosters an articulation between shapes, decorations, and finishing touches. The local production of thin-walled pottery emerging during the *Tiberius'* period highlights the innovative capacity of the *Bracara Augusta* workshops, as they started producing new objects emulating those of external origins. However, it is possible that the local production of thin-walled pottery in *Bracara Augusta* resulted from the presence of foreign potters in the region, possibly originating in *Baetica*. This is a plausible hypothesis due to the absence of an intermediate production marking the transition from one style to another. Additionally, the types of pieces initially imitated, mainly *Baetic* cups and bowls, and the change in clay sources further support this idea, as these potters employed kaolinitic clays from the coast rather than those coming from the *Prado* area (Leite 1997).

This hypothesis is quite reasonable, especially when we analyze the generation of potters that succeeded those who worked during the nearly three decades spanning the reigns of *Tiberius* and *Caligula*. Between *Claudius* and the beginning of the Flavian dynasty, which encompasses the third generation, local production underwent a significant transformation. Under these

circumstances, pottery of indigenous tradition was replaced by common Roman productions, cooked in an oxidising atmosphere, resulting in a light coloration ranging from beige to brown<sup>4</sup>. Additionally, a finer variant of these pieces began to be produced, characterised by purer clays and enhanced finishes, and some even exhibiting surface painting (Delgado & Morais 2009). However, the most significant change regards the creation of new products inspired by imported pieces and the presence of new potters in the region, exemplified by the so-called red-slipped, fine grey polished, and *bracarense* pottery that emerged in the mid-decades of the 1<sup>st</sup> century.

Technologically and in terms of paste composition, the red-slipped pottery is very similar to the common productions. They feature a thick layer of red clay on the interior surface and sometimes the exterior, which adheres to the piece without vitrification, ensuring a finish with a color similar to *terrae sigillatae* and increased wall permeability (Delgado 1994). On the other hand, the fine grey polished pottery represents a significant technical investment, showcasing refined pastes and thin walls. These are associated with tableware items such as pitchers, small pots, cups, jugs, and plates (Delgado & Morais 2009). This production is somewhat widespread across the convent territory, being found in various urban centers and in Romanized settlements such as the *Citânia de Briteiros* and *Monte Mozinho*, as well as in the Leonese region of *Las Médulas (conuentus Asturicum)* (Soeiro 1981). The so-called *bracarense* pottery produced from coastal kaolin feature a unique finish characterized by a beige-orange coloration. It displays a diverse morphological range and includes bowls, flasks, pots, jars, jugs, cups, and small

4 Despite lacking deeper research, some modifications can be observed in pottery of indigenous tradition in a moment before their replacement by common Roman productions. We have attributed this to a transitional phase between these two productions, but further studies are necessary to better contextualize this phenomenon.

pots, many of which imitate shapes found in *terra sigillata* and thin-walled Hispanic wares. According to Rui Morais (2005), this production likely due to the presence of potters from *Baetica*, as the importing of *sigillata* from the Andújar region near Córdoba was quite rare in the city, yet abundant among *bracarens* production shapes. Therefore, these were likely *Baetic* potters who settled in the *conuentus bracaraugustanus* and from there produced these imitations of familiar pieces.

Possible migratory flows across various areas of the Empire can add another layer to the analysis of pottery considering the memory theory related to local productive and commercial dynamics, whether in terms of habit or recognition. In this context, if we attribute the production of thin-walled and *bracarens* pottery to the presence of external potters, the impact on local production is highlighted by these potters and imported pieces. Over the course of three generations, local production oscillated between maintaining a regional pottery tradition and innovating in terms of techniques, morphology, and decoration to adapt to new habits, tastes, and trends that the region's inhabitants had already acquired.

### *Bracara Augusta* in the *Claudius'* Era

The Augustan phase of *Bracara Augusta* is poorly understood due to the strong impact of the construction programs during the Flavian and Antonine periods. However, the available material and epigraphic evidence documents a significant social and economic dynamism in the early decades of the city's existence (Martins & Magalhães 2021). Thus, during the reign of *Claudius*, in the mid-1<sup>st</sup> century, the city already had a substantial supply of pottery products, a testament to its commercial and economic prosperity. The imports of *terra sigillata* and thin-walled pottery, which involved a significant volume of pieces initially coming from Italy, Gaul, and the northwest Iberian

Peninsula, were expanded with the addition of Hispanic productions, particularly those from *Augusta Emerita* and *Baetica*. It seems as if we are witnessing the signs of what would later become the flourishing Atlantic trade following the conquest of *Britannia*, which enabled the establishment of new exchange routes. The opportunities brought by the opening of new Atlantic markets were seized by Hispanic producers and vendors to distribute their olive oil and wine productions, as evidenced by the studies on amphora distribution (Carreras & Morais 2012).

The local pottery workshops, benefiting from the exploitation of both coastal kaolinic clay pits and the mica-rich clays of Prado, began producing pieces that catered to various functions and tastes. The production of fine tableware inspired by foreign pieces (*bracarens*), as well as the local production of distinctive products from other regions (thin-walled pottery), indicate the social diversity of the population of *Bracara Augusta*. Their choices in consuming pottery objects were embedded in networks of meanings that were already quite complex, intertwined with other local products available in the city markets, *tabernae*, and other commercial spaces. Therefore, during *Claudius'* time, the attraction of *Bracara Augusta* was significant, undoubtedly linked to a global economic development of the *conuentus bracaraugustanus*, the characteristics of which are still unknown but were likely based on the intensification of mining, in addition to agricultural and pastoral resources (Martins 1992; Martins 2014; Martins & Carvalho 2017).

An important document showcasing the city dynamism in the mid-1<sup>st</sup> century is the inscription that, despite being poorly preserved, allowed Geza Alfödy to identify a tribute to C. Caetronius Miccio, a Roman magistrate whose *cursus* took place between *Tiberius* and *Claudius* (*tribunus plebis, praetor, legatus Augusti Hispaniae, legatus legionis II Augustae, proconsul prouinciae Baeticae, praefectus aerarii militaris, and praefectus*

*reliquorum exigendorum populi Romani*). The dedication on the tombstone bears the signatures of Roman citizens who conducted business in *Bracara Augusta* (*ciues Romani qui negotiantur Bracaraugusta*), a group that, although its nature remains unknown, would have comprised traders with Roman citizenship and originating from Italy or another province, but who identified Miccio as their patron possibly due to his actions in *Hispaniae* either as a *legatus* in Citerior or as a proconsul in *Baetica* (Alföldy 1966).

Understanding an object within the context of the networks of meanings in which it was embedded involves articulating between pragmatic and symbolic dimensions. Here, memory is a determining factor, whether by *habit* or *recognition*. While the technological choices of pottery producers for the crafting of pottery pieces are determined by the existing material fabrication possibilities, as well as their mastery of technique, the social aspects of manufacturing are equally central to a product's presence in the market. Thus, far from fitting into a single timeline, the formal and decorative evolution of pottery is intrinsically associated to the tastes of its consumers, highlighting the importance of understanding the distinct habits of the studied population.

Within the context of our analysis, by the mid-1<sup>st</sup> century, the population of *Bracara Augusta* was already culturally diverse, so their choices would inevitably be shaped by the negotiation between maintaining the known pottery traditions, which was possibly associated with visual and tactile recognition and perhaps even auditory (or olfactory?), and the acceptance of innovation, highlighted by novel products that encompassed a different cultural and social substrate (Appadurai 1986).

### Final remarks

The Roman imperial experience gave rise to a more culturally pluralistic society

than any other that came before, in which processes of negotiation between tradition and innovation became frequent and permanently impacted all aspects of daily life. This negotiation between Roman cultural standards and the diversity of local expressions likely occurred in a multifaceted and gradual manner, thus originating social contexts in which the hybridization of meanings, mechanisms, techniques, and patterns would result in dynamic and diversified urban environments existing within a thriving economy (Mendes, Bustamante & Davidson 2005). This was the case in cities founded at the beginning of the Empire, especially in its western part, where a regional indigenous population coexisted with immigrants coming from various parts of the Roman world, each with different statuses and levels of Romanization. This led to multicultural environments that fostered multiple expressions of cultural hybridization. In this context, pottery emerges as artifacts that best reflect processes of cultural and identity negotiation. Under these circumstances, pottery studies are fundamental for understanding the ancient world, both because they can serve as a chronological, technological, and cultural guide for dating archaeological contexts, and also because of the wealth of information that can be inferred from these pieces, which provides important means of understanding past societies via their products. Thus, research on pottery materials must be accompanied by constant epistemological and methodological re-evaluation, allowing for the expansion of interpretative horizons via greater dialogue with other areas of knowledge to produce results that approach the semantic complexity of the objects and the social and cultural contexts they represent.

The analysis of pottery from a temporal perspective, which is associated with the cultural memory, offers an innovative methodology with broad interpretative potential for characterizing the dynamics of production

and consumption of pieces, thus facilitating a closer connection between material and human experience. Therefore, we hope that our study can contribute to the debate about the

relevance of this type of approach, as well as to broadening knowledge on pottery production in *Bracara Augusta* during the early stages of the Roman occupation in the city.

MACHADO, D; MARTINS, M. The consumption of pottery in *Bracara Augusta* in the 1st century: memory, tradition and innovation. *R. Museu Arq. Etn.* 43: 17-30, 2024.

**Resumo:** As cerâmicas de *Bracara Augusta* são usualmente estudadas numa perspetiva histórica e cronológica, na qual o objetivo é compreender a sucessão de produções ou suas contemporaneidades. Essa perspetiva permite o enquadramento dos produtos e fabricos em categorias formais e tecnológicas, ordenadas numa linha temporal. Essa abordagem, embora dominante na investigação arqueológica, é limitada para tratar do ponto de vista interpretativo. Neste trabalho, propomos uma análise desse material a partir de uma percepção do tempo enquanto memória, a partir de Bergson (1999) e Deleuze (1999), no qual o presente e o futuro são dimensões do passado, que é virtual e atualizado constantemente no presente, perspetiva que pode contribuir para uma leitura diferente da diversidade de recipientes que eram consumidos na cidade.

**Palavras-chave:** Cultura material; cerâmica; *Bracara Augusta*; consumo; memória.

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