

# Cultural contacts and identity construction: a colonial context in NE Spain (2nd - early 1st c. B.C.)

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This paper focuses on a century of interaction between a colonial agent (Rome) and an indigenous people (known in classical texts as the *Laietani*) who inhabited the area before the arrival of the conquerors. It investigates how contact between the two societies may be detected in the archaeological record, and, where possible, what changes in local culture resulted. The first part, which presents the archaeological sites of the Cabrera de Mar valley and its material culture, documents the contacts over time between those that occupied the valley and those who arrived from the Italian peninsula. A number of indices of such contacts are considered: architecture, construction techniques, imported pottery, epigraphy, and the monetary system. The second part considers whether it is possible to detect in the valley not only cultural contact but also cultural change.

I will use the term “colonialism” to refer to the presence of foreign actors in the area studied, in a context of asymmetrical socio-economic relationships of domination and exploitation between colonizers and local groups.<sup>1</sup> By “culture” I mean the complex of ideas, customs, consumption patterns and social behaviour of a particular people or society. By “contacts” I mean the interaction between two different societies and their members over a certain period of time, which need not automatically result in “cultural change”. The latter term I use to denote the multiple ways in which a society changes its ideas, beliefs, consumption patterns, customs, and social behaviour, thereby modifying its way of life.

## Cultural contacts in Ilduro (Cabrera de Mar): material evidence

### *The earliest interactions with incomers*

The first archaeological evidence for interactions between Mediterranean states and the indigenous inhabitants of the Cabrera de Mar valley, the political centre of the territory of the *Laietani*, appears to date to the 5th c. B.C. These began with commercial contact and exchange, as locals sought to acquire prestige goods from incomers to the W Mediterranean, particularly Phocaeen Greeks who were expanding trade from Massalia along the NE coast of the Iberian peninsula. The evidence is limited to a few fragments of Attic red-figure kylixes, skyphoi, lekanides and kraters found in the *oppidum* of Burriac,<sup>2</sup> with no sign of major cultural borrowing by the incomers from local peoples. Until the Second Punic War, the territory of the *Laietani* seems to fit well into the generic socio-political model suggested for native groups inhabiting NE Spain<sup>3</sup> and generally characterized as an archaic proto-state, with, at least from the 4th c. B.C. onwards, a centralized power focused on the *oppidum* of Burriac. This proto-state managed a rational and well-

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1 P. van Dommelen, “Colonial constructs: colonialism and archaeology in the Mediterranean,” *WorldArch* 28 (1997) 306; D. Prochaska, *Making Algeria French: colonialism in Bône, 1870-1920* (Cambridge 1990) 6-11.

2 P. Rouillard, “La céramique grecque du Burriac (Cabrera de Mar, Barcelona) conservée au Museu de Mataró,” *Laietania* 1 (1981) 7-14.

3 J. Sanmartí and J. Santacana, *Els Ibers del nord* (Barcelona 2005); J. Sanmartí, “Colonial relations and social change in Iberia (seventh to third centuries BC),” in M. Dietler and C. López-Ruiz (edd.), *Colonial encounters in ancient Iberia: Phoenician, Greek, and indigenous relations* (Chicago, IL 2009) 49-88.