

Greek magic on the Atlantic? Homeric potions and mystic cults beyond the Pillars of Herakles. New comparanda and new interpretations

Magia grega no Atlântico? Poções homéricas e cultos místicos além dos Pilares de Héracles. Novas comparações e novas interpretações

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Abstract: The article reviews the evidence for cultic activity at the Orientalizing settlement of Alcácer do Sal (Portugal). It offers new *comparanda* for the assemblage of cultic artefacts identified at two locations and then interprets it in the broader context of Mediterranean interconnections. It is suggested that a cult brought by Phocaean Greek merchants, perhaps from southern Iberia where such cults are archaeologically attested during the same period, may explain the evidence better than the hypotheses so far formulated.

Resumo: O artigo revisa as evidências de culto no assentamento orientalizante de Alcácer do Sal (Portugal). Oferece novas comparações para os artefatos de culto identificados em dois locais e, em seguida, interpreta-os no contexto mais amplo das interconexões do Mediterrâneo. Propõe-se que um culto trazido por comerciantes foces gregos, talvez do sul da Península Ibérica, onde esses são arqueologicamente atestados durante o mesmo período, possa explicar melhor as evidências do que as hipóteses formuladas até agora.

Keywords:

Western Mediterranean.
Commerce.
Cult.
Greeks.
Sanctuaries.

Palavras-chave:

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Introduction

Interconnections between the Atlantic coast of Iberia and the eastern Mediterranean appear to have begun at least to the early 1st millennium BCE, and are attributed to Cypriot and Phoenician sailors. Early Mediterranean mariners and merchants may account for shared metrologies in the Beira region (Portugal) already at the beginning of the 1st millennium BCE (VILAÇA, 2011). Orientalizing material culture appear on what is now the Portuguese coastal stretch from the province of Algarve to the Montego, west of the dense Phoenician colonisation and Orientalizing horizons of Andalusia, while at least one new Phoenician trading established was founded in the Sado River estuary in the 7th c. BCE (PAPPA, 2013), and there is evidence for a Phoenician colony in Tavira (PAPPA, 2015c; MAIA, 2004).

The issue of Greek trips to the western Mediterranean and the establishment of colonies in southern Iberia has surfaced time and time again by historians, relying on Greco-Roman texts, epigraphic and numismatic evidence. Historians had proposed Greek maritime networks that hugged both shores of the Mediterranean, in Europe and Africa. Phocaeans Greeks and before them, Euboeans sailors, would have plied the waters of the western Mediterranean, crossing the Straits of Gibraltar. Time and time again, however, such views remained unconfirmed for lack of corroborating information. Recent archaeological discoveries from across southern Iberia are bringing the question of Greek presence and its nature back to the spotlight, and matching the literary information that hints at two consecutive waves of maritime exploration, by different agents: Euboeans in the 9th-8th c. BCE and Phocaeans, Samians and other East Greeks in the 7th-6th c. BCE, with the latter leaving permanent settlements. Despite the cumulating evidence in southern Iberia that has opened up new understandings of Greek trade and presence, current research on Greek presence in Portugal remains underresearched.

The present study looks at the evidence for two distinct cult loci on the Atlantic coast of Iberia in Alcácer do Sal dated to the Iron Age (ARRUDA, 2014; PAIXÃO, 2001; TAVARES DA SILVA et al, 1980-1). The first site has been excavated in the castle, astutely described as devoted to a mystery cult of Cybele, taking a long-term perspective (PAIXÃO et al., 2007, p. 39). The second was identified in the riverine area outside the castle. Different dates suggested for these two cult loci range from the the 7th/6th c. BCE to the 4th c. BCE for the earlier (GOMES, 2012, p. 103-106) and a 4th -3rd c. BCE date for the later (ARRUDA, 2014; GOMES, 2012, p. 106). The publication of the finds from these two spaces has been in descriptive but vague and arbitrary terms ('Oriental', 'Cypriot'). Arruda (2014) and Gomes (2012) have recently reviewed the evidence without offering clear typological attributions

or substantive comparanda. In these recent publications, sanctuary has been considered of Orientalizing character, vaguely noting connections with the eastern Mediterranean.

In what follows, the evidence will be described in detail, with comparanda from the Mediterranean and the Near East in mind. In reviewing the evidence, I show that a date in the 4th-3rd c. BCE is too late and that several of the finds have clear typological parallels to the eastern Mediterranean. The different interpretation offered is based on a methodologically structured attempt to actually establish the identity of the cult, its origins and specific features. It reviews the evidence, offers comparanda and provides an interpretation within the frame of the latest information on local historical and archaeological evidence, but firmly placing it within the synthetic, broader Mediterranean sphere. Taking into account the present state of knowledge for Phoenician-derived cults in Iberia (e.g. PAPPA, 2015b), the evaluation of the contextualized assemblage links the cultic activity to Greek religious belief and ritual, taking into account the evidence for the topography of sacred, the physicality and performativity of ritual.

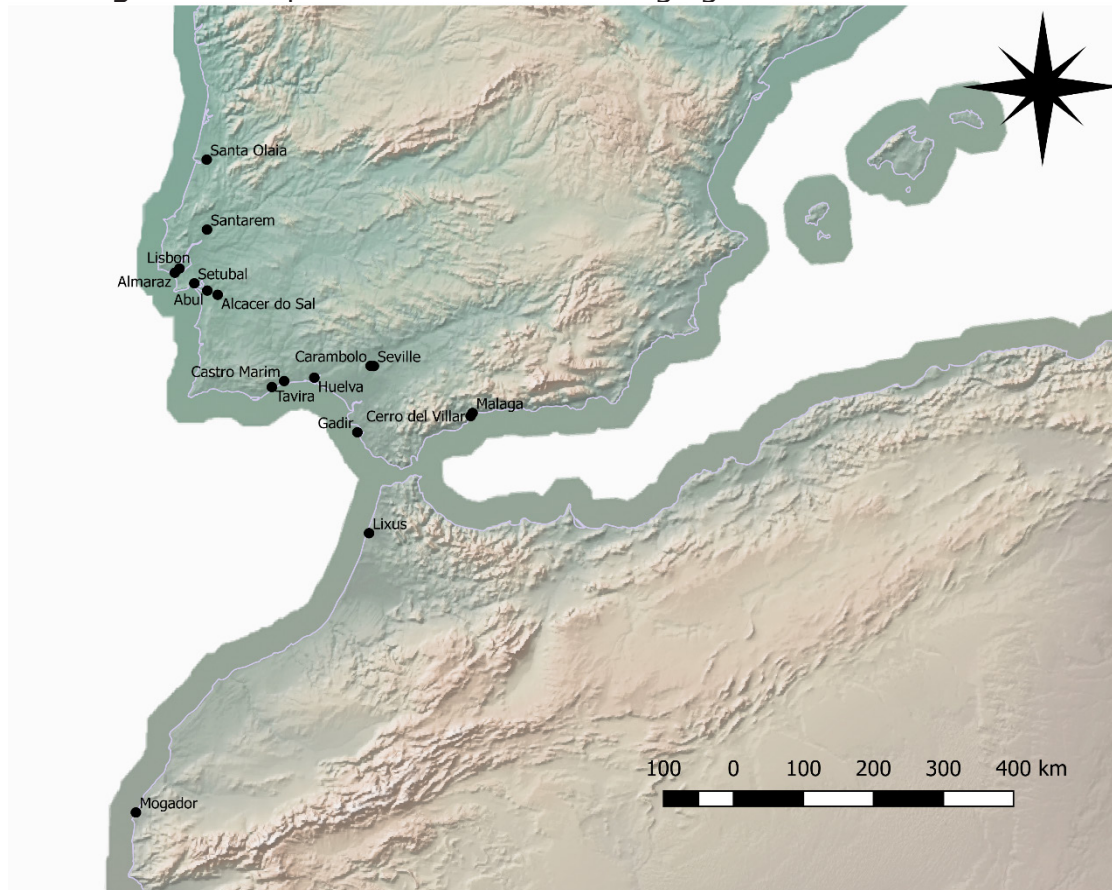
The evidence at Alcácer do Sal

Alcácer do Sal (Setúbal) is situated on a hill overlooking the River Sado in close proximity to the Sado estuary on the Atlantic coast. The river was navigable from its estuary in the Atlantic upstream to Alcácer do Sal and from there inland. The littoral of Baixo-Alentejo is a stretch punctuated by the occasional evidence for Phoenician contacts, while some Orientalizing evidence has been found in the hinterland. In the 7th c. BCE, a Phoenician trading post that doubled as sanctuary, known modernly as Abul, was established on the open-water estuary of the Sado, now silted up (PAPPA, 2013) (Figure 1). The locality of the Alcácer do Sal ('Castle of the Salt) was known as *Salacia* in Roman times, while the toponym of the Iron Age town was *Beuipo/Bevipo* as indicated by coins minted in the town indigenous script (VILLARONGA; BENAGES, 2011, p. 973; GOMES, 1998, p. 10),¹ and was ruled by magistrates under a hereditary line of power (CORREIA, 2004, p. 270-271). In Roman mythology, *Salacia* was a consort/daughter of Neptune (CORREIA, 2004, p. 271), so *prima facie* the name of the Roman city was not related to its main economic activity, salt production (PAIXÃO et al., 2007, p. 34). This historical centre of the town preserves the superimposed levels of the ancient settlement spanning over a millennium, with some archaeological invisibility in late antiquity (PAIXÃO et al., 2007, p.

1 E.g. based on a coin dated by estimation to 49 BCE, legends in the Latin and indigenous scripts (VILLARONGA; BENAGES, 2011, p. 973; GOMES, 1998, p. 10).

40). The archaeological evidence for the period relating to the Iron Age has brought to light settlement and cult contexts at the historic centre of the modern town. Most of it has been excavated at the castle of the town that yielded Iron Age and Roman remains under medieval and later building and constructions (TAVARES DA SILVA et al., 1980-1).

Figure 1 – Map of Atlantic Iberia showing figures mentioned in text



Source: The author.

During the Iron Age, the settlement exhibits the Orientalizing horizon (PAIXÃO, 2001). This is encountered in common in other coastal or riverine settlements in south and central Iberia. This was the result of the mass settlement of Phoenician, Syrian and other Near Eastern populations in Iberia since the 8th c. BCE at the latest. The necropolis has been excavated 500 m km to the west of this location. It documents a range of different burial customs, showing this Oriental influence in customs and grave goods (GOMES, 2015). Figured figured vases from Greek colonies (of Sicily or Emporion in Spain) were also imported (see below).

The language spoken in the area was written using an adaptation of the Phoenician ascript. The decipherring of this script, not universally credited, suggests the language

spoken was a form of proto-Celtic (KOCH, 2009; 2013). According to Herodotus (*Historiae*, 2, 33; 4, 49) writing in the late 5th c. BCE, the westernmost area of Europe, beyond the Pillars of Herakles (Straits of Gibraltar) was occupied by the Κυνήσιοι (*Kynesioi*) (*Hist.*, 233) whom he also calls Κύνηται (*Kynetai*) in a different passage (Hdt. 4.4), but clearly referring to the same people as he describes the westernmost people in Europe who border the Celts (*Keltoi*).² Herodotus' discrepancy in the translation of this error (unless for a medieval scribal mistake) means that the name was not well established in Greek, and the information may have to him in a different language, upon which he improvised for the adaptation of the name to the Greek language. At any rate, by the late 5th c. BCE, Herodotus from Alicarnassus in Karia (south Asia Minor) was aware of these people, locating them on the borders of the *Keltoi and ca. 400 BCE*, Herodorus of Herakleia, a native of a city in Black Sea also referred to them (ÁLVAREZ MARTÍ-AGUILAR; FERRER ALBELDA, 2009, p. 187-189).

Cult space inside the castle

The archaeological remains unearthed inside the enclosures of the convent *Nossa Senhora de Aracaeli* (Our Lady of the Altar of the Heaven) on the castle of Alcácer do Sal date from ca. the 8th 7th c. BCE to the AD 19th c. (Figure 2). The area of the excavations was musealized *in situ* under the present-day floor (PAIXÃO et al., 2007, p. 14).³ Iron Age structures developed on either side of a 3.5 m wide road on a NE/SW axis, preserved at a length of 3.5 m and in use still in the Roman period (PAIXÃO et al., 2007, p. 14).

The Iron Age cultic evidence was identified 50 m north-west from the Roman forum of Salacia in the area of the Roman sanctuary, and was associated with built structures. The Roman sanctuary, which covered a surface of ca. 120 m² and consisted in in two cellae connected by two corridors, dated to the 4th-3rd c. BCE (PAIXÃO et al., 2007, p. 36). A rectangular gutter or well lined with stones yielded a Roman-period, curse lead tablet, of the *tabella defixionis* type, invoking Megara and Attis (GOMES, 2012, p. 104; PAIXÃO et al., 2007, p. 36-37).

² For the original passage in Greek, see Godley (1920).

³ It is known as Cripta Arqueológica do Castelo de Alcácer do Sal: Piso Inferior Pousada D. Afonso II. The excavations were carried out by João Carlos Faria and Dr. Antonion Cavaleiro Paixão in the 1990s. In 2008, the area of the excavations was musealized *in situ*. Check: <<http://www.cmalcacerdosal.pt/pt/municipio/concelho/patrimonio/museus/cripta-arqueologica-do-castelo/>>.

Figure 2 – View of Alcácer do Sal from, showing a bend of the River Sado in the background from the castle



Source: The author.

In reviewing the evidence for the Iron Age cultic activity as originally published by the excavator of the site, Gomes (2012, p. 105-106) noted that the discovery of the 23 bronze figurines was attributed to a fill in levels deeper than those of the Iron Age without

specifying the exact context (the figurines were found scattered due to an excavator machine), but that the reconstruction of the architecture and evidence for an altar remain putative. Among the Iron Age finds were bronze figurines of anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, and anatomical types. Eight of those schematic figurines represent ithyphallic male types, in addition two warriors, two feminine types in the “praying” position, four zoomorphic bronzes that represent cattles/bulls, two horses and a dog. Three “anatomical *ex votos*” correspond to a human arm, a leg and a foot (GOMES, 2012, p. 105). From the site are also known a bronze bull figurine in a more naturalistic rendering than the previous assemblage mentioned, and an Orientalizing two faced bone amulet, depicting a *wedjat* eye (the Egyptian eye of the Horus) one side and a recumbent bull on the other, identified with Apis or Hathor, with cited parallels at other Iberian sites (e.g. Medelín) (ARRUDA, 2014, p. 520; GOMES, 2012, p. 105-106), which postulated it depicts Hathor. The same cultic space also yielded a thymiaterion fragment (GOMES, 2012, p. 105). Two clay figurines show a man with a conical cap, and another shown in the grip of an eagle (Zeus and Ganymedes) may be of Roman date (GOMES, 2012, p. 104).⁴ Gomes (2012, p. 106) down dated the site to the 4th-3rd c. BCE and identified the “almost popular” cult as “prophylactic” and “perhaps salvific”, allowing for a more aristocratic ethos too given the warrior figurines. Two objects found at the medieval castle (sectors L and I) corresponded to Phoenician weights (ARRUDA, 2014, p. 520; VILAÇA, 2011, p. 147). They come from the sanctuary, as indicated in previous publications (PAIXÃO et al., 2007, p. 24).

Cult space by the river (Rua do Rato)

The second cult space was excavated outside the medieval castle, by the river, in front of the previous cult space, and it is now musealized.⁵ Given that the castle that forms presently a border between the two cult spaces was of a medieval date, and that only few hundred meters separate the two cults spaces on a straight line, it is suggested here that both pertain to the same sanctuary, whose entrance would have opened up to the river.

In reviewing the evidence for cultic activity, Gomes (2012, p. 100-103) relied on an archaeologically “sealed and well defined context”, likely an obliteration deposit of votive gifts, arguing that the contextual relationship of this sealed assemblage with architectural remains and 7th c. BCE ceramic material found in the area (consisting in Fine Gray ware

⁴ The name is mention in Homer, e.g. *Il.* 5, 266. Ganymedes was the beautiful son of Troas (northern Anatolia) that Zeus snatched, giving to his father in return the best horses that existed in ‘East and West’.

⁵ Check: <<http://www.cm-alcacerdosal.pt/pt/municipio/atualidade/noticias/alcacer-do-sal-apresenta-museu-moder-no-e-interativo/>>.

pottery, Cruz del Negro vessels, pithoi, a tripod vessel and what he terms “common pottery”) cannot be safely established.

The sealed ceramic assemblage consisted in diverse, Orientalizing types: Fine Polished Gray Ware, such as closed vessels, some in miniature forms (with parallels cited from the 6th-5th c. BCE sanctuary at Cancho Roano), small perfume bottles and bigger jars, an à chardon vase, cups, carinated bowls, and hemispherical bowls (GOMES, 2012, p. 100). Among the finds were also 23 spindle whorls, i.e. instruments related to weaving, fragments of horse trappings, such as ring, a hollow betyl fragment, as well as items of personal attire consisting in 3 “annular” fibulae (anulares hispanicas) and a trapezoidal belt clasp, identified as of Serrano Cerdeño’s (1981) DIII type (ARRUDA, 2014, p. 518; GOMES, 2012, p. 101).

Most distinctive find was a bronze cheese grater and hollow bronze feline head with perforations on the edge, with the second allegedly pertaining to furniture, (ARRUDA, 2014, p. 517-518; GOMES, 2012, p. 100- 101). A bronze vessel with a side handle looping high above the (reconstructed) cup’s rim was identified as Cypriot without any explanation or specific typological ascription (ARRUDA, 2014, p. 517; GOMES, 2012, p. 100). This identification is arbitrary and thoroughly unconvincing. A bronze ribbed stem was identified as a thymiaterion, Cypriot too (GOMES, 2012, p. 101), again without typological attribution, while other bronze fragments, some maybe pertaining to a brazier, and part of a receptacle with a snake finial, and a mirror were also identified (GOMES, 2012, p. 100-102). Three cubic balance weights, inscribed with graffiti (published as “undecipherable”) were briefly reported recently from the town, along with other finds that purportedly belong to the plates of balance scales (ARRUDA, 2014, p. 526; VILAÇA, 2011, p. 147). Decorative elements identified as made of bone consists in three small engraved plaques (< 5 cm), one depicting “the tree of life” (GOMES, 2012, p. 101) or the ‘lotus flower’, along with discs of the same material depicting osettes (ARRUDA, 2014, p. 523). A worked quartzite with a feline engraving and perforations on the edges was not classified (GOMES, 2012, p. 102). Worked bone specimens from hoofed animals were identified, pertaining to nine knucklebones, *astragaloi*, attributed to ovicaprids: 9 *astragaloi* *Bos taurus* (4); *cerus elephus* (1), *ovis capra* (3), *ovis aries* (1) (ARRUDA, 2014, p. 523; GOMES, 2012, p. 102).

The assemblage of figurines, incense burners and knucklebones, the *astragaloi*, used for divination, led Gomes (2012, p. 103) to refer to to “symposiastic” and “libatory” rituals in conjunction with this assemblage, and divination practices in view of the *astragaloi*. This evidence pertaining to a cultic space was dated to the middle of the 1st

millennium BCE, allowing for a 7th c. BCE date given the pottery assemblage found in the vicinity (ARRUDA, 2014, p. 526; GOMES, 2012, p. 103).

The possible continuity of a cult from the Orientalizing to the Roman period

The *tabella defixionis* invoked Megara and Attis seeking restitution of stolen goods and offering as “a gift the body and soul” of the culprit (GUERRA, 2003, p. 337), and was deposited inside this an opening into the ground, common for curse tablets that sought the intervention of chthonic powers (PAIXÃO et al., 2007, p. 38). Attis was a Phrygian god, consort of Cybele. That the Alcácer do Sal curse lead table cult (ca. 2nd c. BCE) was linked to Attis and Cybele, despite not referencing the latter but Megara, is made clear by the reference in the inscription to the latter’s role in Attis’ death (“you who received the body of Attis”). Here Cybele is invoked by an unattested epithet, Megara. The epithet is of Greek etymology, linked to μέγας (‘great’) but also cognate with *μεγαίρω*, which in the *Iliad* (4, 55) appears with the sense of ‘to dispute’ (GALLET, 1990, p. 48), and by Byzantine times it was understood as ‘to envy’, ‘to hold grudge’ – apt for a goddess from whom revenge was sought (LAMPAKIS, 2017, p. 499).

The cults of Magna Mater, Cybele’s Roman name, and Attis, are associated with magical practices in the Latin West, albeit they are rare (BLÄNSDORF, 2010, p. 145-146). *Defixiones* invoking Attis in the Latin West are documented in Groß-Gerau, Germany and are connected to the cults of Mater Magna (late I^p/early II^p period) (GORDON; SIMON, 2010, p. 17). In Mainz, a sanctuary to Isis and Magna Mater also yielded curse lead tablets invoking the latter deity. It appears that Cybele/Magna Mater is invoked in curses, while Attis is invoked for bringing justice in (alleged) wrongdoings (BLÄNSDORF, 2010, p. 145-146). Anatolian cults spread to the central and western Mediterranean in the Roman period. Magic practices, including the use of curse tablets and perhaps divination through dice, are known from the western provinces of the Roman empire, several with direct eastern Mediterranean antecedents (PARKER; MCKIE, 2018). Effectively, this discovery in Portugal fits into the spread of Anatolian cults in the Latin West, but intriguingly presents Attis as someone beseeched for restoring justice. What is of interest here is whether the Roman-period deities venerated in Alcácer do Sal were the result of syncretism with pre-existing cults. It was astutely observed that during the Christianization of Portugal, the church of the convent was dedicated to ‘Our Lady of the Altar of the Heaven’ which may have preserved the memory of mystery cults to Cybele at a hill “making this hill a religious ‘high place’ since time immemorial” (PAIXÃO et al., 2007, p. 39). Occasionally the later historic periods can inform the interpretation of earlier ones, where the remains are scant.

This is particularly apt regarding cult sites, given the conservatism of religion. The matter is worth exploring here. Given the continuous use of the main Iron Age road into the Roman period, and the evidence for pre-Roman cultic activities at the Roman sanctuary, continuity of cult can be hypothesized, so that we can better define the 'time immemorial' implicated. This also necessitates a look into what we know of pre-Roman local religion.

Coins minted by the city prior to the Roman annexation of 45/44 BCE, depict Melqart as a Greek Herakles, with lionskin and club, as well as imagery of dolphins, tuna and wheat, while the coin legends were preceded by the moon crescent, an astral symbol linked to Astarte (CORREIA, 2004, p. 268). Herakles appears almost on all coinage of the city from the end of the 3rd c. BCE, denoting Melqart (CORREIA, 2004, table 4), an odd choice if the hero-god was irrelevant to Bevipó's local religion. In the Mediterranean, the syncretization of Herakles with Melqart was complete by the late 6th /early 5th c. BCE, when the Phoenicians of Kition on Cyprus struck coins with Melqart depicted in the Greek iconography of Herakles,⁶ and Pindar (quoted in Strabo, *Geographia* 3, 5, 5) referred to the Gates of Gadir as the farthest limit reached by Herakles.⁷

Little is known of the indigenous, pre-Roman religion. A collective sacrificial ritual to gods worshipped in Lisutania interior (inland region north and south of the Tagus) is documented by the an inscription in the Lusitanian language, in Latin, found in Arronches, north Alentejo, and dating to the the Julio-Claudian period (CARDIM RIBEIRO, 2010). A tripartite sacrifice was offered to a series of gods, such as Reva, Harase, Bandis, Munidi/Munitie, and hypothetically for Nabia by analogy to a similar ritual sacrifice dedicated to Diana, one of whose epithets was Nabia (CARDIM RIBEIRO, 2010).⁸ This evidence leans towards the view that an indigenous deity was worshiped in a tripartite form as a celestial, fertility goodess and virgin warrior, comparable to Artemis and Diana, with the latter of which came to be syncretized (CARDIM RIBEIRO, 2010, p. 46). If such a goodess existed, then a cult of Artemis brough by Greeks to Alcácer do Sal would have been accepted more easily locally. Let us see what the finds of the sanctuary indicate.

⁶ Cyprus, Kition, Uncertain king of Kition, Acc. no *SilcoinCy* (A1053), in *Kyprios Character*. Check: kyprioscharacter.eie.gr/en/cyprus-coins/details/A1053 (last update 10/23/2018).

⁷ As to why Herakles came to offer the Greek persona for Melqart, the reasons have to be sought in the deified hero nature shared between the two, since Melqart. Additionally, since Herakles' myths were placed in the West, the placing of myths connected to Herakles in the West, may have led to gradual syncretization with Melqart whose cult was taken to the western shores of the Mediterranean and the Atlantic by the Phoenicians (PAPPA, 2015b, p. 54).

⁸ *CIL* II², 14, 292.

The pre-Roman cult at Alcácer do Sal: typological attribution and comparanda of the assemblage

Votives at sanctuaries had complex lives, often travelling huge distances as booty of war, diplomatic gifts or dedications to a temple. In North Syria, Palestine, Assyria and Urartu, horse gear, bronze cauldrons, tripod stands, and perhaps even textiles share a similar elite ideology that shares a commonality of iconographic repertoire (sphinxes, griffins, tree of life, mistress of animals etc), which does not mean that each of those artefacts from a far away place indicates the presence of visitors from that place (CRIELAARD, 2013). Rather, the origin of the votives as an assemblage can illuminate networks of visitors to the sanctuary and the nature of the deity themselves, as well as an international elite ideology (CRIELAARD, 2013). The identification of the deity venerated and the general character of the sanctuaries should be examined within the broader spatial and temporal context. Individually the finds have limited potential in identifying the deity venerated, but in association they can reflect specific cults.

Similarly for the performance of cult activity, the mere transference of one ritual to another place should not be envisaged. Yet parallels when cultural affinities are known should be envisaged and examined. Iron Age finds in Iberia are frequently illuminated by *comparanda* in the eastern Mediterranean. The two cult loci likely pertain to a single sanctuary of Bevipo. The evidence is difficult to interpret without recourse to the eastern Mediterranean and near Eastern milieu, so comparanda are offered below for diagnostic categories of finds.

Astragaloi

Modified or unmodified *astragaloi*, knucklebones from hooved animals, such as ovicaprids (sheep and goats), are found in spatially and temporally broad contexts, showing continuity of use in ritual and funerary context from the Early Bronze Age period to medieval and even modern times, and from Mesopotamia to western and central Europe (Pappa in press a). In Iberia, they have been found in large quantities at some Orientalizing necropoleis, e.g as at Cruz del Negro in Carmona (BERNÁLDEZ-SÁNCHEZ et al., 2013). This suggests practices of necromancy, the use of divination in ancestor cults, a practise brought with the Phoenicians (Pappa, *in press*), but known in Greece too (BEERDEN, 2013, p. 68-69). A similar interpretation for the Alcácer do Sal finds, although not a necropolis, is augmented by their discovery in a pit, where fissures are indicative of communication with chthonic deities of the deceased.

Spindle-whorls

Spindle-whorls, used in textile manufacture, were common votive gifts at sanctuaries in the Mediterranean, in Greece and in Etruria (NAGY, 2016, p. 262).

Miniature Pottery

Miniature vessels are often found in sanctuary contexts and in the necropoleis in various sanctuary and funerary contexts in the Mediterranean of this period. In Greece, their appearance as service sets (for consumption) associated with long “offering trenches” excavated in cremation cemeteries in Athens appears in the 7th c. BCE, suggesting token funerary meals, in miniature. From the same period miniature vases appear in large quantities at sanctuaries in Greece, suggesting an opening of the clientele and a corresponding drop in the wealth of votives (GIMATZIDIS, 2011). They have also been found at Etruscan cemeteries as votives.

Balance weights

The cubic balance weights found at Alccer do Sal are of types known from coastal Phoenicia and several sites in the Mediterranean with Phoenician connections. Balance weights were deposited at sanctuaries in Italy. For example, weight units are known from Latium, as in the case of a votive deposit at Borgo Le Ferriere (Satiricum), dated to ca. late 8th c – 6th c. BCE (NIJBOER, 1994). In 4th c. BCE Etruria, a balance weight was dedicated at a shrine of Hercle in Caere, given as a gift to the god Turms (Hermes), a divinity associated with commerce, as suggested by its inscription, possibly indicating the profession of the dedicant (NAGY, 2016, p. 267).

Anatomical Ex votos

In Greek, and less so Etruscan sanctuaries, votive gifts were very common, manifesting dedicants’ requests for a cure or thanks for healing. The sanctuary of Emporion on Chios sanctuary of Athena at the Acropolis reveal bronze dedication and anatomical votives bronze arms and votive shields (EREN, 2015). In Etruria they appear mostly from the 4th c. BCE onwards, mainly of terracota (NAGY, 2016, p. 266)

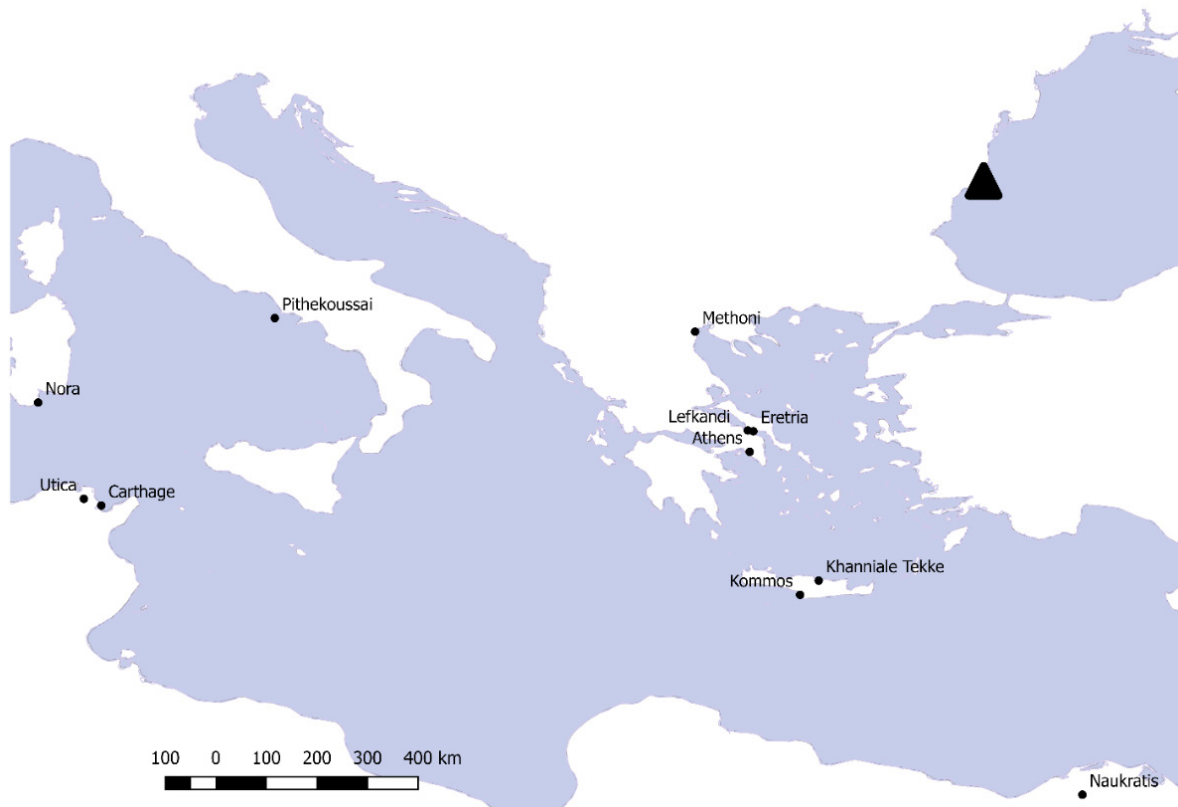
A different interpretation for their presence at Etruscan sanctuaries, less convincing, is that the represented anatomical part indexed the action besieged by the deity (NAGY,

2016, p. 266). For example, an 'ear' reflected the need for the deity to listen to the prayer. In Greece, silver anatomical gifts continue to modern day in churches, evidently reflecting pre-Christian practices.

Cheese grater

This bronze plaque perforated with several holes is a rare find in Iberia, but can be situated within the archaeological and literary evidence for cheese graters in the 8th-7th c. BCE Mediterranean. Perforated metallic plaques of the 'cheese grater' type have been found in Greece and Etruria, at sites connected to the Euboean expansion from Lefkandi to the Tyrrhenian Sea (Figure 3), which originated in the Protogeometric period with a Euboean koine in the Aegean (LEMOS, 2002). Three 9th c. BCE elite male burials at the Toumba necropolis in Lefkandi (old Eretria?) in Euboea yielded cheese graters (POPHAM; LEMOS, 1996). One of these tombs is tomb 79 of the "merchant-warrior", which also yielded balance weights, some of which parallel Atlantic bronze weights that suggest interconnections between the Levant, the Aegean and Atlantic Iberia (PAPPA, 2019). Another such grater was found in lalyssos, Rhodes (ELDERKIN, 1940, p. 391). Rhodes shows clear Phoenician presence linked to the production of unguent bottles and commerce, as do Kos and Crete (COLDSTREAM, 1982, p. 268-269), though the Phoenician graffiti is meagre (BOUROGIANNIS, 2012). Cheese graters have also been also found at Pithekoussai ('Monkey Place'), a Euboean trading post or colony off Naples in the Tyrrhenian sea. The finds came from domestic contexts (CURTIS, 2001, p. 315) and tombs (RIDGWAY, 1997) dated to ca. the 8th c. BCE. In the following century, these implements are found further north, in Etruria, finding their way in Etruscan princely tombs up to the metalliferous Tuscany (RIDGWAY, 1997). Likely they were introduced in the region from the Euboean settlers at the colony of Kyme (Cumae), on the shore opposite Pithekoussai, affirming the textual tradition on Euboean colonization in the regions.

Interpreting the diffusion of this artefact, Ridgway (1997) postulated the adoption of a Euboean commensality custom by Etruscan elites through the Euboean presence in Kyme and Pithekoussai. This would have involved heroic-style drinking, in the tradition of the Homeric epics. The kykeon was a thick mixture prepared with barley, water and herbs, such as *γλήχνηνα* (mint?), and spices, used for cultic purposes but consumed in daily life too.

Figure 3 – Map of central and eastern Mediterranean with sites mentioned in text

Source: The author.

Literary attestations in Greece refer to cheese grater as a *κνήστις* in texts by Homer through to late antiquity.⁹ In the Homeric epics, a cheese grater was used for the preparation of *κυκεών* (*kykeon*), mixing wine, herbs, cereals and grated cheese. In the *Iliad* (11, 624-41), the verse *ἐπὶ δ' αἴγειον κνή τυρὸν κνήστι χαλκείῃ* ("grated goat cheese on a copper grater")¹⁰ refers to *κυκεών*, the potion that Nestor's slave Hekamede was preparing for Nestor's guests in a cup that only the latter could lift., preparing it with wine and grated goat's cheese. In the *Odyssey*, the sorceress Circe adds honey, to enchant Odysseus (10, 234). Discussing this passage, West (1998) suggested that the metrics of the verse shows that the narrative predates, predates the *Iliad* by many generations, supported also by the description of Nestor's cup in the *Iliad* as a Bronze Age cup and the motif of the "mighty goblet" parallel in the Ugaritic Baal epic, as well as archaeological finds. This antiquity of the passage may underly the antiquity of the ritual drinking of this mixture.

⁹ E.g. in the work of Porphyry (234-305 CE) *Life of Pythagoras* (34) where "grated cheece" is mentioned. See also the lexical entry in Estienne (1822, p. 5096).

¹⁰ Author's translation.

In Greece, the kykeon was the sacred drink of Demeter, with barley as an ingredient related to her cult as fertility goddess (KOCH PIETTRE, 2019). The *aition* of the myth for its use is found in the drink Demeter was offered by a slave during her period of mourning, as related in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter for the loss of Persephone, composed in the 7th or 6th c. BCE (CHRONOPOULOS, 2017). It is this *aition* that explains the ritual consumption of kykeon in the *dromena* of her cult of Eleusinian Mysteries and the ritual is found in the Eleusinian mysteries. Through literary sources, three types of vases are known to have been used for carrying the kykeon in the ritual procession of the Mysetries: the kernos, the kotylisk and the plemochoe (κέρνος, κοτυλίσκη, πλημοχόη) (MITSOPOULOU, 2010, p. 48). The vessel was used at the end of the Eleusinian Mysteries, the *Plemochoes* ritual. Archaeological finds from sanctuaries of Demeter in Greece (Kythnos, Dion, Korinthos, Sangrion in Naxos, Thesmophorion in Thenos, Xomourgo in Tenos) suggest that while a complex type was used for this particular cult of Demeter, a simpler one was used for the festival of Thesmoforia. The vases were decorated with schematic motifs that represented the floral motifs of myrtle, plants that were used by the initiates in the festival (MITSOPOULOU, 2010, p. 45-50).

Elite heroic drinking, based on the preparation of homeric kykeon in the *Iliad* (xi, 628-643) with a cheese grater as implement, are documented in Pithekoussai as myth and practice. From a tomb in Pithekoussai comes a Rhodian cup (c.725-700BCE) inscribed in the Euboean inscription in Homeric hexameter, with a verse referring to Nestor's cup, alludes to Nestor's cup in the *Iliad* and is normally interpreted as a sympotic pun (COLDSTREAM, 2003, p. 300). Petropoulos (2008) argued that kykeon was meant as a magic potion, both in Homer and in real life, noting that the Rhodian cup from Pithekoussai with the inscription uses a performative utterance to instil love in the person taking the sip from the wine contained in the cup. In Homer, Nestor is known to have visited Capua in Tyrrhenia (PETROPOULOS, 2008), bringing a literary bridge to the archaeological finds of graters in Italy. Thus, this Rhodian kotyle in Pithekoussia links the Homeric myth of kykeon to the cultic or intellectual life of Pithekoussai (depending on whether it was used for sympotic jokes or a magic ritual), while the cheese grater links the Homeric kykeon with the actual preparation and consumption of this drink in Pithekoussai.

This is an added testament to the fact that the tradition of preparing wine with grated cheese was known to Pithekoussans, in terms of mythical and literary heritage, but as the graters found suggest, possibly as daily practice too, likely connected to a Greek fertility – mystery cult in honour of Demeter, or magic practices.

Thymiateria

The two cylindrical fragments identified as part of a thymiaterio (ARRUDA, 2014, p. 518; GOMES, 2012, fig. 51) preserve part of the lower element of the stem. A cylindrical ribbed element belong to the upper part of the stem below the first row of downturned flower petals recalls in a 7th cl BCE composite thymiaterion, with a horizontal ribbing of part of the stem, from Villagrancia de la Torre (Badajoz (Spain) (FONTAN; LE MEAUX, 2007, fig. 159). The Badajoz variant presents horizontal ribs.

The thymiateria functioned as incense burners and were auxiliary elements of the cultic ritual, though they may have been given as gifts to the god too. They are common finds at Orientalizing necropoleis in Iberia but can be traced to 10th c. BCE Phoenicia. They are found in Phoenician-related contexts in the Mediterranean and in Cyprus, but not so in Greece. In Phoenician milieux, the thymiateria preserved some of the original Egyptian connotations of their decorative ornaments, linked to the divine. A tripod or base supported the elongated cylindrical adorned with rows of petals (of the lotus flower, on which rested a receptacle for the incense (ÁVILA, 2007, p. 163-5). Burning the incense held a ritual function, and depending on what was burnt, it conferred psychotropic effects that may have facilitated a sense of ecstasy that would have been attributed to communication with the divine. Culican (1970, p. 99-101, plate III B) suggested that the form of thymiaterion was tied to the assumed cosmological meaning of the incense stand, its ribs imitating those of the Egyptian papyrus design (ie not of flower petals). Incense stands are commonly depicted on Phoenician seals, sometimes in ritual scenes with Isis and Horus. In Phoenician art they are depicted as the columns of the uraeus and the winged disc, with their petals manifesting the divine presence according to this interpretation.

The lotus, identified with the water lily, or according to other views with the saffron (*crocus cartwrightianus*),¹¹ was pivotal in the Egyptian religion, connected to afterlife and rebirth (for example, the sun god Ra was born out of a lotus). The lotus flower was consumed and used as offerings at Egyptian temples, and had soporific and psychotropic properties (WESOLOWSKA, 2017). The motif of open-and-closed lotus flower, or lotus-and-bud (mirroring that the water lily closes its petals at night) persists for centuries in Phoenician art. It emerged in the Hyksos period in the mid-2nd millennium BCE in the Levant and is attested in different media from Anatolia and the Near East to the western Mediterranean in the following millennium (GUBEL, 2005, p. 136).

¹¹ This predecessor of *crocus sativus* was used in Minoan Crete. I thank Werner Fröhlich for drawing my attention to a different species identification for the 'lotus flower' and its connection to Crete.

Zoomorphic protomes

The hollow feline protome that was found at the cult space of Alcácer do Sal was considered a furniture accessory (GOMES, 2012, p. 100; ARRUDA, 2014, p. 518). There is no basis for such a supposition, since there are no comparanda from Anatolia, the Near East, Egypt or anywhere else. Egypt has yielded wooden furniture with full-bodied carvings of lions and felines, with theriomorphic furniture legs especially from the Middle Kingdom onwards with leontine features, but nothing comparable (HARCOMBE, 2011). Wooden furniture from the 8th c. BCE tumulus at Gordion, capital of Phrygia (COLDSTREAM, 2003, p. 266) also do not show any parallels. Surviving specimens elsewhere in Anatolia and Cyprus bear no resemblance, even where theriomorphic features are present. For example, a kline from an Archaic/Classical Lydian tomb in Alaşehir yielded featured legs carved as feline paws, though no feline protome (BAUGHAN, 2013, p. 127). Representations of furniture from Syro-Palestinian reliefs also do not offer any parallels, e.g. one from Karatepe at ca. 700 BCE, (CRIELAARD, 2013, fig. 4e).

Hollow-casting of protomes of bulls, lions, sirens, griffins and other real or phantastical creatures was an originally Near Eastern manufacturing technique (CRIELAARD, 2013, p. 356-358). Such protomes decorated chariots, cauldrons and shields. They are known from Anatolia, the Near East, Cyprus, Ionia, Greece and Etruria, where they are attached as decorations on cauldrons and shields, and as axle caps of chariots in Cyprus and Spain, later being imitated in other media. The parallel for the Portuguese specimen should be sought among these classes of material culture.

Bronze feline-headed axle caps pertaining to a chariot deposited in the 8th c. BCE tomb 79 in Salamina, Cyprus are similar to lion protomes on the axle caps of a chariot from the 7th /6th c. BCE tomb 17 at La Joya, Huelva, Spain; both elite necropoleis document the inclusion of ornate, ceremonial chariots in elite burials surmounted by tombs and approached by a *dromos* (BLÁZQUEZ MARTÍNEZ, 2011, fig. 7). The type was considered Cypriot, introduced by Greeks who settled there (BLÁZQUEZ MARTÍNEZ, 2011, p. 13) but Bronze Age Greek chariots are different and do not offer parallels (e.g. CROUWEL, 1981, for the Bronze Age).

In Anatolia and the Near East, hollow animal protomes also appeared as figured appendages to metal cauldrons that formed the receptacle of basins supported by tripods or stands, with their functions ranging from the utilitarian to the ceremonial. Such metal basins were items of prestige due to the expensive material and the craftsmanship required, and so were used as diplomatic gifts and tribute payment (CRIELAARD, 2013, p. 355). Some of these bronze cauldrons were decorated with hollow protomes of wild

animals or mythological creatures (e.g. sirens) turning these basins into highly prestigious objects, which were stored in Urartian, Assyrian and palaces, elite burials and sanctuaries. For example, cauldrons are depicted in Assyrian banqueting scenes on reliefs from Sargon's II (722-705 BCE) palace at Khorsabad (CRIELAARD, 2013, p. 355, fig. 20.1). At the cultic and administrative centre of Ayanis in the 9th-7th c. BCE Urartian kingdom BCE, cauldrons were used to store millet, perhaps for offering purposes (BATMAZ, 2015, p. 131). Syro-Hittite cauldrons are known the Greek world too, where they were dedicated as votives the figured appendages could be detached from the cauldrons, and used at sanctuaries, even when the former were repurposed as burial urns, based on evidence from Eretria (CRIELAARD, 2013, p. 358).

Such protomes decorated shields too, dedicated as votives at sanctuaries. Examples of shields with heavy lion protomes (weighing 5 kg) are known from Ayanis, Urartu, inscribed with dedicatory inscriptions, and may have played a part in a ritual involving weaponry in the cult of the solar deity Haldi (BATMAZ, 2015, p. 131; BATMAZ, 2012). Such shields were given as gifts to gods in Crete too. For example, a lion-headed protome, probably a Urartian import, is known from Eleutherna on Crete (PAPALARDO, 2001, p. 165, fig. 8). The island has yielded miniature clay copies of such protomes dating to the mid-7th c. BCE, probably parts of votive shields.¹²

With the Euboean expansion westwards to Italy, such protomes are found in Greek and Etruscan contexts. A bronze cauldron decorated with a bull protome was repurposed as a cremation urn in the Euboean colony of Kyme, in Campania, Italy, ca. 700 BCE (COLDSTREAM, 2003, p. 231). Griffin and lion protomes are also known from Etruria, which has yielded a variety of Urartian bronzes (PALLOTTINO, 1958). Iony imitations of lion heads are known from the Bernardini tomb in Praeneste, ca. 7th c. BCE (UBERTI, 2001, p. 457).

From classical Greek sources, it is inferred that turned on their back, shields could be used as receptacles for blood offerings to the gods (ELDERKIN, 1940, p. 388). This suggests that ornate shields may have been used in ritual, and were not simply deposited. Conclusively, the closest parallel for the Alcácer do Sal find are the protomes of the La Joya parallel, stylistically and functionally. Most likely, detached from the axle caps of a chariot, the protome was repurposed as a votive at the Portuguese sanctuary, similarly to zoomorphic protomes detached from cauldrons and deposited as votives in the eastern Mediterranean, as suggested by Crielaard (2013, p. 358).

¹² Robin Symes, Limited (London, England), sold to the J. Paul Getty Museum, 1991. Available in: <<https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/13093/unknown-maker-lion-protome-greek-cretan-about-650-bc/>>.

Figurines

The male anthropomorphic figurines in the nude found in Alcácer do Sal do not fit into the main Phoenician types – smiting god, enthroned god, benedictory figure (ACQUARO, 2001). Most Phoenician bronzes depict deities wearing at least a loincloth, in the Egyptian fashion. The only parallel for the human form (albeit not pose) is offered by an 11th c. BCE Phoenician-considered statuette depicting a seated female figure from Santa Cristina di Paulilatino (ACQUARO, 2001, p. 481, 483).

The warrior statuettes show schematic males in the nude, wearing helmets and holding a small shield embossed in the centre. The conical hats worn by the statuettes were likely inspired by real-life specimens worn in the Hurro-Syrian cultures. Bronze conical helmets for use in real life have been uncovered at Ayanis in Urartu (BATMAZ, 2015, fig. 15-16). Comparanda for the Portuguese statuettes should better be sought in Greece, where Orientalizing bronzes recall Near Eastern models but introduce novel elements. Geometric-period bronze figurines from Corinth used as attachments to the handles of tripod cauldrons (COLDSTREAM, 2003, fig. 58) offer close parallels for the anthropomorphic statuettes discussed here. Similar features include the lithe figure, schematic features, conical hat and slight tilt of the head backwards.

The animal figurines likewise follow schematic rendering (GOMES, 2012, fig. 55). They can be compared to Greek predecessors. Schematic horses were used in cauldrons ring-handles as decorative ornaments. A figured appendage in the form of a horse figurine was soldered on the ring handle of a bronze tripod cauldron found at the sanctuary of Zeus in Olympia (Olympia Nr 5471) dated to the early 8th c. BCE (COLDSTREAM, 2003, p. 335, fig. 107). The animal with its schematic rendering and short legs presents a close parallel for the Alcácer do Sal specimens.

Such cauldrons with figured appendages were mainly produced in Corinth and Argos in the 8th c. BCE, and have been found at sanctuaries such as the Heraion of Samos and Delphi. Their circulation in Greece resulted in imitations (COLDSTREAM, 2003, p. 335-337). They may have originated in the Near Eastern cauldrons decorated with zoomorphic protomes imported into Greece. In Greece, ithyphallic statuettes are often associated with fertility cults. Bronze statuettes fulfill all the requirements of prestige goods for exchange, found in various loci across the eastern but also western Mediterranean from the Late Bronze Age to the first centuries of the 1st millennium BCE. They were made of fine metals, often embellished in gold or silver. Figurines of this style in the Mycenaean period are considered items of elite gift exchange between rulers (LANGDON, 1987). Transitional Geometric-period distribution enjoyed a wide distribution reaching temperate Europe

to the north and Spain to the west, suggesting a route of trade or reciprocity network (LANGDON, 1987).

Bone/Ivory plauquette

The material of the two plaquettes found are described as bone, but pending scientific analysis of the material, the use of ivory cannot be excluded. The plaquettes were decorated with incised motifs. The two small round plaquettes (ca. 2.5 cm in diam.) were decorated with a 16-petal rosette enclosed by a circle, while more concentric circles framed this central motif. Rosettes in bone are known from a Late Bronze Age ivory and bone assemblage from Kamid el-Loz in the Beqa'a valley (Lebanon) (UBERTI, 2001, p. 457). A similar rosette comes from the central disc embossed on an 8th c BCE highly-ornate tin-plated shield, decorated with concentric animal friezes from Ayanis (BATMAZ, 2015, fig. 20). Closer to Portugal, the same motif was incised on the back side of quasi-rectangular ivory plaquettes tapering at the ends, featuring a with a central, circular perforation and decorated on their front sides with incised floral and animal motifs in low relief. Such objects have been found in funerary contexts, such as the Orientalizing necropolis of El Acebuchal in Seville (Spain). Escacena Carrarsco (2011, p. 172-173) argued that against their usual interpretation as cosmetic palettes, suggesting instead that they had a ritual function as miniature altars (for incense) "which the deceased could use on afterlife".

Three plaquettes were found, two of which curved, and featuring incised decoration (long side ca. 5 cm), which Gomes (2012, p. 101, fig. 53) identified a "tree of life" motif. This cannot stand. The slightly curved plaquette, rectangular, bears a stylized palmette frieze. Predecessors are 8th c. BCE plaquettes depicting naturalistic palmettes in vertical tiers interspersed with a lotus flower from the Syrian ivory assemblage at Nimrud (Iraq) taken as spoils or tributes to Assyria (FONTAN; LE MEAUX, 2007, cat. 304; UBERTI, 2001, p. 465). More schematic examples of palmettes on plaquettes are also known from the Nimrud ivories dated to the same century (FONTAN; LE MEAUX, 2007, cat. 309). The two curved plaquettes may have been part of a round pyxis (box for cosmetics or other purposes), or formed the ornate decoration of an implement, such as a mirror or fan handle. Round ivory pyxides are known from Nimrud, as in 8th c. BCE (UBERTI, 2001, p. 465), showing a procession of musicians. They could also decorate as an added sleeve, such as a 7th c. BCE in low-relief cylinder, tapering at the end, found in Etruria (FONTAN, LE MEAUX, 2007, cat. 320).

In Syrian and Phoenician ivory craft-making plaquettes or panels were hypothetically applied to sacred or domestic furnishings, being parts of altars, thrones, stools, beds, and tables, but they are known with certainty to have been used for mirror or tool handles

ornamental pins, boxes, buttons, spoons, gaming boards with carved decoration (UBERTI, 2001, p. 457). In the Near East they were luxury items, but identifying a style of Ibero-Phoenician manufacture departs from different techniques and simplified themes and composition. The high-relief carving becomes low relief or mere incision. They have been dated to the 7th-5th c. BCE, and show a distribution that reaches the Aegean, where they were deposited as gifts to the Heraion of Samos. In the west, Phoenician ivories were used as tomb offering or votives at sanctuaries (UBERTI, 2001, p. 464).

Rosettes, palmettes, lotus flowers and the 'tree of life' had an ornamental role to play in Phoenician art that originated within the religious sphere, such as the widespread lotus flower, as mentioned above. Fragment of bronze plates depicting parts of the 'mistress of animals', dress decoration and a lotus-bud motif have been found in Ayanis, Urartu (BATMAZ, 2015, fig. 30). They may have belonged to horse trappings, as similar imagery (mistress of animals, lotus-bud motif) is found on ivory and bronze horse trappings. Horse trappings, such as cheek pieces, frontlets, blinker and bits were furnishing of horse-riding and horse harness for chariot associated with high status and used for ceremonial purposes, racing and hunting (CRIELAARD, 2013, p. 358-359). They were ornately decorated with divine motifs and held a metaphysical prophylactic role that augmented their literal prophylactic function as astutely observed by Gubel (2005). They depicted female divinities in their 'mistress of animal' manifestation, suggested by 8th c. Phoenician ivory bronze cheek pieces and frontlets (GUBEL, 2005), which recall the iconography bronze horse cheekpieces, blinkers and frontlets identified in palatial contexts in Syria but also deposited at the Heraion on Samos, the Apollo sanctuary in Eretria and the Anat-Athena sanctuary at Idalion in Cyprus, dated to the late 8th c BCE and 7th c. BCE, as embodying an elite ideology and network of exchange (CRIELAARD, 2013, p. 358-363, fig. 20.2, 20.3). Stylized motifs transcended different media and present an iconographic repertoire of Egyptian, Assyrian and Phoenician origin that became a standardised language. The religious connotations of many of the motifs (lotus flower) thus became crystallized and perhaps were also "absorbed by their ornamental purpose" (UBERTI, 2001, p. 458). Whether by the time they were loosely copied in Portugal where their production must have made them accessible to larger segments of the population, these originally-religious motifs held any significance that was recognizable to their users is not known, on the other hand their inclusion in cultic and funerary contexts suggests that their religious connotations had been preserved, even if their exact meaning was lost over time and space.

Snake finials

Snake finials on jugs are known from Greece. Threfoil bronze jugs with handles whose stem is in the form of palmettes with snake finials have been dated to the last quarter of the 6th c. BCE (HILL, 1967). According to an interpretation that does not consider these Greek specimens Phoenician-derived, the type is a mid-6th c. BCE development in the Peloponnese, which spread to Etruria through routes from Sparta to Kerkyra to the Adriatic, and was likely inspired by the mythical hair of gorgon, formed by snakes (HILL, 1967). Snakes are associated with chthonic deities, such as Dionysos.

One-handed jug

With a bulging body, no base or foot and a large handle, this hand-made, roughly-designed bronze scooping implement does not appear Cypriot, as suggested in the bibliography (GOMES, 2012, fig. 50). And likely does not belong to a Phoenician repertoire. With its high handle, it approximates an Etruscan *kyathos* (ladle). In Etruria the shape has been found in domestic and funerary contexts. A clay example comes from tomb 1 San Paolo, Caere mid-7th century, inscribed with an dedicatory inscription in Etruscan (AMAN, 2015, p. 69, fig. 4.3).

A new interpretation of the cult in Alcácer do Sal

Which Iron Age cult in Alcácer do Sal?

The eastern Mediterranean roots of the cultic assemblage pertain to a Greek or Phoenician milieu, with variations within, may betray the roots of the cult. If so, Semitic would be good candidate, followed by a cult related either to the Euboean milieu or to that of Phocaea, both of which left an imprint in the western Mediterranean. Candidates such as Melqart-Astarte, Isis-Adonis, Cybele-Attis and Poseidon-Amphitrite, given the latter's syncretism with Roman Neptune-Salacia, are worth considering. The assemblage of Iron Age finds at the site consist in objects that are common finds with Near Eastern, Greek, Anatolian and Orientalizing (in Iberia) origins. Such amalgams of travelling goods are found at sanctuaries in the Mediterranean, often dedicated by travellers and sailors as votives to a deity. Still, their specific nature can tell something about the type of cult venerated.

Spindle whorls were found at the site. Spindle whorls are associated with deities guardians of weaving, such as Asherah, associated with weaving (e.g. ACKERMAN, 2008). Textiles had religious significance beyond practical needs or prestige. They were used to dress statues of the god, in which the divine was thought to reside. Statues therefore were not mere representations of the god, but divine themselves. In the Near East, the deities were thought to take up residence in the sacred statue after a ceremony known as “washing of the mouth” (DOAK, 2015, p. 26). Textile production and cloth for the sacred statues is known from Greek and Etruscan sanctuaries too.

The Ibero-Phoenician ivories may have been of local production and were deposited as votives. Though of Phoenician symbolism, their deposition as gifts at the Heraion of Samos shows they could circulate interculturally even in religious contexts. The feline protome likely belonged to chariots once, but was deposited as a votive. Balance weights, on the other hand, were gifts often of merchants and sailors. The sanctuary was easily approached by river the deposition of these balance weights to the deity could be interpreted as gratitude for the success of the dedicant’s trade or request that it might improve. Human and animal figurines of horses and dogs may have been part of cauldrons, used for cleaning purposes, or have been dedicated individually. Like thymiateria, they are common at sanctuaries although have different distributions. Thymiateria are found in Phoenicia, Cyprus and Phoenician areas across the Mediterranean but are not common in Greece. The astragaloi, connected to the Levant and the Greek world, are related to necromancy and divination, thus recalling the use of the cultic space in the Roman period when chthonic powers were summoned to right a wrong by a lead tablet. The anatomical ex votos offer more clarity here, showing a concern for health and healing. Such finds are common in Greek sanctuaries but are not known in Phoenician cult places and not so much in Etruscan.

Effectively many of known functions of sanctuaries are betrayed by these finds. If we assume a connection with the Phoenician world, Ashtarte would be the obvious candidate given the limited Phoenician pantheon in Iberia, and her extensive cult in Kition, Cyprus (KARAGEORGHIS, 1976). But if we look at some of the rather rare finds of Alcácer do Sal, other avenues open up, especially given the Greek material at the site. Ithyphallic figurines in the forms of humans, horses, dogs often related to goddesses such as Cybele (especially horses) and Hekate (especially dogs). Let us turn to the unique in Iberia find of a cheese grater to assess its role in the cult. Its deposition at a cultic site shows that it was idly discarded there by some Greek sailor, but was either part of the cultic ritual or given as a gift to a goddess whose veneration was connected to it. The inclusion of these finds in tombs in Etruria has not illuminated their meaning there, but alludes to a function that

is more than the mere function of a kitchen utensil. What can this object tell us about the identity of the deity venerated at the sanctuary in Portugal?

In Greece it was used to prepare a cultic drink that doubled as magic potion, kykeon, as seen above. It was the sacred drink of Demeter, but was also associated with magic. Magic practices aroused contempt in the classical Greek polis that frowned upon deisidemony, but were widespread among low classes. Perhaps, however, our information is partial and the use of kykeon extended to the cult of other deities. Cybele's close associations with lions is documented by Roman statuettes from Athens, where the enthroned, crowned goddess is accompanied by a seated lion (KATAKIS, 2012). The lioness was an acolyte of Cybele, in her manifestation as mistress of animals. In Aristophanes' comedy *Lysistrata* (231), a verse on a cheese grater and a lioness has been difficult to interpret. The comedy heroine asks her followers to recite an oath which includes the words "I shall not stand a lioness upon a cheese grater". The verse has been thought to allude to *Leaina* (Greek for 'lioness'), the mistress of the Peisistratus' slayer (in the 6th c. BCE) Aristogeiton, tortured to death by the victim's son Hippias (ELDERKIN, 1940, p. 390-391). Since it is known from Pausanias (*Peregesis*, 23, 2) that a bronze statue of a lioness was erected by the Athenians in her memory next to a statue of Aphrodite in Propylaia in the Athenian Akropolis, the interpretation of the verse is that *Leaina*, who may have been named after Cybele's acolyte animal, as an epithet for the deity, was tortured with a grater to which *Lysistrata* was referring (ELDERKIN, 1940, p. 391). That is however a modern hypothesis to explain an ancient verse – and a rather imaginative one at that, for there is no information on how *Leaina* was tortured, let alone that cheese grates were used for torture in archaic Athens (or at any other period). A different explanation proposed here is that the cheese grater may have had a role to play in the cult of Cybele, as in Demeter's, and *Lysistrata* was not referring to the hypothetical torture of *Leaina* with a grater but an instrument of the cultic ritual in honour of Cybele. What this cultic function may have been is unknown, but likely involved the preparation of a kykeon-styled potion consumed during rituals or offered to the deity as dedication.

The use of kykeon for Cybele's cult is independently suggested also by the recent iconographic evidence for a syncretization between Demeter and Cybele in Greece, especially in Eretria in Euboea,

This is also supported by the fact that Demeter and Cybele were syncretized in Greece, as emerges from literary, epigraphic and iconographic evidence. Eretria in Euboea was a major centre of Demeter Thesmophoros, showing the cult of Cybele-Demeter (KATSAOUNOY, 2017). From the time of Cybele's introduction to Greece, it was connected to the mystic cult of Demeter, while in Eleusis there is an inscription that refers to Rea-

Cybele. In late antiquity Athens,, Demeter and Cybele are shown seated together on bull-shaped altars (KATAKIS, 2012, p. 105, 112-113).

Conceivably then the kykeon was part of Cybele's cultic ritual too, necessitating a cheese grater. The hinted connection between Cybele's cult and a cheese grater may extend to other Greek goddess with similar attributes who were syncretized with her, such as Artemis. The Greek Cybele-Demeter is connected with Euboeans, whose pottery is found in several Phoenician colonies in Iberia by the 8th c. BCE, while Artemis is associated with the Phocaeans, whose colonies in the western Mediterranean date from the 7th c. BCE. We should look at these two possibilities separately: the Euboean and the Phocaeans Greek connection in identifying the potential origin of the cult at Alcacer do Sal. Both possibilities are worth exploring with regard to the cult venerated at Alcácer do Sal.

Cybele was associated with wild nature, with healing and fertility. All three elements appear at Alcacer do Sal: ithyphallic figurines for fertility, anatomical ex votos as gifts for healing, while the wild nature is seen in the feline - wild beasts also found as ex votos. The bronze figurines of ithyphallic statues of animals and males may suggest some fertility cult. Other evidence, such as the astragaloi and the cheese grater, point towards chthonic cults, divination or mystery cults. Mystery cults often entailed "sacred marriages" rites that took place during the festival in a secluded room in the sanctuary. A central part of it was a rite of "sacred marriage", reenacted by followers of the cult.

The Euboean connection

Several mystic cults connected to Poseidon and Demeter existed in Greece. The spread of a Euboean cult of Poseidon, and of his consort Amphitrite, which was related to horses and bovines, along the networks of Euboean expansion, reaching the Atlantic shores is hinted at by Greco-Roman sources, which for example mention that the Pillars of Herakles were previously known as the Pillars of Briareos, alternatively called Aigaion, a god linked to Euboea (*Il.*, I, 396; BOFFA; LEONE, 2017, p. 383-386). This mythical tradition has been juxtaposed with the Euboean-sounding toponyms allegedly situated in Morocco (Pontion, Kephesias and Kotes) and the finds for early Euboean expansion in the central Mediterranean (e.g. coastal Tunisian, around Carthage) (BOFFA; LEONE, 2017). The mystery cults of Demeter spread outside Eleusis in the Aegean (MITSOPOULOU, 2010) but are not archaeologically attested widely outside Greece. If the cult of Demeter spread, then the Euboean would have taken with them a syncretized version of Demeter with Cybele. Rather, the Roman toponym of Alcácer do Sal was named after Neptune's consort Salacia,

the Roman equivalent of Amphitrite (PAIXÃO et al., 2007, p. 34). Could this indicate a pre-Roman Euboean cult of Poseidon and Amphitrite?

Greek presence has long been postulated in Iberia based on the literary sources. (DOMÍNGUEZ, 1983), but Euboeans frequenting in south-west Iberia has been intensified (DOMÍNGUEZ, 2017) by recent archaeological discoveries. Pre-classical Greek finds in the south of the Iberian Peninsula are limited, and most authors have suggested that they were transported as part of Phoenician cargos (PAPPA, 2013, p. 37-41.), rather than on Euboean ships whose forays into the eastern Mediterranean are nonetheless well-attested (LEMOS, 2002).

In Iberia, Attic and Euboean vases connected to service (plates and Pendant Semi-Circle cups) arrive with the earliest Phoenician pottery. They correspond to Subprotogeometric, Middle and Late Geometric Attic pottery, as well as Euboean and Cycladic types. They have been found mainly in Andalusia: Huelva, La Rebanadilla (Malaga), Carambolo (Seville). In Huelva (calle 3 Concepción), three fragments consisting of two skyphoi rims and one oinochoe are possibly of Euboean origin, dating to the Middle Geometric II period. Among the assemblage is a Black Cup, a type produced in Greece mainly for export to Italy. The type was produced in Greece for export to Italy, where it appears among the earliest Greek pottery in Etruscan contexts from the early 8th c. BCE.

In Pontecagnano, Etruria, Phase IIA (775-750 BCE) yielded Greek vases (MG II and LG Ia) found mostly in graves and connected to wine, such as skyphoi and oinochoai. Black cups are found in large quantities, especially with MG II, with Pendant Semi-Circle skyphoi (D' AGOSTINO, 2014, p. 182-183). Domínguez (2017) postulated Euboean commercial voyages to Iberia in the 9th-8th c. BCE, noting the far-flung Euboean maritime networks in the central and eastern Mediterranean, as well as the distribution in Iberia of Euboean and Attic pottery, and seals of the Lyre-Player group, which have been found in nodes of Euboean overseas activities. Such seals spread with the Euboean expansion, and are found in elite graves in 7th c. BCE Vetulonia (NASO, 2010). Such a view is aided by the identification of the South-Western sign on pottery imported into Methone, a Euboean colony, Macedonia (northern Greece) (PAPPA, *in press b*).

The presence of Euboean presence in Iberia will remain for the moment unconfirmed, but a cheese-grater arriving with westward Euboeans, given the diffusion of this artefact in Etruria through Euboeans, and the other evidence for Euboean commercial interests in the region, is not unthinkable.

The East Phocaeen connection

Historians have been making the case of a Euboean and East Greek presence in the western Mediterranean for decades, based on the recurrent references to Tartessos by Greek poets, geographers and historians from the Archaic period onwards (*Hist.*, 4, 152; 1, 164; CELESTINO; LÓPEZ-RUIZ, 2016, p. 24-29). Greek language toponyms ending in –essos are known in Asia Minor and East Greek colonies in the Black Sea, but are also found in the toponym *Tartessos*, the ancient name of the Orientalizing polity of Huelva mentioned in Herodotus in connection with Phocaeen and Samian trips. The endings of toponyms in -άσσοις, -ησσοις are associated with the East Greeks, but also the indigenous Carians and Lycians, e.g. Halikarnassos, Telemessos (SCHÜRR, 2001). Such toponyms persisted as late as the 2nd c. BCE, as suggested by numismatics and later sources e.g. e.g. Artymessos, a Lycian hamlet, colony of Xanthian (LE RIDER; SEYRIG, 1967; ROBERT, 1966).

Phocaeans are known to have set up sanctuaries even in places not colonized, such as the temple of Aphrodite at Gravisca in the coast of Tarquinia (Etruria) ca. 580 BCE, renovated in the middle of the century with the arrivals of Samians, and a couple of decades later with that of people from Aigina. Its foundation was approached by sea and was clearly connected to the nautical activities of Phocaeans, and was initially not accessible by land, evidently not frequented by local inhabitants of the near-by Etruscan settlement (FIORINI, 2015). Ivory votives at the Heraion sanctuary of Samos, off the Ionian coast, were manufactured in Iberia. They consist in a horse harness and ivories. This suggests that by the 6th c. BCE, dedicants at sanctuaries in the Aegean had connections with Iberia, and the information they brought seeped into lyric poetry.

In the mid 6th c. BCE, Anacreon of Teos in a verse makes the suggestion that he does not want to reign 150 years over Tartessos, betraying an intimate familiarity of western Mediterranean lore in the Greek society of Ionia (CELESTINO; LÓPEZ RUIZ, 2016, p. 26-27). Phocaeen and Samian trips to Iberia are mentioned twice in Herodotus (*Hist.*, 4, 152, 163-165). A significant settlement of Greek populations from Ionia in the western Mediterranean was initiated in the mid-6th c. BCE due to Persian incursions in their Greek cities. In 546 BCE the Phocaeans abandoned their city in Asia Minor due to Persian military aggression (CELESTINO; LÓPEZ RUIZ, 2016, p. 30-33). Only Alalia (Aleria) in Corsica hosted over 20,000 displaced Phocaeans according to a recent estimate based on figures given by Herodotus (1.165) on ships that carried the refugees (DOMÍNGUEZ, 2004, p. 163). The archaeologically attested Phocaeen colonies and sub-colonies are Massalia (Marseille), Antipolis (Antibes) in south France and Emporion (Ampurias), Rhodes (an earlier Rhodian foundation based on literary sources), and maybe Alalia (Aleria) in Corsica

(DOMÍNGUEZ, 2004, p. 164-168). Later Greco-Roman sources, however, provide literary testimonies for Massaliot sub-colonies in Iberia: Alonis, Hemeroskopeion, Mainake, while two more toponyms are said to have been located in the lands of Celts, without explicit identification of them as Greek: Pyrene and Cypsela (DOMÍNGUEZ, 2004, p. 161-161). The 4th c. CE Latin poem of Ora Maritima by Avienius (*Ora Maritima*, 558-561) refers to Pyrene, cited by Herodotus (*Hist.*, 2, 33, 3) in the Pyrenes and *Cypsela* (*Av., Or. Mar.*, 527-529; DOMÍNGUEZ, 2004, p. 161). Both these toponyms derive from semantically related Greek words, denoting “nucleus” and “hive” respectively, so it is unlikely that they were not Greek, if they indeed existed, or that their names would have been made up by a late antiquity Latin author such as Avienius. A Phocaean presence in Iberia, perhaps through Massalia, is suggested by the literary evidence.

According to Herodotus (*Hist.*, 146, 3; 166, 3), Phocaeans took with them the sacred statues and votives of their temples when fleeing to Corsica (DOMÍNGUEZ, 2004, p. 163), while Strabo (*Geog.* 4, 14) notes the Phocaean colonists in Massalia established the cult of Dophin Apollo, “common to all Ionians”, but also erected a temple to Artemis Ephesia. Literary sources attest to cults of Artemis Ephesia at the Massaliote foundations of Hemeroskopeion, Emporion, Rhodes (DOMÍNGUEZ, 2004, p. 162-168). Epigraphic and numismatic evidence indeed attests to the diffusion of Phocaean cults in the western Mediterranean that correlates with waves of Phocaean colonization. Most prominent among those were the cult of Artemis Ephesia, but also of Cybele, which turns up in Elea, Campania for example (HERMARY; TRÉZINY, 2000). In Phocaea, Cybele was worshipped at several sanctuaries in Phocaea (ÖZYGIT; ERDOGAN, 2000).

The cult of Ephesian Artemis was prominent across Ionia (e.g. Ephesus, Smyrna, Miletus and other Greek cities of Aeolia, Ionia and Caria). Artemis as a Mistress of Animals was often associated with wild beasts. In Ephesos, her cult was linked to healing and magic, and was syncretized with Cybele, expressing Anatolian cultic imagery and traditions (LÉGER, 2015, p. 132). Perhaps this was partly due to friendly relations with Lydia, whose control in the 7th c. BCE extended to Phrygia (EREN, 2015, p. 321-323). Whether Artemis Ephesia and Cybele were distinct in Phocaea and across its foundations is a valid question.

In the Archaic period, votives at the Artemision of Ephesus include a variety of objects, some of which have their counterparts at the cultic space of Alcácer do Sal. They include astragaloi, belts, amulets, fibulae, chariot wheel and a chariot pole (introguing, if the feline protome Alcácer do Sal. belongs to a chariot), shields, miniature vessels, spindle whorls, anatomical figurines, animal figurines, including dogs (LÉGER, 2015, p. 18-30). Hellenistic statuettes from Ephesos present the goddess with a long tight dress, the skirt of which adorned with rows of animal protomes such as lions, griffins, horses and bulls, an attire

distinct to the peplos of Greek goddesses, but resembling the clothing of horizontal friezes with floral and animal designs in 8th-7th c. BCE Near Eastern iconography of the 'mistress of animals'.¹³ Could the feline protome dedicated at the Portuguese sanctuary discussed here result from?

If the possibility of an Artemis Ephesia cult reaching Iberia is documented through literary sources of these Phocaean waves of seeking refuge westwards, and in the western Mediterranean through archaeological evidence as well, is there any evidence for such Greek cults on the Atlantic? Importantly, cults to Greek gods by East Greeks resident in Huelva are archaeologically attested, creating a contemporary precedent for the evidence of Alcácer do Sal.

East Greek cults in Atlantic Iberia: Herakles, Nike, Athena, Hestia and a Celtic god Niethos

How could a Greek or Anatolian cult have reached Alcácer do Sal, and is there is any corroborating evidence for Greek cults in Iberia outside the Greek colonies of the Peninsula? Recent archaeological evidence confirms that a community of East Greeks resided in Huelva and venerated some of their gods, as well as local, Celtic gods. Resident communities of East Greeks, Ionians and others, is archaeologically attested for the 7th-6th c. BCE through the local production of pottery in stylistically East Greek types. Greek pottery classified typologically as East Greek was produced locally in Huelva, as demonstrated by archaeometric analysis. This suggests that at least a resident Greek community of craftsmen was active in Huelva (GONZÁLEZ DE CANALES CERISOLA; LLOMPART GÓMEZ, 2017).

Dedications in the Greek language and script to Herakles, Nike, Athena, Hestia, were made on ostraca from vases reproducing East Greek styles but manufactured locally from the clay beds of Huelva (corroborated by X-Ray Powder Diffraction and Neutron Activation Analysis). The vases stylistically corresponded to East Greek Ionian cups of A2, B1 and B2 in Villard and Vallet's (1955) typology, e.g. olpes, a lekane, amphoras (GONZÁLEZ DE CANALES CERISOLA; LLOMPART GÓMEZ, 2017, p. 126 and *passim*).

Dedications to Greek gods come from localities in the vicinity of one another, nowadays facing the eastern bank of the Odiel River, located close to the evidence for significant Phoenician deposits, and indications of cultic structures later sanctuary at the Plaza de las Monjas (between Méndez Núñez 7-13 and Puerto 8-10-12) (GONZÁLEZ DE

¹³ Compare the design of garments, probably belonging to a 'mistress of animals' from (imported) ornate bronze plates in Batmaz (2015, Fig. 30).

CANALES CERISOLA; SERRANO PICHARDO; LLOMPART GÓMEZ, 2004). The sanctuary could most likely be approached by ship through an open bay, now dominated by the Huelva estuary zone (Figure 4).

Figure 4 – The Huelva estuary zone, from the side of the River Odiel.



Source: The author.

A dedication to Hestia in the form of “gift of Hestia” (calle Botica 10-12) was incised on an Ionian B2 cup (DOMÍNGUEZ, 2013, p. 26). A votive inscription “I am of Herakles” in the Carian Greek alphabet of Knidos was preserved on an A2 East Greek cup (VILLARD; VALLET, 1955), found nearby (calle Palacios 7) (DOMÍNGUEZ, 2013, p. 29). From the vicinity (calle Puerto 9), came a fragment belonging to locally-made vase styled as Milesian (ca. 600-550 BC) and preserving the name of a Celtic deity, Niethos, albeit written in the Ionian Greek alphabet (and declension). The vessel, was found in an assemblage made of up to 20% Greek potter (ALMAGRO-GORBEA, 2004; DOMINGUEZ, 2013). A fragment belonging to an Orientalizing (Gray Ware) pottery typewith ‘I am Nike’ on inscribed in the Ionian alphabet and dialect was found at the Cabezo de San Pedro, where a Phoenician-style ashlar wall has been identified (DOMINGUEZ, 2013, p. 29-30). Domínguez (2013, p. 31-32) postulated that the names of the Greek deities venerated in Huelva were symptomatic of syncretism that evolved from visual similarities between deities worshipped in Iberia and Greek ones, leading for example Greeks to identify a winged deity of Oriental origin (the author cites Tanit or Isis) as Nike.

Other evidence for Greek presence in Iberia

There is cumulating evidence that suggests contacts in the early 1st millennium between Greece and the Aegean, with commercial and cultural exchanges. Vilaça (2011) postulated a derivation of pre-colonial local metrologies of baance weights from Levantine ones. Within the same climate of interconnections, it has been postulated that Homeric verses in Homer's *Iliad* derived from knowledge of horse breeding in the Tagus estuary, communicated by Phoenicians (CANTO, 2009). Greek pottery was imported in what is now the Portuguese littoral, either from the Aegean or from the Greek colonies, and locally copied. The Greek vases were identified at the necropolis of Alcácer do Sal, and consisted in Red-Figure vases (such as a craters and pelikai) dated to 400-350 BCE (1847-1927) (GOMES, 2015; GARCÍA ALFONSO, 2012, p. 121). Few of these items, now dispersed, have been fully published, including two deep skyphoi, with figurative decoration Rocha Pereira (2010, p. 83-84; pl. XLII. 1, 2, XLIII) dated to 400-375 BCE and identified as Attic. One skyphos depicts two young men in himatia, one holding a staff, the other a different object, maybe strigil. These vases are hardly of mainland Greek production through. The vessel shape resembles the deep Corinthian skyphos imitated in Athens and elsewhere, but the coarse, figurative drawing is not Attic. The fleshier figures and the 'flowing' manner of the drawings recall south Italian vase painting from the Greek colonies. It must be imports such as this that led to local imitations. Greek vases for dining service, such as kantharoi, were imitated in the Gray Ware in Alcácer do Sal, dated to the 4th-3rd c. BCE by De Sousa and Pimenta (2017).

However, elsewhere on the Portuguese coast, 6th c. BCE is distributed in few settlements with harbours. Stratified Middle Corinthian pottery (600-575 BCE) has surfaced in Almarz, on the southern shores of the Tagus estuary, in an assemblage of local, Iberian and Phoenician pottery (5th-7th c. BCE) (OLAIO, 2018, p. 148-149). From Tavira are known Attic imports, such as the 5th-4th c. BCE Castulo cups, a lamp fragment dated to the 4th c. (350-300 BCE) and Red-Figure kylix base fragments, decorated with stamped patterns (circles in guilloche), as well as a Red Figure vase fragment attributed to the so-called Vienna Group 116 (MAIA, 2004, fig. 19). Possibly earlier is an Attic (?)rim fragment (too small to be dated with a quarter of a century precision: 2 x 1 cm) covered in black paint likely dates to the 6th -5th c. BCE. The fragment comes from the site of the sanctuary, Palacio da Galeria (Layer 2), from a context that yielded a Phoenician mushroom-lip jug, while Layer 4 yielded a single-nozzled lamp, a type common up to the 7th c. BCE at the latest (PAPPA, 2015c, p. 33). The limited Greek pottery found in Portugal in the 7th-5th c.

BCE hints at trade with Emporion, Rhodos or other Phocaean foci in the Mediterranean, but most likely through the Atlantic port of Huelva.

Apart from the Phocaean colonies set up in Catalonia in the 7th c. BCE, there is evidence for the penetration of Greek culture further south and west in the Iberian Peninsula. One of the spheres where this is attested is armament. Four Corinthian helmets are dated to the 7th-6th c. BCE, originated in the Peloponnese and the Greek colonies of southern Italy, with their acquiring find-spots (Ria de Huelva, Guadalete, Guadalquivir) suggesting use by indigenous people (MARTIN RUIZ; GARCIA CARRETERO, 2018).¹⁴ A slab-lined grave found in the Phoenician colony of Malaga, outside the urban walls (calle Jinetes 12-38 and Calle refino 15, 19, 23), where such helmets were found (GARCIA GONZÁLEZ et al., 2013), suggests the aquatic context may not have been the intended destination for each of these finds. Dated to the mid-6th c. BCE, this elite Phoenician-style burial yielded a Corinthian helmet, and may have belonged to a mercenary, judging by the finds.¹⁵ The proliferation of Greek armament in Iberia, regardless of who used it, underlines close contacts with Greek culture. The iconography of Greek hoplite warfare and armament passed on to ivory decoration, as on a 7th-6th c. BCE ivory plaque from a necropolis Bencarrón (Seville) showing an Orientalizing theme of a warrior with lion and griffin, albeit the former wears a plumed helmet (MARTIN RUIZ; GARCIA CARRETERO, 2018, p. 285). Some of these Orientalizing ivories found their way as ex votos to a Greek sanctuary in Huelva.

Greeks cults at Alcácer do Sal? Conclusions

The question of the Iron Age origins of cults at Bevilacqua pivoted on whether distinct lines of association that converged at Alcácer do Sal: if the kykeon could be linked to Cybele, if there existed a cult to Artemis Ephesia/Cybele or Demeter/Cybele that led to the Roman-period cult of Attis-Megara, and which of the two was implicated: a Demeter-Cybele cult brought by the Euboeans, or an Artemis-Cybele cult brought by the

¹⁴ They probably include a helmet from Ria de Huelva (550-500 BCE), finds in the western bank of the Guadalete river (La Corta), in Sanlúcar de Barrameda, on the Guadalquivir, which concerns an Etruscan-Corinthian piece (ca. 550 BCE), a brass breast plate came from a shipwreck at Cueva del Jarro, Sanlúcar de Barrameda. There were found an iron spearhead and a shield.

¹⁵ This inhumation of an adult male consists in a pit grave, lined with dressed sandstone ashlar slabs, covered with flat or pitched roof and maybe a mound was an elite burial of a warrior, recalling Phoenician tombs. It yielded a pendant with the intaglio of Sekhmet, embellished with gold, silver, cornelian, dated to the 6th c. BCE, and a Corinthian helmet. Also, a ceramic incense burner, like the helmet, was found outside the grave in the enclosing structure, a patera with rosettes was placed close to the head, three scroll bars by the feet, while a spear was found by the right hand side of the body (GARCIA GONZÁLEZ et al., 2013).

Phocaeans? It was established here that the cheese grater was an implement used for the cult of Cybele in the preparation of *kykeon*, not only for Demeter, as shown here, there is evidence for Euboean presence in Iberia, and evidence for a syncretized Artemis-Cybele cult in the western Mediterranean where Phocaeans settled. Finally, the cult of Cybele and Attis is attested in Roman-period Alcácer do Sal, at the same location, demonstrating independently the possibility of the continuity of cult, given the evidence for continuity of use of other public spaces (e.g. the Iron Age road). Dolphins and wheat ears are too generic to be considered indicative, but it should be noted that dolphins was connected to the Ionian cult of Dolphin Apollo, as in Massalia, and wheat was a symbol of Demeter. So, was it a Euboean or Phocaeon cult? The response will determine the chronology too, as the most diagnostic finds can be dated as late as 700 BCE but could also belong to the 8th c. BCE. Votive bronzes often ended their long spans of use at sanctuaries, so the time of manufacture is not necessarily close to that of the deposition.

The East Greek resident community in Huelva suggests that the latter is more probable, though the spread of Euboean pottery in Huelva and the zoomorphic protome in Alcácer do Sal, connected elsewhere to the Euboean expansion, must leave the first possibility open. Attis and Cybele/Magna Mater were venerated as a pair, in a similitude to the Astarte-Melquart and Adonis-Isis cults that appeared in Iron Age Mediterranean sanctuaries. Syncretisms between Egyptian, Phoenician, Etruscan and Greek deities were common at sanctuaries frequented by sailors (e.g. Gravisca, Etruria).

One may dismiss the set of evidence for Greek imports in Alcácer do Sal as mere imports of Greek products, with no potential to establish any kind of relationship to cult activity. However, Greek cults are firmly archaeologically documented further south in Atlantic Iberia. The archaeologically documented Greek cults by resident Ionians in Huelva, further south on the Atlantic coast, shows that Greeks who lived in Huelva may have been visitors to regions further north. This is supported by the East Greek cults in Huelva by a migrant East Greek community. Their presence is related to the mass refugee wave from Ionian cities, which accelerated in the mid-6th c. BCE. From Huelva sailing upstream the Atlántic coast would be employing new navigational techniques. Abul would be encountered on the way, past the shores of densely wooded Algarve. Is there any evidence for Greek (commercial) presence in Alcácer do Sal? Cults travelled to Iberia with migrations and a possible Greek cultic input in an Atlantic city no longer seems inconceivable. As the Homeric epics suggest and the archaeological evidence for Greek presence attest to, plying waters of Greek prior to colonization was often relying on opportunism, and local circumstances for gaining profits and fame (CRIELAARD, 2013).

The study linked the Iron Age cultic evidence to a Greek cult, which was a forerunner to the Roman cult at the site. The evidence points to a mystic cult that may have been imbued with Greek elements of a Demeter-Cybele or Artemis Ephesia, the first brought with Euboean sailors, the latter with colonists from Phocaea as in other parts of the western Mediterranean. The question regarding the origins of the cult at Aláacer do Sal will remain open-ended. The results here are not conclusive but provide a framework for future investigation.

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