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Social hypotheses for the communities of the Iberian Mediterranean basin (From the VI to II millennia BC)

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RESUMEN

Revisamos las hipótesis sociológicas vigentes para las comunidades del Arco Mediterráneo Ibérico durante 5 milenios. Exponemos y discutimos las evidencias asociadas a las explicaciones y señalamos las lecturas sociales que consideramos más adecuadas al registro empírico. La sociología de las comunidades del VIº al IVº milenios se apoya en lecturas sociales derivadas del Arte Rupestre *Levantino*. Para la etapa del 3500 al 2300 se recoge el debate sobre la existencia o no de una formación estatal. La etapa del 2300-1500, asumida la existencia del estado *argárico*, focaliza la atención del debate entorno a los mecanismos de explotación social. Finalmente, para la etapa de 1500-1300 se abordan las condiciones de reproducción social en el *Horizonte de Villena* y nuevamente la cuestión de la existencia o no de estado. Las diferencias entre comunidades, las redes intercomunitarias y las evidencias sobre la situación de mujeres y hombres en cada etapa, son tenidas en cuenta al abordar las relaciones de reciprocidad o explotación entre colectivos sociales.

KEY WORDS

Iberia; Production; Reciprocity; Exploitation; Neolithic; Millares; Argar; Villena.

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEMS FACING SOCIOLOGY FOR FIVE MILLENNIA.

The purpose of this paper is to set forth the current state of the reading matter for the Mediterranean regions of the Iberian peninsular. We will focus on recent contributions that remain valid and that represent the current situation in terms of scientific debate. We shall also attempt to evaluate the empirical support we are currently able to rely on. We hope that research moves forward as a result of facing off hypotheses, not only in the field of coherence, reason and logic, but also by providing new tests that allow us to gradually dismiss any findings that prove to be inconsistent with the empirical information. We are aware that simple ideas can be demanded in order to use it for the social dissemination of knowledge, but stark reality cannot be reduced to obvious stereotypes, naïve preconceptions, logical estimates or empty trivialities. These only help to perpetuate an archaeology of the spectacle or to add value to cultural merchandise and can't advance knowledge. For this very reason, we sometimes create more problems than we solve. We must prevent the spectacle from continuing at all costs.

The structuring of sociology into the prehistory of the Mediterranean seaboard is affected by a range of problems resulting from factors that are not exclusive of scientific production for this region. They are part of the undercurrent of academic inertia and involve an enormous waste of energy by coming up with useless findings that do little to advance our historical and sociological knowledge of the past.

a.-Visibility of sociological indicators. Although this poses problems in answering certain questions, it has benefited a number of scientific contributions. In terms of funerary rites, having individual graves (*Sepulcros de Fosa, Argar*) has allowed for both a better understanding of the social relationships and early sociological readings, even in the absence of paleoanthropological studies. Yet when the tombs contain numerous individuals, applying the same analysis proves to be a much more complex process and it is often impossible even to

accurately determine the chronological proximity of the burials, particularly if they lack broad dating series. In cases where the tomb is unaccompanied by “diagnostic types,” it is only these datings that make tombs “visible” by positioning them in certain time horizons where they previously passed unseen. In terms of the social spaces of daily life, the visibility of stone structures has thrown fortified settlements and stone buildings into the limelight. Yet vegetation or mud structures remain almost invisible, whilst the “negative structures” (pits, underground stores, pits) proliferate any appearance of the spaces of activity. Visible stone structures are the determining factor in interpreting sedentarization, war or centralisation, whilst invisible structures represent the social places of those lower down the hierarchy or in a dependent relationship. Function tends to be forgotten (similar function with different base material) and appearance is given importance. Either that or anything visible is granted an all-embracing function (every place of work or consumption is “seen” as domestic, all daily life is “seen” as exclusively domestic). If we could rescue all the social spaces of every time horizon (funerary or daily life), we would be able to see synchrony not only between recognisable places and appreciate the functional heterogeneity of the social space of any human community.

b. Cultural assumptions. Although there are numerous theoretical standpoints, there is a general tendency for the space-time demarcation to have a historical-cultural outlook. The traditional or reformed “archaeological cultures” continue to lead the way in terms of analysis. It is easier to make social readings when one has a “culture” defined in terms according to Childe (recurrence of kinds of artefacts, tombs or architecture) than when one attempts to tackle the reality of the production of social life. With this, although uncertainty remains a factor (the anomalies in normative cultures are very “normal” statistically speaking), one can obtain the peace of pleasant inward-facing worlds. The result is that social readings are taken of only one part of the society; that which reproduces and respects certain guidelines and obeys by the rules, whilst groups that do not do so remain hidden and in silence. So as to attend to all groups, we must study the realities of every historical situation in detail.

c. Fragmentation of the research. The research is broken down into sites. We know of only a few well-studied sites, together with countless points on the maps, classified by means of guiding fossils. It is one of the main fields for empirical generalisations. What a well-studied site has to offer is classified as normal in an age or region. Research is also broken down into administrative demarcations. Although Spanish provinces and autonomous communities are realities created by the prevailing conditions of archaeological financing and the professional groups that take part, as for history they are mere fiction. Their boundaries are only passed in the case of “traditional cultures.” In all other cases, conventional regional periods predominate. It is frequently the case that those investigating a zone are unaware of what is happening around it. As a paradigmatic case for the Iberian Mediterranean basin, we have the Southeast-Northeast rift. Research is also divided between specialists. Specialisation in specific periods is and has always been the most common division. We will talk of this towards the end of this essay. Yet even more dangerous is fragmentation of a scientific nature arising from an archaeological study based upon a range of analytics: sectorial visions limited to an only field produce decontextualised transhistorical perspectives.

d.-Evolutionary cycles. The diachronic knowledge of history (*prehistory*) is split between two poles. A double evolutionary cycle has been accepted, based on a notion of increasing complexity: history would cover the same path twice (moving towards complexity): 1) From the *Neolithic* to the *Bronze Age*. 2) From the *Bronze Age* to the *Roman Empire*. We always appear to be on some point of the same path and we already know where everything comes from, where it's going to and how it ends. The “Dark Ages” are excluded from the evolution, as are the “Dark Places” which don't meet the standard (speaking in evolutionary terms) of their time. Looking into Dark Ages and Places entails that they must be made visible. If we sidestep them, we will fail to come up with a complete social history, although already known (recognised) and we will therefore not advance our knowledge.

e.-Speculation and reason. The precarious nature of current prehistoric sociological research is such that hypotheses formulated with the freedom to do

without empirical evidence represent the majority. If we lack evidence concerning a large portion of social issues, we are free to say whatever we want. Only reason keeps speculation in check. The result is that the hypotheses are rational yet speculative. They are not the fruit of relevant findings but rather of subjective impressions or social acknowledgement of these subjectivities through repeating formulae accepted in academic circles. Speculation is easy but it is difficult and expensive to thoroughly look into the empirical implications of the hypotheses by means of methodical research projects. Moreover, the speculation is repeated without any form of control, whereby criticisms of quotations in bibliographies outweigh comparisons of independent evidences.

f.- Theoretical force of habit. This routine involves an indiscriminate use of sociological notions that are cut off from a social theory to guide them. The professional routine (repeating what is repeated in the bibliography) does not help to build social studies as the concepts lack meaning and are disassociated from the empirical evidence. It is a problem that extends to all theoretical-methodological approaches currently used in scientific archaeological production. The banal use of concepts even results in the use of notions from a range of different theories (including contradictory ones). The interpretative rhetoric, which is barely regularized, moves to the academic-scientific circuit to be forgotten, or, depending on the reputation of the author, to be routinely cited.

From this point onward, we will tackle the social hypotheses used over a series of stages into which we have grouped the historical time *horizons*. In light of our objective to deal with the social hypotheses, we have established this stages with preliminary political-ideological demarcated criteria instead of using the regional periodizations. We have of course paid suitable attention to the relevance of the changes in the material production and have placed the time in our calendar through the series of radiometric datings (C14 calibrated through dendrochronology). The aim is to demarcate the historical times of social life in which material production affected distinct entities (sexual collectives, domestic groups, communities, state institutions, social networks) by means of relationships, the nature of which must be determined in every case. Pinpointing the synchronic horizons allows us to analyse the reality of social relationships,

which goes beyond the formal appearance of social aspects, beyond the established political limitations or the ideologies shared or imposed from time to time. The reproduction of the social life always breaks the mould the institutions or perceptions would like to conserve.

5700/5500 - 3700/3500 cal BC. HORIZONS OF FIRST AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES.

These two millennia correspond to horizons in which cattle-raising and farming techniques aimed at the production of food are introduced, meaning the time the Iberian Mediterranean communities live the “Neolithization”. They are the ages of *macroschematic* rock painting and *Levantine* rock painting.

Reflections on the implications of the Mediterranean “Neolithic” has led many of the studies into seeking out the primitive “origins” or into claiming indigenous factors, without going into the network of relationships in which the women and men were involved nor touching upon the production of social life (Castro *et al* 2005). Talk of the “Neolithization” has often been replaced for linear evolutionary processes (supposedly logical), which diminish our knowledge of the historical conditions and the concrete reality. Universals such as the stages of human progression (the technique) or the structures of thinking and being (the peasant life) displace history.

For this reason, work spent on the daily social reproduction (the numerous essential tasks of bringing up, feeding and taking care of the members of a society) is practically non-existent. Whilst technical innovations, demographic increases or apparent improvements continue to fascinate researchers, the realities of increases in workloads for some or all of a collective remain hidden. As a result, the growth in the population revealed by archaeological findings is described, but the central role of the women in the basic production of new social subjects and in the upkeep of the social life in general is forgotten (Escoriza 2002a).

The “Neolithic” concept itself takes for granted phenomena (demographic growth, sedentarization, territorialization, surplus) that aren’t always associated with agropastoral techniques and that must be proved in each case (for example, in the Iberian Peninsula). We should become aware of the technologies for the production of food and the ways of organising labour, distributing products and possessing product, and this must be an objective more relevant than locating domestic animals and/or plants. For this reason, we have defended (Castro *et al* 2005) the fact that it is necessary to abandon pairings such as the fictitious break between “Palaeolithic” and “Neolithic”, the dichotomy between hunting-gathering and agropastoral groups, or the polarization between egalitarian-simple and civilised-complex societies (Chapman 2003). We must avoid valuing in positive terms agropastoral techniques which result in greater workloads for a important part of society and ask ourselves why these techniques were adopted and whether it may have been the result of group interests, of needs imposed due to a crisis surrounding other forms of production or of strategies of groups that would stand to benefit from such techniques (Castro *et al* 2005).

We will not enter into debate over the allochthonous or non-allochthonous nature of the agropastoral communities, as for this, we would need to avail of genetic contrast techniques that we do not have at present. The “Dual Model” remains valid, in defence of the theory of the arrival by sea of communities that introduce domestic species and farming-herding techniques and who co-exist with the local hunter-gatherer communities (Bernabeu 2002). The same can said of the percolative model, which emphasizes the mechanisms for introducing agriculture and livestock-raising without the need for population migrations (Vicent 1991; Díaz Del Río 2001). In this second model, conservation and storage techniques gain importance in evaluating the stabilisation of food reserves as a crucial factor in the adoption of new techniques (Vicent 1991, Román 1996).

The social spaces that we know of for the 2 millennia of the stage under study are, in fact, quite minimal. There are storage caves (**Cova de l’Or**) and

settlements that can reach a certain level of stability, even linked to ditched enclosures such as **Mas d'Is** (Bernabeu *et al* 2003). The funerary sites vary significantly (burials caves, pit graves) and are spread around the Mediterranean regions, from the Northeast to the recent discoveries in Almería (**Cerro de la Virtud**) (Montero, Rihuete and Ruiz 1999).

The Serpis basin (Alicante) is perhaps the best-known region, with a social study that highlights a coordination of community labour invested in political-ideological places as far back as 5000 cal BC (ditched enclosures, "sanctuaries" with *macroschematic* rock-art) (Bernabeu *et al* 2003). This community structure of the territory cannot be extrapolated to other areas. To infer "accumulation of power" from it, would entail a proposal that we believe to be infeasible (supposedly, community labour is impossible without a social hierarchy). The regional ideology of the Serpis Basin lacked continuity and was replaced by another large territorial extension ideology, materialized in *Levantine* rock-art (Escoriza 2002a).

We should consider that the introduction of agropastoral techniques is not associated with territorial conflicts (Vicent 1991), but to dissymmetry of access to the production and to control over those that carry out the work (Cámara 2001). More importantly than domesticating the countryside, animals and plants, the domestication of social subjects generated substantial benefits for a certain sector of society. Therefore, the hypothesis of the patriarchal domination of the female collective (Escoriza 2002a; 2002b) allows us to understand the transformations from VI to IV millennia in the Iberian Mediterranean. Or even provide the vital link for the explanation of the adoption of farming-herding techniques. Thanks to the patriarchal relations that were imposed, the pluslabour that these techniques entail would fall on the women, even though production would also benefit the male collective. Although consumption remained symmetrical, men exploited women in order to invest less labour (Castro, Escoriza & Sanahuja 2003). *Levantine* rock-art informs us of the conditions of social reproduction through the ideology of those communities.

Levantine art is dated by the superimposition of paintings and ceramic parallels during early times of agropastoral techniques (Martí Oliver & Hernández 1988), or in the age immediately after (Molina Balaguer *et al* 2003). Representations of animals and archers (men) in hunting or fighting scenes, dominate the art form. This style remains consistent from Almería to the Northeast peninsular, a span of hundreds of kilometres. These points to a homogeneous ideology, which legitimises hunting as a fundamental activity (Escoriza 2002a). Faced with this ideology, the economic evidence shows that in the *Levantine* art territory, not all the communities share the same economic practices or in the same order of importance (Schuhmacher & Weniger 1995). Then, we must conclude that the existing thematic uniformity entails a set of norms that is shared by communities with heterogeneous economic activities and that it is an ideology that portrays the false image that hunters are the most important economic contributors (Escoriza 2002a, 2002b). This would be a shared “ideology of patriarchs”, notwithstanding how each group obtained their food. An alternative hypothesis would be that *Levantine* art captures the ideology of communities where hunting is important in the (non exclusive) obtention of food and that they shared territories with other communities where agropastoral techniques were more important. It would express a “hunter ideology”, giving too much importance to just one economic, male activity, in detriment to the other practices. This ideology subtracts relevance from the varied works that women carry out, which is barely represented.

An important conclusion emerges from these two hypotheses: that of a patriarchal ideology legitimised by the coercive power that generates figurative representations, which transcend the existing economic forms. The figurative representation of the division of labour depending on sex enables us to identify situations of social dissymmetry and exploitation among Mediterranean communities, independent of the techniques of food obtention implemented.

This social interpretation concurs with the evidence in the Northeast c. 5000-3700 cal BC (Molist, Ribé & Saña 1995). There, the *Sepulcros de Fosa* (Muñoz 1965) consists of individual burials, which allow us to jointly analyse paleoanthropological studies, associated grave goods and functional analyses.

In this way, we have managed to establish a division of labour between men and women. Men tend to have bows and arrows and tools to cut meat and women are associated with tools for other activities (e.g. for working skin) (Gibaja 2002). Trace-elements analysis of human bones from **Bóvila Madurell** indicates sex inequalities of diet (men have meat diet, while women vegetable diet) (Malgosa *et al* 1996). The dissymmetric labour, that favours the male collective, are documented in the patriarchal ideology (*Levantine art*), in the funerary expression (grave goods) and in material reality (food consumption), confirming the male domination around V millennium cal BC.

In the *Sepulcros de Fosa* some objects of remote origin as well as collections of materials in some male burials (including child tombs) have been discovered, which strongly suggests hereditary social dissymmetry (Gibaja 2002). This situation is detected at the moment of development of the mining activities of flint and variscite in **Can Tintorer** (Bosch & Estrada 1997), a system of planning and control of a considerable amount of specialised work. However, from 3000 cal BC onwards, the spreading collective funerary rites in Northeast Iberia suggest that the mechanisms of appropriation and individualisation that had been instigated were discontinued.

3700/3500 – 2300/2200 cal BC: HORIZONS OF DUALITY.

This stage can be defined by a new political-ideological reality, which is expressed in the "chalcolithic idols" and in *Schematic* rock-art. Their datings are staggered over more than a millennium (Castro, Escoriza & Sanahuja 2004; Sanchidrian & Valladas 2002). The dominant ideology is expressed through this iconographic world and through collective tombs, sequential burials and varied secondary treatments. The material expression of this ideology is distributed throughout a large part of the Iberian Peninsula, especially in the southern half. The funerary sites are natural caves or artificial hypogea, and in the Southeast there is a funerary architecture with chamber tombs of various types (Leisner & Leisner 1943). Although chronometries are missing for most of the variants (circular tombs without corridor *almerienses*, megalithic tombs with corridor), the

tombs that are covered with a false copula (*tholoi*) date from 3100 cal BC onwards. Barely there are not paleoanthropological studies that offer the key to social understanding and clearly sex-defined information.

It is possible to distinguish three horizons, with turning points in 3100 and 2500 cal BC (Castro, Escoriza & Sanahuja 2004; Molina González *et al* 2004). Right from the start new settlements in flat areas appear. Towards 3100 fortified settlements and *tholoi* appear (**Los Millares**). From 2500 onwards there are new fortified sites (**Los Millares** "Forts" and mountainous settlements in the Iberian Levant) and *beaker* pottery.

The *Millares Horizon* has attracted international interest, as a reference point for the beginning of unequal societies. The singularity of the **Millares** site, where a large village with stone walls co-exists with a necropolis of *tholoi* and more than ten small forts, led to consider it as a central place, first as a colonial foundation (metallurgic prospectors from Eastern Mediterranean) and then as the centre of a hierarchical society. Many social interpretations presupposed arid conditions similar to those of today in Southeast Iberia (Chapman 1978; 1982; 1990; Gilman 1976, 1987; Gilman & Thornes 1985; Mathers 1984a, 1984b). Now, however, isotopic carbon analysis in plants (Araus *et al* 1997) and oxygen isotopes in marine shells and carbonates (Castro *et al* 1998b) show higher rainfall in the III millennium and a drop in temperature in the II millennium (Castro *et al* 2000). Defenders of the first hypothesis have had to adjust their theories (Chapman 2003).

The social inferences regarding **Los Millares** are supported by the study of its necropolis. The analyses conducted by Chapman (1978, 1982) associated each tomb to one unit of kinship and concluded that we are dealing with a hierarchical society, with ranked lineages and economic management based on redistribution. The lineages (tombs) of high rank would be those of bearers of "prestige goods", identifiable by their exoticism (allochthonous materials such as ivory or ostrich eggs), their symbology (decorated pottery) and technical complexity (metal objects, right at the moment when copper metallurgy was beginning).

However, a revision of the evidence does not allow us to draw conclusions on the dissymmetric societies or to conclude anything about exploitation relationships (Micó 1993, 1995; Castro *et al* 1998a; Chapman 2003). The distribution of grave goods in tombs (quantity and quality of the materials) does not reflect appropriation of wealth. In those where there are individual elements or allochthonous materials, there is no accumulation, only unequal presences. This singular goods coincides with the larger tombs and with a larger number of burials, in other words, with larger groups and with a greater capacity of labour (Micó 1993, 1995). However, the dissymmetry at the heart of the lineages and domestic groups eludes us, in the light of the community ideology of the funerary rites.

Another argument employed in the inferences of social hierarchy is the so-called defensive architecture of the village and forts of **Los Millares**. This has attempted to perceive signs of military power and an encoding of prestige. A territory surrounded by forts that defend the frontier has even been suggested. Semi-nomadic communities and constructors of megalithic tombs (Arribas & Molina 1978) would have resided outside. These interpretations have extrapolated to other fortified settlements, not only in Southeast, but also in other areas.

These proposals, however, are loaded with pitfalls. Firstly, the datings of the "forts" (Molina González *et al* 2004) demonstrate that they only co-exist with the central settlement and necropolis for three centuries, c. 2500-2200 cal BC, the only horizon in which the frontier would fit. Secondly, the only agricultural land lies outside this territory, which would mean that it would depend on other communities for the food (Caro & Rodríguez 1989), a situation that also affects similar settlements in the Vera basin (Castro *et al* 1998a). In short, if there was a frontier, it was a political one, not economic. Thirdly, there is a functional paradox here, as the fortification of a settlement does not correspond with its political position nor with its size, thus it may well be a mistake to compare a fortified village with a hierarchical one (Chapman 2003). A fourth problem can be found in the assumption that military architecture can only be understood in

vertical relations and that there is no room for community coordination in order to go about setting up collective defence.

Recent research has proven that **Los Millares** is not the only case in point. There are other settlements with stone and adobe walling in the Southeast and in other regions, and there are also enclosed areas defended with ditches in other areas, even in earlier chronologies (Nocete 2001a; Díaz del Río 2004a). Although we may be able to trace these back to the VI millennium (Bernabeu *et al* 2003), for now, the settlements defended by ditches are only dated at 3400 cal BC in **Niuët** (Bernabeu *et al* 1994).

As such, greater heterogeneity is increasingly observed in the settlements (Castro, Escoriza & Sanahuja 2004). Right from the time of their appearance, walled places co-exist with open settlements, and hillside villages with villages on the planes (of varying size). The duality in settlement sizes was an argument used to consider two hierarchical levels and to defend a hierarchical society (Chapman 1990). But there are also arguments that question whether such a duality entails political hierarchy. There is nothing to say that a community that constructs defensive structures or is of greater size dominates the other open or smaller, if no other information is forthcoming. To locate a central power from this argument simply is not possible, nor does it show vertical relations without other evidences. A community may decide to defend its living conditions, or they are objective conditions that allow demographic concentration (Castro *et al* 1998a). It has also not been possible to demonstrate differences in wealth between domestic units, although knowledge of the records is lacking and despite the fact that an explanation has been provided for the collection of lithic materials in a dwelling (**El Malagón**), in terms of “Big Men” type leadership (Ramos 1998).

Places of specialised labour had been discovered (metallurgy, lithic carvings, bone work). These are located in specialised buildings or in domestic units, preferentially located in large and/or fortified villages. And location of numerous small open villages in the most fertile lands supports the hypothesis that these communities carried out agricultural and livestock farming (Castro *et al* 1998b).

With this evidence, current sociological debate is centred on the nature of the relationships within communities associated to fortified sites such as **Millares** and on their relations with other communities.

One hypothesis defends a society of classes and a tax-based state. The farming and livestock-raising communities would pay taxes to an elite which manages the rituals (theocracy) and the allochthonous or singular materials (Cámara 2001). An “initial classist society” within an *Atlantic-Mediterranean Civilisation of the Copper Age* (Arteaga 2000), which considers Southeast as the periphery of a system whose epicentre is in the valley of Guadalquivir (Nocete 2001b). Empirical support can be found in the differences between the settlements (which are fortified and/or large as opposed to open and/or small) and handicraft specialisation (metallurgy in particular) as an indicator of the control exercised by the elite.

In the light of this position, the analysis of conditions of production and appropriation has led us to negate the evidence of exploitation, at least among communities or lineages (Castro *et al* 1998a). The division of tasks is accompanied by an indifferent access to the produce. There are only differences due to the direct pluslabour of the communities (defensive structures, tombs, singular products that are widely disseminated). A “Dual Production” did exist (Castro *et al* 1998a; Risch 1995, 2002), with craft specialisation in large/fortified villages that distribute artefacts, and agropastoral activities in small communities that supply food to the former. There were no restrictions on the distribution of production. This exemplified a situation of symmetry between communities and domestic units, which does not cast aside exploitation relationships in the domestic or relative-based sphere, or between sexes.

Following this line of thought, is assumed that egalitarian and unequal social relationships could co-exist (Chapman 2003), or is incorporated the competitive factionalist model into the debate, explaining inequalities between settlements in political terms, due to competition between leaders and domestic groups and between social sectors (Díaz Del Río 2004b).

More recently, we propose another discussion about the character of "cities" of large nuclei with handicraft specialisation as **Los Millares**, posing the question of whether these settlements are meeting places that act as supra-community political epicentres (Castro *et al* 2003). The alternative, in our hypothesis, would be closed communities, although they maintained the productive complementarity and the distribution networks. Investigating the first hypothesis would entail recognising the existence of cities and political centres in conditions of social symmetry and economic reciprocity, a remote possibility for ethnography and historiography, whilst accepting the lack of knowledge about the reality of prehistoric illiterate societies.

With regards to the distribution of produce, we find ourselves with the same material models in remote regions and without territorial continuity. Therefore, architectural forms (surrounding walls, circular houses, megalithic tombs, *tholoi*), decorated ceramics (including *beaker* forms) or symbolic media ("idols", *schematic* art) manifest in an uneven way in synchronic, domestic or funerary places of the Iberian Peninsula. Different types with the same use-value demonstrate juxtaposition and inconsistent distribution. From the perspective of an "initial classist society", the "chalcolithic idols" would be an expression of the ideology of the elite (Nocete 2001a, 2001b). In contrast, our explanation frames them in horizontal politics of links between collectives. The reciprocity and social symmetry would allow unobstructed mobility, thanks to the security that relationships (of whatever type) between "relatives" afford, and between geographically inconsistent places, as there are no ground rules imposed in the ideological expression, only an open and polymorphic style (Castro, Escoriza & Sanahuja 2004).

Between 2500-2200 cal BC the "forts" begin to appear as well as mountainous villages in Southeast and Levant as well as *beaker* pottery, in keeping with recurring models throughout Europe. Speculative explanations have proliferated about the significance of the *beaker* wares (new ethnical presence, matrimonial trousseau, vessels for prestige drinks), however their function remains to be cleared up and their dissemination in the III millennium forms part of the

aforementioned inter-communitarian networks. This stylistic tradition disappeared from the Southeast and the Levant (but not the Northeast) around c. 2000-1800 cal BC. The indicators of Inter-community violence (sophisticated systems of defence, new types of weapons, destruction of settlements) do not have a concrete explanation to date. Perhaps the inter-community relations generally originated from inequalities in symmetric dissemination, maybe the communities of the Southeast attempted to defend their system of "Dual Production" in the light of expansive politics of other production mechanisms (*Argaric* norms appeared), or perhaps remote violent groups arrived to disrupt previously stable social structures (evidence of which can be found in the tombs of warriors with *beaker* grave goods from other regions and later dates).

2300/2200 – 1550/1500 cal BC. HORIZONS OF EL ARGAR.

The 7 centuries that span this stage are dominated by what is known as *El Argar Culture*. Its existence was discovered in 19th Century with the first excavations (Siret & Siret 1890) and was systematized under sociological key two decades ago (Lull 1983).

To date, around 2000 tombs have been documented and are situated in areas within the settlements. They are individual, or at best triples. Grave goods associations, indicators of sex and social category, have enabled a definition of the *Argaric* norm, an ideological expression possible in the conditions of social reproduction which benefit the dominant class and their political correlate, the state (Lull & Risch 1995, Castro *et al* 1998a, Lull 2000). The uneven distribution of social wealth in tombs and the possession of weapons by a restricted group enable us to distinguish burial categories, expression of social classes (Lull & Estévez 1986; Castro *et al* 1993-94; Lull 2000). Physical anthropological studies show lower physical activity and lower occurrences of pathological diseases among the dominant class (Jiménez Brobeil & García 1989-90), or the benefit of better health care and a longer life expectancy (Castro *et al* 1999a).

There are two main stages in the development of the *argaric* society, with changes around 1800 cal BC (Castro *et al* 1993-94). The first stage shows a dominant group in tombs of adult males with halberds, short swords and gold, and women with the female knife and awl association that we will find until the end of the *Argaric* society. From 1800 cal BC onwards inheritance was consolidated, expressed in child tombs with normative associations. In this recent stage there is a graduation of wealth inside the dominant group, with a prominent sector of sword-bearers (men) or diadem-owners (women), and a second order in which men are entrusted with axes-adzes and women with knife and awl.

Years ago, was debated about "chiefdom" or "gangster-elite" in the *Argaric* political system, however now it is generally accepted that there was a state system. The institutionalisation of violence and its control by the dominant class enables us to define the political structures as a State type (Lull & Risch 1995). An "Argaric expansion" from the Southeast towards interior regions implies the imposition of their norms on other communities, where they organized specialization of labour on a regional scale and territorial political control, legitimized by an ideology, which manifests itself in funerary rites. Even analysis of the political "complexity" of the territory indicated three hierarchical levels in settlements, which correspond to the State structures (Chapman 1990). Only those who associate the 'state' with governmental institutions, comparable with those of the ancient Middle East, doubt the state nature of the system (Gilman 1997, 1998).

The scientific debate today is centred on the mechanisms of social exploitation, the existence of which cannot be doubted. One of these mechanisms would be the tax levied at a local level, to explain the movement of products towards the centre where they come under control of the dominant class (Contreras & Cámara 2002). However, on another scale, taxation has been considered as the mechanism of dependence of a series of "*Argaric* principalities" on the state political centres (Arteaga 2000).

The importance of servitude linked to the dominant domestic groups is another mechanism of exploitation under discussion. It is recognisable by the coexistence in *Argaric* houses of graves of the dominant group and of individuals without grave goods, and who show signs of lower nutrition and higher work loads, arguments for talk about a "servile society" (Cámara 2001; Contreras 2001). However, these differences have been justified due to the fact that belonging to a social class would depend on extra-domestic circumstances and not on inter-familial relations. The noteworthy absence of graves of adult males in secondary populations, such as **Gatas**, contrasts with their representation in central places such as **El Argar**, which entails an extra-community management of the funerary appointment of men of the higher classes (Micó 1993). The child burials of the dominant class confirm that inheritance was strengthened from 1800 cal BC onwards (Castro *et al* 1993-94), although precision is needed about the institutional area of acquisition of rights.

On the other hand, the importance of the appropriation of means of labour by the *Argaric* aristocracy and of the productive conditions that are derived from them has been highlighted (Castro *et al* 1998a, 1999a; Risch 1995, 2002). It has even been noted that the ownership would not be in the hands of the families, but in those of extra-familial state institutions (Lull 2000). In this way, they established a "system of vertical production" (Risch 1995, 2002; Castro *et al* 1998a). This implies the existence of small communities dedicated to farming (they had sickles) and cattle-raising, who work under the obligation to supply products and labour in fortified settlements equipped with mills, storage areas for grain and thermal process ovens (Lull & Risch 1995, Risch 1995, 2002). Patrons of measures in ceramics (capacities) would permit the control of grain. Imposition of extensive agriculture, based on cultivation of barley, would ease management of this system in the final centuries of the *Argaric* state.

Furthermore, rigid production norms are imposed on handicrafts (metallurgy and pottery). In pottery production specialised workshops managed at an extra-domestic scale and domestic industry co-existed, both subject to the standard models (Castro *et al* 1999a:195). In making reference to ethnographic cases in order to draw conclusions of a generalised domestic and exclusively feminine

labour (Colomer 2005:207), we distance ourselves from empirical evidence and fall into the realms of naturalised stereotypes of women's work.

In the mining-metallurgy works, regional organization of labour was imposed, as only places of transformation have been discovered in specialised settlements into mining areas (**Peñalosa**) or in few and far between political economic centres like **El Argar**. As the primary analysis of lead isotopes suggest, despite its wealth of copper minerals, allochthonous metals arrived to coastal Almería, possibly from Sierra Morena (Gale, Stos-Gale & Hunt 1999). Weapons, tools and copper and silver ornaments passed through the hands of the *Argaric* aristocracy who monopolized their use and circulation, and ended up in their tombs.

Unfortunately, very little is known of the *Argaric* domestic buildings and the activities that took place in them, and even an estimation of their size has proved difficult to establish. The domestic groups linked to the dominant class could be grouped in concrete spaces in the settlements, as indicate distributions of burials in **Fuente Alamo** (Risch 2002: 274). However, the spatial coexistence with singular buildings ("towers") or building for communal use (cistern) inform us about coexistence with political ideological spaces or common services.

The idea of a society based on mono-parental nucleus families, which has arisen through the discovery of married couples in twin man/woman graves, has therefore to be rejected. Carbon-14 dating of these burial sites indicates that both individuals died decades apart (Castro *et al* 1993-94), and as such the domestic group must have another make-up, perhaps of extended family (Lull 2000). Furthermore, osteometric variability studies indicate male mobility and practices of exogamy with matrilocality, to which it is also important to add the hypothesis of a matrilineal transmission of rights (Castro *et al* 1993-94, 1998a; Lull 2000).

The social conditions of women, at least in the dominant class, and without ruling out patriarchal relationships, are without doubt more favourable in matrilocal and matrilineal lineages than when patrilineal and patrilocal lineages

impose a forced female exogamy. Nevertheless, the demographic increase documented on the *Argaric* state, together with a high rate of infant mortality, placed enormous burdens on the women to sustain basic *Argaric* production (biological reproduction) and to assume the duties of the maintenance of subjects (Castro *et al* 1998a, 1998b); despite the fact that these burdens could vary depending on social class.

Towards the Northern *Argaric* territories, in the Iberian Levant region, the synchronic stage of the *Argaric* world is associated with the *Valencian Bronze Age* (Tarradell 1963; Hernández Alcaraz & Hernández Pérez 2004). Small populations in fortified settlements have been discovered, with architecture of stone, almost inexistent up to that point in time, as well as heterogeneous funerary rites outside the settlements. Historical-cultural concerns have dominated the bibliography to date, and sociological proposals have only arisen in the past decade, beyond the hypothesis of the predominance of autarchic agricultural villages (Aparicio 1976).

It is this proposal that currently dominates the debate. In the light of the possibility of the political organisation of the territory into a hierarchy (centralisation) and of social hierarchy, depending on the size and on some of the documented handicraft work (Bernabeu, Guitart & Pascual 1989), is in force the hypothesis of a society based on small autonomous and autocratic communities which are formed by extended families who maintain reciprocal relations, given the inexistence of the appropriation of labour methods or final products (Jover 1999).

The relationship between these Levantine communities and the *Argaric* political systems has been largely overlooked (except in historical-cultural code). The only sound contribution suggests the transfer of surplus of the communities of the southern Levant (Alicante) towards *Argaric* territories, thanks to the circulation of metal objects, whose manufacture is not documented in Levantine populations at this moment (Jover 1999). This point opens the way for investigating the inter-territorial relations that affect other regions (Mancha, Guadalquivir, Southwest).

Information regarding the coastal/pre-littoral area of Northeast Iberia continues to be fragmented and heterogeneous. At this point they use and construct megalithic tombs in the pre-Pyrenees regions (**Les Maioles**) (Castro, Lull & Micó 1996; Clop & Faura 2003), whilst other funerary sites continue to be used (caves, hypogea, graves). This situation does not seem to have changed substantially since 3500 cal BC. Imbalances between collectives have not been detected and for this reason a social atomization with small semi-nomadic communities dedicated to the production of food and handicrafts for self-consumption has been generally accepted. However, some tombs with *beaker* grave goods suggest the existence of a privileged sector of society, and it remains to be confirmed if there were stable mechanisms of exploitation, or what constituted the women-men relationships (Sanahuja, Micó & Castro 1995).

The end of this stage corresponds to the end of the *Argaric* state. Its definitive crisis spelt the end of the *Argaric* political-ideological instances. This occurred when production conditions no longer afforded the contribution of surpluses which were appropriated by the dominant class, nor was it possible to carry out handicraft production or to maintain the collectives that assumed the labour, and as such, through revolution or dissolution, the state structures ceased to function in the social reproduction (Castro *et al* 1999a:194).

1550/1500 – 1300/1250 cal BC: TIMES OF AUTONOMY

This stage is problematic right from the start, it was only recognised three decades ago (Molina González 1978; Gil Mascarell 1981), and as such, the documentation is limited, but excavations in sites such as **Gatas** (Castro *et al* 1999a) have invited new hypotheses. We now know that there is a reorganization of production, a renewal of the product models and a restructuring of the social spaces, with the construction of new buildings, predominantly in stone (Castro *et al* 1999a; Castro 2005). The settlements occupied almost always the same *Argaric* locations, but we now know that there were new settlements (**Murviedro**).

An ongoing debate rages on the *post-Argaric* character of this stage. The disappearance of the *Argaric* state and its political-ideological practices are exemplified in the disappearance of the former funerary rites, which poses the problem of restricting the funerary register, a fundamental basis for precedent sociological studies. However, this is a central argument when referring to a *post-Argaric* situation (Castro 1992; Castro, Lull & Micó 1996; Castro *et al* 1999a), which we refer to as the *Villena Horizon*, given the relevance of this locality (Castro 1992; 2005). In contrast, who affirm the continuity of a “cultural tradition”, continue employing the term *Argaric* (Molina González & Cámara 2004).

The *Villena Horizon* attracts interest in terms of investigating how communities that lived through the disappearance of class dominance and the state acted and which also allows us to deal with the rocky path that the collectives in the Southeast followed. This stage can be characterised by the recuperation of the autonomy of the communities, lineages and domestic groups.

This new situation carried consequences in the quality of life of the men and women, as nutrition improved: food became more varied and accessible, with an increased availability of meat in the daily diet, including wild animals from hunt (Castro *et al* 1999a). Greater capacity of the women to control their bodies and basic production could limit the number of births, resulting in demographic stability.

The autonomy is also expressed in the recuperation of the collective character of the burials. Tombs such as that of **Qurénima** are typified by inhumation and cremation rites, and by use of individual urns within the common area. Ancient collective burial places have also been reused (megalithic tombs, funerary caves). There are but a few communities of the Vinalopó basin (Alicante) that carried out individual burials within the populated areas. This heterogeneity of the funeral forms distances itself from the regulated norms.

There is specialisation of labour in certain workshops, with some homogeneous models (Castro 1992, 2005). Metallurgy, pottery or thermal processing of materials can be placed equally in a domestic framework as an extra-domestic one. The autonomous politics of the communities suppose production geared towards self-sufficiency and towards maintenance of horizontal social networks, in which some goods circulated.

The dissemination of products, in conditions of intercommunitarian symmetry would probably have developed on the basis of reciprocal relations (Castro, Escoriza & Sanahuja 2003; Castro 2005). However, as in *pre-Argaric* times, we know that allochthonous products arrive at the Iberian Mediterranean (tin, copper, goldsmith pieces, vessels thrown on potters wheel, amber, iron). Their obtention via interregional networks entailed pluslabour and their access was restricted to some collectives (or some individuals thereof), who amortised them in their tombs. Dissymmetry is probable within some communities or domestic groups, but we cannot ascertain whether we are dealing with owners or a patriarchal form of control.

Among the products pertaining to the *Villena Horizon*, at South of the river Ebro, decorative ceramics of the *Cogotas I* style can be found. The explanation for the wide distribution of the *Cogotas I* style throughout the Iberian Peninsula, now does not take into consideration the seasonal migratory movements of shepherds (Jimeno 2001). There are theories that relate this to the practices of the social elites (Contreras & Cámara 2000, Delibes & Abarquero 1997, Harrison 1995). However, its appearance responds more to examples of discontinuity typical of linear social networks, as in the proposals for the *Millares Horizons*, than a distribution linked to imbalances of social classes. For this reason, the theory of mobility of products between “relatives” or the dependence of circulation of individuals among domestic groups (exogamy) is maintained (Castro, Micó & Sanahuja 1995).

On the other hand, a series of hypotheses point to the existence of a dominant class. A proposal has introduced the notion of "*post-argaric* principalities", taking the size of certain settlements as a starting point (Arteaga *et al* 2005), the

payment of taxes to the elite is noted (Martínez & Afonso 1998; Molina González & Cámara 2004), or a “classist society” is proposed from the management of gold in deposits or funerary grave goods (Jover and López 2004:298). It has even been suggested that the “system of vertical production” survived in specific places (Risch 2002: 281). To evaluate these hypotheses we involve an area exceptionally well documented, the Villena region, where a relatively large village has been excavated, **Cabezo Redondo** (Soler 1987), and where deposits of gold objects have been found (Soler 1965, 1987; Almagro 1974).

Cabezo Redondo has some multifunctional workshops, such as the XV Department (milling, metallurgy, textiles), which are highlighted in the context of other units of domestic nature (Soler 1987; Risch 2002). These types of workshop may have been the result of the coordination of labour in an extra-domestic framework, but also part of large domestic units, which do not exclude exploitation relationships.

The accumulation of products of silver, gold and other materials among the Villena "treasures" demands an explanation in this context, concluding the chronology of this moment (Castro 1992; Castro, Lull & Micó 1996). Although they have been treated like treasures of a personal or princely collection, the grouping of heterogeneous pieces and the wear and tear visible in many of them (Perea 2001), point to a more appropriate definition of scrap good only for recasting. The explanation, therefore, should fall within the framework of specialised forms of handicraft production, whose products we find distributed around various regions of the Iberian Peninsula, as in, for example, the Villena-Estremoz-type bracelets or the gold "trumpets" (Armbruster & Perea 1994; Castro 1992). These pieces are among those that appear in some of the Villena tombs, as well as in funerary sites of the Iberian Northeast (Castro 1992). We should only refer to "princely treasures" after confirming that the conditions of social reproduction allowed the political management of the accumulation of singular products and the appropriation of the surpluses via the exploitation of extensive collectives.

In contrast, demonstrating the existence of social classes and of a centralised territory is somewhat complicated when observing a productive self-sufficiency of the communities (Jover and López 2004:298). It would indeed be necessary to establish which communities originated the appropriated surplus, or the mechanisms to obtain labour from agropastoral groups and how is managed in such a way as to benefit a dominant class.

Therefore we uphold the hypothesis that the social inequality discernable from the Villena "treasures", form part of a reality where privileged subjects in the heart of their communities or domestic groups may have obtained appropriation of handicraft goods (precious metals for example) produced in specialised workshops, or imported via trans-Mediterranean networks (*mycenaean*). The singular nature of the gold from Villena warrants a closer investigation of this last possibility. The duality of domestic units which demonstrate the settlements of the *Villena Horizon* or the co-existence of domestic groups of varying constitution compels us to tackle the mechanisms of coordination of productive labour and access to the goods produced in order to clarify the nature of these units (Castro 2005). The exploitation of relatives or domestic servants, or the patriarchal exploitation of women, does not constitute adequate conditions for approaching the subject of extended exploitation that we could associate with the state (Castro, Escoriza & Sanahuja 2003:14).

The attempts to relate the circulation of certain materials (gold, amber, ivory, iron, ceramics thrown on potter's wheel) to central-peripheral models also have to be formulated with caution, given that their presence is by no means regular, rather quite sporadic. It is important to bear in mind that they may well have circulated on horizontal networks, which were not controlled by a dominant power. If this was the case, the aristocratic administration, if indeed, it did exist, must only have been circumscribed in small political territories.

1300/1250 – 900 cal BC: THE DARK AGES AND PROTOHISTORY

Here, we begin to avail of the evidence of the previous stage, the *Villena Horizon*, baring in mind that the historical context from 900 cal BC onwards is increasingly better documented, in configuring a social reality influenced by the consolidation of economic-politics administered from coastal epicentres, more precisely, the colonial establishments of the *Phoenician* states. However, the age spanning the XIII-X centuries still eludes us due to the convergence of various factors.

This age corresponds to the beginning of the new settlements where social existence lived on, and the information we have available almost without exception come from stratigraphic records. Furthermore, the scarce archaeological sites with only one phase of occupation during this age were abandoned without destruction or fire and the centres of activity which were the object of regular strict cleansing, hardly offer any materials or remains. On the other hand, the production models, with some exceptions (metallic products), live on beyond 900,, which complicates the chronological distinction.

The same is true in the case of the burials. We now know that incineration rites and the burial of the burnt remains predominated, forming quite extensive necropolis, the *Urns-Fields* of traditional bibliography. But this necropolis will also have a continued existence, which obscure their chronological distinction.

It must be added that, as we pointed out at the beginning, this stage has remained in hands of research circles with a special interest in the more recent moments (*Protohistory* in academic terms). These circles have a scientific tradition linked more closely to “classical archaeology” and who, more often than not, give special importance to the numerous sources of information of classic writings. Moreover, the wealth of the material production of the stages after 900 cal BC attracts a lot of attention, to the consequent detriment of the earlier time.

The analytical procedures and instrumental methodology, which have been incorporated in the research into the earlier ages, have only recently been assumed in these circles of researchers, who favour a more traditional

archaeographic approach. To quote an example, we only have to refer to the substantial decrease in the number of radiometric datings available, a consequence of an attitude of scepticism of the independent analysis of the “guide fossils” for establishing chronologies. Thus, in the light of the problems of temporal differentiation of many types of material, a "crushing" effect of the chronologies is produced, and there is the tendency to late-date nearly all the documented contexts (Castro 1992; Castro, Lull & Micó 1996). The consequence of this research situation is that the XIII to X Centuries cal BC constitute an authentic *Dark Age* for research into eastern peninsular societies.

We also must add that the questions that guide the research no longer centre so much on the dynamics of social change or on crisis situations or transformation of institutions such as the state. The research circles of *Protohistory* are more concerned with topics of cultural historicism, such as the supposed paths of identity constitution (*ethnogenesis*), when investigating the “peoples” which are cited in written sources.

When this is not the case, and there are concerns around economic political realities, attention is turned towards circuits of circulation of materials (*colonial* or *indigenous*). Therefore, it has become routine practice to establish sociological explanations whilst availing of pre-established formulas, such as the “economy of prestige goods” (Frankenstein 1997; Frankenstein & Rowlands 1978; Castro 2000), or equally of Braudelian principles (Ruiz-Gálvez 1998) which, when based on formal economics essentials, justifies pre-established universals.

The XIII to X centuries currently constitute an "Obscured Age" in research, so much so that the Iberian Mediterranean appear as part of, or antecedent of the ethnically labelled worlds (*Phoenician-Cypriots, Aegeans, Indo-Europeans*), with remnants of a entire Mediterranean, or, at times Atlantic-Mediterranean.

We will conclude our paper here, as tackling sociological questions beyond the problems already highlighted belongs to another cycle of "origins of inequalities", far from the area in which this volume is to be inserted.

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PIES FIGURAS

Fig. 1. Map of Iberian Mediterranean Basin. Sites mentioned in this chapter.

Fig. 2. Dating series from sites mentioned in this chapter. Box-plot of median dates (Castro *et al* 1996:49).

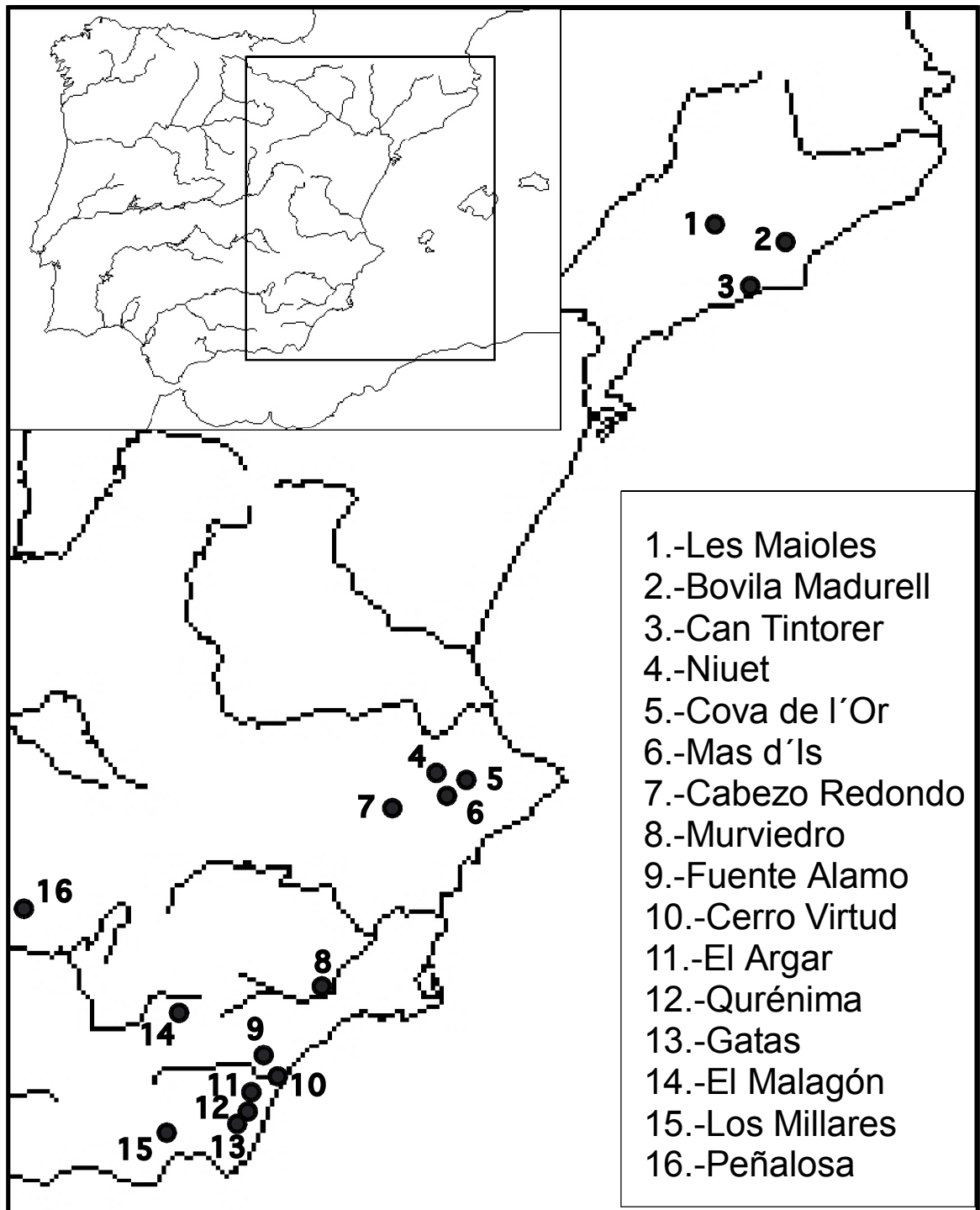


Fig. 1. Map of Mediterranean Basin of the Iberian Peninsula. Sites mentioned in this chapter.

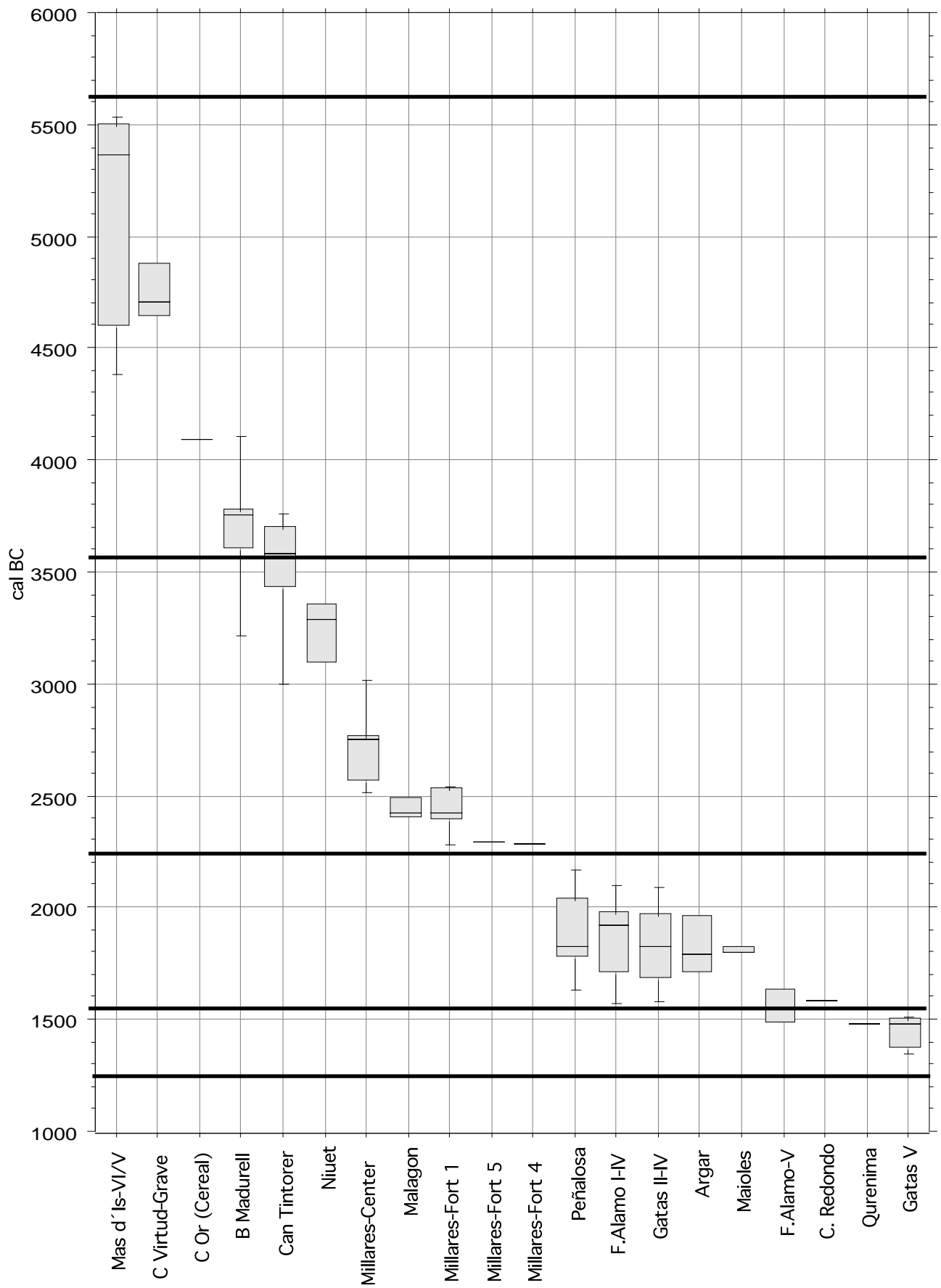


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