Introduction: The choice of context and methodological aspects

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This research project began in 2014, due to the need for improving the chronological definitions of ceramic morphologies, an extremely important issue for the study of Late Antiquity. As we discuss in **chapter II.1**, recent initiatives, such as *Late Roman Fine Ware* (Cau Ontiveros et al., 2011), have drawn attention to the extreme need for studies on stratigraphic contexts. It is the contradiction between different contexts and different regions of diffusion/consumption that allows us to effectively understand the chronological behaviour of a given type. This need for stratigraphic studies to improve taxonomies, however, increasingly requires a complex analysis that must include several typologies. Only in this way will we be able to understand the true chronological reliability of the ceramic assemblage from a given context, by comparing the results within the various typologies.

The choice of Tarraco (present-day Tarragona, Spain), the former Hispanic provincial capital (**fig. 0.1**), as the stratigraphic study area was motivated by a number of factors: on the one hand, the lack of good contexts for this period in the Atlantic territory; on the other, the extreme richness, both quantitative and qualitative, of the contexts successively diagnosed on the Eastern coast of Hispania with an obvious direct or indirect relationship to the historical context of the last third of the 3rd century in this region (**see chapter I**). Additional reasons are not

Fig. 0.1. Location of Tarraco.

only its well-known role as a political, port, commercial and consumer centre, but also the recognised quality of the archaeological interventions carried out in its urban area. In this respect, the role of the Museu Nacional Arqueològic de Tarragona and its management team has been crucial. Here, we should highlight the role of three people in the development of this project: Josep Anton Remolà Vallverdú, as the person in charge of the museum's collections, and the two directors throughout this period, first Francesc Tarrats Bou and later Mònica Borrell Giró.

The second half of the 3rd century raises typological questions of enormous interest for understanding the processes of economic transition, as a prelude to the Tetrarchy's renovations. As with any other period, its correct taxonomic characterisation allows for a much more effective distinction of the urban, rural, industrial, or commercial processes underway. However, considering that this period from 250–300 AD is particularly rich in historical and archaeological changes, studying it in greater depth allows us to draw a more accurate picture of the economic and commercial cycles and the associated changes in material culture.

This taxonomic study required finding a context that was stratigraphically secure and had not only a complex and numerous ceramological assemblage, but also an urban setting that could confirm the temporal position indicated by the ceramological assemblage. This is how, in discussion with Josep Anton Remolà Vallverdú, it was decided to study the context of Carrer de Castaños, 1, which consists of a detrital accumulation or dump formed in the southern suburban area of Tarraco, at the foot of the urban slope that faces the sea (**see chapter I, figs. I.1 and I.2**).

We may call it detrital accumulation rather than dump, for a number of reasons. Its various strata are not the result of the premeditated placement of rubbish in a deposit prepared or adapted for this purpose; rather, they are a set of stratigraphic units accommodated in the urban (or suburban) area. The concept of a detrital accumulation is not a contradiction with the concept of a dump, but we may also use a concept that is less functionally compromised. In fact, a dump does not necessarily have to be made in a cavity prepared for that purpose. It may well be the result of careless waste disposal. The high concentration of material that these strata contain most likely means that it was the result of a relatively rapid, albeit gradual, disposal of a large number of pieces, discarded for some reason, far from the residential, commercial, or harbour sectors where they would be expected to be found during their diffusion and consumption phases. In our opinion, its position at the bottom of the urban slope may suggest that, apart from a strong human action, part of its sediment and assemblage could have been the result of a natural colluvial action. However, the strong coherence of the ceramic assemblage points to the first option and its definition as a dump.

As can be seen in **fig. 0.2**, the altimetry of this stratigraphic phase reaches a height of around 3 m, which can be explained by the high level of deposition of discarded objects, mainly ceramic, but also architectural, vitreous, faunal, and monetary, among others. It is also the result of a high level of stabilisation of colluvial sediments that naturally flowed down the urban slope and lost gravitational force at its base. Whether we use the concept of detrital accumulation or dump, this is a deposit (in the sense of a set of contexts) with an assemblage in secondary position, as 'a primary deposit is one whose assemblage largely belongs to the same systemic context in which the deposit was formed' and a secondary deposit is one whose assemblage largely, or completely, belongs to a 'systemic context prior to the one in which the deposit was formed' (Furlan, 2019; chapter II). The high concentration of terra sigillata, cooking ware, lamps, amphorae, and coarse ware suggests that a large part of the assemblage has its first origin in the harbour sector. In other words, it is quite possible that the homogeneity and quantity of the assemblage are the result of redeposition from a harbour area, where they would have had their primary use.

Given that the dump is not a closed context, the reconstruction of its stratigraphic matrix (**fig. 0.3**) involved a serious analysis of the physical relationships between the various stratigraphic units and of the material universe they contain. We were thus able to establish three groups of units, depending on their quality: a lower set of units without any intrusion; an intermediate set with very slight intrusions; and a small set of units with slight mechanical damage, resulting from the machinery used by the construction work that had necessitated the emergency archaeological excavation.

The concepts of residuality (types whose diffusion seems to be earlier than the chronology of the context) and intrusiveness (types whose diffusion seems to be later than the chronology of the context) (**see chapter II, figs. II.1 and I.2**), protocolised decades ago in Beauvray (Arcelin and Tuffreau-Libre, 1998), were carefully applied to define these three sets of units, whose basic chronology we believe to be homogeneous: 270+ AD. As described in **chapter II, fig. II.1**, the levels of intrusion from the 4th and 5th centuries AD are low (between 0% and a possible 2.1%), and such levels also occur within the numismatic assemblage (**see chapter IV**). They are the natural result of exposure to the open air of a non-closed context, but there is nothing to suggest that we are dealing with a large-scale relocation of a large quantity of sediments and objects in the 4th and 5th centuries AD, packing a vast mid-Imperial ensemble. On the contrary, the urban positioning, the nature of the sediments, and the extreme homogeneity of the assemblage are consistent with the conceptualisation

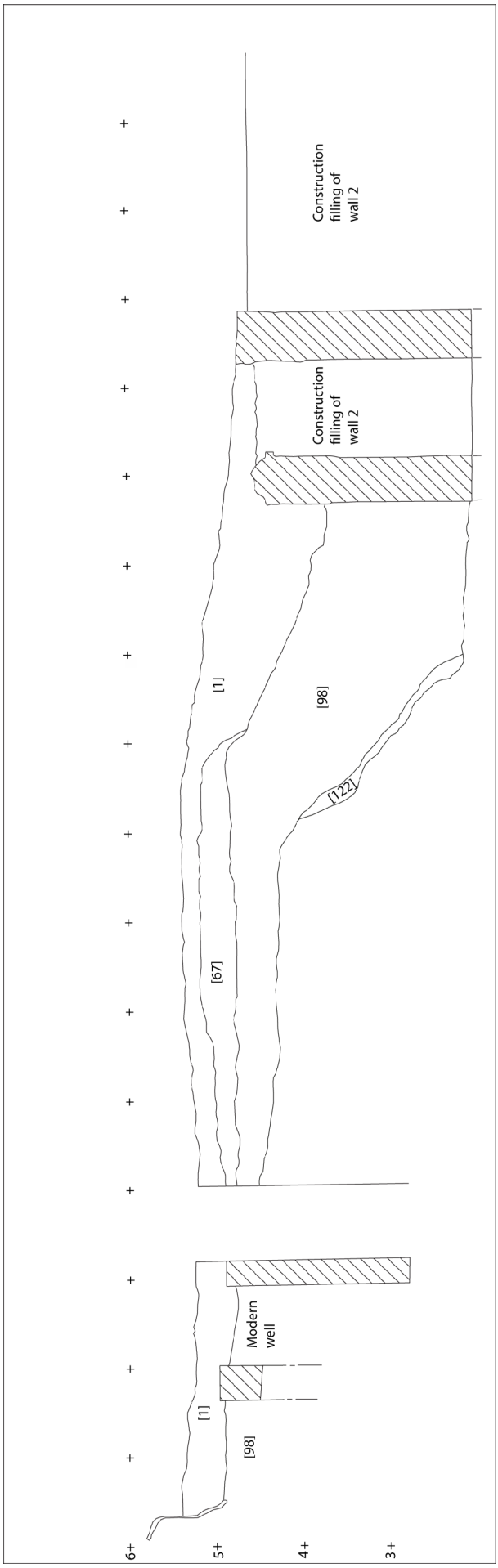

Fig. 0.2. Profile of sector 4 at Carrer de Castaños, 1 (dump from 270+ AD).

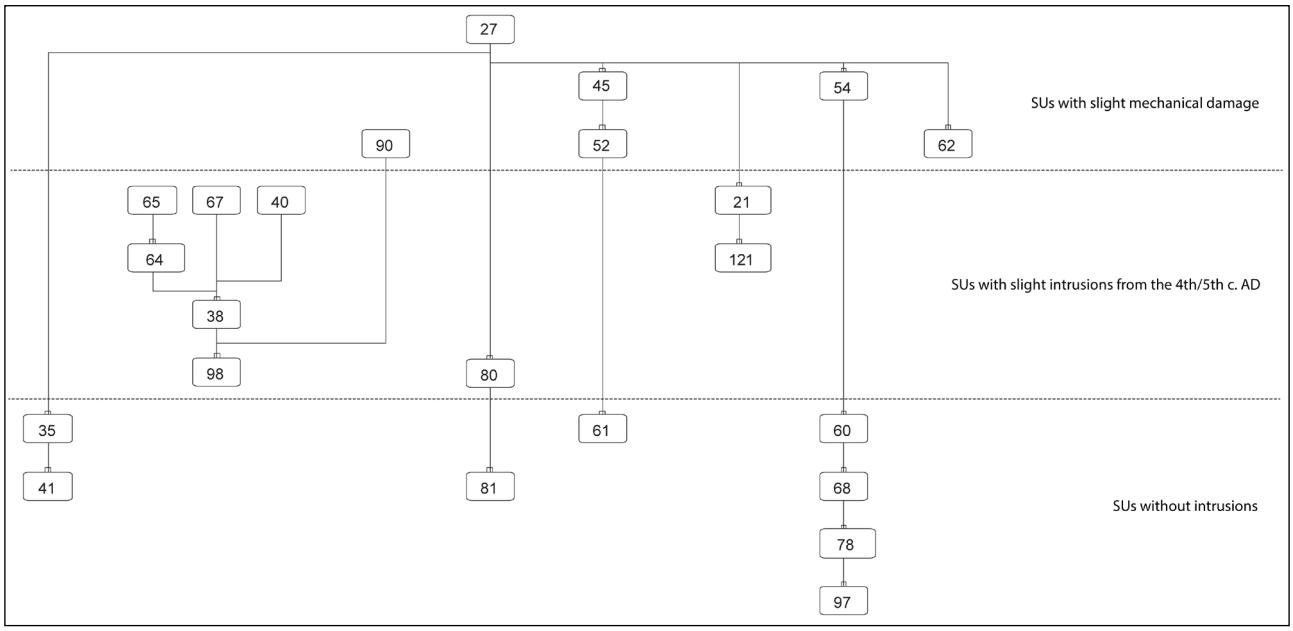

Fig. 0.3. Stratigraphic diagram of Carrer de Castaños, 1 (dump from 270+ AD).

of a detrital accumulation (or dump) from 270+ AD. It is above all the residuality that invokes further discussion, presented in **sections II.2 (and figs. II.1 and II.2), II.3, and II.4**.

Following the same protocol, **chapters II, III, and IV** use the concepts of number of fragments and minimum number of vessels (= minimum number of individuals) for their quantification, with the second parameter being naturally the most important for establishing typo-chronological proposals. **Chapter VI** explains its methodology through a specific section, since faunal remains require other strategies.

Unfortunately, it has not been possible so far to carry out laboratory analyses of the various ceramic and vitreous typologies. In **chapters II and IV**, the archaeometric groups presented were created by observing the petrographic aspects with a binocular loupe, through magnifications between 20 and 40×. Fabrics descriptions have followed the petrographic concepts and categorisations presented by Velde and Druc (1999), Quinn (2013), and Druc (2015). In **chapter II**, colour coding follows the systematisation proposed by Cailleux (*s.d.*). In this same chapter, the fabric photos correspond to a maximum width of 11 mm.

The context of Carrer de Castaños, 1 is thus a reference context for the taxonomic analysis of 270+ AD, namely for the chronostratigraphic knowledge of the main commercial typologies circulating in the Western Mediterranean in the last moments prior to the Tetrarchy: terra sigillata, cooking ware, amphorae, lamps, and glass. To these, we added the study of coarse ware, which is of a local/regional nature but also important for gauging the levels of contemporaneity of the context. This volume also presents the dietary trends resulting from the study of the fauna consumed in Tarraco and discarded in this context.

The central goal and leitmotif of this book are therefore the classification, quantification, and discussion of the morphological variations present in this stratigraphic context. Therefore, the discussion of commercial dynamics is rather short. However, in each typology, an effort was made to determine manufacturing groups and regional origins, as an essential tool for chrono-typological characterisation of the context. We chose not to write a specific chapter analysing the commercial networks and consumption vectors that existed in Tarraco at the end of the 3rd century AD. The focus of this work is eminently chronomorphological and uses above all stratigraphic parallels to categorise the different types and subtypes. **Fig. 0.4** shows the approximate location of the sites mentioned throughout the various chapters of this book.

The largest group, whose results provide the greatest contribution to the chrono-typologies of 270+ AD, concerns terra sigillata, cooking ware, amphorae, and lamps, studied in **chapter II**. The sheer size of this chapter led us to opt for the construction of an internal index at the beginning, to help the reader. It is also in this **chapter II**, namely in **sections II.3** and **II.4**, that we undertake a joint critical analysis of the statistical results of these main typologies and their chronological value.

For all these reasons, **chapter VII** (Conclusions) is limited to listing the most important results that each study revealed, without going into an exhaustive repetition of the results explained in each chapter.

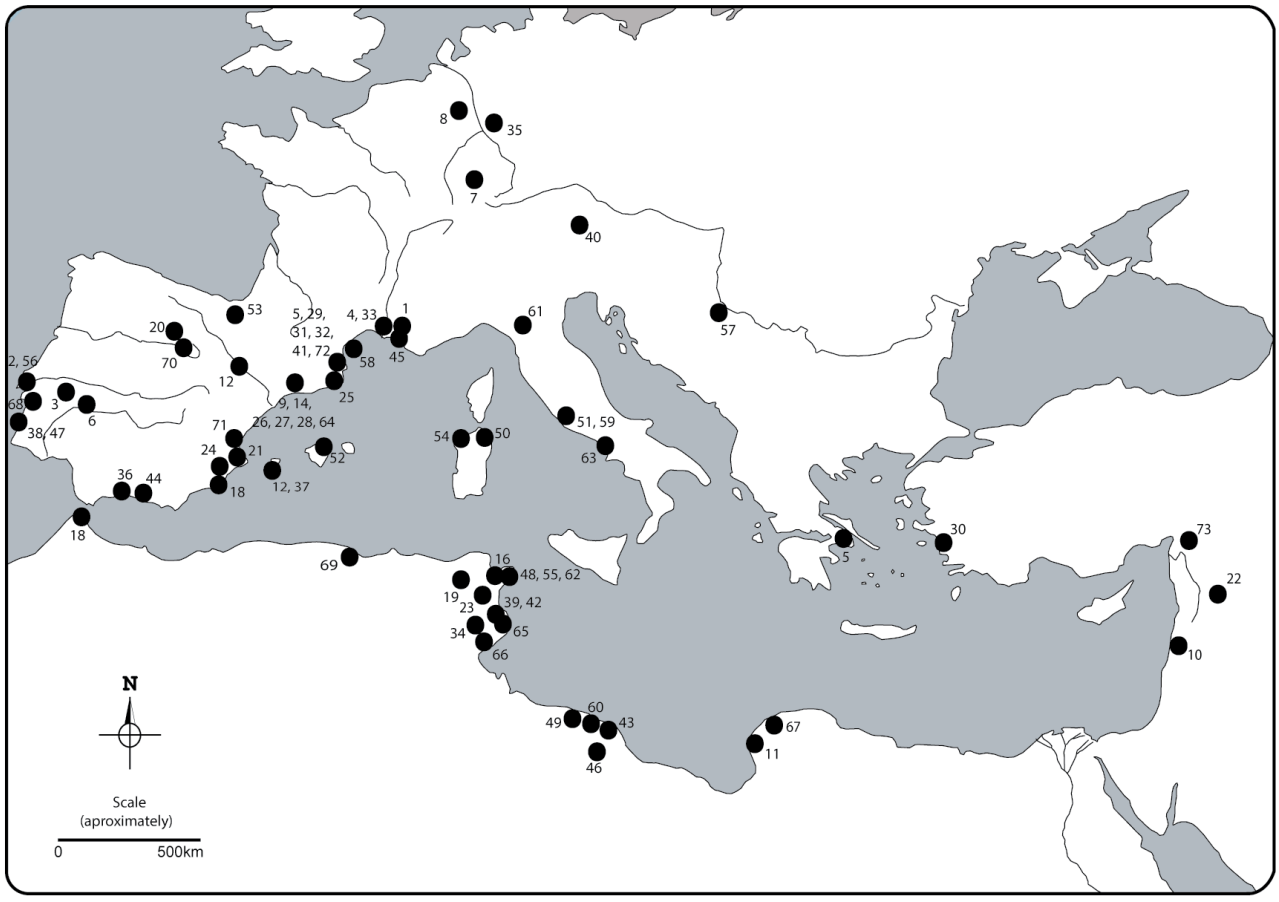

Fig. 0.4. Location of the sites mentioned in the book.

1 - Aix-en-Provence
2 - Almoínhas
3 - Ammaia
4 - Arles-Rhône 3 river dump - Arles
5 - Athens
6 - Augusta Emerita
7 - Augusta Raurica
8 - Augusta Treverorum
9 - Barenys
10 - Beirut
11- Berenice
12 - Cabrera 3 shipwreck
13 - Caesaraugusta
14 - Camp de Tarragona
15 - Camps de Can Colomer
16 - Carthago
17- Carthago Nova
18 - Ceuta
19 - Chemtou-Simithus
20 - Clunia
21 - Denia
22 - Dura Europos
23 - El-Assa
24 - El Mojón
25 - Els Ametellers
26 - Els Antigons
27 - Els Castellets
28 - Els Munts
29 - Emporiae
30 - Ephesos
31 - Ermedàs
32 - Gerunda
33 - Gisement D - Arles
34 - Henchir el-Guellal/Djilma
35 - Hofheim
36 - Huerta del Rincón
37 - Ibiza
38 - Ilha do Pessegueiro
39 - Kairouan
40 - Lauriacum
41 - Llafranc
42 - Leptiminus
43 - Leptis Magna
44 - Los Matagallares
45 - Marseille
46 - Myd (- - -) / Gheriat el-Garbia
47 - Mirobriga
48 - Nabeul
49 - Oea
50 - Olbia
51 - Ostia
52 - Pollentia
53 - Pompaelo
54 - Porto Turres
55 - Pupput
56 - Quinta do Rouxinol
57 - Ratiaria
58 - Redoute Béar=Port Vendres 9
59 - Roma
60 - Sabratha
61 - Sala Baganza
62 - Sidi Jdidi
63 - Somma Vesuviana
64 - Sota la Timba del Castellot
65 - Sullecthum
66 - Thaenae
67 - Tocra
68 - Tróia
69 - Tubusuctu-Tiklat
70 - Uxama
71 - Valentia
72 - Vilauba
73 - Zeugma

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