

Courtyard Houses and Other Complex Buildings in the Protohistory of Southern Gaul: From Architectural to Social Changes

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Abstract

Courtyard houses are attested at several sites in southern Gaul between the 5th and the 1st centuries BC. They represent a new concept when compared to the traditional protohistoric houses of the region and have often been interpreted in terms of Mediterranean, Greek or Italic influences. Regardless of their origin, exogenous influences or evolution, these houses suggest the emergence of social differentiation and elites in several of the main settlements. This article analyses the significance of the various courtyard house categories in the context of local, indigenous societies, while trying to understand the social implications of this new type of residence. In a wider context, the development of domestic architecture during the Iron Age is analysed alongside the relationships between changing uses of space and social changes.

Keywords: *Iron Age, southern Gaul, domestic architecture, building techniques, courtyard houses, household organization, acculturation*

Introduction

This paper is about Mediterranean France during the Iron Age. From a geographical point of view, this region, which is also known as southern Gaul, is defined by the Mediterranean Sea and the Pyrenees, Alps and Cevennes mountain ranges that constitute its natural boundaries. The southern part of this area includes the present-day region of Languedoc in the west and that of Provence in the east; they are separated by the river Rhône (Figure 1). In chronological terms, the Iron Age is usually distinguished into an Early and a Late phase. There is, however, little agreement about the absolute dates of these phases and distinct chronologies are used for different sites and areas (Dietler 1997: 275-76; 2005: 29). In this paper, I will work with the periodization proposed by Michel Py in his well-known book *Les Gaulois du Midi* (1993) that is intended to apply to the

whole of Mediterranean France. It dates the Iron Age overall between 675 BC and the turn of the era and situates the transition from the Early to the Late Iron Age between 525 and 425 BC (Py 1993: 21).

A large number of Iron Age sites were excavated in this area between the 1980s and the beginning of the 21st century. They provided a great deal of data on domestic architecture, building techniques, floor plans, domestic features and the use of space. These data have already been published widely and various typologies and interpretations of their development have been proposed (Chazelles 1999: 481-98; Dedet 1987: 175-208; 1999: 313-55; Michelozzi 1982; Py 1996: 141-258). The data gathered in these publications show a significant continuity in building traditions and settlement patterns over long periods, as well as an apparent

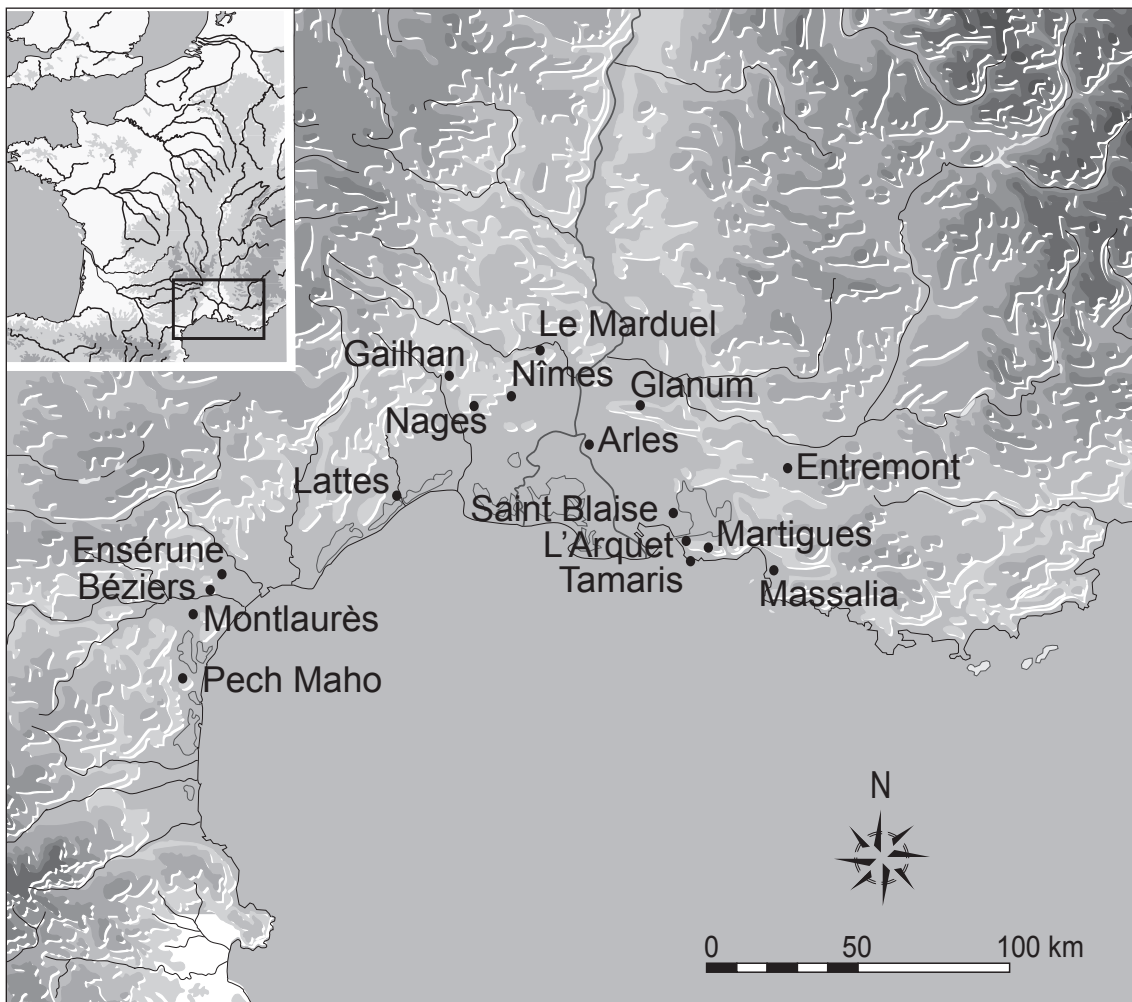


Figure 1. Map of Southern Gaul with the location of the sites mentioned in the text (map background: Michel Py).

lack of innovation over the centuries, with one remarkable exception—the appearance of buildings with stone foundations and earthen (mud brick) load-bearing walls by the beginning of the Early Iron Age.

During the Late Bronze Age (900-750) and Early Iron Age (675-525), settlements were made up of groups of huts with foundations cut in bed-rock or the ground and with superstructures of perishable materials (Dedet 1987: 177; Michelozzi 1982: 19-34). In the coastal areas, the first houses built with durable materials (i.e. with stone foundations and earthen walls) appeared by the end of the 6th century BC,

while the interior regions followed suit at a later date (Dedet 1999: 315-21). As I will discuss later in this paper, the appearance of new settlement patterns, architectural forms and building techniques, such as the use of mud bricks, have often been interpreted as being related to colonial encounters and interactions (Chazelles 1995: 51-54; Dedet 1999: 317; Michelozzi 1982: 85), because the first contacts between the indigenous communities of southern Gaul and other Mediterranean peoples (Greeks, Etruscans and Phoenicians) occurred during the transition period from the Bronze to the Iron Age (750-675 BC) (Dietler 1997: 277-91; 2005: 39-67). The new

building techniques and architectural forms created at this time were to change very little over the centuries until the Roman period.

The Bronze Age huts (or houses built of perishable materials) had very simple plans and small surface areas, with an average of 11 sq m for the Languedoc region (Dedet 1999: 325). The building of houses with stone and mud brick walls, the so-called *maisons en dur*, began at the end of the 6th century BC in the coastal area and during the 5th century farther inland. During the Iron Age, a certain diversity of plans, floor areas and use of space is documented, including differences among houses in one and the same settlement. Drawing on previous work (Chazelles 1999; Dedet 1999; Py 1996), I first give an overview of the main types of house plans and spatial organization in order to provide a context for a more detailed study of the courtyard houses. I intend in particular to examine the changing relationships between public and private spaces, as changes in the use of open spaces are closely related to the appearance of courtyard houses.

After a long period of continuity in house types, new architectural forms appeared at several sites by the end of the Iron Age, that is between the 3rd and the 1st centuries BC, although there are some earlier exceptions. These were houses with complex plans organized around a roofless space that were considerably larger and had a more complex layout than most other houses in the same settlement. They are usually called 'courtyard houses' (*maisons à cour*). The appearance of this type of dwelling in protohistoric settlements represented an important innovation that was perhaps the most remarkable one since perishable building materials were replaced with durable ones.

It is thus the aim of this paper to analyse these houses and to reflect on their significance in the protohistory of southern Gaul, as they can be found throughout the region. The courtyard houses recently excavated in *Lattara* (Lattes)

have moreover shown diversity in the plans, origins and formation processes of these houses, even within the same site (Dietler *et al.* 2008). These houses have often been related to external influences from other cultural areas of the Mediterranean, but it seems too simplistic to explain the appearance of these houses as the result of acculturation processes. Without wishing to deny such influences, which are sometimes obvious, a thorough analysis of a number of these houses in their various contexts seems to be called for, if we are to understand the social implications of these developments.

House Plans and the Organization of Domestic Space during the Iron Age

The one house type that can be considered as the basis for any protohistoric domestic unit is a single-roomed and rather small building that was used for all activities of daily life. This 'minimal house' was derived from the Late Bronze Age tradition and its spatial concept was not very different from that of the Bronze Age huts. It would last throughout the Iron Age and coexist with more complex residences.

The plans and main features of these houses were closely related to the settlement layout of the protohistoric sites and their development ran parallel to changes in those layouts: the houses fitted into the overall settlement layout and were usually grouped in small, compact blocks with shared party walls. By the end of the 6th century and throughout the 5th century BC, these compact houses co-existed with other ones characterized by a looser type of organization that was interspersed with open spaces or courtyards. The sites of Tamaris in Provence (Duval 1998; 2000), as well as in Languedoc, the sites of Pech Maho (Gailledrat and Solier 2004: 375-77) (Figure 2a), Lattes (Belarte 2008b: 102), Le Plan de la Tour (Gailhan) (Dedet 1987: 15-38), Marduel (Saint-Bonnet-du-Gard) (Py and Lebeaupin 1992; 1994) and Montlaurès (Chazelles 2005: 248), offer good examples of this situation.

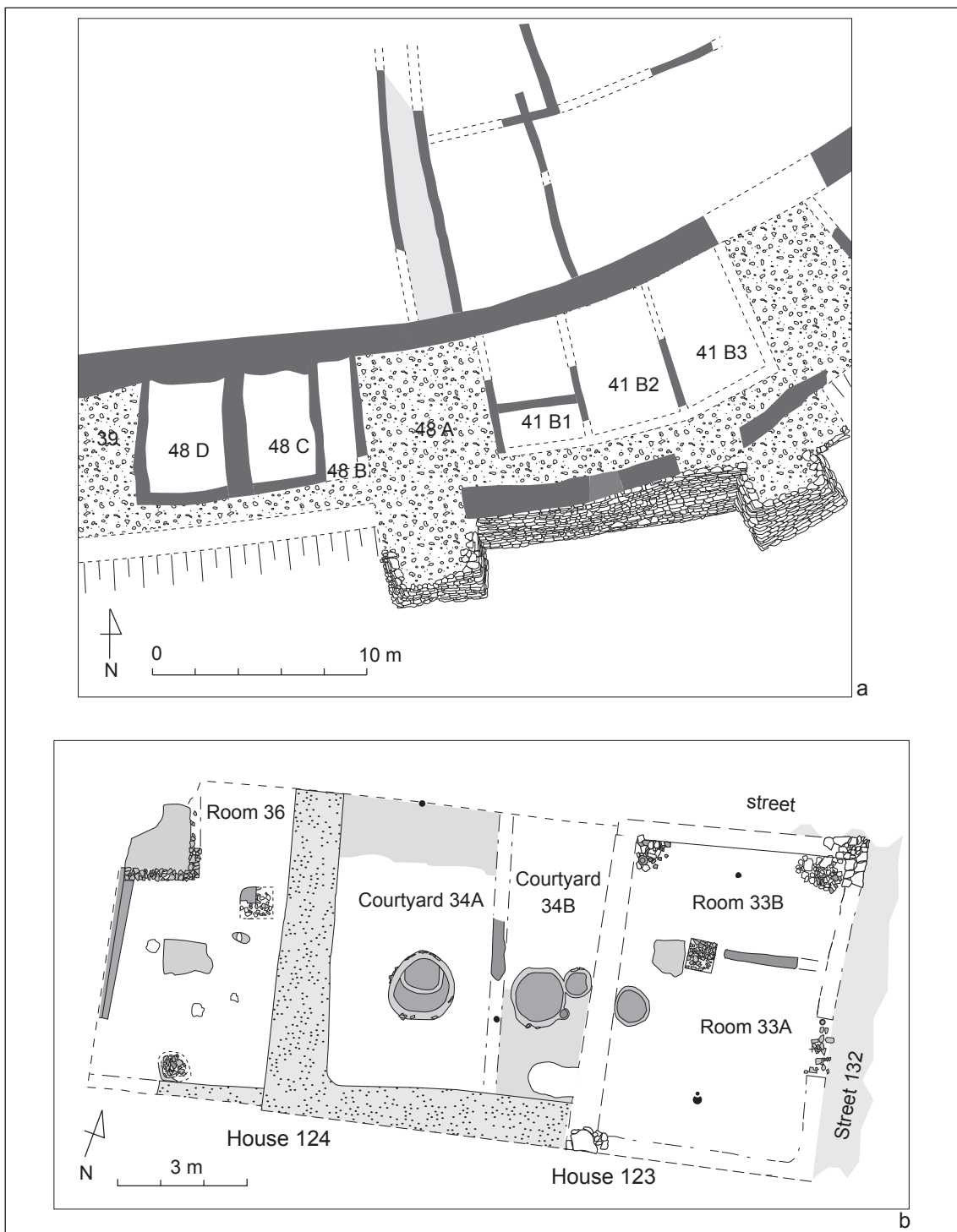


Figure 2. a) Plan of Pech Maho (Sigean, Languedoc) during phase I (6th century BC), showing houses built against the ramparts and separated by open areas (after Gailledrat and Solier 2004: 39, fig. 25). b) Houses 124 and 123 at Lattara (4th century BC), sharing an open space or courtyard (after Roux 1999: 33, fig. 28).

At Montlaurès, from around 500 BC the houses no longer shared party walls, but were separated from one another by open spaces. Although this site has the appearance of a loosely organized compound, the houses still seem to follow some kind of general planning, perhaps one in which predefined plots were assigned to units that included an external space for domestic activities rather than just the houses themselves.

At Lattes, open spaces between two houses were sometimes shared by the inhabitants of the adjoining houses during the 5th and 4th centuries BC (Roux 1999: 31-48, fig. 28) (Figure 2b). These external spaces would have been used mainly for culinary activities, as is suggested by ovens and hearths, as well as various kinds of domestic waste (ashes, coals, faunal remains, seeds, etc.) (Belarte 2008b: 103). In all these examples in Languedoc, the courtyard is an additional space that is sometimes shared by two or more domestic units, and that is not always delimited by walls. It is thus a space that is not strictly part of the house.

In Provence, those sites that have been extensively excavated, such as Saint-Pierre-les-Martigues, L'Arquet and the earliest occupation at L'Île (Martigues), show settlements organized in regularly laid-out blocks of similar size from the beginning of the 5th century BC. Streets generally ran parallel to the ramparts and were lined on both sides by house blocks (Chausserie-Laprée 2005: 98) (Figure 3). Most of these houses had rectangular plans with only one room, no courtyard and were generally quite small (between 10 and 20 sq m); these spaces were multi-functional, as is suggested by the high concentration of domestic features (hearths, ovens, etc.) in every house (Chausserie-Laprée 2005: 132).

It is important to note the typological variability of house plans, numbers of rooms and spatial organization across southern Gaul from the 5th and 4th centuries BC onwards (e.g. Belarte 2008b; Chazelles 1999; Dedet 1987; 1999; Py 1996). Spaces dedicated to meal preparation and/

or consumption tended to be separate from storage areas and front yards or patios were frequent in houses of this period. Two exceptions stand out, however: the houses of the *Jardin d'Hiver* quarter in Arles and house 1 in Béziers, where space was organized around internal courtyards, as opposed to outdoor spaces in front of or next to the houses.

The excavations in the *Jardin d'Hiver* in Arles brought to light a building dating to the early 5th century BC with a large internal courtyard (60 to 70 sq m). The rooms, without clear specific functions, were strung around this open space. The quarter underwent a major transformation during the first half of the 4th century BC, when the multi-roomed houses were organized around small courtyards of 7 to 9 sq m. Inside the domestic units, specialized spaces such as living rooms,

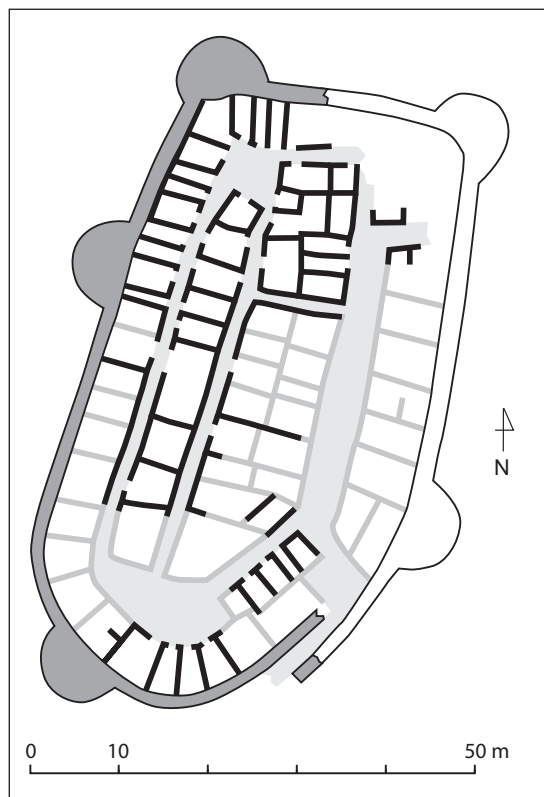


Figure 3. Plan of the earliest occupation at L'Île (Martigues) with a regular layout from the beginning of the 5th century BC (Michel Py).

spaces for cooking, storage areas, craftwork rooms, etc. may be distinguished. The architecture and portable material culture overall suggest a strong Greek influence at this site during the 5th and 4th centuries BC, as the houses are based on the same metrological system as found in Greek colonies like Agde and Olbia, and Mediterranean imports account for 70% to 85% of the pottery in use (depending on the phase: Arcelin 1990: 196; 1995: 329-30; 2004: 253).

House 1 in Béziers dates to the second half of the 5th century BC. Although it has only partially been excavated, its preserved area measures about 115 sq m and originally it probably covered around 150 sq m (Olive and Ugolini 1997: 96). This house comprises eight separate spaces, among which the excavators have identified a hall and an internal courtyard that was surrounded on three sides by roofed, probably tiled, rooms. It is not always clear how these spaces were used, as finds were scarce, but one room adjacent to the courtyard was undoubtedly a cooking area. The excavators point out that the plan of this house, organized as it is around a courtyard and with tiled roofs (tiles were unknown in indigenous architecture), finds no parallel in Iron Age southern France—with the exception of Arles—and they suggest that it may therefore reflect foreign, and presumably Greek, influence (Olive and Ugolini 1997: 97-98). The estimated size and number of rooms of this building are in any case clearly greater than those of the contemporary indigenous houses in Languedoc and Provence.

Generally speaking, the structure of the proto-historic houses became more uniform and compact after the 4th century BC, with square or rectangular plans, a tighter overall settlement layout and regular housing blocks separated by streets (Figure 4). These blocks were often distributed within the sites in a more or less concentric pattern. From the 3rd century BC onwards, settlements were mostly organized into long and narrow blocks, such as those at the second village

of L'Île (Martigues), Saint Pierre les Martigues, Nages Phase II and Lattes. It has been proposed that pre-established regular modules were used for some of these agglomerations, particularly at Lattes (Garcia 1996; 1999; 2004) or Les Castels de Nages (Py 1978: 149; Tréziny 1989: 39, 41). Although we know nothing about the system of property ownership, this type of internal settlement organization of regular blocks of similar dimensions may perhaps be interpreted as providing an egalitarian distribution of space among households with only limited opportunity for the construction of larger houses or for innovations in their ground plans (see also Chausserie-Laprée and Nin 1988: 92-97; Chazelles 1999: 488).

It seems that the number of rooms and the size of the houses generally increased over time, partly as a result of a larger number of rooms and, partly because of the conversion of open areas or courtyards into roofed spaces. This development is well attested in Lattes, where several houses exist that initially comprised just one or two covered rooms alongside a courtyard or, in some cases, even part of the street for domestic activities, including food preparation. These houses later incorporated 'their' part of the street by transforming it into a courtyard or lean-to building, and eventually included it in the house as a roofed room. A good example is house UNF406 that was transformed during the 4th century into house UNF409/410 (Lebeaupin 1994: 35-62; Py 1996: 177-83) (Figure 5). A similar expansion of domestic space at the expense of the street has also been observed in Nages, although slightly later in the early 2nd century BC (Py 1978: 153-55).

These examples from Lattes and Nages show that it was possible for individual households to expand their domestic spaces without disrupting the otherwise regular settlement layout, even if the basic house-plots were of roughly similar size. The examples from Lattes in particular show that such extensions of built spaces can be



Figure 4. Aerial photograph of Lattara (Michel Py).

seen as adaptation of the pre-existing situation, in which some public space was already used for private purposes. Dominique Garcia has even suggested that these expansions of domestic space amounted to bringing inside the house certain activities that had previously been kept outside.¹

Expanding domestic space at the expense of the street is not necessarily the result of a social differentiation process. This is obvious in Nages, where the size of all houses increased more or less simultaneously in the 2nd century BC. Although the houses are internally laid out in different ways, the floor area is about the same (Py 1978: 154).

Detailed analysis of the functional organization of domestic space at sites such as Lattes or Pech Maho that were occupied over the long-term highlights an emphasis on spatial specialization from the 3rd century BC onwards. The evidence that certain rooms were only used for specific activities suggests that this was the result of a planned organization of activities and use

of domestic space. Two good examples of 3rd-century date are offered by house 301 at Lattes (225-200 BC) and house 58A-58B-58E at Pech Maho (225-200 BC). The former consisted of four rooms with a total surface area of 147 sq m and the domestic features and portable items found suggest that one large room would have been used as a kitchen, that a second one surrounded by benches might have been a dining room, and that the other two could have been living rooms (Chazelles 1990: 115-25; Py 1996: 170). The other house at Pech Maho has a total floor area of 94 sq m and was divided into three spaces with different functions, including areas for cooking and eating meals and storage space. In one of these rooms grain was moreover milled and perhaps roasted (Gailledrat and Belarte 2002: 601) (Figure 6).

These changes applied only to the floor area of the house and the use of space, and did not affect building techniques or domestic features such as hearths, ovens, benches, storage pits, etc. This suggests that existing traditions were more or less

kept intact throughout the protohistoric period, even in those houses where Mediterranean influences have been observed (Belarte 2004: 383).

In general, the protohistoric houses of the whole of southern Gaul, in both Languedoc and

Provence did not vary very much in size within one site between the 5th and the 3rd centuries BC, and the building techniques and finishing of the houses were by and large the same within each settlement. In Lattes, however, which is

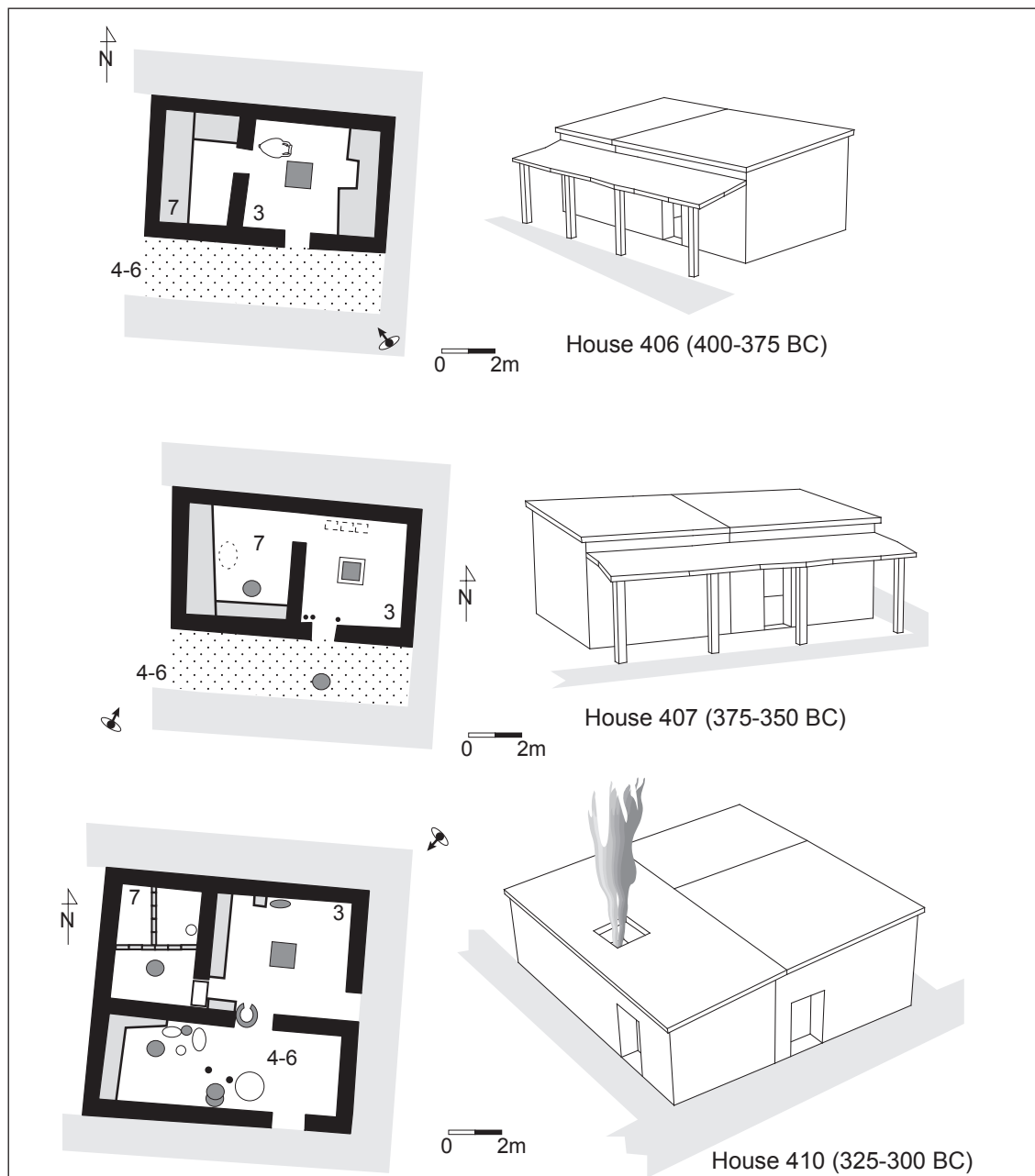


Figure 5. Transformation of house 406 at Lattes from a two-roomed dwelling with an open area in front (UNF406) into a house with three roofed rooms (UNF410) (after Py 1996: 178-83). Two intermediate states of this development (UNF408 and UNF409), dated between 350 and 325 BC, are not shown.



Figure 6. View of house 58A-58B-58E at Pech Maho from the southwest (Centre Camille Jullien, reference 121 313).

the most extensively excavated site in southern Gaul, the situation was slightly different, as house plans became more diverse from the 4th century BC onwards. These differences became more marked in the 3rd century BC, with the appearance of large courtyard houses (described in the following section) and specific types of floor decoration in certain quarters, such as the shell decorations in blocks 30-35 (Belarte and Py 2004: 387-88) or the coloured stone incrustations in block 3 (Chazelles 1990: 118).

Iron Age Courtyard Houses in Languedoc and Provence: Definition and Typology

As already noted, the complexity and surface of the houses increased during the 4th century BC, and even more so during the 3rd century BC. An important component in the development

of house plans and surface areas is the presence of courtyards or, more generally, unroofed spaces which, as noted, played an important role in domestic life from the 5th century BC onwards, and which began to change in the 3rd century BC.

On closer inspection, the 'courtyard houses' of the Late Iron Age represented a very particular type of residence that was quite different from the earlier houses, in which roofed rooms were separated by open spaces with domestic functions. The courtyard houses, by contrast, constitute compact, non-fragmented buildings, in which the courtyard was situated inside the house, surrounded by the building, at the heart of its domestic space. On the basis of their general layout (square and regular) and arrangement of rooms, Py has termed these houses 'articulated courtyard houses' (*maisons*

Site	House	Date	Surface (sq m)	Number of rooms
Béziers	House n° 1	5th century	estimated 150	8
Arles	Jardin d'Hiver	5th century	about 100	4 to 5
Lattes	Jean-François Leca	3rd-1st century	400	9
Lattes	UNF 52101	3rd century	550	10 (restituted)
Lattes	UNF 54101	3rd century	300	7 (restituted)
Lattes	UNF 901	2nd century	274	9
Lattes	UNF 1605	2nd century	148	6
Lattes	UNF 3501	2nd century	181	4
Nîmes	Jules-Guesde	2nd century	fragmentary	
Glanum	House of the Antas	2nd century	800	15
Entremont	Block X	2nd century	100	5
Saint Blaise	Block 2	2nd century	91-115	
Ensérune	Block X House A	1st century	525	7

Table 1. Courtyard houses of southern Gaul mentioned in the text, with indication of date, size and number of rooms.

à cour distributrice) and has proposed that they have been derived from overseas models in the Hellenistic and Italic Mediterranean (Py 1996: 248-49). Houses of this type have been attested at several major sites in southern Gaul from between the 3rd and the 1st centuries BC (Lattes, probably Nîmes, *Glanum*, Ensérune, Entremont, Saint-Blaise and Marseille) (Table 1). A rare local precedent may be found in the two houses already described in Arles and Béziers and where Greek colonial influence has been proposed.

Lattes in particular offers several examples of courtyard houses, among which we can discern a certain diversity (Dietler *et al.* 2008: 111-22) (Figures 7a, 10a, 11a and 11b). Three of these houses (UNF 901, UNF 1605 and UNF 3501) date to the 2nd century BC and are made up of rooms from at least two separate and earlier houses that even belonged to two blocks. These were later combined to make up a single house that incorporated part of the street as its courtyard. Houses UNF 52101 and 54101, dated to the 3rd century BC, were by contrast conceived and built from the outset as courtyard houses; they were also larger and had bigger courtyards (Figures 7b and 8). Houses UNF 52103 and 61106 might also belong to this type, although

the evidence is somewhat ambiguous, as they have not (yet) been excavated completely. In all these cases, the building techniques (stone walls, mud bricks, earthen or pebble floors, etc.) show continuity of indigenous construction traditions. In terms of use of space, the available evidence suggests that specialization was limited and that activities were not clearly separated. Houses 52101 and 52104, for example, had a storage room in one corner (identified by circular pits with storage vessels), while the rooms around the courtyards had several hearths and pits and yielded abundant domestic waste to demonstrate their multi-purpose nature (Dietler *et al.* 2008: 122).

In Nîmes, a 2nd-century house at Place Jules-Guesde may have been made up of several rooms organized around a courtyard, but the data are too fragmentary to restore its plan. More reliable evidence exists for 1st-century houses of Graeco-Italic inspiration. They are characterized by a strong continuity of traditional domestic features, including adherence to the housing blocks of the protohistoric town and even the old walls (Monteil 1999: 335-36).

The site of *Glanum* offers a number of good examples of these large Hellenistic houses

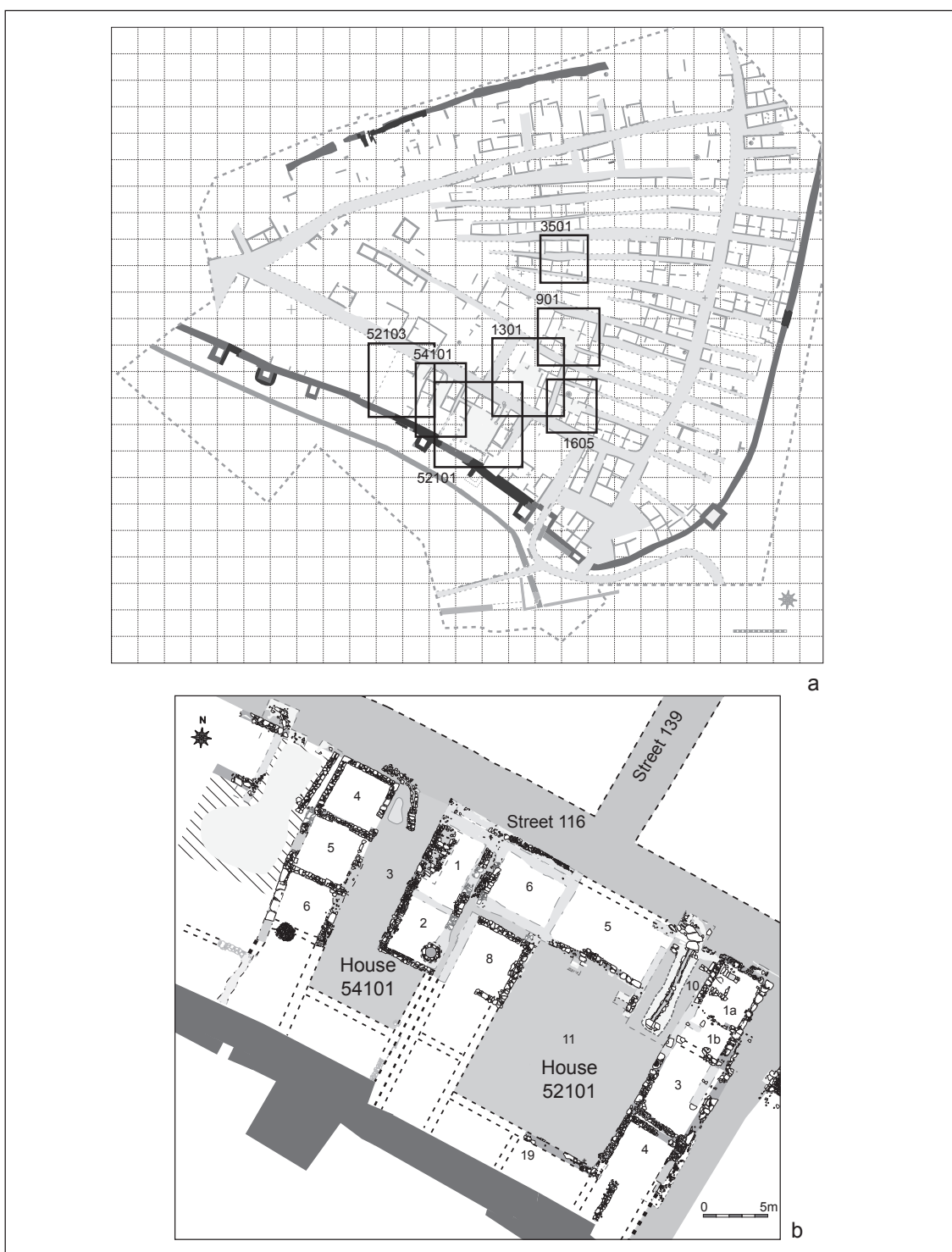


Figure 7. a) Distribution of courtyard houses (3rd-2nd centuries BC) at Lattes (after Dietler *et al.* 2008: 112, fig. 79). b) Plan of houses 54101 and 52101 at Lattes (after Dietler *et al.* 2008: 114, fig. 80, modified).



Figure 8. View of courtyard houses 52101 (left) and 54101 (right) at Lattes, from the northwest (after Dietler *et al.* 2008: 115, fig. 81).

organized around a courtyard, sometimes even with a peristyle (colonnade). One particularly well studied house is the so-called 'House of the *Antae*', named after two distinctive semi-columns (*antae*) in the house. It was built during the 2nd century BC and modified in the following centuries (Van de Voort 1991). Its walls were built from large ashlar blocks in a technique unknown in the indigenous tradition. It occupied close to 800 sq m and was organized around a courtyard of 240 sq m (Van de Voort 1991: 9, table).

Still in Languedoc, the excavations of housing block 10 at Ensérune have yielded an even later example of a courtyard house. House A measured 525 sq m and was organized around a central *impluvium* (a small pool to collect the rain-water coming through an opening of the roof) that in turn was connected to a large cistern,

and that was surrounded by a gallery, which was covered on at least three sides, thus connecting the *impluvium* to the rooms of the house (Gallet de Santerre 1968: 41-56) (Figure 10b). Dated to the second half of the 1st century BC, this house was built on older 2nd-century remains. Despite the Roman-style layout and the tiled roof of *tegulae* and *imbrices*, many construction elements, such as the walls, the wall plaster and the floors were made in accordance with local protohistoric traditions.

In Provence, houses organized around courtyards are attested from the 2nd century BC, although their dimensions are more modest than in Languedoc. In the later 2nd century (150-130 BC), houses with two to five rooms appeared at Entremont in the 'Habitat 2' of the settlement. Block 10 seems to define a com-

plex house, even if it has not yet been fully excavated. It occupied approximately 100 sq m and included several rooms set around a small central space that can be reached from the street through a corridor (Figure 11c). Domestic life in this house co-existed with more specialized economic activities, which would seem to be in keeping with the organization of other courtyard houses at contemporary sites (Arcelin 1987: 71). Block 8 at Entremont possibly has a similar organization. During the last phase of protohistoric occupation at Saint Blaise (175-125 BC), the houses were made up of several rooms and occupied between 91 and 115 sq m (Bouloumié 1992: 29). In block 2, the rooms seem to have been organized around a courtyard (Bouloumié 1992; Arcelin 2004: 254-55).

Marseille has finally also yielded a courtyard house, dated between 250 and 50 BC, which occupied nearly 400 sq m and consisted of three wings surrounding a courtyard (Figure 9b). The southern wing, which has four rooms, would have been used for craft activities, probably metalworking. In the western wing there is a room with a plaster *signinum* floor that could be interpreted as a male room or *andron*, while the northern wing, which is less well preserved, could have been for domestic use, with a granary on the terrace. According to the excavators, this design is based on examples in the Greek world, where houses with a similar layout are well known during the Classical and Hellenistic periods (Conche 2001: 134).

If we take into account all the protohistoric courtyard houses in southern Gaul (Table 1), the differences in their layout, contexts and development can be used to define three main groups:

1. Courtyard houses built in a colonial context or with strong Greek influences: Béziers house 1, the *Jardin d'Hiver* houses in Arles and the courtyard house of Marseille (Figure 9). The first two examples date to the 5th century BC, while the Marseille building is more re-

cent (3rd–2nd centuries BC). Although 5th and 4th century evidence is generally scarce in Marseille, it is not unlikely that earlier courtyard houses existed in this city.

2. Houses built in an indigenous context but conceived and built with a central courtyard in accordance with Mediterranean models. These are usually large houses of several hundred square meters with regular plans (Figure 10). They could indicate a tendency towards social differentiation. In Lattes, such houses are attested from the beginning of the 3rd century BC. The only other houses in this category are the somewhat larger ones at *Glanum* that date to the 2nd century BC, and the even later houses of block 10 at Ensérune that date to the 1st century BC. The 'House of the *Antae*' at *Glanum* with its obvious Hellenistic influences may be considered a mixed instance with elements of both groups 1 and 2.
3. Houses created by regrouping and joining previously separate buildings. These usually present irregular plans, in which the main distinctive element is an interior courtyard that is not always situated at the centre of the house (Figure 11). There are several examples of this group in Lattes and they reflect a local development that might imply a changed lifestyle. They belong to a later period, namely the 2nd and 1st centuries BC. The houses of block 10 at Entremont and block 2 at Saint-Blaise could also be considered as belonging to this group, because of their central courtyard, but otherwise irregular layout.

Central courtyard houses that are the result of adaptations of pre-existing buildings (group

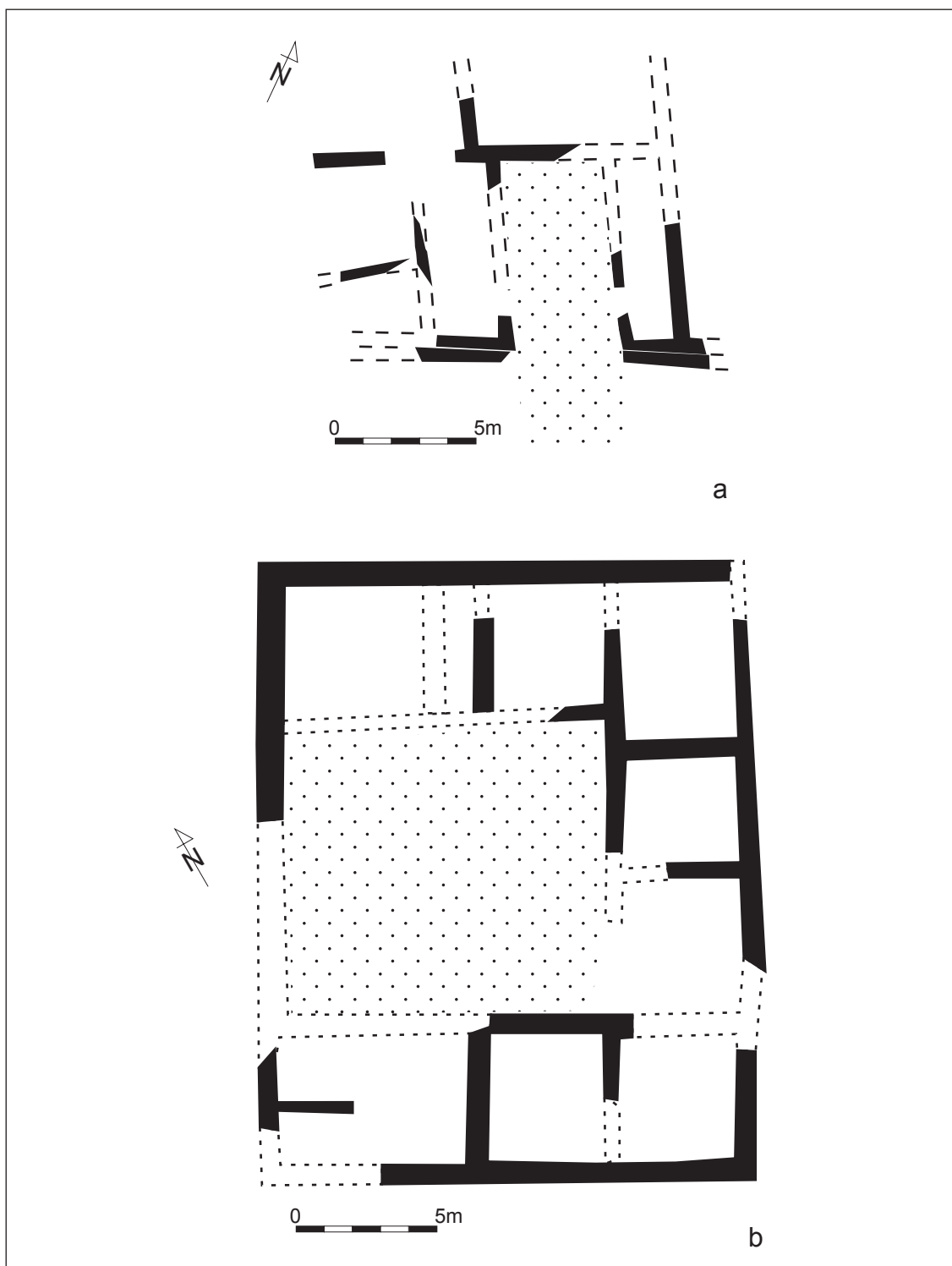


Figure 9. Schematic plans of courtyard houses with Greek influence (group 1): a) Béziers (after Olive and Ugolini, 1997: 92 fig. 8); b) Marseille (after Hesnard *et al.* 1999: 6).

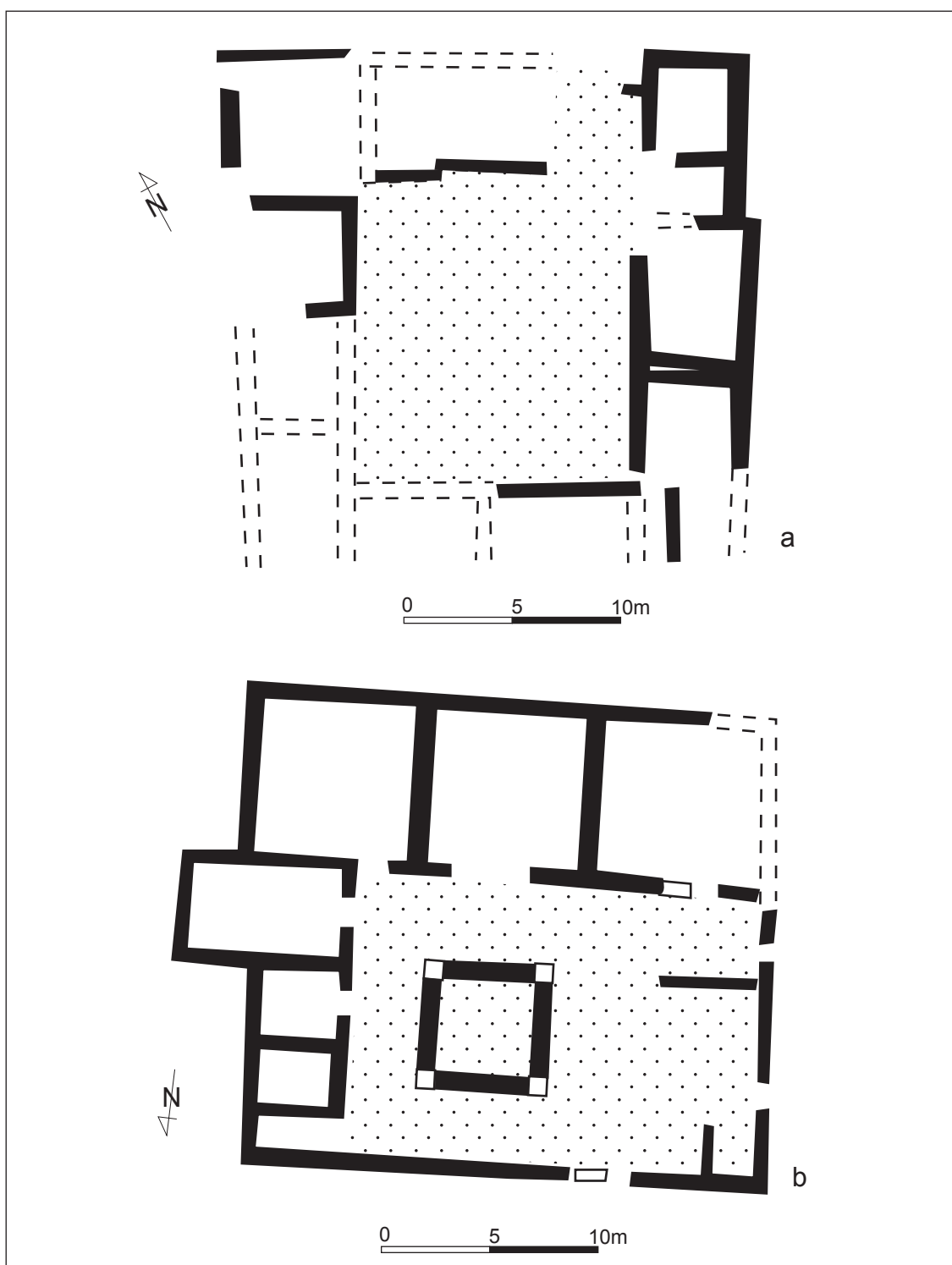


Figure 10. Schematic plans of protohistoric courtyard houses (group 2): a) House 52101 at Lattes (after Dietler *et al.* 2008: 114, fig. 80), b) House A in block 10 at Ensérune (after Gallet de Santerre 1968: pl. II).

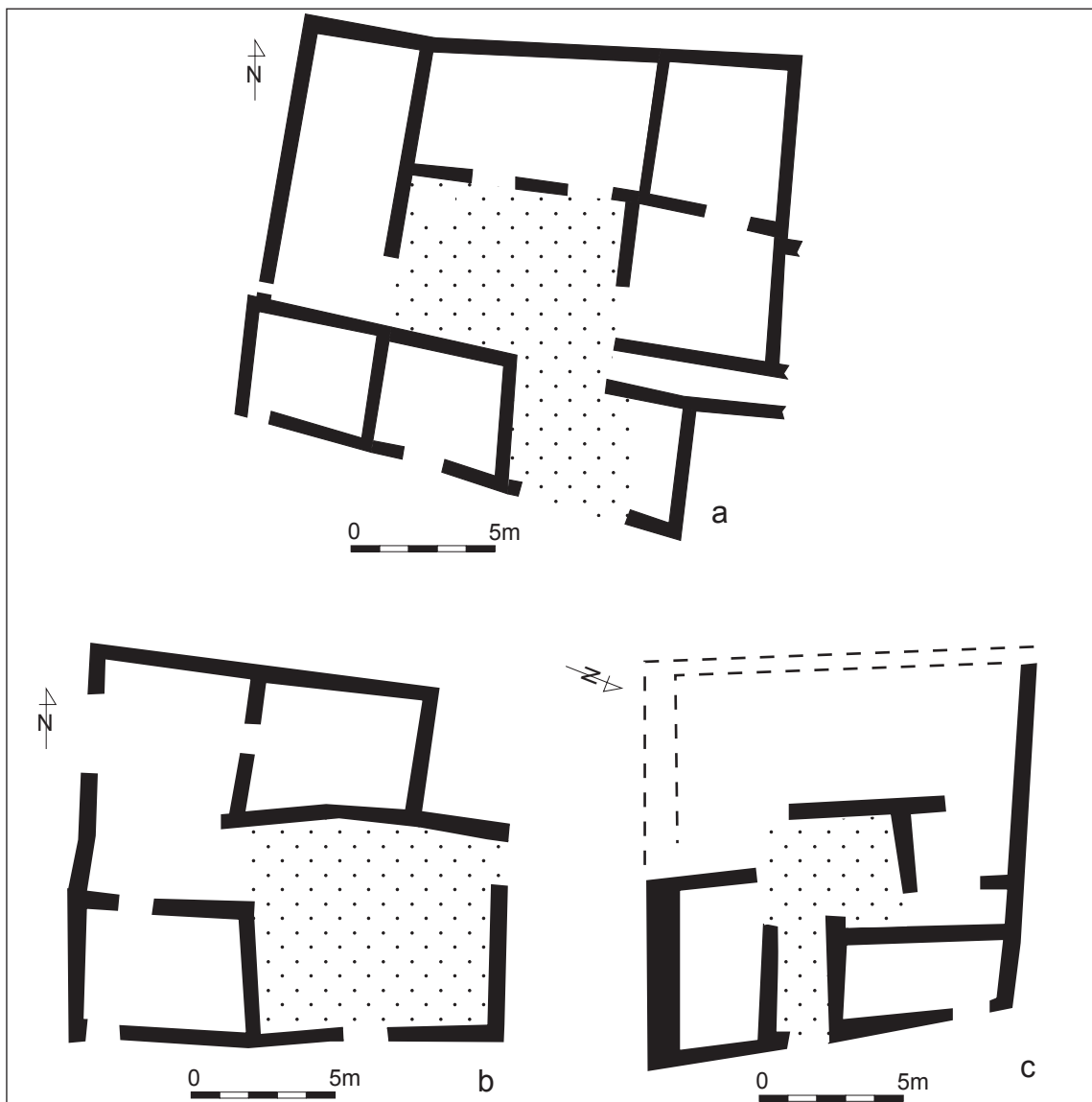


Figure 11. Schematic plans of protohistoric courtyard houses (group 3): a) House 901 at Lattes (after Py 1996: 205); b) House 3501 at Lattes (after Belarte 2004: 377, fig. 18); c) Block 10 at Entremont (after Arcelin 1987: 63).

3 above) are known throughout the Mediterranean, both in Antiquity and more recently. A key feature of these houses is that rooms tend to be evenly distributed around the courtyard and that a hierarchy of spaces may be distinguished that can be traced back to the local history of the house (Pinon 1999: 255). Houses that were designed to start with a central courtyard tend to be more regularly organized and thus fall in

groups 1 and 2.

The central courtyard houses show a design that clearly differs from that of houses built in the 6th to 4th century BC, whose courtyards were completely open or shared between two houses. In the three courtyard-house types that I have distinguished, the ground plans are those of 'closed buildings' looking inwards, where activities focus on the central courtyard rather than

look to the street, and thus guarantee more privacy for the occupants. The interior of the rooms cannot be seen from the street and the inhabitants of the house did not have to pass through other rooms to reach another one, as they can all be accessed directly from the courtyard. This contrasts notably with the majority of protohistoric houses, where at least two of the rooms were usually laid out in direct succession. A similar notion of organization was already present in houses with two non-communicating rooms and a frontal patio that are attested in Lattes from the 4th century BC. In these houses, the courtyard represented a transitional space that linked the private space at the back of the houses to the collective one of the street, while also connecting the rooms with each other. This spatial design, which also defines most Greek and Italic houses, has remained a characteristic feature of traditional Mediterranean architecture to the present day (Brothers 1996: 34; Corpus 2002).

In the majority of cases, it has not been possible to identify specific functions for the rooms of the courtyard houses, because excavations were carried out long ago, or were incomplete, or because poor conservation or diligent cleaning of floors had left few archaeological remains *in situ*. By and large, however, it seems likely that courtyards provided light and ventilation. They also often include features related to water management, such as gutters or cisterns. In some cases, the presence of hearths, benches, or storage pits suggest that rooms were primarily, if not solely, used for activities such as cooking, eating, storage and artisanal activities. The distribution of such specific spaces within the house varies nevertheless from case to case and it is not possible to discern a typical house plan. Even in Lattes, where the available evidence is relatively good and abundant, special-purpose rooms do not seem to have been a recurrent feature of these courtyard houses. The finds finally do not suggest that the inhabitants of these houses were richer than other people or that they engaged

in other kinds of activities. Overall, the conclusion would seem to be that the introduction of the new courtyard houses was not matched by changes in the use of space when compared to the traditional protohistoric houses.

External Influences or Local Forms? Courtyard Houses in the Wider Mediterranean Context

The introduction in the early Iron Age of stone foundations and mud-brick walls, as well as the change from a rather loose to a regular layout of houses, have often been interpreted in terms of external Mediterranean influences, because both features are common in colonial contexts. The processes underlying these transformations were nevertheless undoubtedly rather more complex, as has repeatedly been pointed out, if only because local communities also played their part in colonial interactions and thus also contributed to these developments and changes (Dietler 1999: 307; 2005: 131; van Dommelen 1997: 309; Vives-Ferrándiz 2005: 229).

The first houses in the Early Iron Age that were built with load-bearing walls of stone foundations and mud-brick elevations, are not straightforward copies of Greek, Etruscan or Punic buildings, but represent original creations with which indigenous communities adapted the built environment to their daily needs. In the 5th century BC, the removal of open spaces between houses, the conversion of open spaces into covered ones and the regular spacing of houses with shared party walls are no less remarkable innovations. Even if there is evidence at some sites that Greek metrological standards were applied (Tréziny 1989), the resulting layouts should overall be interpreted as local solutions, because these changes emerged gradually and did not immediately follow the colonial contacts. We should instead understand these changes as internal developments and consider connections with other factors, such as demographic growth or the emergence of social complexity and hierarchisation (Garcia 2004: 89).

This process has been studied in other western Mediterranean regions such as northern Iberia (present-day Catalonia), where the transition from huts to houses with stone walls or foundations and shared party walls is well attested in the coastal areas around the beginning of the Iron Age (late 7th-early 6th century BC). In some other areas, as for example in the Segre and Ebro valleys, regular proto-urban town plans with load-bearing walls were also already known in the Late Bronze Age (around 1000 BC) (Belarte 2009: 93). Even in this case, however, of apparently indigenous traditions and developments, there is strong evidence that colonial trade played an important role in the innovation process (Belarte 2009: 107).

The appearance of so-called articulated courtyard houses, in particular, has often been interpreted in terms of acculturation with Greek or Italic influences (Py 1996: 250). There is certainly good reason, as I have already indicated, to identify Greek influence in a number of instances in Arles, Béziers and Marseille that I have classified as group 1. Although there is also substantial variability of house plans in the Greek world that, despite numerous typologies suggesting otherwise, seem often the intrinsic result of local adaptation (Nevett 1999: 29), open courtyards surrounded by rooms were a frequent feature of Greek houses between the 5th and the 3rd centuries BC (Nevett 1999: 23-24; Zacaria Ruggiu 1995: 291). It is therefore certainly not inconceivable that this idea was adapted in Greek colonies or in other sites of southern Gaul.

For the later houses that appeared from the 2nd century BC onwards, Hellenistic or Italic influences seem equally likely. Central open spaces or courtyards may well have been an adaptation of the *atrium* of Republican-period Italic houses and it could have facilitated ventilation, lighting and movement between the various spaces of the house. The building technique of house walls in *Glanum* also suggests Hellenistic influences.

But in these cases, too, there is evidence of local adaptations, notably the absence of symmetry and axuality that are typical of 3rd-century BC Italic houses (Zacaria Ruggiu 1995: 358; Fernández Vega 1999). Good examples are offered by houses 901, 1605 and 3501 in Lattes, block 10 in Entremont and block 2 in Sant-Blaise. It is thus only the courtyard and spatial organization that denote these houses as Italic ones, since there was no functional relationship between the rooms of the indigenous houses and those of the Italic ones. The building techniques of the walls, the plasters, the finishing of the floors and the domestic features are moreover mostly of typical indigenous protohistoric types (Py 1996: 250). Only the broad layout of Italic models was therefore adopted and also adapted to the functional requirement of the indigenous communities of southern Gaul, and the adoption of the Hellenistic house plan does therefore not necessarily imply assimilation of the use of space. This is particularly evident in Lattes, where the large courtyard houses of group 2 were not related to the Roman presence in southern Gaul, because they appeared as early as the beginning of the 3rd century BC.

Protohistoric houses with complex ground plans structured around an open space also existed elsewhere in the western Mediterranean, notably along the east coast of the Iberian Peninsula, which was a crossroads of colonial encounters and interaction (Dietler 2009: 3-48; Vives-Ferrándiz 2008: 241-72). In the northern Iberian area of present-day Catalonia, for example, not far from southern Gaul, there are several instances of large, complex houses with an unroofed space in a central or frontal position and that are sometimes preceded by an access passage (also attested in some courtyard houses in southern Gaul). The earliest examples date to the 4th century BC and have been found in Ullastret (Girona) (Martín *et al.* 2004). By the 3rd century BC, this kind of house is a more frequent appearance and is known from

sites such as Mas Castellar de Pontós (Girona) (Pons 2002), Alorda Park (Calafell, Tarragona) (Asensio *et al.* 2005a) and Castellet de Banyoles (Tivissa, Tarragona) (Asensio *et al.* 2005b). Elsewhere, especially further south along the Mediterranean coast, even older examples of such complex courtyard houses have been found (Belarte *et al.* 2009), for example at La Bastida de les Alcusses (Moixent, Valencia) (Díes *et al.* 1997) and El Oral (San Fulgencio, Alicante) (Abad and Sala 1993; 2001; Sala and Abad 2006).

From a typological point of view, these complex houses in Catalonia are very different from those of southern Gaul, as they present irregular and non-symmetrical plans, their courtyards are seldom centrally situated and they often open towards the street. They nevertheless also share several features, such as the fact that they are often made up of two joined-up houses, which is a process well known in Lattes; their ground plans are consequently usually irregular and idiosyncratic. The materials and building techniques used for the walls and roofs are indigenous and are no different from those used in the construction of other houses at the sites. The only external influence is the use of hydraulic mortars and a *signinum* pavement. The use of these materials need not cause surprise, however, as the Iberian area had seen intense colonial encounters from the 7th century BC and all sites mentioned traded with Greek and Punic merchants (Sanmartí 2009). Greek or Punic influence may also be detected in the settlement plans and architecture of these sites (Olmos 2008: 273-86). Domestic features and activities were no different from those attested in the other houses, although a greater specialization of spaces may be detected. I thus suggest that even if designs may have been influenced by other Mediterranean cultures, the result remained a distinctive and original creation.

Further south along the coast, in the region of Valencia, the most interesting site is El Oral (San Fulgencio, Alicante). Between the late 6th and 5th centuries, several houses with a complex

layout and a central courtyard were built, while other houses were much smaller and possessed only two covered rooms. Their excavators have suggested Punic or more general 'Levantine' influences for these houses, in both general layout and specific features, such as the use of shells as decoration for thresholds, benches and drains (Sala and Abad 2006: 29; 36).

These Iberian complex houses have been interpreted as the residences of local elites (Asensio *et al.* 2005a; 2005b; Martín *et al.* 2004; Pons 2002; Sala and Abad 2006: 38) and would have been the result of a process of social differentiation and elite formation (Belarte 2008a: 196; Belarte *et al.* 2009: 118-19). While this situation might thus to some extent be comparable to that of southern Gaul, the external influences in Iberian houses are certainly less obvious than in southern France.

Courtyard Houses and Social Differences

The homogeneity of forms, dimensions and domestic practices in the protohistoric domestic architecture of southern Gaul is one of the arguments that has led Arcelin to speak of an egalitarian society during the First Iron Age (2004: 231-37). In his view, Iron Age social organization remained largely egalitarian until the 3rd century BC and only underwent major transformations in the 2nd and 1st centuries BC (Arcelin 2004: 241). He suggests that Italic trade and later Roman occupation were instrumental in these transformations, which included the introduction of social differentiation and the formation of elites (Arcelin 2004: 242). Although this proposal seems plausible for many sites in both Provence and Languedoc, it may nevertheless be difficult to generalize it for the whole of southern Gaul. Lattes is a case in point, where the appearance of large courtyard houses alongside other types of complex houses occurred at the beginning of the 3rd century BC and where house plans and sizes were already quite varied in the 4th century BC. This suggests that a process

of social differentiation was already underway at some sites at least by the 4th century BC. This social differentiation was presumably associated with either economic or political factors, as it developed at sites that were involved in overseas trade or that controlled large territories, and it would have allowed part of the communities to accumulate wealth and indeed political power.

The courtyard houses stand out in the settlements by their size and the fact that they are not straightforward domestic units grouped together in regular housing blocks. Equally remarkable is that the courtyard houses of group 3 were created by either incorporating an adjacent house or appropriating public space, usually part of the street, because it suggests that private interests could override the needs of the community (Belarte 2004: 383; Dietler *et al.* 2008: 120). The appropriation of part of the street is, however, not exclusive to courtyard houses, as it already occurred in Lattes in the 4th century BC. A similar development has been observed in Nages, even if somewhat later and involving merely a reduction in width of the street, which did not fundamentally alter public space.

The key question to be asked is therefore why some inhabitants opted for these new house plans. The appearance of more complex dwellings and especially of different types of houses at one and the same site suggests an increased degree of social complexity, while their exceptional appearance indicates that they were constructed and occupied by the leading groups in indigenous society (Py 1996; Dietler 2004).

If we accept that the construction *ex novo* of large courtyard houses (as those of group 2) can be understood as denoting a desire for social differentiation, what then does it mean that other courtyard houses were created by joining up two previously separate houses (group 3)? While it obviously resulted in a substantial increase of house size, it also transformed the use of space. Could it moreover imply the merging of previously separate households? In Iberia, there are

good reasons that this was indeed the case, as I have argued for a connection between larger households and the consolidation of social elites (Belarte 2008a: 196).

In southern Gaul, we have very little information about family structures and the organization of protohistoric society, even if we combine the scarce literary evidence with the available archaeological data. This holds true even for the Roman period (Ellis 2000: 174-79). If we go by the archaeological evidence, the increased domestic space of the courtyard houses implies a greater number of occupants, although the larger number of rooms might suggest that households members were organized in smaller units: in other words, a courtyard house may have been home to an extended household that itself was made up of two or more smaller units, possibly nuclear families (Luce 2002: 86-87; Ellis 2000: 177). Dietler has indeed proposed that the courtyard houses of Lattes could have been occupied by distinct domestic cells (Dietler *et al.* 2008: 122) and I would add that the separate access to the rooms from the courtyard in these houses would have supported such a division, as it increased the privacy of the groups occupying these rooms.

This interpretation is supported by the absence of any evidence for spatial specialization in the rooms of the courtyard houses of southern Gaul, as we would expect if the larger number of rooms were associated with an increased separation of activities. The presence of similar domestic features such as hearths and pits in most rooms, in contrast, points to a limited degree of functional differentiation. More specifically, the domestic features and artefacts present in the rooms clearly show that different rooms in the same house were used in the same way. The only exception is storage spaces, which confirms the view that each house was occupied by several households that belonged to a larger unit (Dietler *et al.* 2008: 122; Luce 2002: 86-87).

A final point concerns the distribution of

courtyard houses within the settlements of southern Gaul, because they did not exist in all settlements: only a limited number of instances is known and the number of sites where they have been found is even lower. Lattes is unusual, as it has yielded several courtyard houses, but it is also the most extensively excavated settlement. The available evidence suggests that courtyard houses only existed in large settlements that occupied several hectares. The probable role of these sites in the wider landscape is therefore a factor to be considered and it is unlikely to be a coincidence that those sites that were emerging as regional central places in the 3rd century BC are the same ones where courtyard houses first appeared. Arcelin (2004) has interpreted these processes in terms of local aristocracies or elites who came to power in the course of the 3rd century BC, in the wake of the transformation of the main protohistorical settlements into territorial centres. The evidence that I have discussed in this paper, however, suggests that these developments predate the 3rd century BC, as has indeed also been proposed on other grounds (Garcia 2004: 89).

Final Remarks

This article has discussed the protohistoric courtyard houses of southern Gaul in the contexts of cultural interaction. The courtyard houses are not the only examples of complex houses in the protohistory of southern Gaul, and they are part of a more general Late Iron Age trend of increasing numbers of rooms and overall house size. The courtyard houses are partly the result of a process of adopting and adapting external influences, but at the same time they also represent the outcome of local developments of social differentiation. Courtyard houses may therefore be interpreted in terms of cultural hybridity and as such reflect the ability of local societies to integrate external influences and to transform and adapt these to their own needs. Even if new house-plans were created, protohis-

toric tradition was not entirely abandoned, as is shown by continuity in building techniques and domestic activities. At the same time, these houses denote transformations in indigenous society that would ultimately lead to the formation of local elites, who were undoubtedly the occupants of these residences. These changes also suggest that social and economic relationships within households were transformed in the process as well.

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Note

1. Unpublished paper presented at the conference *Habitats i territoris protohistòrics a la Mediterrània nordoccidental*, held at the Catalan Institute of Classical Archaeology, Tarragona, 11-13 April 2007.

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