

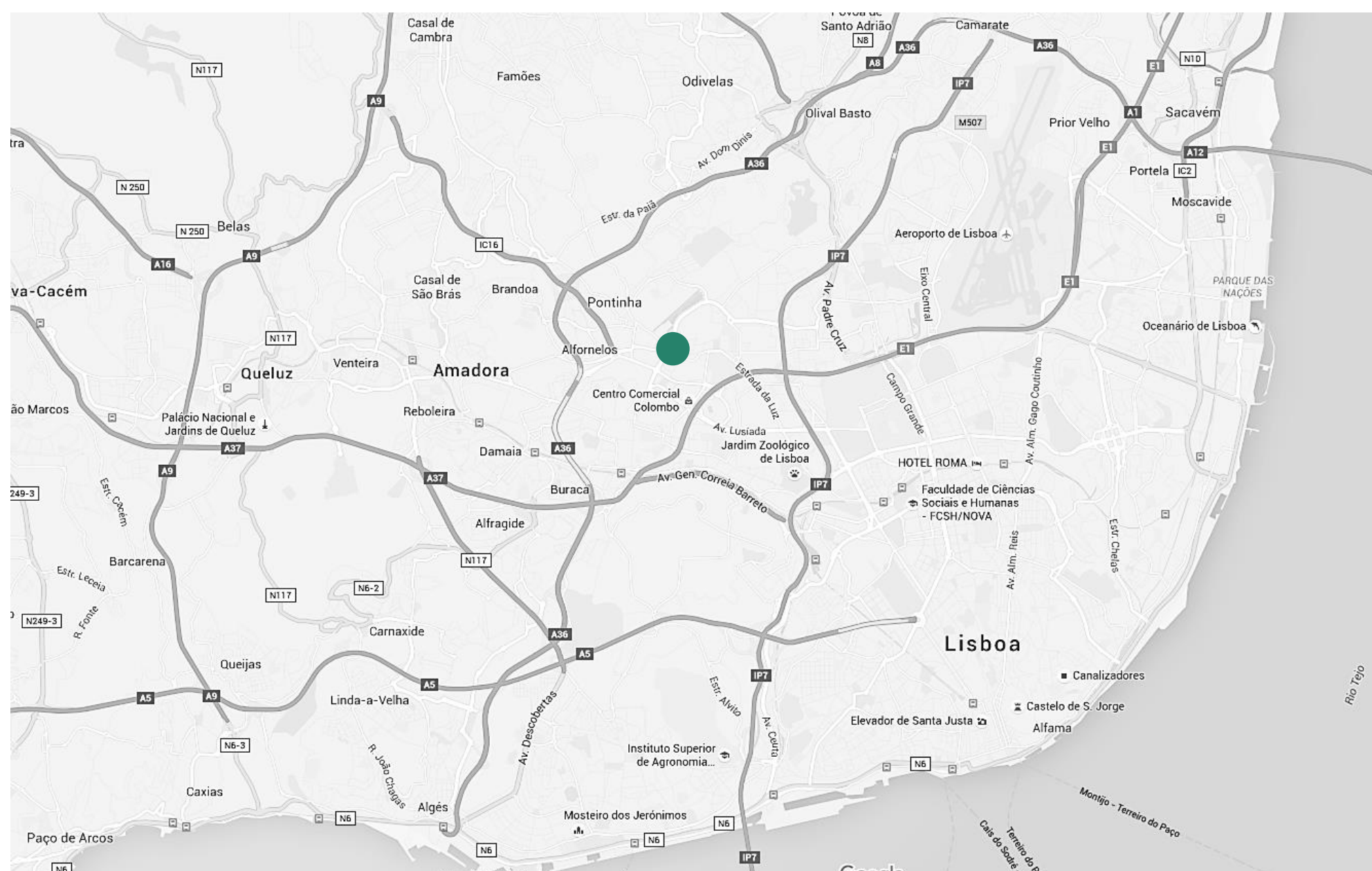
# Unearthing Portuguese Clay Measuring Cups: Insights from the Carnide Excavation

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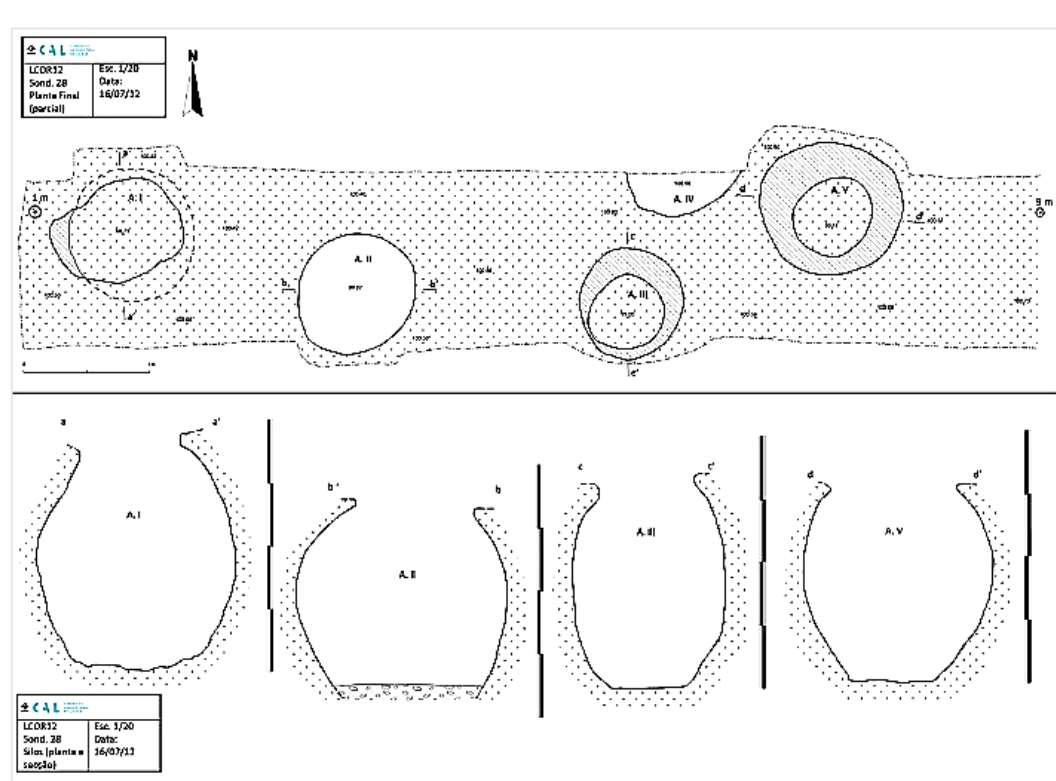


Location of the Carnide site on the outskirts of Lisbon.

The excavation of an area to replace sewer systems and general refurbish of a square in Carnide (at Lisbon outskirts) lead to the discovery of more than hundred medieval storage pits transformed into dumpsters in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries (1550-1650 approx.). These reflect the daily use of ceramics and other material culture elements utilized by that population in what can already be considered a rural area, although associated to important religious houses. Literally thousands of objects, in different stages of conservation, were found inside those abandoned storage pits. Some of those are measuring cups, whose are made of clay and provide a fascinating glimpse into domestic and commercial life during this period and provide a unique lens through which to explore cultural perceptions and social organization during this period. Amidst the refuse of daily existence, these cups stand out, marked with values and dates indicative of their function in measuring.

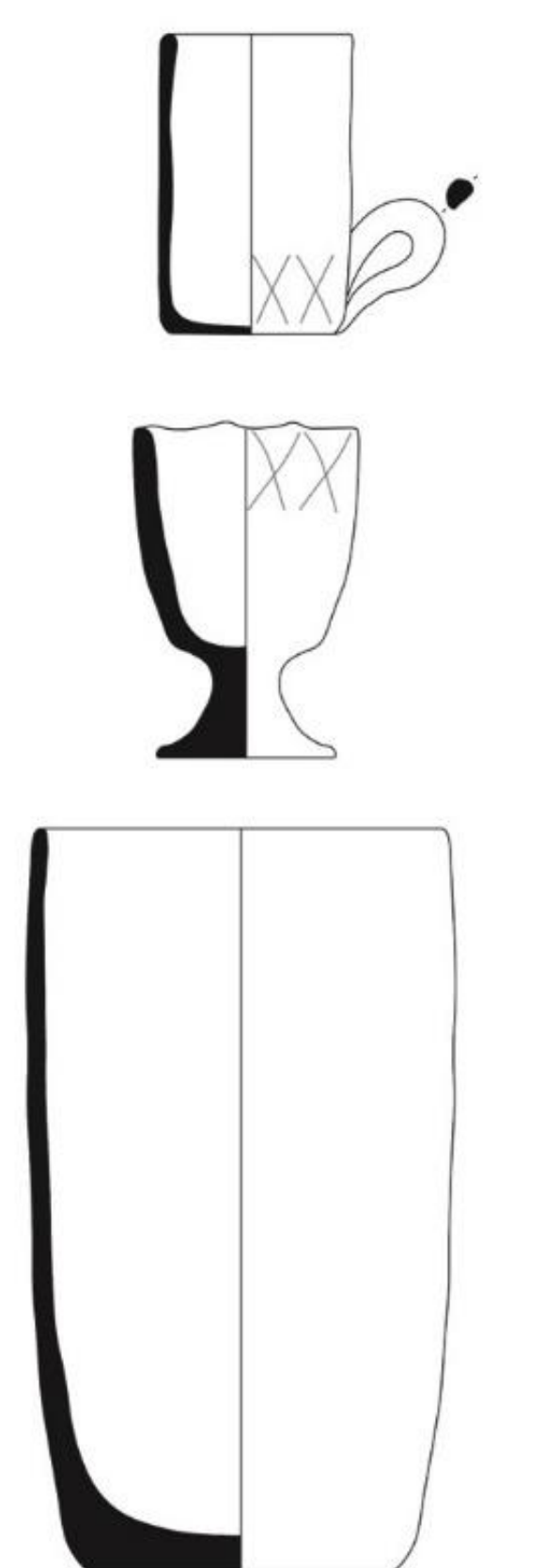


Storage pits dispersion area at the Carnide site (Caessa e Mota, 2016).



Plan and sections of some of the Carnide storage pits (Caessa e Mota, 2016).

Some aspects of the Carnide storage pits (Caessa e Mota, 2016).



Measure cups recovered at Carnide storage pits.



Annual calibration and dating near the rim of one measure cup recovered at Carnide storage pits.

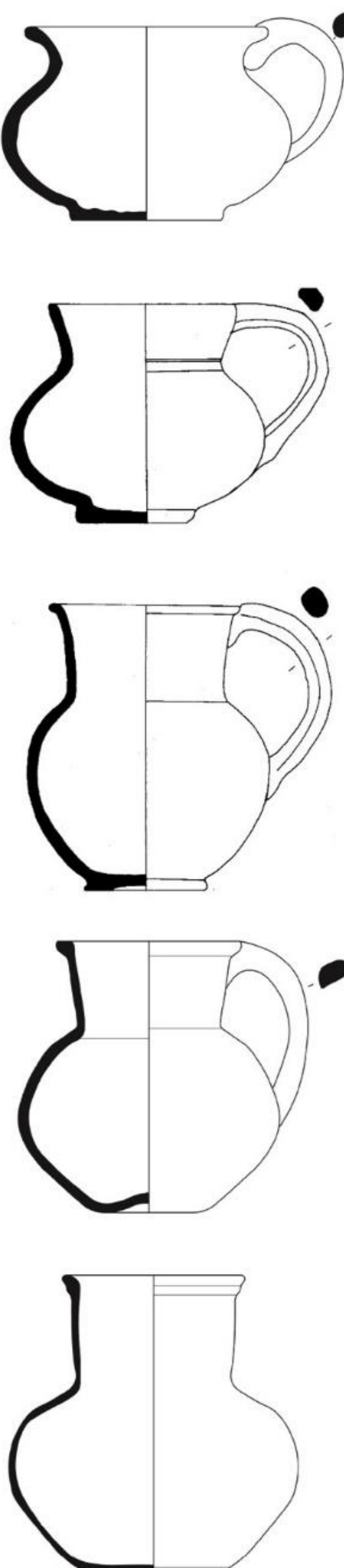
A lack of uniformity characterized Portugal's measuring system during the Early Modern Age. While measures bore similar names, variations existed from city to city. However, the presence of calibrated measuring cups suggests efforts towards standardization.

In the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, King Manuel I initiated measures to standardize weights and measures across the kingdom. Consequently, all measuring cups utilized in trade were subject to calibration and dating by local authorities annually.

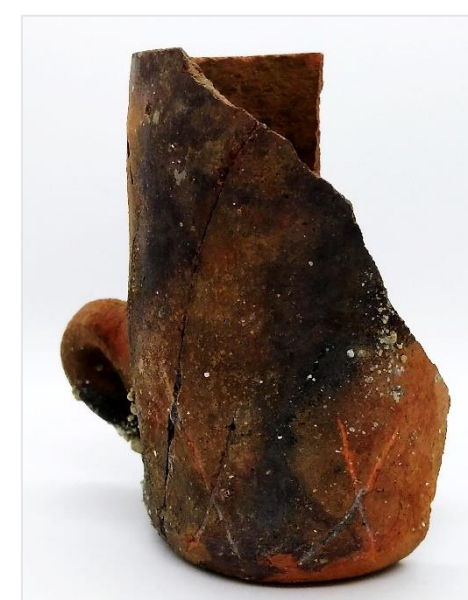
These clay measuring cups, with their diverse shapes and sizes, provide tangible evidence of this historical context. Their presence underscores the importance of accurate measurement in trade and commerce during this period. Moreover, the annual calibration and dating reflect a commitment to ensuring fairness and transparency in transactions. Beyond their utilitarian function, these measuring cups hold significance for cultural perceptions and social organization.

Produced throughout the country, *púcaros* were normally associated with the act of drinking, however they appear to have also been used as a measure cup. With thin walls, a globular shape, a high neck and a handle, the *púcaros* recovered in several archaeological contexts of this chronology, like those from Carnide storage pits, have little variable shapes and are often reduced in size, with a capacity close to 0,35 liters (*quartilho*).

The discovery of these measuring cups offers valuable insights into Early Modern Portuguese society. They illuminate not only the practical aspects of daily life but also the administrative efforts to regulate trade and commerce. Furthermore, they serve as tangible artefacts connecting us to the historical quest for standardization and accuracy in measurement, a quest that continued to evolve into the modern era and only met a proper resolution many centuries later.



Some *púcaros* recovered at Carnide storage pits.



Measuring cups with capacity mark incised.

