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## CONSUMPTION PATTERNS AT THE EDGE OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE: THE IMPORT OF AMPHORAE IN *OLISIPO* (LISBON, PORTUGAL) BETWEEN THE 2<sup>ND</sup> CENTURY BC AND THE 2<sup>ND</sup> CENTURY AD

*The aim of this work is to provide a synthesis of the study of the roman economy and trade in Olisipo (Lisbon, Portugal) between the Republic and the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, based on an extended set of finds from various archaeological excavations in the ancient city of Lisbon.*

*From the imported amphorae and its manufacturing region characterization, we will try to obtain a representative framework of the rhythms and patterns of consumption, with some brief comparisons to other cities in the province of Lusitania, during the same period.*

*Overall, this text contributes to our understanding of the economic, social and urban conditions of the city of Olisipo, outlining the importance that it could potentially have had, at that time, in the context of the Atlantic façade and in the Roman Empire.*

### Introduction

The roman city of *Olisipo* (Lisbon, Portugal) had a particularly important role in the trade of food supplies in the Western part of the Roman Empire and in the Atlantic route, being, probably, the most important city in the Atlantic façade of the Iberian Peninsula. Nevertheless, consumption patterns of amphorae and foodstuffs transported in amphorae are still poorly known in Roman Lisbon, primarily due to a lack of in-depth studies.

Research and publication of studies on Roman amphorae from *Olisipo* is important not only to understand the historic dynamics of the city itself but also in order to provide a comparison of consumption patterns in relation to other cities and regions of the Roman Empire.

The current study presents the consumption patterns in *Olisipo* between the third quarter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century and the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> AD, based on the study of the republican and principate imported amphorae<sup>1</sup>.

### Geographical contextualization

About the city's geographical context we can briefly say that it is located on the Atlantic coast, on a hill, at the entrance and on the right side of Tagus River, which was extensive and navigable, and gave access to a vast inland region. It has good natural defence conditions and an ample visual control, especially of the river's entrance and its access to the inland. It also has excellent harbour conditions and an ideal environment for the exploration of abundant natural resources, notably maritime resources, such as fish and salt, but also mineral resources, such as gold from the Tagus sands<sup>2</sup>.

### Roman *Olisipo*

*Olisipo* was already an important urban centre before the arrival of the romans. The oldest Roman presence in the city dates from the third quarter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, in the context of the military conquest and affirmation of the power of Rome in the west of the Iberian Peninsula<sup>3</sup>. According to Strabo (III,3,1) *Olisipo* was fortified by *Decimus Junius Brutus* in 138 B.C., under the military campaign undertaken against the Lusitanians.

The oldest archaeological remains of the Roman presence, scattered throughout the city but especially on the top of the hill, are consistent with this date<sup>4</sup>. Although the *Praetor* established his headquarters in Scallabis, up in the Tagus valley, *Olisipo* could also have played an important role in the military operations carried out by Julius Caesar in 60–61 B.C. against the Lusitanians, though this has yet to be demonstrated in the archaeological record.

The city obtains the *municipium civium romanorum* between 31 and 27 BC and the designation of *Felicitas Iulia Olisipo*, which is an indication of the importance it held at the time<sup>5</sup>.

During the principality of Augustus and until the mid-1<sup>st</sup> century AD the city undergoes strong urban restructuring and the construction of many public buildings, such as the theatre, the baths and the cryptoporticus, as well as a city wall<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Special thanks to Artur Ribeiro for revising the English.

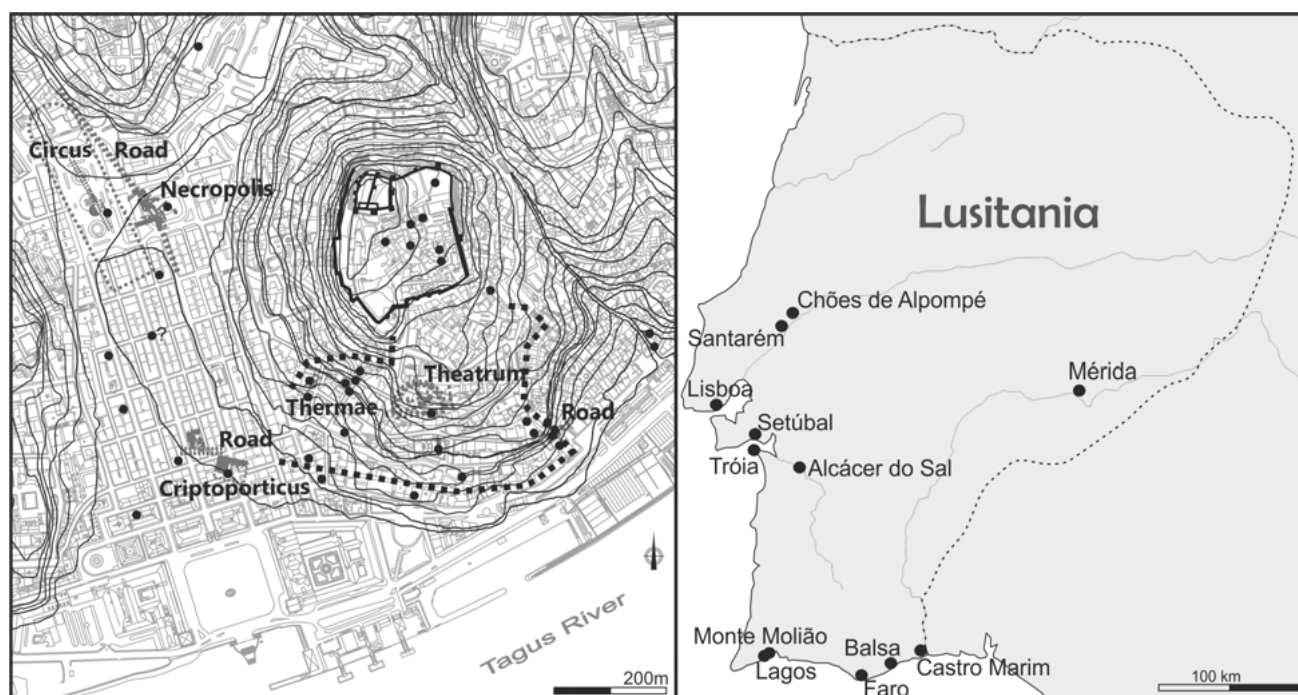
<sup>2</sup> FILIPE 2015, 130–131.

<sup>3</sup> C. FABIÃO, O passado Proto-Histórico e Romano. In: J. Mattoso (ed.), *História de Portugal*. Lisboa: Círculo de Leitores 1 (Lisboa 1993) 77–201.

<sup>4</sup> PIMENTA 2005.

<sup>5</sup> A. M. FARIA, Colonização e municipalização nas províncias hispano-romanas: reanálise de alguns casos polémicos. *Rev. Portuguesa Arqu.* 2/2, 1999, 29–50.

<sup>6</sup> J. ALARCÃO, Lisboa romana e visigótica. In: *Lisboa subterrânea*. Lisboa: Lisboa Capital Europeia da Cultura 94 (Lisboa 1994) 58–63; SILVA 2005.



**Fig. 1.** Localization of the sites where the amphora assemblages come from (left). Lusitanian cities mentioned in the text (right).

The implementation of several fish processing units in the suburban area of *Olisipo* also dates from the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, which would have reached its phase of greater strength and development by the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> and, especially, by the 2<sup>nd</sup> century<sup>7</sup>. The city's circus was probably constructed during this century, which indicates some economic wealth<sup>8</sup>.

In the transition of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century to the 3<sup>rd</sup> and in the first decades of the later, there's a panorama of general disturbance in the fish export flows, with likely repercussions on the economy, verifiable in some *Olisipo* fish production units and in the pottery of the Tagus valley<sup>9</sup>.

### Composition of the sample

The analysed amphora sets come from 38 sites located in the *pomerium* and *suburbia* of the ancient roman city. Some of these sites were recently excavated and are archaeologically well documented, but there are also some older interventions, which have provided virtually no stratigraphic records. These archaeological excavations were carried out by archaeology companies, the City Council, Guardianship professionals, and also by private archaeologists, both within contract archaeology and scientific projects.

The amphora sets comprise a wide range of sites and realities in terms of locations within the city as well as in terms of urban functionality – domestic area, necropolis, roads, public buildings and fish production units, or even under the ancient river level.

All the amphorae from the Republic to Late Antiquity were inventoried and classified: the sample is c. 12.000 classifiable amphorae sherds and around 5.000 Individuals (MNI = Minimum Number of Individuals). This study only includes the amphorae from the Republic to the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century/early 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, and comprises around 3.900 individuals, which, from a statistical point of view, can be regarded as a highly reliable sample. Around 16% of the total sample refers to republican amphorae, 80% to the Principate and the remaining percentage to indeterminate types.

MNI analysis was given precedence in the quantification process, as established in the Mont Beuvray protocol<sup>10</sup>.

The analysis of the amphorae sample took into consideration morphological aspects and the characteristics of the fabric, which served as the basis for chronological adscription into two main groups (Republic and Principality).

### Republic

As has already been stated, the first contacts with the romans occurred in the third quarter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC in the context of the military campaign of *Junius Brutus* and it is testified, among others, by the presence of the regular

<sup>7</sup> J. BUGALHÃO, A indústria romana de transformação e conserva de peixe em *Olisipo*. Núcleo Arqueológico da Rua dos Correeiros (Lisboa 2001); FABIÃO 2011; FILIPE 2015.

<sup>8</sup> SILVA 2012, 30.

<sup>9</sup> C. FABIÃO, Cetárias, ânforas e sal: a exploração de recursos marinhos na Lusitânia. *Estud. Arqu. Oeiras* 17 (Oeiras 2009) 555–594; F. MAYET/C. T. SILVA, Production d'amphores et production de salaisons de poisson: rythmes chronologiques sur l'estuaire du Sado. *Conimbriga* 49, 2010, 119–132.

<sup>10</sup> P. ARCELIN/M. TUFFREAU-LIBRE, La quantification des céramiques: conditions et protocole. *Actes de la table ronde du centre archéologique européen du Mont Beuvray (Glux-en-Glenne, 7–9 avril de 1998)*. Collect. Bibracte 2 (Mont Beuvray 1998).

amphorae that, in this period, used to accompany military contingents. The ones that carried the Italian wine, Greco-Italic and Dressel 1 types, and fish products from Southern *Hispania*, type Ramón T-7.4.3.3., were imported in great quantities during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. The olive oil carried in ovoid amphorae from Brindisi and Tripolitania (Ancient Tripolitanian/African), the wine from Ibiza (T-8.1.3.2.) and from the Eastern Mediterranean (Rhodian and Dressel 4 from Kos), as well as the fish products from North Africa (T-7.4.3.1.), were imported in much lesser amounts.

This new data does not change much of what is already known about *Olisipo* during the republican period<sup>11</sup>, but, on one hand, it does confirm previously analysed patterns and, on the other, it also provides more amphorae types and provenance regions into the map of republican imports of Lisbon.

This amphora “package” finds a notable parallel in Valencia, in the east of Spain, which was founded in 138 BC<sup>12</sup>, the same year that *Junius Brutus* arrived at *Olisipo*. It seems clear that the predominance of italic amphorae, at this stage, has to do with the institutionalized supply circuits associated to army provisions<sup>13</sup>.

During the last quarter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC there seems to be a decrease in Italian wine import, which could be due to a reduction of military contingents in the region. In the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC the panorama of imports starts to gradually rise on a widespread level, especially in the second quarter.

The import of some wine from the North coast of *Hispania Citerior* (Greco-Italic and Dressel 1) as well as olive oil (Class 67 and Ovoid 6) and wine (Ovoid 4) from the Guadalquivir valley in *Uterior* might have kicked off around this time, although generally in small amounts.

From the mid 1<sup>st</sup> century there's a gradual “economic rise of the Iberian Peninsula”, as Carlos Fabião has stated, which is demonstrated in the significant increase of imports from *Baetica* province, namely, olive oil and wine from Guadalquivir in various types of ovoid amphorae, and fish products from the Southern coast, mainly in ovoid amphora types – Ovoid gaditana, Dressel 7–11, but also other non-ovoid types like Dressel 12<sup>14</sup>.

Italic wine import in Dressel 1 amphorae starts decreasing from this period onwards, and the wine which is subsequently transported in Dressel 2–4 amphorae never again reaches those of the previous level.

Comparing the data of *Olisipo* with other sites in de Tagus valley, such as Santarém<sup>15</sup> and Chões de Alpompe<sup>16</sup>, it can be

observed that the patterns are basically the same, with just some slight differences, underlining the same geographical and historical context. Looking at the data of some sites in the South of Portugal – Monte Molião<sup>17</sup>, Faro<sup>18</sup> and Castro Marim<sup>19</sup> – it is perceptible that the main difference in the import patterns during the republic concerns the lesser importance given to Italian wine and higher importance given to products from *Uterior*. This may be due to the geographic proximity of south Spain but also due to the military movements undertaken in the Tagus valley.

## Principate

In general terms, from the last decades of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC until the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> AD a clear predominance of consumption of regional products can be observed. Within the framework of imports, the relevance of Baetican products is highlighted, prevailing the “principle of geographical proximity in the import criteria”<sup>20</sup>.

From Augustus onwards, there is significant import of wine and olive oil from Guadalquivir, and fish from the coastal area of *Baetica* keep on arriving in considerable quantities, now transported primarily in ovoid amphorae<sup>21</sup>. These products were imported in great quantities and transported in many amphorae types, notably in Oberaden 83, Haltern 70 and Dressel 7–11, all of them well represented in our sample.

Besides the geographical relevance, this important presence of Baetican products should also be associated to the existence of a regular institutional supply network, originating in *Baetica*, which ran through the western coast of the Iberian Peninsula, destined for the northern military establishments of the Germanic *limes* and, later, to *Britannia*, as well as to the North-western *Hispania*<sup>22</sup>. These amphorae are particularly well documented all over the Tagus valley, especially in *Scallabis* and *Olisipo*.

In the first decades of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD a gradual decrease in the import of Baetican fish (Dressel 7–11) can be observed, stabilizing temporarily from the middle of the century onwards, and decreasing even more in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. This is directly related to the emergence of Lusitanian fish products<sup>23</sup> which seems to have started around the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC<sup>24</sup>,

<sup>11</sup> PIMENTA 2005; J. PIMENTA, Os contextos da conquista: *Olisipo* e Decimo Jvno Bruto. In: C. Fabião/J. Pimenta (coord.), *Actas do Congresso Conquista e Romanização do Vale do Tejo*. Cira-Arqueologia 3 (Vila Franca de Xira 2014) 44–60.

<sup>12</sup> A. RIBERA I LACOMBA, La fundación de Valentia: un apéndice de Italia y Campania en la Hispania del siglo II a.C. In: *Oebalus. Studi sulla Campania nell' Antichità* 4 (Napoli 2009) 46–77.

<sup>13</sup> FABIÃO 1989, 42.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 121; FABIÃO 1998, 182.

<sup>15</sup> A. M. ARRUDA/R. R. ALMEIDA, As ânforas da Classe 32 da Alcáçova de Santarém (Campanhas de 1983–1991). *Confimbriga* 37, 1998, 201–231; A. M. ARRUDA/R. R. ALMEIDA, Importação e consumo de vinho bético na colónia Romana da Scallabis (Santarém, Portugal). In: *Actas Congreso Internacional Ex Baetica Amphorae. Conservas y vino de la Bética en el Imperio Romano* 2 (Écija 2001) 703–715; A. M. ARRUDA/C. VIEGAS/P. BARGÃO, As ânforas da Bética costeira na Alcáçova de Santarém. *Rev. Portuguesa Arq.* 8/1, 2005, 279–297; P. BARGÃO, As importações

anfóricas do Mediterrâneo durante a época Romana Republicana na Alcáçova de Santarém (Dissertação Univ. Lisboa 2006); ALMEIDA 2008.

<sup>16</sup> J. PIMENTA/A. M. ARRUDA, Novos dados para o estudo dos Chões de Alpompe, Santarém. *Estud. Arq. Oeiras* 21 (Oeiras 2014) 375–392 with references.

<sup>17</sup> A. M. ARRUDA/E. SOUSA, Ânforas republicanas de Monte Molião (Lagos, Algarve, Portugal). *SPAL* 21, 2012, 93–133.

<sup>18</sup> VIEGAS 2011.

<sup>19</sup> A. M. ARRUDA/C. VIEGAS/P. BARGÃO/R. PEREIRA, A importação de preparados de peixe em Castro Marim: da Idade do Ferro à época romana. *Setúbal Arq.* 13, 2006, 153–176; VIEGAS 2011.

<sup>20</sup> FABIÃO 1998, 181.

<sup>21</sup> FILIPE 2015, 158.

<sup>22</sup> FABIÃO 1993–1994, 239–241; R. MORAIS/C. CARRERAS MONFORT, Geografía del consumo de les Haltern 70. In: *Culip VIII i les ànfores Haltern 70*. *Monogr. Casc* 5 (Girona 2003) 93–112.

<sup>23</sup> V. FILIPE, Importação e exportação de produtos alimentares em Olisipo: as ânforas romanas da Rua dos Bacalhoeiros. *Rev. Portuguesa Arq.* 11/2, 2008, 301–324; FILIPE 2015.

<sup>24</sup> R. MORAIS/V. FILIPE, Ovoid Lusitanian (Western Lusitania). *Amphorae ex Hispania. Landscapes of production and consumption (amphorae. icac.cat)*, 20 July 14 (2016).

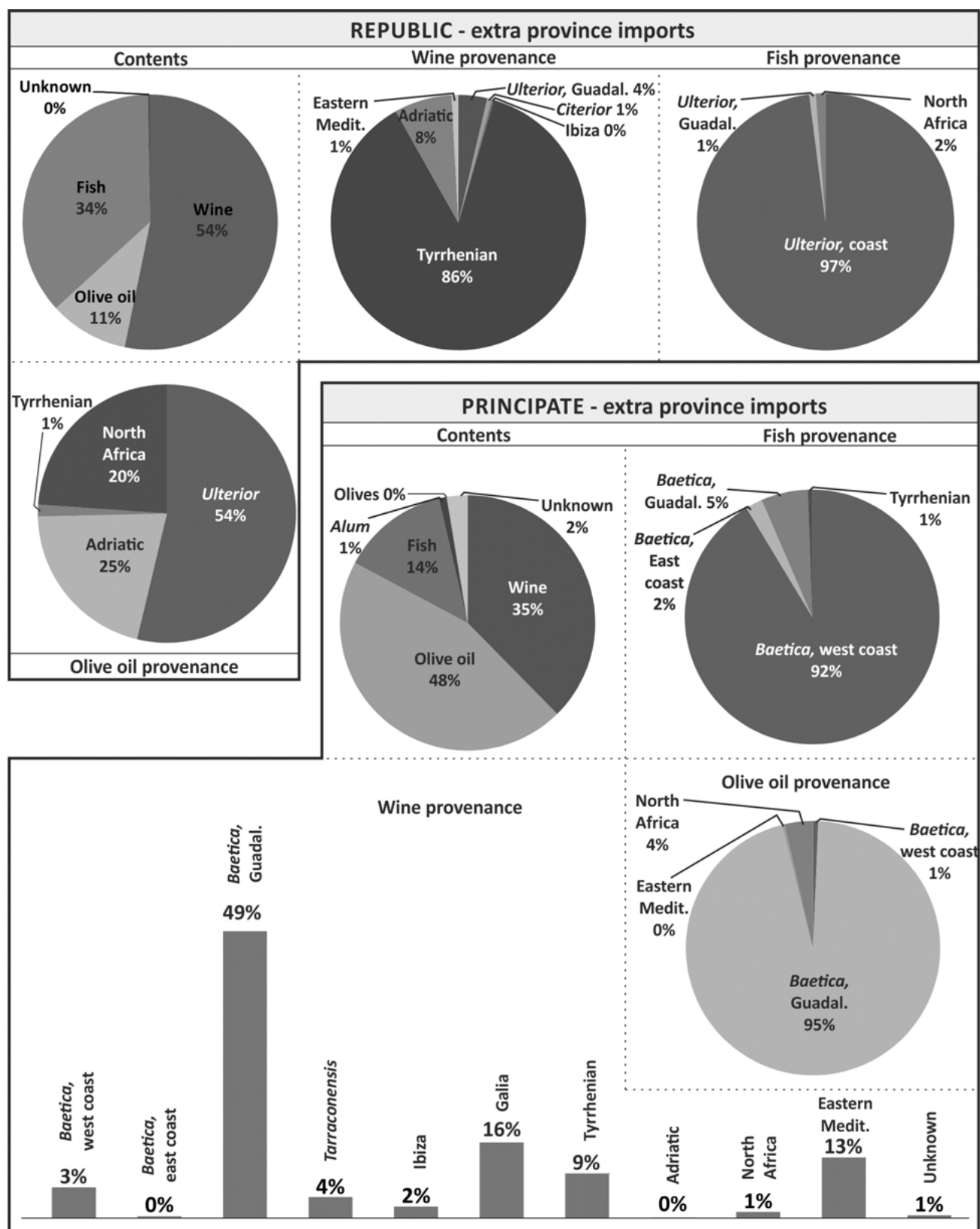
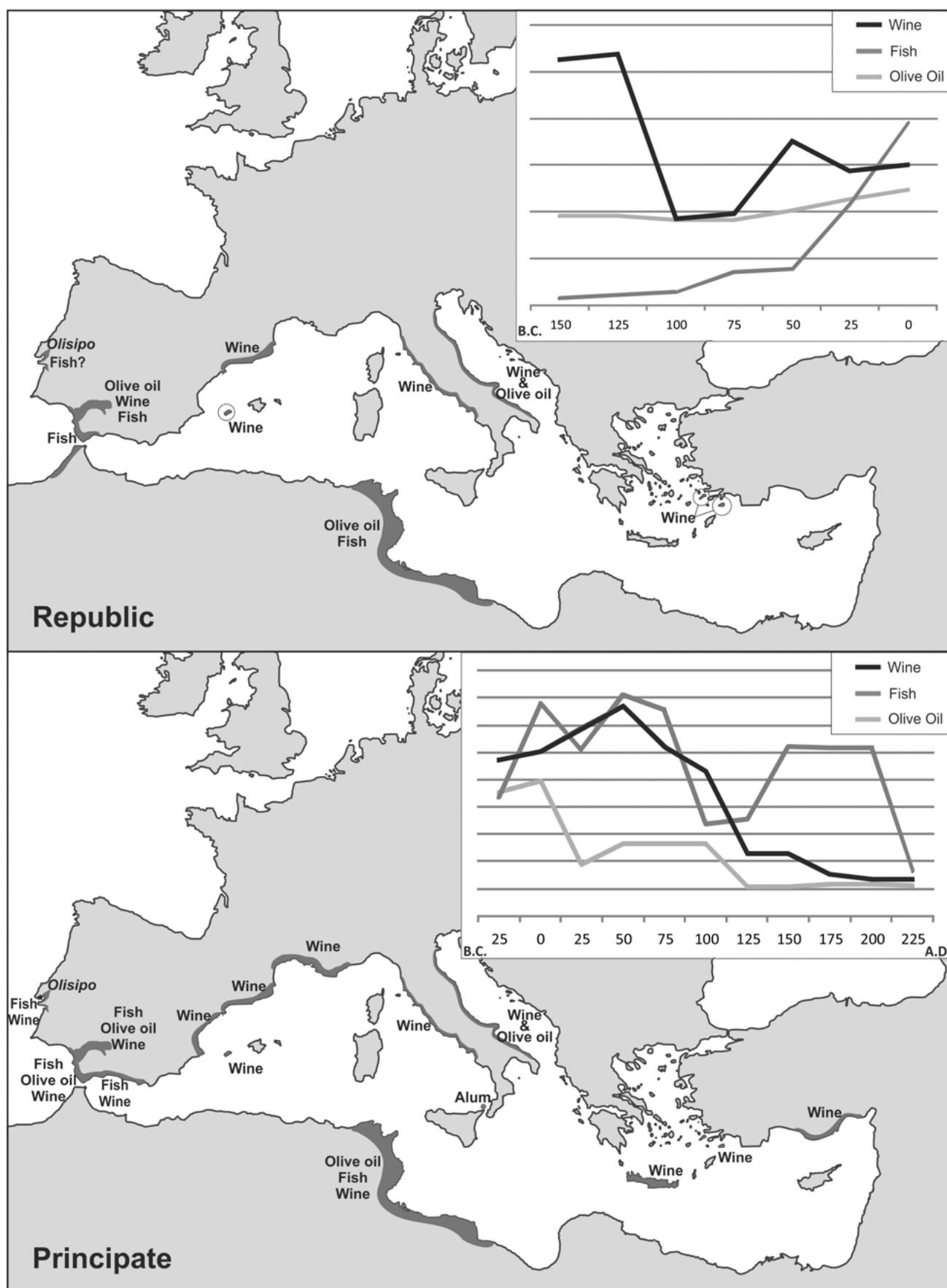


Fig. 2. Republic and Principate extra province imports.





**Fig. 5.** Localization of the provenance regions of imported amphorae from Lisbon in the Roman Empire and evolution of the foodstuffs carried in amphorae.

rence lies on the stronger presence of Baetican products from the coast instead of those coming from the Guadalquivir valley, which compound to around 60% in Lisbon and Alcácer.

Looking at the capital of the province, which has quite different consumption patterns<sup>31</sup>, what stands out is the more important role of long distance trade compared to *Olisipo* and Alcácer, namely with regards to products from the Eastern Mediterranean, Italy and Galia. *Baetica* was the province from where the majority of imports came from, but in the case of Mérida that importance was under 50%, while in all the other places which were analysed the imports from *Baetica* are between 67% and 94%. The major economic capacity of the elites from Mérida should, along with other factors, help clarify this important difference. This can also be glimpsed in the diversity of provenance and typology of the imported amphorae, which only finds parallel in Lisbon.

The profile curve of imports of samian ware in *Olisipo*<sup>32</sup> shows some similarities with the amphorae, especially if we establish a correlation between the peak of imports, during Claudius and Nero, and the following depression in the Flavian dynasty. During the whole 2<sup>nd</sup> century the curves of both samian ware and amphorae are similar, except in the import of olive oil that has a positive phase in the Antonine dynasty. This can also be seen in the amphorae assemblage from Praça da Figueira<sup>33</sup>.

## Final remarks

The broad and diversified set of amphorae from Lisbon, coming from several different parts of the Mediterranean, reveals the evident cosmopolitanism of *Felicitas Iulia Olisipo*, which then played an active and central role in the complex commercial exchanges in the West of Iberian Peninsula, which underlines its importance as a trading post in the Atlantic coast<sup>34</sup>.

This outlook of the city had already been recognized long ago by Vasco Mantas<sup>35</sup> and Carlos Fabião<sup>36</sup>, but with the publication, in the past years, of a greater amount of data, we have started to gain a better overview of *Olisipo* and, above all, it has finally become possible to define in more meticulous way how *Olisipo* was economically and socially shaped.

Its location and its condition as a maritime city<sup>37</sup>, facing the ocean and in the contact area between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, as part of a full Atlantic route<sup>38</sup>, would have been determinant in its rise towards the “maritime capital” of the province, where merchandise arrived from several geographic regions of the empire and from where they were redistributed into the territory, including *Emerita Augusta*, the capital of the province. Furthermore, not only was *Olisipo* a place for importing, it also held a crucial role in exporting fish products and wine which were produced in the Tagus valley.

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<sup>31</sup> R. R. ALMEIDA/F. SANCHEZ HIDALGO, Las ánforas del Cuartel de Hernán Cortés. Nuevos datos para el estudio de la importación y consumo en Augusta Emerita. In: Hornos, talleres y focos de producción alfarera en Hispania. Congreso Internacional de la SECAH Ex Officina Hispana 2. Cádiz, 3–4 de marzo de 2011 (Cádiz 2013) 48–59.

<sup>32</sup> SILVA 2012, 753. It should be noted that these refer only to the stamps of samian ware and that the analysed sample comes from a considerably smaller number of sites than the amphorae sample.

<sup>33</sup> R. R. ALMEIDA/V. FILIPE, 50 anos depois: as ânforas da Praça da Figueira. In: Actas do I Congresso da Associação dos Arqueólogos Portugueses, 21 a 24 de Novembro de 2013 (Lisboa 2013) 737–745.

<sup>34</sup> FABIÃO 2011.

<sup>35</sup> V. G. MANTAS, As cidades marítimas da Lusitânia. In: Les Villes Romaines en Lusitanie, Hiérarchies, et Territoires. Table ronde Internationale du CNRS, 8–9 Décembre 1988 (Paris 1990) 149–205; V. G. MANTAS, *Olisipo* e o Tejo. In: Actas do II Colóquio Temático Lisboa Ribeirinha, Câmara Municipal, DPC/DA (Lisboa 1999) 15–41.

<sup>36</sup> FABIÃO 1993–1994.

<sup>37</sup> MANTAS 1990; MANTAS 1999.

<sup>38</sup> FABIÃO 1993–1994; C. FABIÃO, A dimensão atlântica da Lusitânia: periferia ou charneira no Império Romano? In: J. G. Gorges/J. Encarnação/T. N. Basarrate/A. Carvalho (eds.), Lusitânia Romana: entre o mito e a realidade. Actas da VI Mesa-Redonda Internacional sobre a Lusitânia Romana. Câmara Municipal (Cascais 2009) 53–74.

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