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THE USE OF “KOUASS WARE” DURING THE REPUBLICAN PERIOD IN THE ALGARVE (PORTUGAL)

1. Introduction

“Kouass ware” is a type of pottery characteristic of the south of the Iberian Peninsula and the north coast of Morocco. It basically consists in a Hellenistic production, distinguishable especially by the large variation of the colour of its poor quality glaze which varies from red to black. This variation can be seen sometimes at the same vessel.

Although the production of this type of pottery begins at the end of the 4th century BC, when it is mainly characterized for imitating several forms of the black and plain Greek ware, its persistence during the first centuries of the Roman occupation in Southern Iberia has been systematically documented. In these later moments, the repertoire of this production shows a clear evolution of several prototypes, including the adoption of new forms that are now inspired by or simply imitating the Campanian ware.

This picture, observed in the south coast of Spain and in the north of Morocco, is now also visible in the south of the Portuguese coast, which was, in ancient times, a natural continuation of these areas, from a geographical and cultural point of view.

Over the last decade, several excavations carried out in the current province of the Algarve (**fig. 1**) have yielded significant data for the Roman Republican occupation, dated, so far, between a late moment in the 2nd century and the end of the 1st century BC. Materials recovered from these interventions show a persistence of various ceramic forms of pre-Roman tradition, of which we highlight, in this occasion, the Kouass ware.

2. The archeological contexts

2.1. “Urbanização do Moleão”

On the coast of the Algarve, towards the west, in the town of Lagos, preventive excavations, directed by the author, M. Serra and C. Alves, revealed the existence of two pits of considerable dimensions, dated from the Republican period. This excavation took place in the area immediately surrounding what are presumed to be the limits of the Monte Molião proto-historical and Roman habitat.

One of these structures was used, at least in its last phase, as a rubbish dump. This archeological context, consisting in

the first layer of the structure, which was fully excavated (**fig. 2**), is well dated, through the recovered finds, at a moment between the end of the 2nd century and early 1st century BC. In this level, associated with several types of amphorae (italic type Dressel 1 A, Maña C2 a and b, Ramón Torres type 9.1.1.1., late variants of Pellicer type D and Castro Marim I), we recovered a considerable number of Kouass ceramics (approximately 45 vessels) in the assemblage of table ware, together with Campanian ware, mainly type A (Lamboglia forms 27, 28, 31 and 36) and thin walled pottery (Mayet forms I and II)¹.

The most popular forms of Kouass ware in this context (**fig. 3**) are the Niveau types II and variant IX-A. Other types, like the plates of Niveau type IV and the bowls of Niveau variant IX-B and type X are also represented. A new form of Kouass ware was also identified, consisting in an imitation of Campanian ware, Morel type 1331.

Although the study of this specific archeological context is not yet completed, the results related to the Kouass ware analysis should not suffer significant modifications.

In the nearby area, in the habitat of Monte Molião, recent archeological interventions, directed by A. M. Arruda, led also to the identification of Roman occupation levels, which have been dated between the end of the 2nd century and the beginning of the 1st century BC. In these contexts, the presence of Kouass ware was also documented, namely the plates Niveau type II and bowls of the subform IX-A².

2.2. Faro

In the city of Faro, archeological excavations in the urban area, directed by D. Paulo and N. Beja³, also allowed the identification of Roman Republican levels of occupation, in which a substantial quantity of Kouass ware was recovered (approximately 41 vessels: **fig. 4**).

The best-represented forms, as in the previous cases, are Niveau type II and variant IX-A. However, in these Roman

¹ SOUSA 2005, 81–83. For detailed characterization of Kouass ware see: NIVEAU DE VILLEDARY 2003; EAD. 2008. – E. SOUSA/M. SERRA, Resultados das intervenções arqueológicas realizadas na zona de protecção do Monte Molião (Lagos). In: *Xelb* 6/1, 2006, 5–20.

² A. ARRUDA/E. SOUSA/P. BARGÃO/P. LOURENÇO, Monte Molião (Lagos): resultados de um projecto em curso. In: *Xelb* 8/1, 2008, 153.

³ D. PAULO, As sondagens arqueológicas realizadas na antiga Fábrica da Cerveja - Faro. *Anais Município Faro*. 29/30, 1999/2000, 17–85.



Fig. 1. Location of the Algarve in the south of the Iberian Peninsula and distribution of Kouass ware at Roman republic sites. **1** Lagos (“Urbanização do Moleão” / Monte Molião); **2** Faro; **3** Castro Marim (“Castelo de Castro Marim” / “Forte de São Sebastião”).



Fig. 2. Detail of the rubbish dump identified in the archeological interventions of the “Urbanização do Moleão”.

Republican assemblages, it was possible to observe a more diverse repertoire in Kouass ware than in the previous cases. Along with the forms listed above, there are also plates of Niveau type V, bowls of variants IX-B and IX-C and type X, and new forms imitating prototypes of Campanian ware, like Morel type 1331 and 2296⁴.

2.3. Castro Marim

In the east of the Algarve, on the right bank of the Guadiana River, excavations in the “Castelo de Castro Marim”, directed by A. M. Arruda, led to the identification of late Roman Republican levels, dated from the third quarter of the 1st century BC.⁵ Although in these later moments, during which Campanian ware spread through all the Roman peninsular territory, we should not expect to find Kouass ware, this class of pottery is still present in these contexts. Kouass ware is now present in a very small percentage (approximately 6% =

13 vessels: **fig. 5**) in the context of table ware, when compared to the Campanian ware and the thin-walled pottery. The Kouass ware forms most represented are still the plates of Niveau type II and the bowls of the variant IX-A, along with plates of Niveau type V and VI and the vessels of type VII.

Facing the “Castelo de Castro Marim”, in another elevation, known as “Forte de São Sebastião”, archeological excavations, also directed by A. M. Arruda and C. Pereira, allowed the recovery of materials which seem to indicate a Roman occupation of that hilltop between the end of the 2nd century and the beginning of the 1st century BC. Some Kouass ware was also recovered, unfortunately without archeological context, consisting in the plates of Niveau types II and V and also bowls of type X⁶.

⁴ SOUSA, 2005, 81–83.

⁵ A. M. ARRUDA, Los Fenícios en Portugal. Fenícios y mundo indígena en el centro y sur de Portugal (siglos VIII–VI a.C.). Cuad. Arqu. Mediterránea 5/6, 1999/2000, 43.

⁶ A. M. ARRUDA/C. PEREIRA, As ocupações antigas e modernas do Forte de São Sebastião, Castro Marim. Xelb 8/1, 2008, 391.

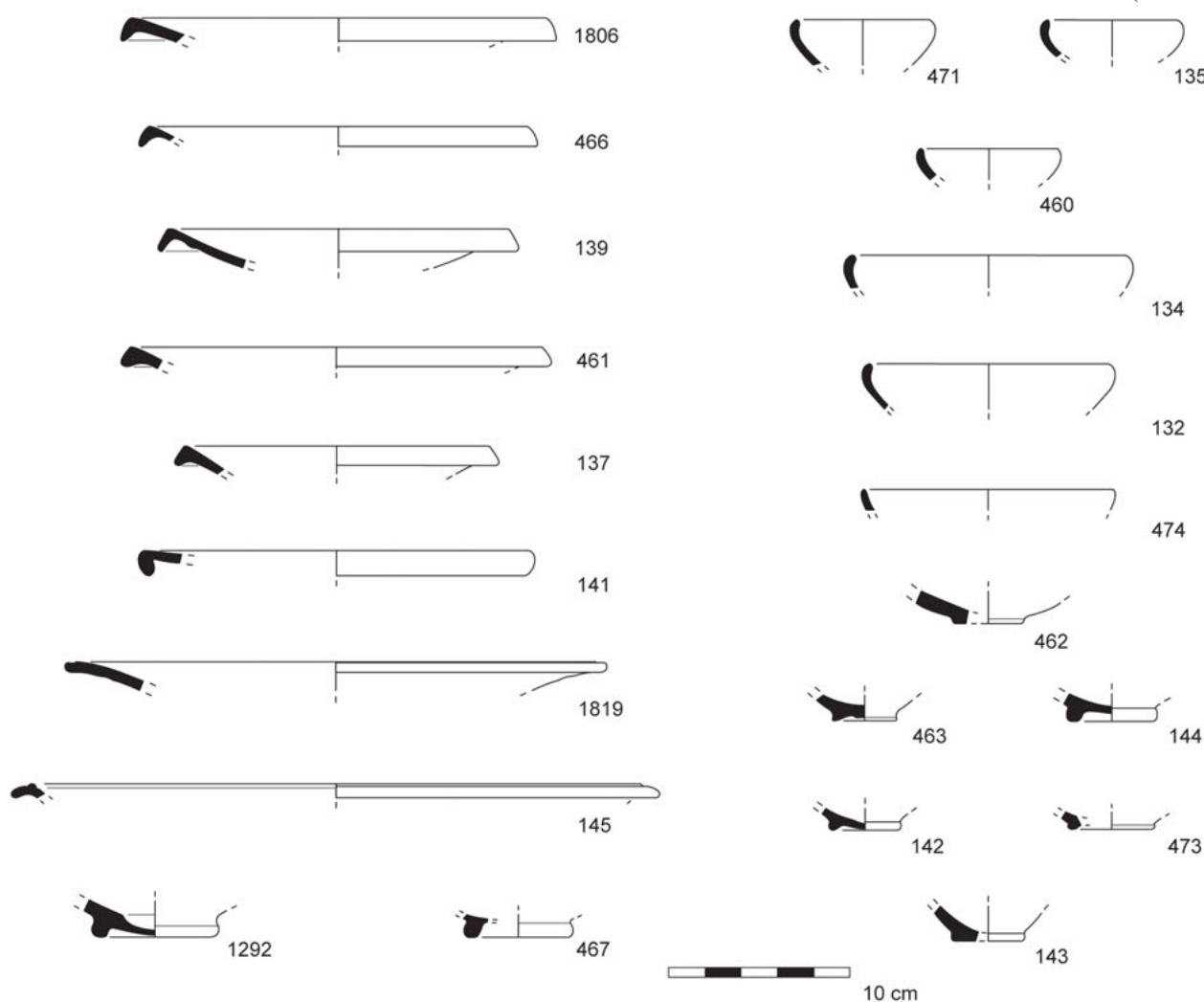


Fig. 3. “Kouass ware” recovered in the Republican levels of “Urbanização do Moleão”. Niveau type II (1806, 466, 139, 461, 137, 141), IV (1819), variant IX-A (471, 135, 460) and type X (134, 132, 474). Morel type 1331 (145).

3. The Roman Republican Kouass ware repertoire in the South coast of Portugal

In all the archeological sites previously described, two forms seem to dominate the repertoire of the Kouass ware in the Roman Republican contexts, namely the plates of Niveau type II and the bowls of the variant IX-A. This pattern shows a clear persistence of what has been previously reported for the pre-Roman period, both in the primary production area⁷ and in the coast of the Algarve⁸.

Morphologically, some differences can be established between the Republican plates of Niveau type II and their pre-Roman predecessors. The characteristic grooves, present both near the rim and surrounding the central depression of these forms, that are a constant feature at the end of the 4th century and in most of the 3rd century BC disappear during the Republican period in some vessels, as it has already been established⁹. None the less, the latter forms also coexist with the more classical prototypes of these plates, although these are less frequent. Another difference is a considerable re-

duction of the diameters of the plates during this last phase of production.

Along with these fish plates, the other most popular form represented in the Algarve consists of bowls of the Niveau variant IX-A, which has been associated with the consumption of liquids and condiments. Morphologically, these types of bowls do not show significant differences from their pre-Roman forms in the Portuguese region. The same can be established for the other variants of the Niveau type IX (variants IX-B and IX-C).

The plates Niveau type IV and VI are quite rare in the south of the Iberian Peninsula¹⁰, and are documented only in “Urbanização do Moleão” (type IV) and in the “Castelo de Castro Marim” (type VI). The plates Niveau type V are relatively more frequent. This is a late form in the context of “Kouass ware”, which is dated after the end of the 3rd century¹¹ and achieves its most popular phase in the 2nd century

⁷ NIVEAU DE VILLADARY 2003, 147.

⁸ SOUSA 2005, 79.

⁹ NIVEAU DE VILLEDARY 2004, 682.

¹⁰ EAD. 2003, 57–59.

¹¹ EAD. 2004, 680.

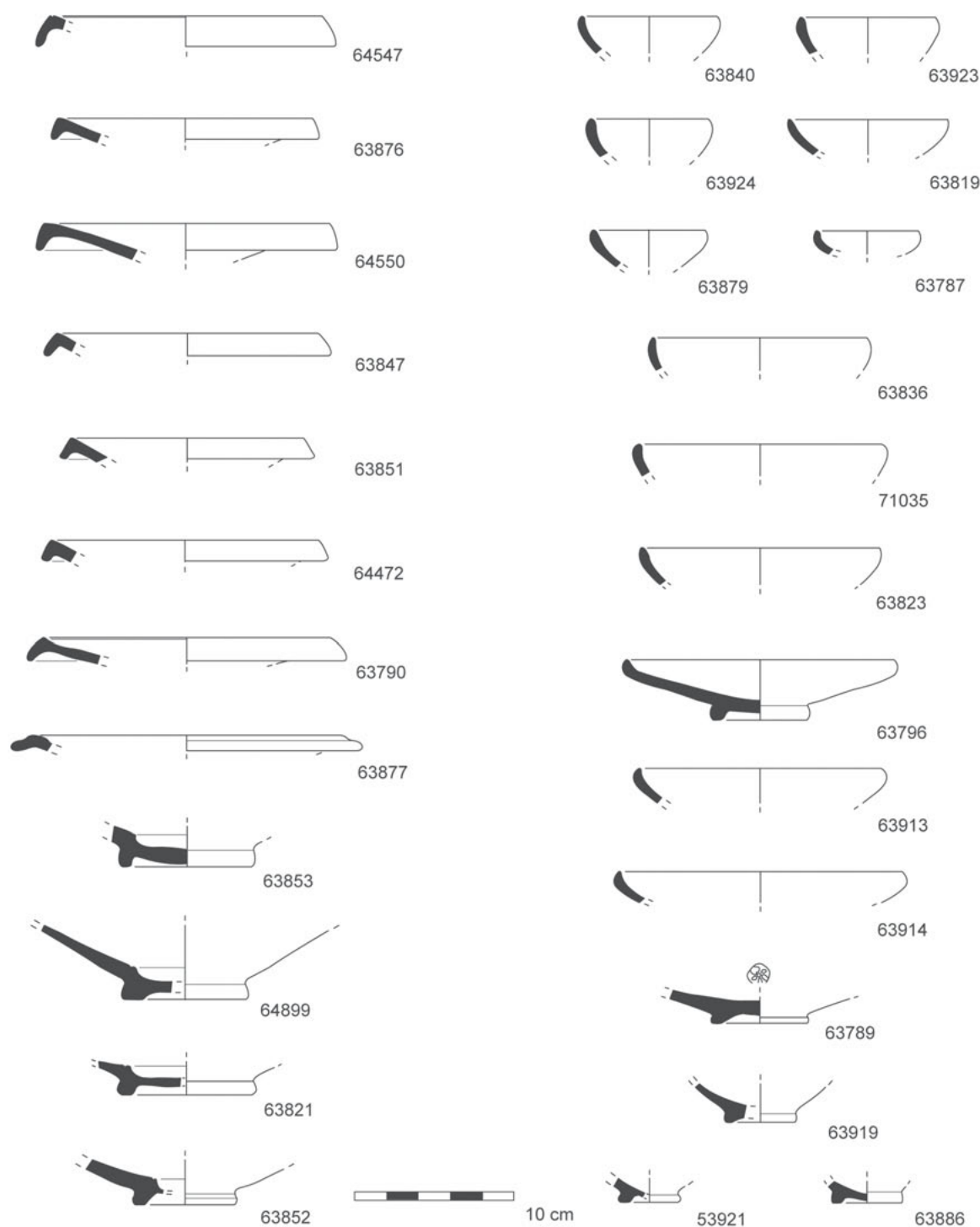


Fig. 4. Kouass ware recovered in the Republican levels of Faro. Niveau type II (64547, 63876, 64550, 63847, 63851, 64472), V (63790), variant IX-A (63840, 63923, 63924, 63819, 63879), IX-B (63913, 63914), IX-C (63787) and type X (63836, 71035, 63823). Morel type 1331 (63877) and 2296 (63796).

BC. The only pieces known, so far, in the Algarve, were identified in Faro and in Castro Marim (both in the castle and in the “Fortaleza de São Sebastião”). The presence of Niveau type V in the 1st century is documented in “Castelo de Castro Marim” and in Southern Spain¹².

Vessels of Niveau type VII are only represented, so far, in the “Castelo de Castro Marim”. Although it has been proposed that the production of this form ends in the beginning

of the 2nd century BC¹³, similar examples have been documented in *Lixus*, in the north of Morocco, through the 1st century BC.¹⁴

¹² EAD. 2003, 57–59.

¹³ EAD. 2004, 681.

¹⁴ BONET ROSADO ET AL. 2005, 91 fig. 4,2; 90; 92; 95.

The bowls of Niveau type X are, like the plates of type V, more typical of the latter phases of the Kouass ware productions. Although this form is quite frequent in Portuguese contexts, it never outnumbers the bowls of type IX-A, unlike what seems to have happened in the Cadiz area, according to recent studies¹⁵.

It is also necessary to highlight the identification of two previously unknown Kouass forms, documented in the “Urbanização do Moleão” and in Faro, namely the plates of Morel type 1331 and the *patera* of Morel type 2296. Although these forms are relatively rare among Kouass pottery, they clearly show the adaptation of the Kouass ware production to the new Roman prototypes of the Campanian ware.

In some of these sites, the identification of primary archaeological contexts also allows us to discuss the significance of Kouass ware among pottery assemblages during the Republican period.

The first layer of the pit identified in the “Urbanização do Moleão” (end of the 2nd / beginning of the 1st century BC), allowed a quantitative analysis using the method of minimum number of vessels (MNV), based on the totality of the table ware material (Campanian ware, thin walled pottery and Kouass ware). The results emphasize that the productions of Kouass ware are still quite significant in this category (approximately 18%).

In Faro, although it is not at this moment possible to present definitive data, it seems that Kouass pottery has a slightly more significant presence when compared to the imports of Campanian ware. This also confirms that its use is still quite frequent in the first moments of the Roman occupation of what is today the southern coast of Portugal.

In the “Castelo de Castro Marim”, which is, so far, the latest chronological context identified (3rd quarter of the 1st century BC), the percentage of Kouass ware is, naturally, quite low (about 6% of the table ware), but it is still present. This data, like that from Morocco¹⁶, contradicts the hypothesis that the production of Kouass ware came to an end in a moment near 100 BC.

4. Conclusion

The intention of this study is to demonstrate the coexistence, in southern Portugal, of table ware of both pre-Roman and Roman tradition, during the first centuries of the Roman occupation.

The presence of “Kouass ware” in the southern coast of Portugal (fig. 1) during this period is quite expressive, in what is considered to be the last phase of production of this type of pottery. In all of the sites where Roman Republican levels have been identified and published, some percentage of Kouass vessels is represented.

It may be argued that the presence of “Kouass ware” was due to the proximity of the main production area (Cadiz), and that it replaces possible difficulties in the importation

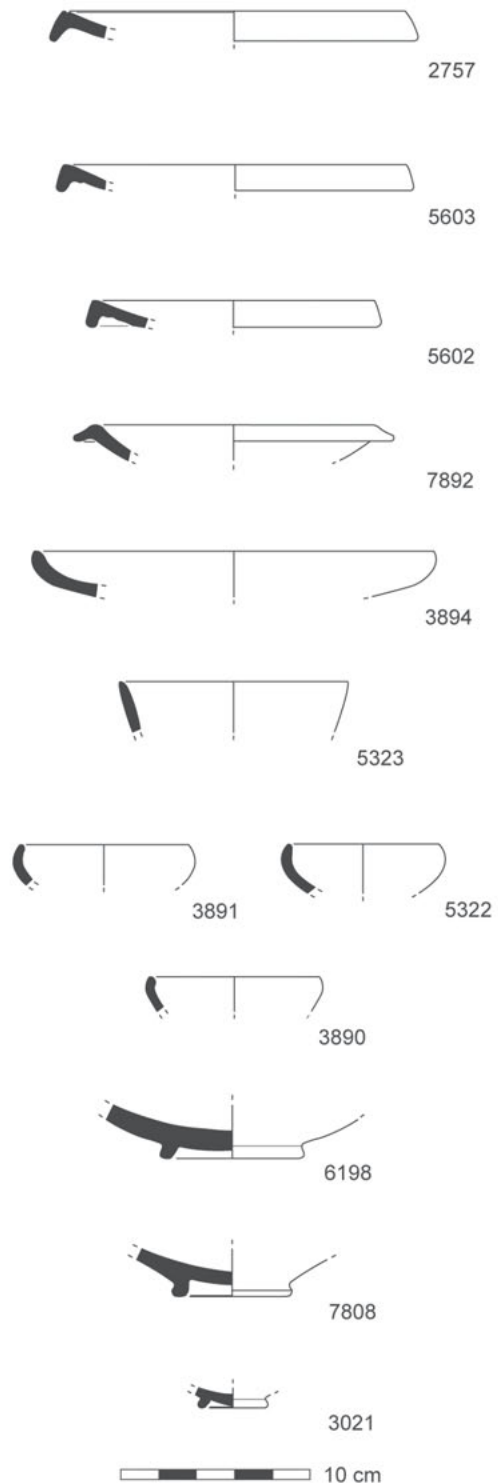


Fig. 5. Kouass ware recovered in the Republican levels of the “Castelo de Castro Marim”. Niveau type II (2757, 5603, 5602), V (7892), VI (3894), VII (5323), variant IX-A (3891, 5322, 3890).

¹⁵ NIVEAU DE VILLEDARY 2004, 682; 685.

¹⁶ BONET ROSADO ET AL., 2005, 90–95.

of the Campanian ware. However, other arguments should be considered. The formal repertoire of the “Kouass ware” was, from the beginning of its manufacture, adapted to certain aspects of the diet of the communities that lived in the south of the Iberian Peninsula, namely the consumption of fish and fish sauces produced in that same area. Therefore, some forms, like the typical fish plates (Niveau type II), appeared to be specially demanded, which justifies the great popularity of this form in both the pre-Roman and the Republican periods. Since this type of plate seems to disappear from the Campanian ware repertoire after the first quarter of the 2nd century BC¹⁷, it may partially explain the maintenance of the production and distribution of Kouass ware during the Republican period, which is also reflected in the south of the Portuguese coast.

Although the accurate definition and characterization of this type of pottery is relatively recent¹⁸, both for the pre-Roman and Roman period, it seems important to emphasize and recognize its function in the context of table ware during its latest phase of production.

¹⁷ M. PY, Campanienne A. In M. Py (ed.), *Dictionnaire des ceramiques antiques (VIIe s. av. n. è. – VIIe de n. è.) en Mediterranée nord-occidentale (Provence, Languedoc, Ampurdán)*. Lattara 6, 1993, 147.

¹⁸ NIVEAU DE VILLEDARY Y MARIÑAS 2003.

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