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Phocaeans and *emporía* in western Languedoc (southern France) during the 6th-5th centuries BC.

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Abstract

From the sixth century BC, following the phocean foundations of *Massalia* (Marseille) and *Emporion* (Empuries), the region of the Gulf of Lion is quickly integrated into an economical network turned to the Mediterranean world, based on a series of settlements operating as market places.

The nature of these settlements, most of the time on the coast, is at the centre of the research led in Languedoc since several decades. The fundamentally indigenous character of these sites dedicated to trade and exchange, widely open to products coming from the Mediterranean and especially those from the phocean trade, is qualified by a series of documents giving evidences of the presence into these communities, of foreign individuals or groups, often Greeks, but also Etruscan or Iberian.

The role played by the colonial world in the construction of this emporic system is decisive, but the dynamic of the native societies was for a long time underestimated. The acceptance or the reject of contact is traduced by different logics of location and different modes of operation, according to the different geographical and cultural areas extended from Provence to the Pyreneans.

In front of the phocean system organised in the Rhône region (eastern Languedoc), western Languedoc appears like a more complex zone, turned both to *Massalia* and *Emporion*. The lower valleys of the rivers Hérault and Aude appears since the seventh century BC as major points of attraction for the Mediterranean trade. The sixth century BC is synonymous of the creation, on the coast, of new settlements acting as interface with the Mediterranean sea. Agde, in the mouth of the Hérault river, and Pech Maho, in the southern part of the lagoons corresponding in the mouth of the Aude river, reflect this generic model of the emporion, but knew different beginnings and destiny, revealing the complexity of interactions between the native and the phocean world.

East wind, west wind

The foundation of Marseille (*Massalia*) and Empuries (*Emporion*) (Fig. 1) by the Phocaeans at the very beginning of the sixth century BC gives the impression that the Greeks only became interested in the north-western Mediterranean regions later on. Given the length and the importance of the navigations and the colonial enterprises targeted towards Italy and Sicily from the eighth century BC onwards, it seems that in the eyes of the Mediterranean seafarers, this area was as a marginal zone with few advantages. Moreover, we sometimes believe that since the Phocaeans were late in embarking on the colonial enterprise, it meant that they had to settle for these far-western regions in an already crowded Mediterranean, which up until that point had been neglected as, a priori, they were rather unappealing.

However, by the sixth century BC, the regions between the north-eastern Iberian peninsula and Provence had actually been the seat of long distance trading networks involving the Mediterranean world for sometime. At the end of the Bronze Age, manufactured objects,

stylistic models and raw materials were indeed traded under different networks linking in particular the Atlantic regions to the Mediterranean. As such, a maritime route circumvented the Iberian Peninsula linking up with the Strait of Gibraltar, whilst several transversal terrestrial routes started out from the the Ebro, the Aude and the Rhône Valleys, heading either towards the Atlantic regions or inland towards the shores of the North Sea¹ (fig. 2). Although tenuous, the material evidence for these long-distance contacts involving the Mediterranean world is still convincing and mostly refers to the circulation of metal.

The idea that the western Mediterranean remained on the fringes of shipping activities at the beginning of the first and even from the end of the second millennium BC must be nuanced. Yet, strictly speaking, the foretokens of the colonial phenomenon are not really visible until the eight-seventh centuries BC. A series of material data show more or less direct contacts between the indigenous populations of the south of France or north-eastern Spain and the Mediterranean seafarers who frequented and landed here at a time when the first iron objects were appearing. The episodic nature of these first contacts should in itself be looked at in more detail. They go beyond being simple explorations often interpreted as "pre-colonial"; early on, they already represent trading relations that followed different strategies implicating different people, particularly in the second half of the seventh century BC. The Greeks were of course involved, but also the Phoenicians and the Etruscans. The idea of an "aristocratic based trading" associated with the establishment of hospitality links, illustrated by the donation of goods with high symbolical value such as drinking cups, is often used to characterise this phase of contacts. Nevertheless, we can see that the developing or strengthening networks during this period imply that exchanges were operating by relatively regular rhythms, and certain places along the coast seem to have been sought-after contact zones as well.

The geography of these contacts reflects the dynamism of the indigenous communities in the south of France. From the Late Bronze Age, the western Languedoc stands out in particular. This region is delimited by the Corbières range to the south and the peaks of the Black Mountain range and the Hérault River to the north. Towards the west, this geographic zone narrows where it reaches the middle Aude Valley in the Carcassonne region - an inevitable crossing point that opens towards the east onto the plains of the Languedoc. The existence of several large rivers also played a decisive role in the population of this plain. In the western Languedoc, the Hérault, Orb and Aude rivers thus define several valleys offering many possibilities in terms of agriculture and of course in terms of the communication channels towards the hinterland regions with their rich mineral resources, particularly iron and copper and to a lesser extent lead, gold and silver.

It should also be highlighted that at the centre of all this is the Aude valley, which is of particular importance not only because the river is situated at the heart of the territory, but particularly because it represents a major communication channel. To the west it continues towards the Garonne Valley and constitutes a direct link between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. The Lower Aude Valley area therefore presents many potential advantages. Indeed, the "Mailhacien" facies, a particularly homogeneous and dynamic cultural group, established themselves here from the Late Bronze Age IIIb onwards. This group was named after the eponymous site of Mailhac (Aude), which had a strong influence over the surrounding regions from Provence to Ampurdan.

During the Late Bronze Age, cultures varied very little in this geographical area, but conversely at the beginning of First Iron Age (end of the eighth century BC), there were pronounced regional differences. In the Languedoc, although the Hérault River is not technically a border, it clearly demarcates an interface between two distinct cultural groups, the "Grand Bassin I" to the west and the "Suspendien" facies to the east (fig. 3). This trend, which is particularly visible in terms

¹ Coffyn 1985; Gailledrat 2014.

of the material culture, coincides with important social and probably economical changes. Indeed, there is evidence of an increased hierarchisation process conveyed by the relatively ostentatious statement of power displayed by a small fringe of society. This process coincides with a pronounced stronghold over the land, which leads us to question this frequently cited idea of an unfinished settlement process².

This phenomenon is particularly noticeable in the regions to the west of the Rhône and even more so in the western Languedoc. Once again, this region was a driving force in the French Midi as is shown by the dynamism of the "Grand Bassin" facies, named after the eponymous necropolis of Mailhac. Whilst the settlements of this period remain little understood, the necropolises reveal both the density of the occupation of this region, as well as the existence of settled communities of varying sizes with some sites already being distinguished as being pre-eminent. Established along the great terrestrial communication channels and foreshadowing the network of *oppida* that appeared during the sixth century BC, these sites seem not only to control the important food-producing lands, but also constitute the frame of well-defined territories.

These territories are fundamentally anchored inland, and the occupation of the seashore remains scarce. This raises questions, as this is different to the situation that has been observed during the Late Bronze Age IIIb or from the sixth century BC onwards. It might seem paradoxical, since possibilities in terms of meeting and contact with the Mediterranean world arise at the beginning of the First Iron Age. However, even if there were very few settlements near the coast, a number of areas such as the mouth of the River Aude or River Hérault were particularly attractive for the Mediterranean sailors. These particular spots were not necessarily permanent and structured settlements, but at the very least were natural landing places (fig. 4), located at regular intervals over a distance that would have been the equivalent of one day's navigation.

The identity of the seafarers who were now frequenting these regions also raises questions, and it is uncertain whether they were made up of Greek people alone or even less certain if they were made up of Phocaeans only. It seems that Etruscans were also present, at least at the end of the seventh century BC, but what specifically characterises the regions located to the west of the Hérault River is the existence of a southern movement, linked to the Phoenician navigations led from the Balearic Islands or the southern Iberian Peninsula.

In fact, a small number of Phoenician importations dating to the seventh century BC have been found between Roussillon and the Narbonne region. Local imitations of eastern vessels have also been found among the richest burials of the Grand Bassin I necropolises. They are often coated with an engobe evoking the red-slip Phoenician technique, which suggests that "models" were commonly in circulation and were considered as objects of prestige. It is surprising to note that these records have not been found to the east of the Hérault Valley, outside this western part of Languedoc that was then occupied by a population with common material culture and funerary practices, in other words the "Grand Bassin I" facies. They seem to pre-date the ethnic group known as "Elisyque", mentioned by ancient sources such as Hecataeus of Miletus and Herodotus³, that was apparently located in this region during the sixth-fifth centuries BC.⁴

The division of the Languedoc, between an eastern area gravitating towards the Rhône Valley and a western area gravitating towards the Iberian Peninsula, is further accentuated at the end of the First Iron Age with the development of the "Ibero-Languedocian" facies, of which the Hérault Valley is the northern-most limit⁵. At the beginning of the sixth century BC, as the Phocaean Greeks were settling on the banks of the Gulf of Lion, the geographical and human landscape of Languedoc had already been familiar to them for decades. The previous appeal of

² Py 2012; Garcia 2004.

³ Hecataeus of Miletus; Herodotus (7.165).

⁴ Barruol 1973; Nickels *et al.* 1989, 456-57.

⁵ Gailledrat 1997.

the western Languedoc, linked as mentioned above to the particular dynamism of this area during the eighth-seventh centuries BC, did not however result in this region being the favoured spot for this new colonizing movement.

The time of the *emporìa*

By the sixth century, the south of France sees the establishment of colonial foundations, in particularly *Massalia* (Marseille). From the very beginning, *Massalia* was a real *polis*, not simply an *emporium*, which then evolved around 545 BC when migrants arrived, having fled from their mother city, Phocaea, that was taken by the Persians.⁶

This is the time when Greco-Etruscan *emporìa* were flourishing, or in other words when regular and structured trade, lead by professional merchants, was developing. This colonial trade involved the indigenous world in many different ways, and relied on a series of settlements most often located on the coast that acted as points of contact between these two entities. However, the exact nature of these places still raise a number of questions. If we go beyond ambiguous terms such as "trading-posts", "gateway communities", or "Ports of trade", the underlying reality is that of an *emporium*. We still need to understand how they were structured, how they functioned and to an even greater extent what their status was. The degree to which the Greeks or the Etruscans were involved in the creation and the life of these sites, which often appear to be fundamentally indigenous, also remains to be determined.

A more direct question concerns the presence of strangers, isolated individuals (merchants, craftsmen etc.), families or wider groups that settled temporarily or permanently in these establishments. Yet proving the existence of such a particular presence is often difficult in the absence of explicit evidence such as written documents. More commonly, these sites are only distinguishable through the high quantity of imported products, consequence of their intrinsically economic function. The presence of artefacts that are rarely or never seen on "normal" indigenous sites and which are by contrast characteristic of indisputably Mediterranean sites, is another singularity, but yet again remains difficult to interpret. The processes of influence and acculturation visible through the material culture seem to be naturally fostered in these contact zones, which in turn tends to disguise any eventual situations where cultural mixing or cohabitation occur.

Around 600 BC, the foundation of *Massalia* points above all towards an interest in the Rhône, this important communication channel towards Gaul. Yet the presence of the Phocaeans instated in the first half of the sixth century BC was not limited to the south of France. Empuries in Spain, as well as *Alalia* (Aleria) in Corsica, are part of a network which includes on one side the Tyrrhenian regions and on the other side the Iberian regions, at a time when the Phocaeans were active all the way down to southern Spain, especially in the *emporium* of Tartessos⁷, which we generally identify with the site of Huelva.

The chronology and geography of the Greek settlements in the Gulf of Lion apparently clearly illustrates the Phocaean peoples' interest in this region: Marseille and Empuries truly encompass this geographical area including another colonial settlement, which is known both through ancient texts and through archaeological remains: *Agathé* (Agde), is situated at the opening of the Hérault Valley more or less half-way between Empuries and Marseille.

The logic behind its location on the Gulf of Lion, seems to have been conditioned by the pre-existing importance of the Languedoc, which was much more appealing than neighbouring Provence during the eighth-seventh centuries BC. Nevertheless, a number of questions remain because what we discern in a macroscopic way as being a relatively simple and logical structure with a real drive to influence the regions between the Rhône and the Pyreneans, is in fact much

⁶ Herodotus (1.163).

⁷ Herodotus (1.163).

more complex. It is complex in terms of chronology and structure, firstly because the nature of these Greek foundations is not uniform. *Massalia*, *Agathé* and *Emporion* not only have different origins but also different destinies.

As has already been evoked, *Massalia* is defined from the very beginning as a true *polis*, whilst *Emporion* has a specific destiny: the Phocaean trading post quickly becomes a commercial city producing its own coinage. Agde raises more questions, even if in the background we find the same notion of a settlement evolving from an *emporium* to becoming "something else", in this case *Agathé*, a true colony of *Massalia*.

Agde should also be included in the more global setting of *emporion* created during the sixth century BC along the Languedoc coastline. From east to west, many sites fit into this category. *Théliné* (Arles), Espeyran (St-Gilles-du-Gard), La Cailar and *Lattara* (Lattes) reveal the progressive and fast control of the Massalian economy over the Rhône region between the sixth and the beginning of the fifth century BC. Barely a couple of decades after its foundation, Marseille reaps the benefits of its *chôra*, producing large quantities of wine and distributing it to indigenous communities. The amphorae from Marseille produced from the middle of the sixth century BC onwards quickly replace the Etruscan productions on the coastal Gallic market. This particular trade, to which we must add cream-ware pottery, gains in importance between western Provence and the eastern Languedoc and is virtually monopolised by Marseille during the fifth century BC.⁸

By contrast and further towards the west, we find a different situation where several commercial networks overlap. Firstly there is the Etruscan network, which was active mainly during the sixth century BC, the importance of which decreases in magnitude from east to west: less consequential in western Languedoc than in eastern Languedoc and Provence, this network visible through the distribution of amphorae used for wine and through *bucchero negro*-type drinking vessels was nevertheless active up to Empuries, becoming more sporadic towards the south of the Iberian coastline.

By the fifth century, there is a clear decline in this trade in the Gulf of Lion. The decline is fairly quick, and during the first half of this century the Etruscan merchants were still playing an important role in the already established trade network. This is confirmed by their presence in *Lattara* at the beginning of the fifth century BC, in an area that was also coveted by the Marseille people⁹. One of the most important pieces of evidence is the lead tablet found in Pech Maho (Sigean) dated from the very beginning of the fifth century BC. One side has a commercial text written in Greek using the archaic Ionian alphabet, whilst the other side has a different text written in Etruscan with a reference to Marseille (*Matalia*)¹⁰. Clearly this text is not hugely pertinent in terms of whether there may have been Etruscan trade in the western Languedoc, since the document may pertain to a transaction that took place elsewhere. However, although the two texts are not directly related to the same subject, they may nevertheless be related one to another, showing that at this particular time the overlapping of the Greek and the Etruscan trade network connected to the *emporion* remained a tangible reality. The Phocaean trade network was also in operation in the western Languedoc, but it has been noted that Marseille and Empuries were jointly involved. This observation comes from the comparison of the different distribution patterns of Massalian and Iberian amphorae. Whilst Massalian amphorae are visibly present in the western Languedoc and in Roussillon, they noticeably decline in quantity beyond the Hérault Valley. These same amphorae are rarely found on Iberian sites but can be found in Empuries, proving that Marseille wine was consumed there. By contrast, Iberian amphorae, which must have contained different products including wine, are not only widely present in Empuries itself, but predominate on indigenous settlements

⁸ Gailledrat 2010a ; 2014.

⁹ Py 2009.

¹⁰ Lejeune *et al.* 1988.

in the Ibero-Languedocian zone. There are only a few scattered examples on certain Greek sites (Marseille) to the east of the Hérault River, perhaps revealing specific consumption practices and at the very least favoured links with *Emporion*.

From Cap d'Agde to Cap Leucate

Whilst the rapid decline in Etruscan trade at the beginning of the fifth century BC goes hand in hand with the idea of Marseille's monopoly over Provence and the eastern Languedoc, the western Languedoc emerges at the end of the first Iron Age as an open region, at the crossroads of the influential spheres of Marseille and Empuries. It is thus notable that Agde do not only marks the centre of the Gulf of Lion, but also a true border area, both culturally and economically.

The Mont Saint-Loup, which marks the mouth of the River Hérault, is one of a series of hills located on the Languedocian coastline (fig. 5). It was also a convenient visual reference point for navigation, whilst the coastline was characterised by the existence of large lagoons that are still mostly visible in today's landscape. These lagoons, which often open out towards the sea, define an intermediary zone, not only between the sea and the land, but also between an indigenous terrestrial and a maritime area, which importantly was those of the Greek or Etruscan seafarers. This notion seems to be fundamental in order to understand, not only the location of coastal sites known for this period in Languedoc, but also to understand how they functioned according to a logic alternately of meeting or cohabitation and exclusion¹¹.

Agathé - modern day Agde - was established on a small hill on the edge of the Hérault River (fig. 6). The city is today located around 4 km from the coast and the mouth of the river, but the landscape has greatly changed since the Iron Age. The Greek settlement was then situated behind a lagoon that was connected to the sea. Agde was both a fluvial and a lagoonal harbour and gave the impression of being entirely surrounded by water. The Bagnas basin, which today borders the Mont Saint-Loup to the north-east, sometimes discharged water from the Hérault River during floods. This meant that for anyone looking at Agde from the sea it must have looked like an island.¹²

At around 30 kilometres to the south, in the Narbonne region, lies the Moulinasse site (Salles-d'Aude, Aude), which is today 10 km from the sea and the mouth of the River Aude, but like Agde, it was also located in a lagoonal environment during the Iron Age. The site is situated on a small hill forming a barred spur and was bordered by an eastern arm of the Aude (the current course of the river). There was also a vast lagoon in the area surrounding the Clape Mountain. To the south of this mountainous area, that was another important landmark along the Languedocian coast, another arm of the River Aude was flowing into today's Bages/Sigean ponds (fig. 7).

Twenty kilometres to the south of Narbonne is the site of Pech Maho (Sigean, Aude). It is located on a hill at an altitude of 29 m (fig. 8) overlooking the course of the Berre River to the west, near the Bages-Sigean pond, which has mostly silted up today, but which back then extended to the foot of Pech Maho. In this area, the Aude river flows northwards whilst the Berre River flows south. The mouth of this river is located 3 km downstream from Pech Maho. South of the La Clape mountain range, during the Iron Age, landscape must have consisted of a series of small islands spread out over a vast pond connected to the sea. The *Lacus Rubrensis* evoked by Pliny the Elder¹³, may thus have taken on the appearance of a real Gulf.

Pech Maho is located in a specific area of the Narbonne region. Nearby Sigean, the Languedocian plain ends with a bottleneck, which is marked to the west by the edge of the

¹¹ Gailledrat 2014.

¹² Devillers *et al.* Forthcoming.

¹³ Pliny the Elder (3.5.2).

Corbières Maritimes hills and to the east by the lagoon. This area was an unavoidable crossing point between the north and south, where the Roman *Via Domitia* and previously the Protohistoric road (the mythical *Via Heraclea*) was passing by.

Whilst the Moulinasse site remains little known, it is clear that Agde and Pech Maho were acting as landing stages. At the height of its growth (third-second centuries BC), Agde was just over 4 ha in size, but neither the extent nor the exact location of the settlement during the Iron Age can be determined. La Moulinasse and Pech Maho on the other hand are no larger than 1 ha and 1.5 ha respectively. The size of these two sites is considerably smaller than the average settlement of the time. However, the chronology of these sites is identical, all three of them having been founded more or less at the same time, towards the middle of the sixth century BC.¹⁴

Although we only have a partial understanding of Agde, it has been shown that the area was occupied without any apparent discontinuity since the Late Bronze Age IIIb. The existence of two necropolises dated from the seventh century BC (the necropolis of Peyrou and those of Bousquet) demonstrate the presence of an important indigenous community. This community was open to the Mediterranean world as is shown by the discovery of several proto-Corinthian style vessels (*skyphoi* and *oenochoe*) that probably originate from southern Etruria¹⁵. As yet, it is not known what the site looked like during the First Iron Age. Whatever the case may be, from at least the middle of the sixth century BC onwards, the hill occupied by the Medieval and modern city witnessed the establishment of a community open to Mediterranean trade. This is indicated by the high quantities of imported goods such as amphorae, representing 80% of the potsherds found in the earliest levels (fig. 9)¹⁶.

Initially, produce was mainly Etruscan, but from the end of the sixth century BC, Marseille produce predominated to the extent that at the end of the fifth century BC, Massalian amphorae made up almost 100% of this category (fig. 10). The rest of the finds indicate that before the end of the fifth century BC there was a facies comparable to contemporary indigenous sites, but with a notable difference: on one hand there was a marked decrease in hand-made indigenous pottery, and on the other hand a presence of wheel-thrown kitchenware. This includes typically Greek forms, which in part is imported produce, but there is particularly the presence of pottery produced locally and regionally. Amongst this produce, the most common form by far is the cooking pot, which seems to be commonplace in Etruscan and Phocaeian kitchenware. This pottery was not widely distributed in indigenous settings but can be found most often on coastal settlements, often in small quantities.¹⁷

During this earlier phase, Agde's expansion still seems to be limited, and certainly less important than what was achieved at the dawn of the fifth-fourth centuries BC. Unfortunately, we know virtually nothing of how the settlement was structured during this period. At the most, we can make reference to the traces of wattle and daub post-hole structures, as well as the remains of mud-brick structures. The existence of such vestiges from the third quarter of the sixth century BC onwards is important in that it reveals an early use (for the south of France) of this technique originating from the Mediterranean world. The site also seems to increase its fortifications from this time onwards, as is indicated by the remains of a rampart constructed on a stone plinth with a mud-brick elevation.¹⁸

The high quantity of amphorae towards 550 BC radically drops during the second half of the sixth century BC, whilst the neighbouring site of La Monédière (Bessan, Hérault), located 6 km

¹⁴ Passelac 1995.

¹⁵ Nickels *et al.* 1989; Mazière 2013.

¹⁶ Garcia and Marchand 1995.

¹⁷ During the sixth century BC, there were workshops operating in the Lower Hérault Valley. Consequently, other workshops developed during the fifth century BC (Curé 2013), mainly in Béziers.

¹⁸ Lugand and Bermond 2001, 123-25.

upstream from Agde on the Hérault River, sees the quantities of amphora increase to making up more than 90% of all the pottery. This observation enlightens us on the symbiosis of these two sites, both with a destiny tightly linked to an identical politico-commercial system led by the indigenous people and their Mediterranean partners.

La Monédière initially appeared as a "simple" indigenous site and is located on a very specific place in the Hérault Valley on the outskirts of the area directly influenced by Agde. The site evolved very quickly. A sudden increase in the number of amphorae occurs at the same time as a spectacular drop in the number of hand-made pottery and the development of very "Mediterranean" facies where grey-monochrome ware and later cream-ware pottery were preeminent. This has led to suppose that there was a Greek presence on the site during the second half of the sixth century BC.¹⁹ More than a simple attempt at creating a colonial settlement, indeed we now believe that La Monédière was a mixed site focused on trading activities. During the second half of the sixth century and until the third quarter of the fifth century BC (when La Monédière was abandoned), the emporic system that was operating in the Lower Hérault Valley relied on a partnership consisting of a port (Agde) and a marketplace (La Monédière) constituting a link with the hinterland.²⁰

The end of the fifth century BC is synonymous with profound changes that took place in Agde. By this point the town becomes larger and a new rampart, which later undergoes some changes, is built to protect an area of just under 4 ha²¹. Related to this, successive orderly urban networks has been revealed with a system of orthogonal streets that delimit clusters of houses, later associated with a cadastral organisation of the peri-urban landscape.²²

The facies of the pottery also shows significant changes: importations of amphora and Attic pottery develop, showing not only an intense economic activity but also specific patterns of consumption. The large quantity of massalian cream-ware pottery heightens the originality of this facies that clearly shows the inherently Greek nature of the population that had settled here. One part of the necropolis from the Second Iron Age is known and has revealed the presence of several burials from the fourth-second centuries BC. Burial practices aside, the rituals carried out here were similar to those of the Greek burials in *Emporion*.²³ There were also a number of cremation burials, but the current documentation has not yet made possible to clearly identify indigenous graves.

During the sixth-fifth centuries BC, two distinct episodes punctuate Agde's history. The city is known by ancient authors as a colony of Marseille (*Agathé*), or at least founded by the Phocaeans and subsequently passed under the control of Marseille²⁴. This indication is in keeping with the extending towards the west characterising Marseille's politics during the fifth century BC. This foundation is dated to the end of this century by most scholars, because of the break that has been observed both in the settlement itself and in the material culture. The change in the site's status indicates a new phase in the relations between the Greeks and the indigenous people. It is demonstrated by the apparent chronological consistency between the assertion of Greek stronghold over the area around the mouth of the Hérault and the abandonment of the site of La Monédière. The Greeks and indigenous people seem to distance themselves, whilst Agde takes on the economic functions that had previously belonged to La Monédière. This change implies that the indigenous population more or less withdrew from the port of Agde. The idea of communities that had up until then been intermeshed but subsequently distanced themselves from one another, is further emphasized by the abandonment of La Monédière and

¹⁹ Nickels 1976; 1976a; 1983 and 1989.

²⁰ Gailledrat 2014, 161-62.

²¹ Nickels and Marchand 1976; Lugand and Bermond, 123-28.

²² Nickels 1981.

²³ Lugand and Bermond 2001, 145-46.

²⁴ Pseudo-Scymnus (208); Strabo (4.1, 5-6); Pliny the Elder (3.5); Stephen of Byzantium.

the appearance of a new indigenous settlement: *Cessero*, in Saint-Thibéry (Hérault), some 4 km upstream from the River Hérault.²⁵ At the same time a *chôra* develops around *Agathé* (without any apparent signs of violence linked to an eventual conquest), showing that the Greeks did indeed gain a territorial concession and the way in which trade was carried out changed.²⁶ This also explains why the *oppidum* of Beziers (Hérault) gained in importance at that time - a city that has often been inadmissibly identified by some as a Greek colony.²⁷

As far as Agde is concerned, it is more difficult to characterise the settlement that existed before the Massalian colony, which did not seem to be a truly Greek site. Yet regarding it as a strictly indigenous site is just as problematic, since it seems entirely probable that the Greeks were settling around the mouth of the Hérault during the sixth century BC. Indeed, at the beginning or the middle of that century, a grey monochrome pottery production appeared and subsequently developed. The technique employed to produce it and the style itself is traditionally believed to be from Eastern Greece. The pottery was initially produced by the Phocaeans before being reproduced by indigenous workshops that quickly adopted the technique of the potter's wheel.

It has been suggested that Greek potters had settled in the Lower Hérault Valley prior to the foundation of *Agathé*.²⁸ As far as La Monédière and Agde are concerned, the most logical idea is that of a double *emporium* where Greek merchants and craftsmen were already living there, either permanently or temporarily. Should we therefore be talking about a Greek or an indigenous *emporium*?²⁹ We should be looking at this from a different perspective, but we can retain the idea of an "entanglement" of different communities with, in the background, the idea of an agreement and a physical proximity up until the late fifth century BC.

Why the mouth of the Hérault River instead of another place? We can evoke at the same time a favourable location, between Marseille and Empuries was, the continuous Mediterranean contacts since at least the seventh century BC, as well as a positive response from the indigenous people in favour of the Phocaeans' solicitations. It is nevertheless surprising that the mouth of the Aude River was not favoured by the Phocaeans, given all the possibilities that this region offered. Was it choice or constraint? It might be explained by the fact that it was "impossible" for the Greeks to establish a colony there, simply because the indigenous people refused it, whilst inversely they could settle more easily at the mouth of the River Hérault, on the eastern fringes of the Elisyces territory. The absence of Marseille's commercial monopoly in this part of the western Languedoc is revelatory of this state of being, which implies the existence of a highly structured indigenous society with control over their territory and one that was probably not subjected to trade as "unequal" as supposed by the notion of "colonial trade". The western Languedoc, at the crossroads of several cultural and commercial zones, was a particularly dynamic region in the sixth-fifth centuries BC, and it is within this context that we should reposition the foundation of Pech Maho.

The site was founded *ex-nihilo* towards the middle of the sixth century BC, and seems to be contemporary with the appearance of a major site: the Montlaurès *oppidum* in Narbonne, which is known as *Naro* (or *Narbo*) from ancient sources and mentioned as being the "capital" of the Elisyque tribe that occupied this part of the Languedoc in the First Iron Age. Whilst during the seventh century BC the main settlements were located inland, a nucleated settlement appeared in Montlaurès in the second quarter of the sixth century BC. Situated on and around a hill, the village covered an area of over 10 ha. It can be regarded as a veritable foundation showing the

²⁵The site is a point of passage along an east-west terrestrial route which was re-used in Roman times when the *Via Domitia* was constructed.

²⁶ Gailledrat 2014, 159-61.

²⁷ Ugolini and Olive 2006.

²⁸ Nickels 1976; 1978.

²⁹ Dietler 2010, 147-55.

indigenous people's desire to move their power closer to the coast and to reinforce their control over trade with the Mediterranean. Montlaurès, which is 4 km to the north of Narbonne, is close to a former arm of the Aude River and the nearby lagoon was larger than it is today, meaning that the site may have been accessible via small boats.³⁰

Pech Maho emerges as one of the solutions for the problem relating to direct access to the Mediterranean and was perhaps a transloading point for boats coming from the sea that were unable to advance very far into the lagoon. The site is located on a very specific spot, where it controls a north-south terrestrial crossing point marking the southern limit of what must be regarded as the Montlaurès territory. This area is also the geographical limit between the Languedocian plain and Roussillon, which was occupied by a different tribe during the Iron Age, known as the *Sordes* or the *Sordones*.

The morphology of the site during these earlier phases is little known. Yet an initial phase, apparently very short-lived, has been identified and is characterised by the construction of a simple rampart preceded by a ditch. Inside the walls, only a few traces of wattle-and-daub constructions and post-holes have been found. However, the fortification evolved very quickly and was reinforced with an artificial terrace associated with two successive lines of ramparts surrounded by two imposing ditches. A sizeable urban development thus took place, with the creation of a pre-established urban network with carefully maintained streets and mud-brick walls built on top of stone plinths with traces of lime plaster.

Beyond a simplistic image of an indigenous site where Mediterranean influences were gradually adopted, we should regard the very first phase as being a time when the settlement was composed of buildings that were only ever meant to be temporary for a few years or even months before large-scale building works took place.

Alongside Agde and La Monédière, Pech Maho is one of the rare sites in the south of France (apart from Martigues and of course Marseille) where the technique of building mud-brick walls on stone plinths was used at such an early date (middle of the sixth century BC). Its very sudden emergence, as well as the perfectly regular appearance of its construction and the existence of a preconceived urban design, raises a number of questions. It is difficult to imagine it being nothing more than an assimilation of techniques and exogenous models. On the contrary, there may well have been a foreign, probably Greek involvement in the foundation of the site.

Judging from the finds and the morphology of the site, Pech Maho remained fundamentally indigenous, and we should entertain the idea that its creation was the result of a similarity of interests and a tight collaboration between the Greeks and the indigenous people. All this would have been for the specific aim of establishing a meeting and trading place under the authority of the indigenous people, where Mediterranean merchants were accepted.³¹ Although the choice of location may have been shared, it was the indigenous power that granted the right of way, the right to inhabit or simply the right to trade here. It was also the indigenous power that mobilised construction materials and the workforce required to dig ditches and erect ramparts, whilst the Mediterranean partner settled for providing specific skills. This type of structure would seem to correspond to an *emporium*, or in other words a codified framework referred to by the Greek commercial text inscribed on a lead tablet, which was discovered on the site and dates to the beginning of the fifth century BC.³²

The facies of the finds from Pech Maho during the sixth-fifth centuries BC is characterised by an extensive openness to Mediterranean imports. However, the collection of imported amphorae is very different from that which has been found in Agde, because while there seems to have been a slow increase in Massalian goods, Iberian amphora continued to dominate the majority of this group during this period and even beyond. More importantly, the close links

³⁰ De Chazelles and Ugolini 2015.

³¹ Gailledrat 2010.

³² Lejeune *et al.* 1988.

with the Iberian world and *Emporion* seem to have been maintained. Whilst this tendency is clearer during the fourth-third centuries BC, the Archaic phase in Pech Maho clearly shows that this Narbonne region constituted the northern-most limit of an "Iberian" commercial sphere in the largest sense of the term.

A potential "competitive" situation with Agde emerges from studying the percentage of amphora present on these sites. While it is clear during the sixth century BC that most of the amphora was transported through Agde to La Monédière and subsequently distributed within the indigenous circle, during the end of the fifth century and the beginning of the fourth century BC, the development of Greek *Agathé* went hand in hand with a downturn in importations at Pech Maho.

It would seem that Pech Maho was not an "independent" site disconnected from its social and economic environment, but represented another powerhouse, probably Montlaurès. The excessive size of the fortification in relation to the size of the site and its ostentatious character unveils not only defensive needs, but also the need for the native power to demonstrate its control over the site, on transactions that took place there and most importantly, a stronghold over this part of the coast.

It is illogical to think that the large works in Pech Maho were not carried out by a large workforce, as there must have been workers from outside the settlement. An indigenous authority strong enough to mobilise this workforce had been capable of ensuring the security of the merchants frequenting the site as well as the goods and the regularity of the transactions that took place here.

The symbolic character of this is also important. Libation rituals and votive offerings associated with the fortification have been brought to light.³³ A large number of stelae from the Archaic Period re-used in later constructions were discovered, demonstrating the existence of sacred places at the settlement from the sixth century BC onwards. A number of these stelae were in fact used for graffiti showing images of ships, which illustrates the importance of the maritime activity in the life of the site³⁴.

We also know that there were public buildings in Pech Maho, at least from the middle of the fifth century BC, as is shown by a partially conserved building³⁵. Although its function is unknown, in front of the façade is a row of wooden column bases, which evoke the image of both a monumental and a Mediterranean-inspired construction. This is an unknown phenomenon in an indigenous setting during this period.

Agde, La Monédière and Pech Maho are archetypes of the *emporium* model where the administrative, political and religious dimensions all intermingled. They illuminate one another giving us an overview of the complexity of the interactions between the indigenous and Mediterranean worlds during the course of the development of the Greco-etruscan *emporion* in the Gulf of Lion. They also show us the diversity of the commercial and probably the political networks crossing one another in the western Languedoc. The Phocaeen network is complex, and we believe that Marseille on one side and Empuries on the other, took advantage of the potential the region offered but also adapted to the local circumstances where the role of indigenous societies proved to be deciding.

³³ Gailledrat and Solier 2004.

³⁴ Gailledrat 2013.

³⁵ Gailledrat 2014 : 223, fig. 196.

Acknowledgements

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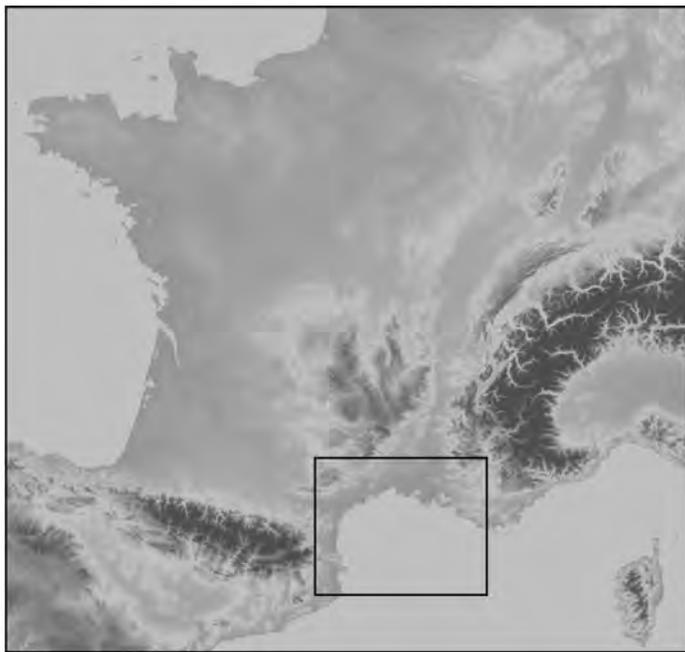


Fig. 1. Map of southern France with the main Iron Age sites (© E. Gailledrat)

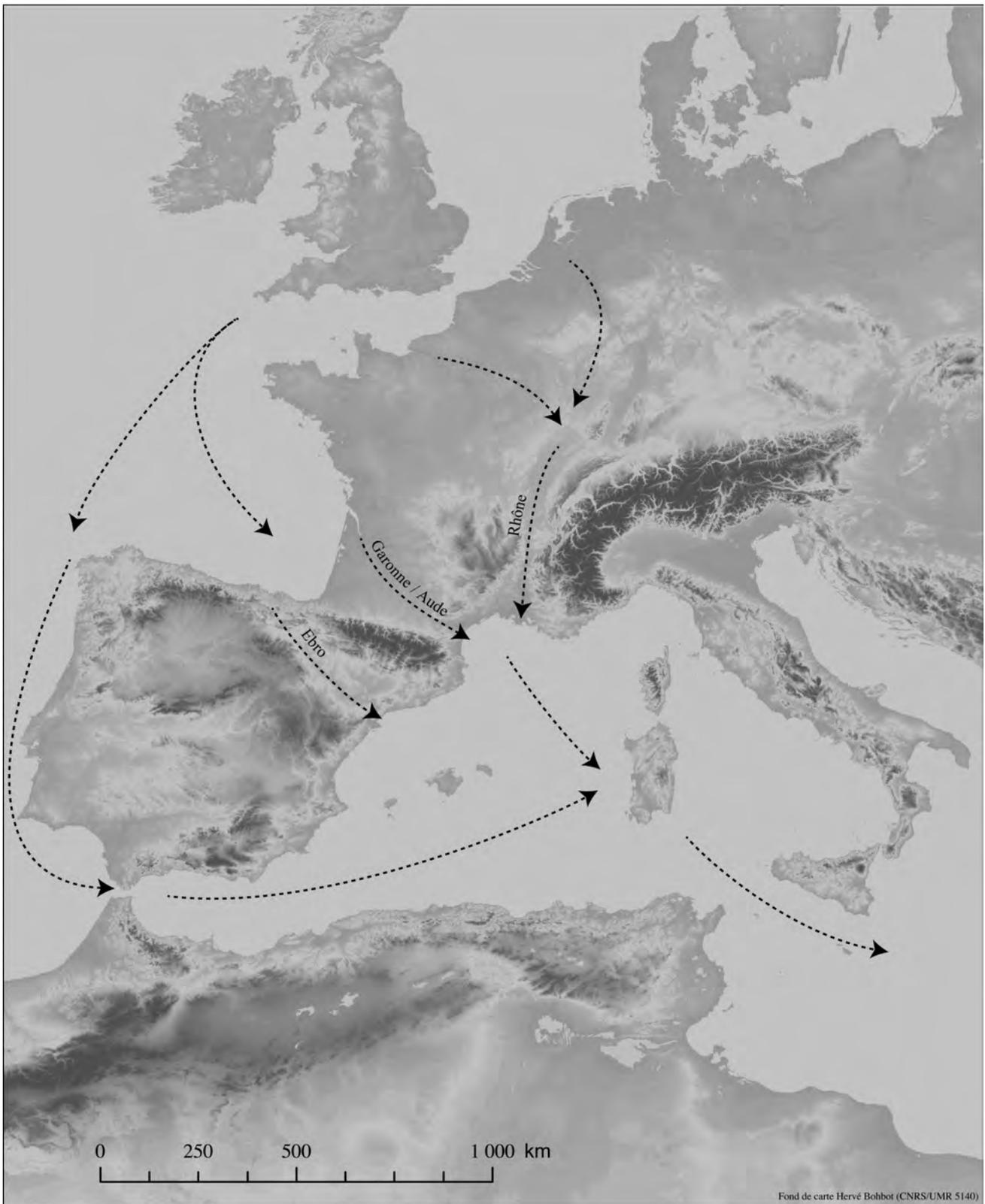


Fig. 2. Map of Western Europe with the main routes between Atlantic and Mediterranean during the Late Bronze Age (© E. Gailledrat)



Fig. 3. An example of a natural landing place at the mouth of a river (the Bourdigoul) in Roussillon (© E. Gailledrat)



Fig. 4. The Mont Saint-Loup in Agde, with the Bagnas pond in the foreground (© E. Gailledrat).



Fig. 5. Aerial view of the city of Agde (in the background) with the mouth of the Hérault (in the foreground) (© Laurent Uroz)



Fig. 6. Location of the Iron Age settlements of La Moulinassè (Salles, d'Aude), Montlaurès (Narbonne) and Pech Maho (Sigean) with restitution of the extension of the lagoon mentioned by ancient authors as the Lacus Rubrensis (map by J. Caverio)



Fig. 7. Aerial view of Pech Maho (© CNRS)

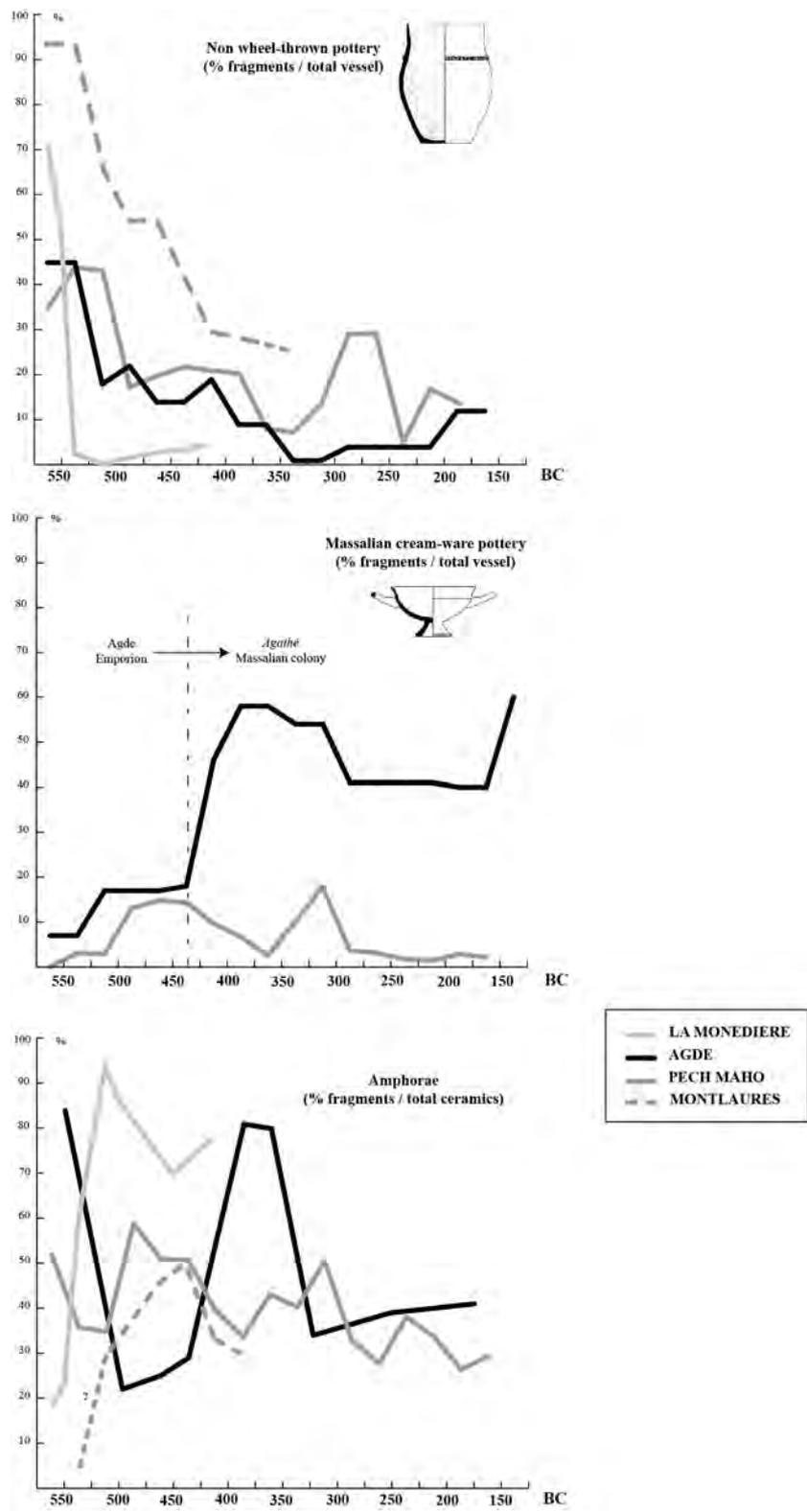


Fig. 8. Percentages of non-wheel-thrown pottery (A), cream ware (B) and amphorae (C) in La Monédière, Agde and Pech Maho

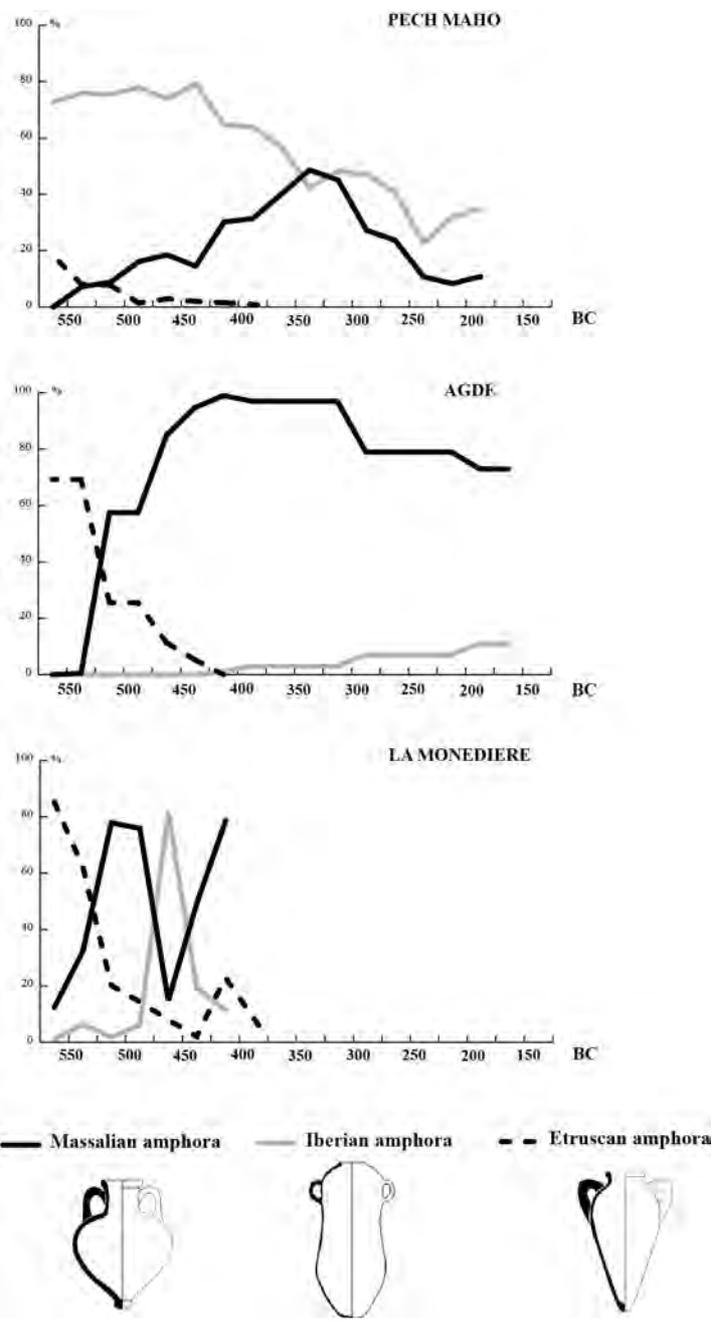


Fig. 9. Percentages of imported amphorae (Massaliate, Etruscan and Iberian) in Pech Maho, Agde and La Monédière



Fig. 10. Plan of the city of Agathe (after Nickels 1981)