

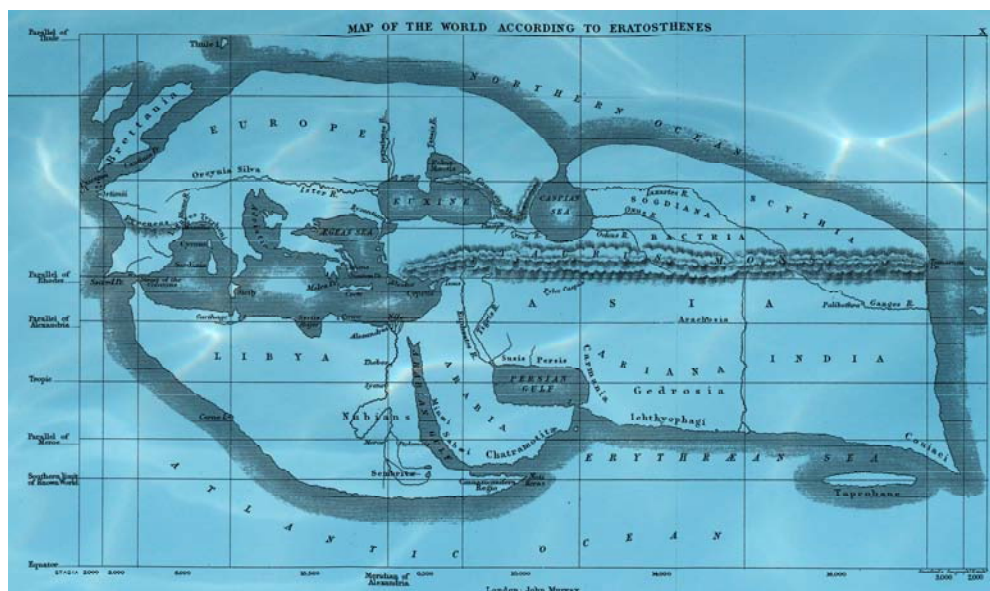
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Late Roman Coarse Wares, Cooking Wares and Amphorae in the Mediterranean

Archaeology and archaeometry
Comparison between western and eastern
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THE LATE ROMAN POTTERY IMPORTS IN THE EAST OF *HISPANIA TARRACONENSIS*

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Recent studies provided new data about late Roman imports (ARS, amphorae, lamps) in the coast of Hispania Tarraconensis. Concerning urban contexts (the ancient towns of Barcino, Tarraco and others) and rural settlements, the data allow us to identify the imports and the economic trends of the region from the 4th to the late 6th /early 7th centuries. We hope this paper to be an interpretative work of synthesis about the economic relationship between town and country in Catalonia and Northern Comunidad Valenciana in the Late Antiquity.

KEYWORDS: LATE ROMAN POTTERY, *HISPANIA TARRACONENSIS*, CATALONIA, ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TOWN AND COUNTRY.

INTRODUCTION

The Northeast of the Iberian Peninsula has a special interest for the study of the ancient commerce, for its position at the western corner of the Mediterranean and for being in a crossroad East-West. This position allows to verify the interaction of the Italic, African, Hispanic and Gallic products in North-South direction, as well as to value the incidence of other more distant, like those coming from the Eastern Mediterranean.

The purpose of this work is to carry out a general approach to the evolution of the commerce at Late Antique times in the coastal zone of the ancient province *Tarraconensis*, through the study of the pottery. With the purpose of obtaining an evolutionary approach, we will divide this synthesis in chronological blocks. We have to point out that, due to the little space whereupon we counted, we have had to present an extremely synthesized balance.

4th CENTURY

During this century, corresponding to the Later Roman Empire, there was a flowering of the African commerce, that already had begun, in relationship with the fine ceramics (African red slip A and C) and the kitchen's pottery, at the end of the 1st century AD. Nevertheless, it was in the 4th century when took place the arrival on great scale of African amphoras, that only sporadically had reached the Hispanic coasts since the end of the 2nd century. Although traditionally it has been associated with the oil transport, at the moment there are serious doubts on the products that contained these amphoras, which affects the study of the old commerce. In any case, the massive presence of African amphoras, along with the fine pottery (African red slip late C and D) and lamps (form Hayes I - Atlante VIII), these last ones in much smaller amount, indicates a preference for importing African products, mainly in the Hispanic coast than in other Mediterranean areas, as it already indicated S. J. Keay (1984). Nevertheless, these productions are quickly rarefacted in the interior, although they are present in important towns, like *Ilerda* (Lleida) and *Caesaraugusta* (Zaragoza).

In the second half of the 4th century appeared in the south of *Gallia* the so-called "D.S.P", that had an important distribution in the coastal zone, rarefacting its presence to the south of Valencia, but it was very important in the Catalan coast. It is represented in its more typical forms (Rigour 1, 2, 3, 6, 15 and 18), and predominates the grey production on the oxidant. It is

difficult to determine the precedence the Provençal production or that of Languedoc, although the first seems to had been more important, and had been imported from the port of *Massilia* (Marseilles).

Another fine production of table that appeared in the second half of the 4th century is the decorated Later Hispanic sigillata. The smooth forms are of more difficult typology and dating, as the so-called form (we think unfortunately that) "Hispanic Ritterling 8", that probably appeared in the 1st century but seems to have its greater height in the 2nd and 3rd centuries, arriving perhaps at the 4th century. Anyway, the most important form (and practically the only present in Catalonia) of the later production is denominated (we also believe that of erroneous form) "later Dragendorff 37", almost always with its characteristic decoration of interlocking circles, dated between the second half of the 4th century and the first half of the 5th. It appears with certain profusion in Tarragona and the North of the Valencian area, diminishing its amount in the coast in North direction, until being practically absent in the Northern zone (Girona, Empúries). This is probably a production of the interior, possibly from La Rioja; it has a diffusion towards the coast through the Ebro river, and by this reason why the marine-fluvial port of *Dertosa* (Tortosa) could have a paper of outstanding interchange, as much for the commerce of these materials towards the coast like those of Mediterranean products towards the interior. In contrast to the coast, in the interior the later Hispanic sigillata is more important, moving to African products.

Concerning the African pottery of kitchen, its continuity is documented in the first half of the 5th century, although in many occasions the factors of residuality and the continuity of some forms (as Hayes 197) in late Roman contexts prevent to attribute with certainty these ceramics to this period. Some painted common ceramics sporadically appears in the coast; these are apparently standardized production perhaps originated in the interior of the Peninsula, that has been object of a set study (Abascal 1986) although its diffusion in the coastal zone are still to study with detail.

As we are saying, in the 4th century the contribution of African amphoras in the coastal area was important, beginning with the arrival of forms African I and II and increased considerably with the amphoras of the form Keay 25 (denominated "African 3" by Bonifay), that in its manifold variant is the amphora more abundantly represented in contexts of the 4th century and the first half of the 5th. Although we do not know its content (that

could have been multiple), its preponderant role is evident. Together with the African productions, and in much lesser quantities, we can document the South-Hispanic productions, as much Baetican (represented by the form Dressel 23) and Lusitanian (forms Keay 19 and 23, that partly could also take place in *Baetica*), clearly for oil in the first case and for the salt fish or other products in the second, that is documented along the Catalan coast (Berni 1998; Járrega 2000a) always in smaller amount than the African amphoras. Finally, at the end of the 4th century it seems to have arrived the first oriental amphoras, whose presence will be more important since the next century.

Any rupture between the urban nuclei and the rural ones (*villae*) is not detected, because although the towns presents a much greater amount of materials, the presence of diverse productions and the proportion among them is similar in the town than in the country.

5th CENTURY

In the third quarter of this century (year 476 AD) the Roman Empire of the West politically disappeared. Nevertheless, the imports of fine ceramics, lamps and amphoras had an intense activity in this period, independently of whom had the political power. It is not clear if the vandal conquest of Carthage in the year 439 AD represented any problem for the ceramic industry (and the content of the amphoras, it was as it was) in Tunisia in the middle of the 5th century. Few closed contexts are known in the coast of the *Tarraconensis*, but the impression produced by the well-known data in the main cities (*Tarraco*, *Barcino*, *Iluro*) like those in the *villae* is that during the first half of this century there was a clear commercial continuity, represented (among other materials) by the form Hayes 61 B of African sigillata D, typical of the first half of this century.

The imported pottery of Tunisian origin concurred in competition with Eastern, South-Hispanic and Gallic products. Indeed, this was a moment of height of the Eastern amphoras (specially LRA 1, 3 and 4). The South-Hispanic amphoras, that were Baetican and Lusitanian (forms Dressel 23, Keay 16 and 19), as much presents a relatively important distribution in the towns and in the *villae*, are characterized, for example, by the late variants of the form Dressel 23. Nevertheless, it is not clear if this amphoras could be object of trade beyond the second half of the 5th Century, arriving at the most at the beginning of the 6th century.

The Gallic imports take shape in the presence of the so-called "DSP", whose period of height was the 5th Century, reaching the first half of the 6th Century; there are little (or null) the amount in which it is documented in contexts of the advanced 6th Century and the 7th, like La Solana de Cubelles (Garraf, Barcelona) (Barrasetas - Járrega 1997) and the highway of Sant Martí d'Empúries (Llinàs 1997). This fact demonstrates that these ceramics were no more present in the Hispanic deposits from the first half or the middle of the 6th Century.

The exporting area that had greater capacity to compete with the North African products during the Late Antiquity was the Eastern Mediterranean. The presence, in the Western Mediterranean's coasts, of amphoras of the type *Late Roman Amphora* 1, which supposedly transported oil from the zone of Antioch or Cyprus, and the *Late Roman Amphora* 4, which probably contained wine from the zone of Gaza (without discarding a possible Egyptian origin from the production) is quite important numerically, but had an ample distribution (Reynolds 1995, 80-82). Smaller statistical importance has the presence in the West of the set of dishes of well-known *Late Roman C*, coming from the zone of Phocaea (Near Asia), that

dates to the second half of the 5th Century and the beginnings of the 6th, as well as the *Late Roman D* or Cypriot Red Slip ware, that occasionally arrived at the Mediterranean Hispanic coasts.

The percentage resistance between the North African amphoric productions and the Eastern ones in the 5th Century has been a subject debated enough. In the Catalan zone, Keay (1984, 428) had stated a massive presence of the African amphoras, whereas the Eastern and South-Hispanic productions appeared in much smaller amounts. Nevertheless, the later publication of the context of the street of Vila-roma in Tarragona, that was initially dated to the second quarter of the 5th Century (TED'A 1989), although lately has been re-dated in the third quarter of this century (Reynolds 1995, 281) allows to document an important presence of the Eastern products, that constitutes the 25 percent of all the amphoras (TED'A 1989, 317). Anyway, the set of findings of the Catalan area we think that confirms the initial valuation of Keay.

The commerce of North African products had to be, at least in good part, into the hands of traders of the Eastern Mediterranean, who are well testified in the written sources, also in *Hispania* (García Moreno 1972); in this sense, is interesting the reference of Procopius about the abundance of oriental traders in Carthage in Vandal times, who aid to the entrance of the Byzantines in Carthage.

By the end of the 5th Century or very at beginnings of the 6th dates the garbage dump excavated in the old Hearing of Tarragona (Aquilué 1993) and the context excavated in the rural deposit of Can Modolell (Cabrera de Mar, Maresme, Barcelona) (Clariana and Járrega 1990; Járrega and Clariana 1996). In both deposits are present the forms of African sigillata D of the last quarter of the 5th Century and beginnings of the 6th: Hayes 87 A, B and C, Hayes 88, 99, 103, 104 A and the cup form Hayes 12. These contexts invite to think that, in the case that the Vandal invasion in the second quarter of the 5th Century had even affected the production and commerce of the African pottery, the reinforcement of the African Vandal kingdom represented a phase of maintenance and expansion of the trade of these ceramics, that surely must be related to the typological changes that experienced at this time the African red slip as the African amphoras.

6th-7th CENTURIES

The African pottery continued or even increased its distribution in the coastal area of the western Mediterranean in the first half of the 6th Century, and practically disappeared the products that could compete with it. This means that the late Vandal reign of Carthage had a period of increase of the trade between Africa and the Visigothic kingdom.

The Byzantine conquest of Carthage in the year 533 AD had generated some controversies between the historians and archaeologists. Although traditionally it has been supposed that this conquest had facilitated and impelled the commercialization of the African products, it has been indicated also that in fact the conquest was very negative and marked the beginning of a period of crisis for Carthage (Keay 1984, 428).

Consequently with a period of political rivalry, it has been suggested that the commerce and, concretely, the arrival of African pottery to the zones under Visigoth dominion was made difficult by the mentioned rivalry between Visigoths and Byzantines; for this reason, it has been suggested that the result was a total cut of the African imports in the coastal areas placed to the North of the Hispanic Byzantine province (Keay 1984,

428; Nieto 1984, 547). Nevertheless, today we know that this hypothesis is incorrect (Járrega 1987 and 2000).

The forms of African red slip of the second half of the 6th Century and of the 7th (until the end of the production of these ceramics) are mainly the forms 104 C, 105, 106, 107, 108 and 91 D of the repertoire of Hayes (1972), thus like the Hayes 109, that is often considered as a form of ceramic of kitchen (AA.VV. 1981, 214).

We counted at the moment on a series of archaeological contexts, located in Puig Rom (Roses, Alt Empordà, Girona) (Nolla and Casas 1997), Sant Martí d' Empúries (l'Escala, Alt Empordà, Girona) (Aquilué 1997), the highway from l'Escala to Empúries (Llinàs 1997), Mataró (Maresme, Barcelona) (Járrega and Clariana 1994; Cela and Revilla 2004), els Mallols (Cerdanyola, Vallès Occidental, Barcelona) (Járrega 2007), Barcelona (context of Plaza el Rey) (Járrega 2005), La Solana (Cubelles, Garraf, Barcelona) (Barrasetas and Járrega 1997) and diverse contexts in the city of Tarragona (Macías and Remolà 2000; Remolà 2000), that allows to study the pottery of the 6th and 7th centuries.

As we already advanced some years ago (Járrega 1987), the considered evidence allows to demonstrate that, against which had been assumed, there was no cut in the provision of African pottery in the North-East of the Peninsula nor when the Byzantines' conquest of Carthage either nor when they settled in a part of *Hispania* (Járrega 1987 and 2000). However, if it is truth that the later forms of the African red slip (Hayes 104 C, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 101 y 91 D) are founded in the peninsular zones situated in and out of the Byzantine province. It is truth also that are present in so few quantities, compared with the rich contexts of the 5th Century or even the first half of the 6th, that are fully documented in some archaeological sites. In the deposit of Puig Rom (Roses, Gerona) it has only found a fragment of African sigillata D, whereas the African amphoras are documented, apparently, in certain abundance. In La Solana de Cubelles, African sigillata D constitutes only the 3 percent of the total of the imports, whereas the African amphoras are the 91 percent of the same ones (Barrasetas - Járrega 1997). In the area of North-East Catalonia the frequency of the African sigillata decays in the second half of the 6th century in a 98,34 percent (Nieto 1993, 204) whereas in Tarragona it does in a 85,88 percent (Aquilué 1992).

All these data demonstrates that, although the imports of North African fine pottery continued arriving at the North-Eastern harbors of *Hispania* during the second half of the 6th century and the beginnings of the 7th, it did it in reduced amounts. However, the amphoras (specially African) continued arriving in considerable amounts, as can be appraised in the site of Puig Rom. The amphoteric findings allows to state that the Catalan coast continued concerning North African materials during the 7th century.

On the other site, the volume of Eastern amphoras seems to be very reduced in front of an absolute predominance of the African imports. Anyway, the finding of globular amphoras related with the type Yassi Ada 2 in the deposit of Puig Rom (Nolla and Casas 1997, 11 and 19, fig. 8, núm. 13) demonstrates the continuity of Mediterranean imports in amphoras in the advanced 7th century. Before, in the 6th century arrived at the peninsular coast some units from amphorettes from Ibiza (Reynolds 1995, 63-64 and 66-67), and other similars were produced in the Catalan central coast, perhaps imitations that those of Ibiza (Járrega 2007), whose content and diffusion are unknown, but that are documented in contexts of the middle 6th

century in La Solana (Cubelles) (Barrasetas and Járrega 1997) and in Mataró (Cela and Revilla 2004).

The mentioned contexts and findings are dated in general in the second half of the 6th century and the first half of the 7th. Nevertheless, the finding of a money of the Visigoth king Akhila in the deposit of Puig Rom allows to consider it active during the second half of the 7th century, although it is possible that it was in activity at the beginnings of this century. For this reason, it is not possible to determine if the amphoras found in this establishment corresponds to the first or the second half of the 7th century. On the other side, the presence of one African lamp of the form Hayes II in Puig Rom confirms the continuity of these imports in the 7th century, so as it is demonstrated by the findings of Cartagena (Ramallo, Ruiz and Berrocal 1997, 206-207).

Until now, the deposits in which there are documented imports of the second half of the 6th century and the 7th are limited at the located ones in the Catalan coast. These are found mainly in the urban nuclei (Empúries, Mataró, Badalona, Barcelona, Tarragona, as well as perhaps the Ciutadella de Roses) although also arrived at the rural nuclei (Puig Rom, Camp de la Gruta, Nostra Senyora de Sales, La Solana, Els Antigons), specially by the presence of the form Hayes 91 D of the African Red Slip ware (the well-known contexts do not allows to date this form before the 7th century or, at the most, the end of the 6th) and the African amphoras of the forms Keay 61 and 62.

The distribution of these materials is almost always coastal. However, some excepcions, like the *spatheion* located in Sant Vicenç de Rus (it lines up of the inner region of Berguedà), and the finding of African amphoras of the forms Keay 55 and 62 in the Roc d'Enclar, in Andorra, allows to document the sporadic capacity of penetration towards the interior of the imports of the 6th and 7th centuries.

We do not know the cause (or the causes) of the end of the production of the North African late Roman pottery, as much in the zones of commercialization like in the production areas. It is a topic to attribute this end to the Islamic invasion of Tunisian zone (AA.VV. 1981, 15). It is possible, nevertheless, that the findings of Puig Rom can take to the second half of the 7th century, which is very possible that the imports (basically amphoras) continued arriving until the end of the production.

CONCLUSIONS

- During the 4th century it is stated a clear superiority of the African productions (African red slip, amphoras and, to a lesser extent, lamps), with a smaller concurrence of South-Hispanic products (amphoras for oil and for salt fish). The proportion of these products is similar in the urban and rural deposits, and by this reason we can conclude that didn't exist any rupture in the commercial relationship between town and country.

- The first half of the 5th century supposed a continuity with the previous situation, although with a greater presence of Eastern amphoras, and the appearance of new products, like the so-called "D.S.P.", the later Terra Sigillata Hispanica (both originated in 4th century) and the Late Roman C – Phoecean red slip ware, that has their height at this time. It is possible that the Vandal invasion of Carthage in 439 could cause some changes in the commercialization of the African materials, but in the second half of the 5th century, the political reinforcement of the Vandal kingdom was translated in some important typological changes in the African products (as much African Red slip as amphoras) and a new impulse to its commercialization.

- In the second half of the 6th century and the first half of the 7th (and perhaps also in the second half) continued arriving imported ceramics, very specially from the Tunisian zone and, in smaller amount, from the Mediterranean East.

- The African sigillata undergoes an abrupt quantitative declivity in this period, but it does not disappear, at least until the beginnings of the 7th century. However, a continuity is stated and until a considerable increase of the African amphoric production, and by this reason cannot be admitted the hypothesis that advocated the cease of the imports in the middle 6th century. On the other hand, a continuity (so far nonaquilatable from the quantitative point of view) in the arrival of African lamps goes on at least during the first half of the 7th century, as demonstrates the findings carried out in Cartagena and Puig Rom.

- Therefore, the political rivalry between Visigoths and Byzantines were not translated in a disappearance of the commerce between the Iberian Peninsula and North Africa. The cause (or causes) of the end of the arrival of the Mediterranean imports to the Hispanic coasts is not possible to be determined, but it could not have affected to the consuming centers but the producers, with which it could be due to the Islamic invasion of North Africa, since it has traditionally assumed.

- The stated amphoric imports in contexts of the 6th and 7th centuries are almost in their totality African. Nevertheless, there was a continuity (although diminished) in the arrival of products from the Eastern Mediterranean, specially of type LRA 1 and others more later and less well-known (like the amphora type Yassi Ada 2). On the other hand, the existence of some amphoras of globular profile is stated, although until now we have few indications in the studied area.

- The findings of imported pottery in Catalonia during the second half of the 6th and the 7th centuries are limited basically to the coastal zones, and although they are centered in the urban nuclei, but also arrives at the rural establishments next to such. Nevertheless, some findings (as those of Sant Vicenç de Rus and the Roc d'Enclar) allows to document the sporadic arrival of these imports in geographic areas located in the interior.

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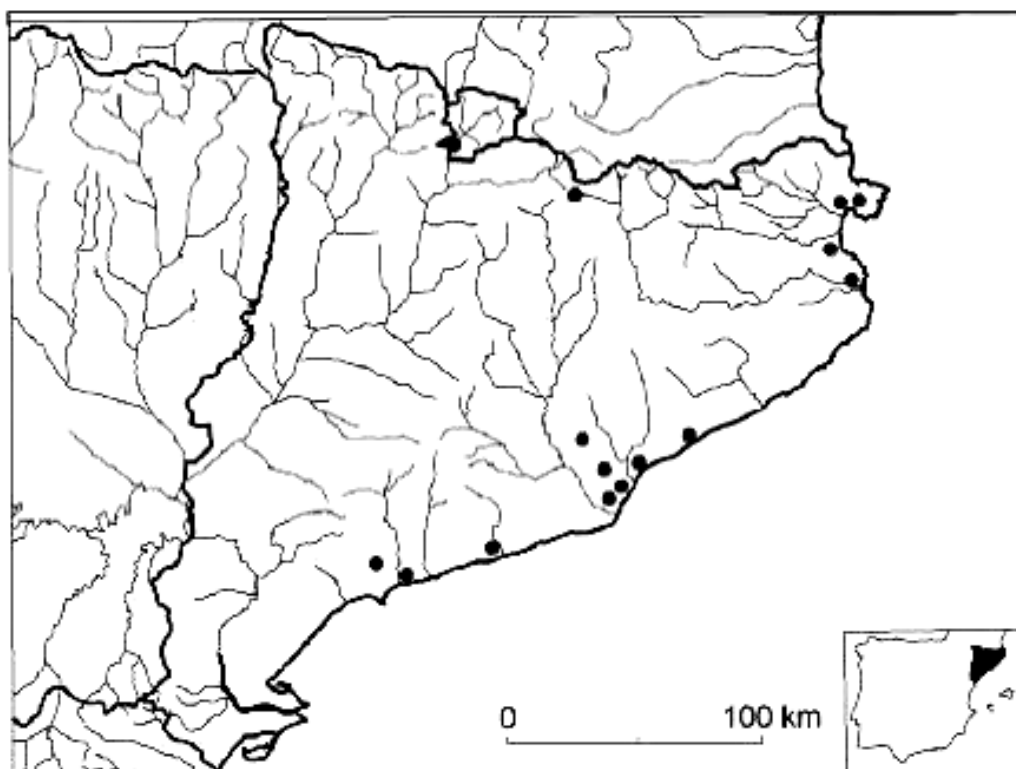


Fig. 1. Sites with Late Roman imports in Catalonia in the 6th and 7th centuries AD.

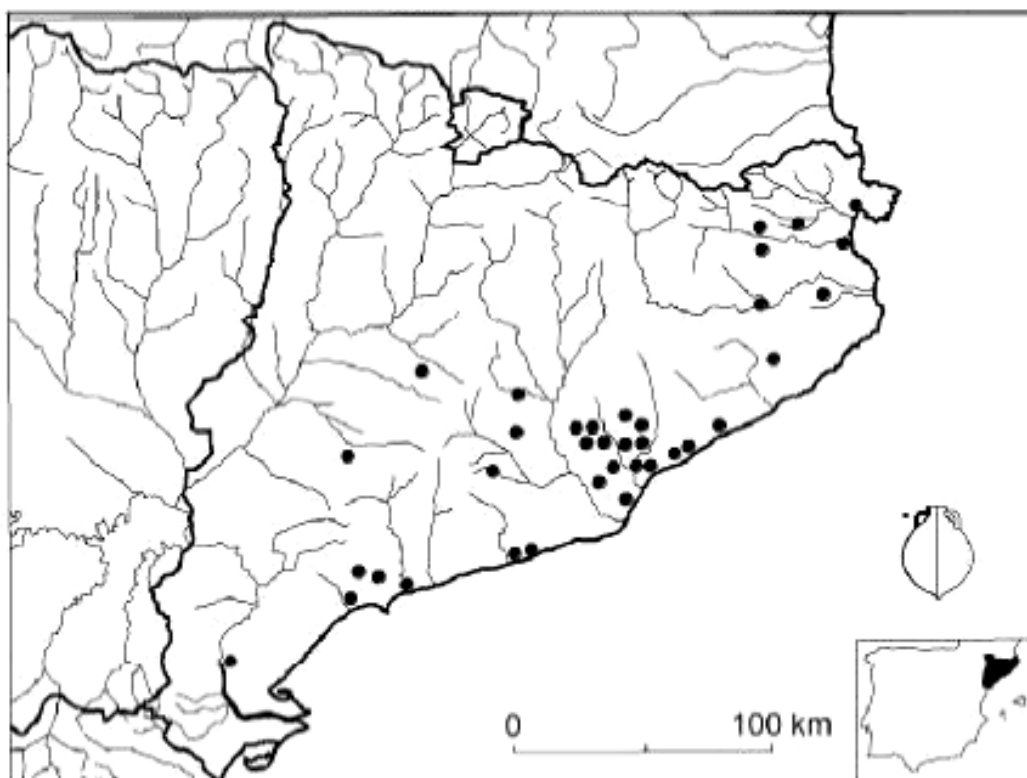


Fig. 2. Dressel 23 amphoras in Catalonia.