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ITALICS AND HISPANICS IN SOUTH-WEST IBERIA AT THE DAWN OF THE ROMAN-REPUBLICAN PERIOD The common ware of Monte Molião (Lagos, Portugal)

1. Introduction

Between 2006 and 2011, archaeological field works that took place in Monte Molião, in the south of Portugal, revealed the existence of an important pre-Roman and Roman settlement. Its human occupation, dated from the last quarter of the 4th century BC to the middle of the 2nd century AD,² has provided a very significant set of data.

During the excavation of the Roman Republican phase of this site, dated between the end of the 2nd century and early 1st century BC, we have retrieved a considerable amount of artifacts, mainly constituted by ceramic fragments. The amphorae and the Campanian ware collected in the stratigraphic units of the Republican occupation have already been published.³ This paper intends to present a first analysis of the repertoire of the common ware associated with it. The study of this ceramic category allows us not only to confirm previous proposed chronologies and to understand the main commercial routes that have reached this settlement, but have also, in our opinion, opened a window to the heterogeneous ethnicity among the Roman Republican population of Monte Molião.

2. Monte Molião

Located on a prominent hill in the south-west of the Portuguese coast, near the Bay of Lagos, the site of Monte Molião has a good visual domain over the surrounding landscape, both inland and to the Atlantic.

The archaeological fieldwork that took place in this hill unfolded in the opening of three sectors, Sectors A, B and C, located in the hilltop, east and south slope. In the final phase of the project, the excavated area amounted to over 800 m².

In two of these areas, Sector A and Sector C, we have retrieved a stratigraphic sequence of the three main phases of Monte Molião's human occupation, mainly the Iron Age, the Roman Republican and the Imperial period.⁴

The first of these periods is dated from the last quarter of the 4th century BC. The features of the cultural artifacts recovered show that this Iron Age community had a close

and almost exclusive affiliation with the cultural environment of the South of Andalusia, especially with the Bay of Cadiz, to such a degree that it was recently proposed that Monte Molião may possibly have been founded by Gaditan settlers.⁵

The first traces of Roman contacts appear in the archaeological data only in the late 2nd century BC. It is during this moment that the ceramic repertoire reflects a very significant transformation, with the appearance of a numerous quantity of central Mediterranean imports, mainly *amphorae* and Campanian ware. It is also during this phase that a new architectural layout was built, although it maintains, in a general sense, the same orientation as the previously abandoned pre-Roman structures.⁶

The data recovered both in Sector A and in Sector C coincided in terms of the chronological scope of the Republican phase. In fact, in over 100 stratigraphic units excavated in both areas, the italic amphorae Dressel 1A were always in a far superior number in comparison to their predecessor, the Greco-Italic type.⁷ Another indicator, the Campanian ware, also shows a clear dominance of the type A over the Cales productions, that are more balanced only during the last moments of this period.⁸ On the other hand, the complete absence of *amphorae* from the Guadalquivir Valley indicates that this occupation did not last deep into the 1st century BC.

The proposal of a chronological occupation between the late 2nd century and the first decades of the 1st century BC is also confirmed by other artifacts. Besides the italic *amphorae*, we have also identified importations from the Carthage/Tunis area, namely Maña C2 and Ancient Tripolitanian, and from the nearby Bay of Cadiz (also Maña C2, Castro Marim 1, Pellicer type D, Dressel 1, MañaPascual A4 and type 9.1.1.1. of Ramon Torres)⁹. Other significant elements among the Republican ceramic assemblage that also confirm this chronology are the Kuass ware, the thin walled pottery and a few fragments of Megarian relief bowls.

¹ Uniarq – Centro de Arqueologia da Universidade de Lisboa.

² ARRUDA ET AL. 2008.

³ ARRUDA/SOUSA in press; DIAS 2010.

⁴ ARRUDA ET AL. 2008.

⁵ E. SOUSA/A. ARRUDA, A gaditanização do Algarve. *Mainaké* 32/2, 2010, 951–974.

⁶ ARRUDA/SOUSA in press.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ DIAS 2010.

⁹ ARRUDA/SOUSA in press.



Fig. 1. Location of Monte Molião in the Portuguese territory.

3. The Republican common ware of Monte Molião

Associated with the materials described above, in the same stratigraphic units, we have collected a great amount of common ware. The assemblage is constituted by 2319 classifiable fragments (1571 NMI),¹⁰ divisible into hand made (123 fragments – 90 NMI) and wheel made pottery (2196 fragments – 1481 NMI) from the Italian and the Iberian Peninsula.

Macroscopic analysis revealed the existence of at least six different fabric types, which we believe to reflect different points of origin, from the Bay of Cadiz, to more upstream areas of the Guadalquivir Valley, to the east Iberian coast and the Italian shores. Fragments of undetermined origin (2.29% of the common ware assemblage) and intrusive materials (0.38%) will not be published in this paper.

3.1. Cadiz Bay productions

The Cadiz Bay productions represent the majority, with over 63.97% of the common ware assemblage. The most typical forms (GDR) defined by Saéz Romero¹¹ are present.

The most frequent type is the semi hemispherical bowl, with small variations concerning the morphology of the rim and the orientation of its walls, that corresponds to types GDR 1.2.1 (**fig. 3,1–3**), 1.2.2 (**fig. 3,4**) and 1.2.3 (**fig. 3,5**). Less common are the small cups with a incurving lip (type GDR 1.1.1 and 1.1.2: **fig. 3,6–8**) and the traditional fishplates with an internal central depression and hanging lip (type GDR 5.1.1: **fig. 3,9–12**).

Among the vases more closely related with food preparation, storage and other utilitarian uses, we find large carinated types of bowls (type GDR 2.1.1 and 2.1.2: **fig. 3,13–14**) and basins (type GDR 4.1.1: **fig. 3,15**) and also a few fragments of mortars (type GDR 3.1.1: **fig. 3,23–24**), whose features clearly reflect the pre-Roman tradition of the area.¹²

The pots are also a significant part of the Cadiz Bay common ware assemblage and, although with significant variations concerning the rims and neck, they share a globular or oval-shaped body (types GDR 8.1.1: **fig. 3,20–21**; GDR 9.1.1: **fig. 3,19**; GDR 12.3.2: **fig. 3,22**) and sometimes can be painted with simple bands on their external surface. A small type of jar (type GDR 10: **fig. 3,25–27**) closes the repertoire of the Cadiz Bay common ware.

3.2. Guadalquivir Valley productions (type A)

The typical Roman productions of the Guadalquivir Valley are also present in Monte Molião (2.80% of the common ware assemblage).

This assemblage presents, however, a much lower formal variation than the last group. It is constituted by large-sized recipients, mainly by different types of basins and bowls (**fig. 4,1–3**). Other fragments seem to belong to mortars (**fig. 4,5**) and dolia (**fig. 4,4**).

3.3. Guadalquivir Valley productions (type B)

The third group of common ware from Monte Molião (5.54%) is believed to have its origin also in the area of the Guadalquivir Valley, although surely in a different type of pottery center than the previous group, considering not only the characteristics of the clay but also the morphological and decorative features.

The forms are diversified and, in some cases, quite original, as is the case of the vases with a horizontal rim (**fig. 5,5–6**). The semi hemispheric bowls (**fig. 4,6–8**) and large carinated basins (**fig. 4,10–11**) are also part of this production, as well as a peculiar type of plate (**fig. 4,9**) that may have been inspired by the Campanian ware. This production shows a very high percentage of painted decoration, especially in

¹⁰ The quantification criteria used were those established in Mont Beauvray: P. ARCELIN/M. TUFFREAU-LIBRE (dir.), *La quantification des céramiques. Conditions et protocole. Bibracte 2* (Bibracte 1998).

¹¹ SAÉZ ROMERO 2005.

¹² Ibid. 152.

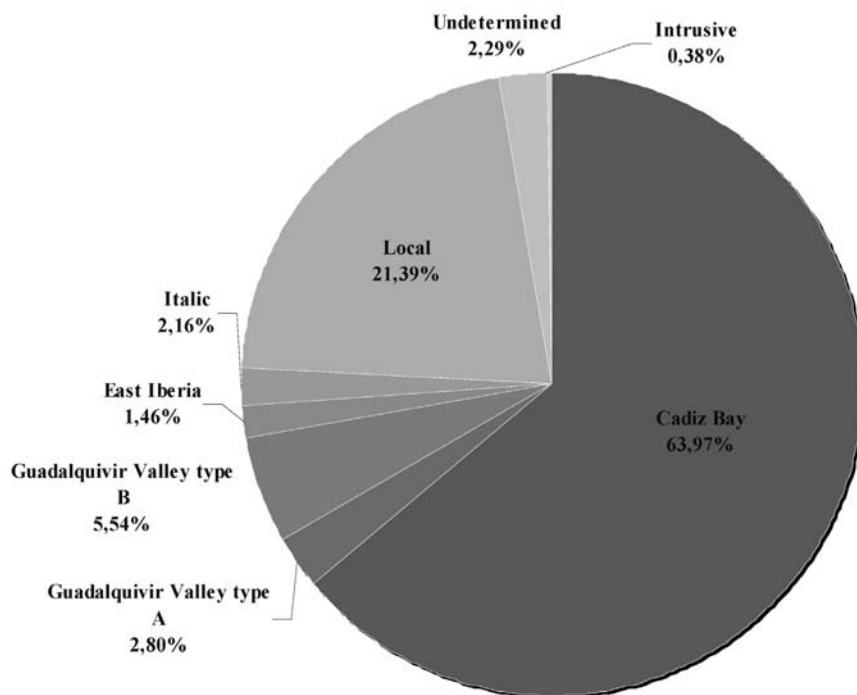


Fig. 2. Distribution of the common ware of Monte Molião (NMI) according to fabric types.

the vases used for storage (fig. 5,1–4), which is a feature that seems to relate to the so called “turdetanian culture” of the valley of Guadalquivir.

3.4. East Iberian Coast productions

Among the assemblage of common ware, we were able to identify a group of painted pottery whose shapes and decoration are typical of the eastern coast of the Iberian Peninsula (1.46%). They correspond to the so-called Iberian *kalathoi* (fig. 5,7–8). The decoration is exclusively geometrical, and can be found over the rim and the external surface of the vases.¹³

3.5. Italic productions

The Italic common ware (2.16%) is the only production that originates from outside the Iberian Peninsula. The formal classification follows the table proposed by Bats.¹⁴

This category is represented by the typical range of shapes of the late 2nd century and early 1st century BC. The most frequent are the patina with bifid rim and flat base (COM-IT 6c: fig. 5,10–12), their corresponding lids (COM-IT 7a: fig. 5,9) and pots or *caccabi* (COM-IT 3d: fig. 5,13–14). The mortars (COM-IT 8d: fig. 5,15) are scarce, but present.

3.6. Local productions

The last group of Republican common ware of Monte Molião is constituted by local productions (21.39%).

Its formal repertoire shows clearly the influences of the imported common ware. The semi-hemispheric bowls (fig. 5,16–17) and fishplates (fig. 5,18) reflect the weight of the Cadiz Bay productions, as well as the large basins (fig. 5,19–20) and oval or globular shaped pots (fig. 6,1.3.5), although, in these last cases, we should also consider a possible influence of the more interior areas of Andalusia.

In fact, the large recipients for storage (dolía: fig. 6,10–11) only appear, outside of the local common ware, in the Guadalquivir productions.

The Italic influence is also very clear among the local pottery of Monte Molião. A quite significant group of pots shows a hollow in the internal part of the rim for the use of some type of lid (fig. 6,6–9) which is a feature presented only by the Italic productions (pots type Vegas 2). Other vases with a triangular rim (fig. 6,4) also recall Italic prototypes (pots type Vegas 1).¹⁵

Also among the local pottery, we find a considerable percentage of hand-made vessels. They are almost exclusively recipients fit for cooking, like the “S” shaped pots (fig. 6,12–14) although some globular vases, ideal for storage, are also part of this assemblage.

There are, however, in some fragments, decorative characteristics of great interest, namely the application of stamps and certain incised motifs (fig. 6,15–17). The importance of these finds relates to the fact that such features are completely

¹³ A more specific study concerning these vases is available in an article in this volume: G. MUCCIOLI, I *Kalathoi Iberici nell' Éstrema Occidente*.

¹⁴ M. BATS, *Céramique commune italique*, in *Dictionnaire des céramiques antiques (VIIe s. De n.è.) en Méditerranée nord-occidentale*. Lattara 6, 1993, 357–362.

¹⁵ M. VEGAS, *Cerámica comun romana del Mediterráneo Occidental* (Barcelona 1993).

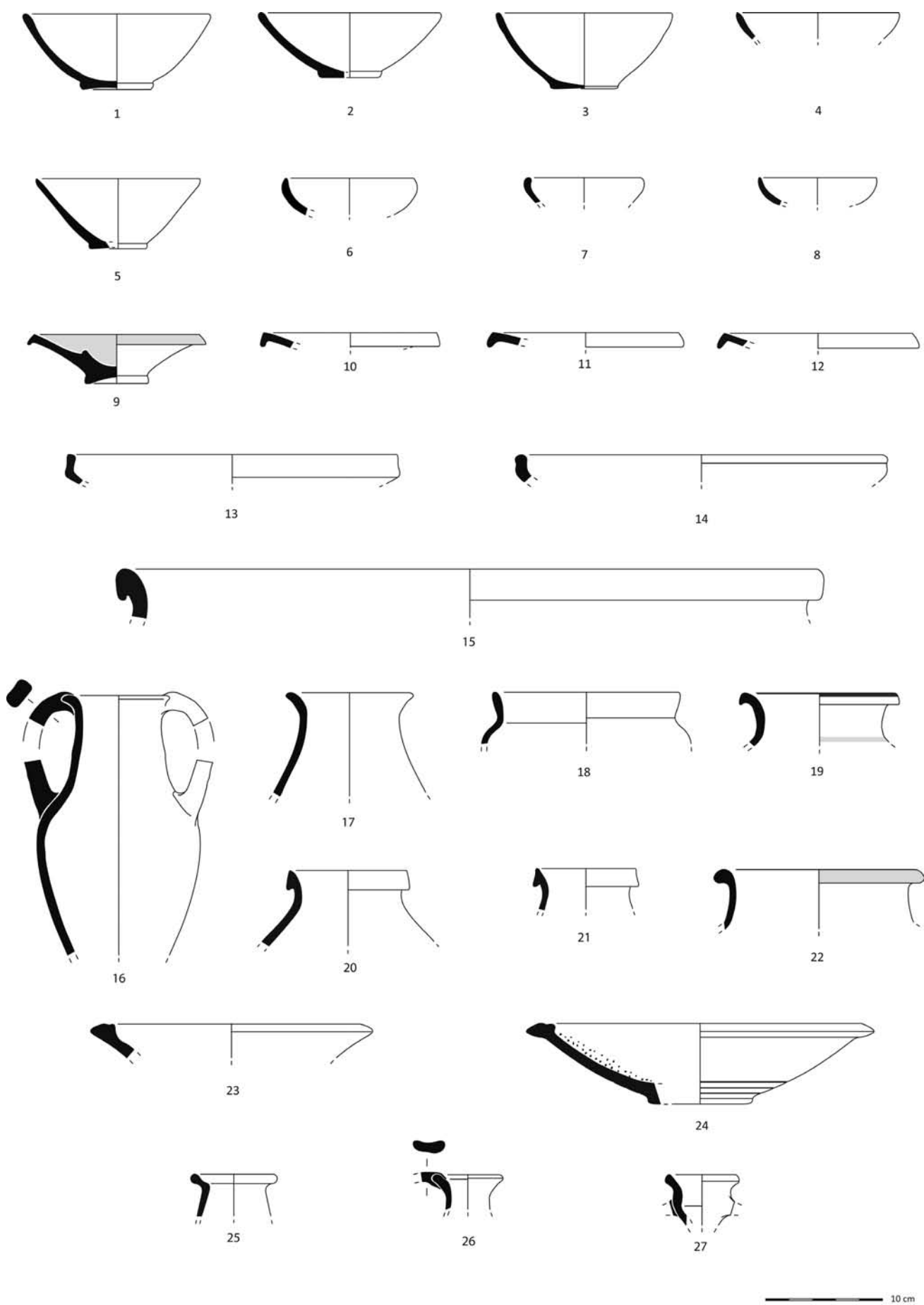


Fig. 3. Cadiz Bay productions.

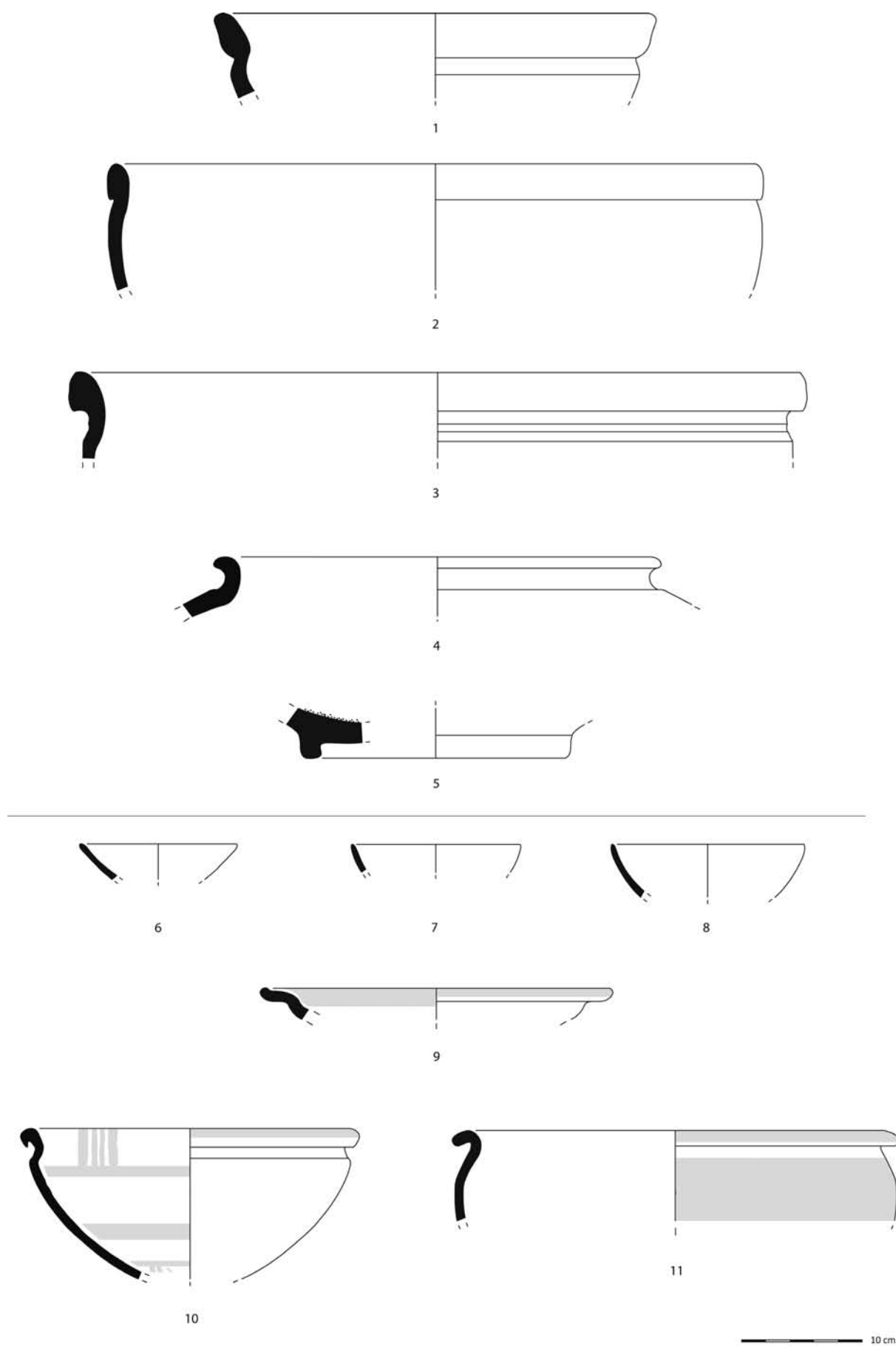


Fig. 4. Guadalquivir type A and type B productions.

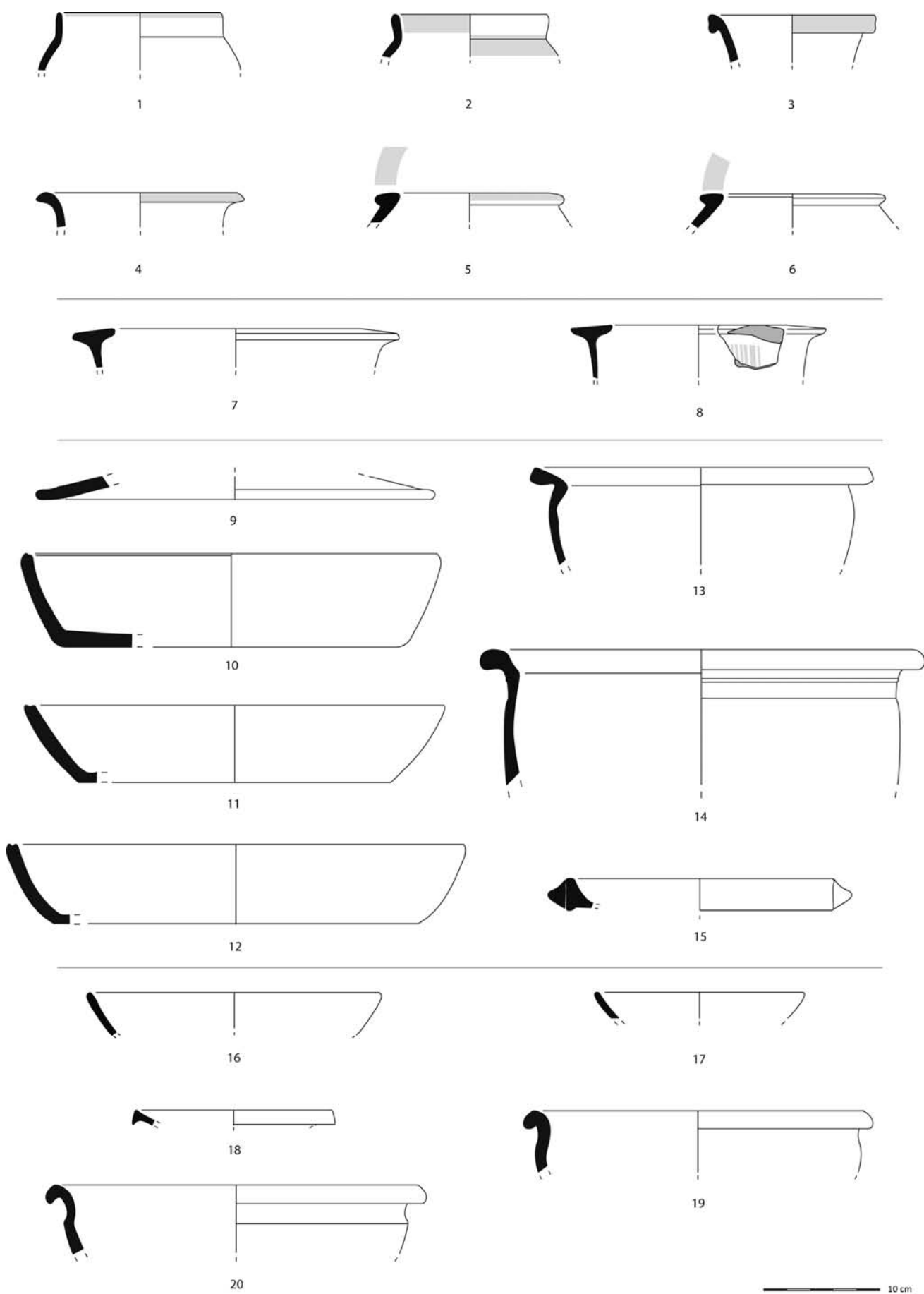


Fig. 5. Guadalquivir type B, Italic and local productions.

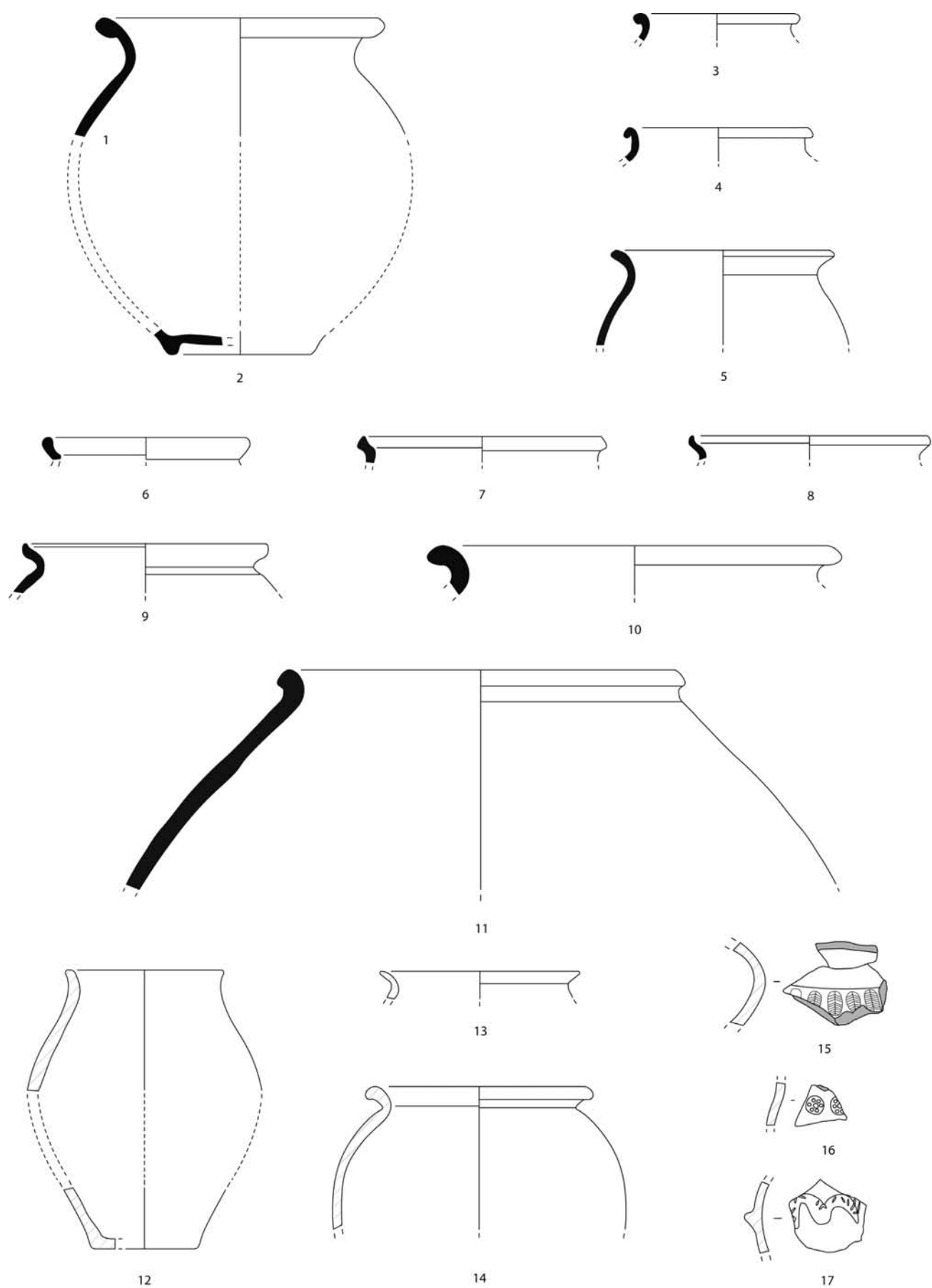


Fig. 6. Local productions.

unknown among the pre-Roman vessels of Monte Molião, and therefore, cannot be interpreted as the continuation of a previous tradition. They are, however, typical of the so-called “celtic” heritage of the center of the Iberian Peninsula,¹⁶ during both the Iron Age and the Roman Republican Period.

4. Conclusion

The study of the common ware of Monte Molião allowed the retrieval of a significant amount of data that was unreadable through the other ceramic assemblages, such as the amphorae and the fine ware.

The first point of interest is related to the significant variations in terms of origin of the different groups of common ware. The presence of Italic productions is fairly common in archaeological contexts of this period, but the existence of vessels from the Turdetanian and East Iberian region clearly shows an important variety of supply centers in Monte Molião. Although this data can be easily interpreted in terms of geographical proximity, the existence of other elements, like the hand-made ware with stamped decoration, allows for a different interpretation.

These kinds of vessels were either produced at or brought to Monte Molião by individuals originating from the Celtic cultural areas, which clearly indicates a certain degree of heterogenic constitution among the Republican population. Relating such a phenomenon with the already known and well-documented transfer and settlement of veterans of the Roman army is tempting. Most of these episodes speak of the foundation of new important cities, but it is also possible that such a phenomenon occurred on a smaller scale that remains undocumented in the classical literary texts. This does not imply a military *status* of Monte Molião, only that during the Republican phase of its occupation the popula-

tion seems to be constituted by individuals with highly varied cultural backgrounds, an element that could be explained by an origin related to military reorganization of conquered territories or to a group of auxiliary troops that established themselves in the far west of the Iberian Peninsula.

Such an explanation would also allow us to reinterpret some of the previous data, considering that the common ware vases of Turdetanian tradition could also be justified by the presence of individuals from that geographical area in Monte Molião, and the same could even be applied to the *kalathoi* (east Iberian coast). Some of the features present on the local common ware, like the Italic-inspired pots, could likewise reflect the settlement of some true Romans in that territory.

We are aware that discussing cultural and ethnic identities through archaeological artifacts that do not conserve their original human and social context is a difficult and some times dangerous task. However, knowing that different identities can express themselves through the material evidence, as seems to be the case of the Roman Republican inhabitants of Monte Molião, has been a stimulus in constructing this analysis and interpreting the available data. Since the common ware is probably the type of ceramics with the most potential to reflect cultural differences and features, especially in regard to the local productions of any given site, this study implicated an exhaustive and detailed analysis of the totality of these types of artifacts recovered in the Republican stratigraphy of Monte Molião. Although the data can always be interpreted in different ways, we believe that this study has, at least, showed that even the most basic types of pottery can, occasionally, be elements that define the different ethnicities that have interacted in the process of Romanization of the Iberian Peninsula.

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¹⁶ C. FABIÃO, *O Mundo Indígena e a sua Romanização na área Céltica do território hoje português* (Doctoral thesis Univ. Lisbon, published in photocopy 1998).

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