

THE BORDERLAND OF THE BEIRA (CENTRAL PORTUGAL) AROUND THE II-I MILLENNIA BC. MATERIAL AND IMAGINED REPRESENTATIONS, VANGUARDS AND REARGUARDS IN A PERPETUAL MOTION*

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Abstract: *It has been twenty years since the author published the synthesis in which it was first argued the existence of cultural hybridization processes during the Chalcolithic and Late Bronze Age. Further papers have reappraised the issue, solidifying the argumentation, through either the study of new empirical data or the application of ground-breaking and distinct methods. This data generated the idea of a patchwork-like world during the regional Pre and Protohistory. A world of undefinable, or vaguely perceptible, borders. These borders are fluid, highly permeable and always imagined. They might not have even existed. Meanwhile, the chronological scale has been amplified by more recent data which validates the need for a new assessment in terms of the convergence of the evidence with the previously defended thesis, by means of reinforcing it, or if, on the contrary, such data points out its inevitable revision. This exercise is explored in the present text.*

Keywords: *Beira Interior (Central Portugal); Bronze Age/Iron Age; Ceramics; Cultural hybridization; Borders/frontierisation.*

Resumo: *Vinte anos passaram desde a publicação da primeira síntese em que a autora defendeu, para a Beira Interior, a existência de processos de hibridização cultural durante o Calcolítico e o Bronze Final. Em textos posteriores, o assunto foi aprofundado, e a argumentação consolidou-se com o estudo de novas evidências empíricas e o cruzamento de distintas metodologias. Essas evidências permitiram criar a ideia de um mundo marchetado durante a Pré- e Proto-história daquela região, um mundo de fronteiras indefiníveis, ou só vagamente perceptíveis. São fronteiras fluidas, de elevada permeabilidade, e sempre imaginadas. No limite, podem não existir. Entretanto, dados mais recentes, alguns só parcialmente publicados, que ampliaram também a escala cronológica, legitimam um novo inquérito no sentido de avaliar se tais evidências são convergentes com a tese então defendida, reforçando-a, ou se, pelo contrário, apontam para a conveniência da sua revisão. É esse exercício que se explora neste texto.*

Palavras-chave: *Beira Interior; Idade do Bronze/Idade do Ferro; Cerâmicas; Hibridização cultural; Fronteiras/fronteirização.*

1. STARTING POINT AND SOME THOUGHTS

The Organizing Committee¹ of the International Conference *Breaking borders, crossing territories. Identities and exchanges during the Late Prehistory in the northern interior of Iberian Peninsula* didn't make the job of its partakers any easier (or did it?), in the

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¹ I would like to thank Maria de Jesus Sanches, Ana Vale, Helena Barbosa and Joana Castro Teixeira for inviting me to partake in this conference with the talk this text relates to.

sense that there was no concrete guidance as to what kind of borders to focus on. And it hardly could be any more precise, were it not for the plurality of layouts inherent to the concept, layouts that intersect each other and, in some cases, even transcend their own boundaries. The concept in itself has a very rich semantic meaning, with its path being conceptualized differentially according to the different social sciences, which is why it can be applied in different domains with various challenges to its approach.

Here we chose to make a set of observations, that easily surpass this text, taking the prestige ceramics of Beira Interior of the II and I millennia BC as our case study simply due to space limitations, without disregarding other cultural markers. Those are defined by the underlying expertise of their manufactures and decorative techniques, in addition to their scarcity in all observed contexts. We use the concept of border as a synonym of the concept of limit, even though both can have slightly different interpretations.

As it is well acknowledged by the Organizing Committee, the concept of border encompasses not only the politic and administrative factor, but also the traditional approach to producing knowledge concerning Pre and Protohistory, highly conditioned by the former, and with limiting consequences in terms of overview. Reflecting this reality is, as they pointed out, the study of common archaeographic entities and categories, i. e., «Portuguese» and «Spanish», which are frequently treated separately. While this observation seems to make sense, it should also be noted, without any kind of nationalist haughtiness, that the Portuguese research hasn't spared efforts in the sense of surpassing said rooted practice of bilateral tendency and common responsibility. This conference is the most recent expression of such effort.

But the question of borders can equally be asked in methodological terms when analysing these archaeographic categories, whether they be cross-bordered or not. The separate study (thus, with borders) and thorough of each one of these entities — fixed and mobile, artefactual and built —, that constitute the raw material of the «factory» of the researcher-archaeologist, is absolutely necessary. That atomized analysis allows for an in-dept dissection of the characteristics of each one, for example when we study a particular type of ceramics or architecture, but impoverishes the indispensable overview, that we could call molecular. It is this aggregating perspective, without borders, which consents the establishment of links, defining its potential combinations, peering possible meanings. This heuristic process pursues the art of the encounter between independent, but not isolated, entities and the indispensable lines with which they were sewed — with which we sewed them —, that give them consistent weaving, even if malleable.

Transporting these considerations to a closer field from the one that the conference also pretends to focus on, the notion of border carries with it the notion of territory and the construction of territories implies the need of creating boundaries, physical or symbolic contours, or in other words, there aren't borders without territorial identities. And those identities only exist if and when they are placed in relation with «others»,

with other identities. How to define them, how to express them? Which are the ways of materializing and representing them when talking of nonliterate societies? This is one of the biggest challenges we face.

The difficulty level is diverse and is established promptly at the starting point.

If we look for predefined cultural groups with stable outlines, geographically framed and moulded by a sum of items that specify themselves concerning the settlement systems, the funerary practices, the socio-political and economic organization, the types of materials, the beliefs and even the values, and if we attribute them a name, we go through the easiest path to finding cultural identities, delimiting them with borders and mapping them. In contrast to such idea, which reclaims independent groups with geographical profiles, based on materialities as cultural identity markers, at times even as carriers of ethnic roots, assuming their representation through a so-called *linear-border* (Figs. 1A and B)², we chose to value as an alternative approach one that aims to understand, instead of cultural or ethnic discrete groups, cultural dynamics, with their internal tensions and conflicts, with their interactions and mobilities. These cannot have a representation because they are open.

Another problem is the importance, and indispensability, of cartography in the archaeological thinking. Even though the maps of data distribution are flawed, since they are always incomplete and deformed, captive of the visibility degree and of the data conservation, of the advance and rectification of knowledge, these maps are nonetheless tools which help approaching the differentiation of concentration areas, scattered places, voids and undefined areas. And as the mapping of regular places and materials is, or could be, different from the prestigious goods and places, and because the distribution of both could still be divergent from the domain of the ideological realm, in itself identity, the borders could be traced there with limits that do not necessarily overlap.

Thus, areas are sketched with point clouds, with aligned points, without points, therefore of heterogenous density. The nuance of this dotting has been equally used as a motto for creating cultural models with nuclear zones (the denser areas), contact zones (the more faded areas), and also the so-called exterior areas (Fig. 1C)³. In this exercise it is possible to glimpse fluxes between regions, exchange of goods and of raw materials, while also being able to outline areas of territorial differentiation translatable in *stylistic-borders*, but to go even further when exploring the borders of nonliterate, non-state, societies could result in a high-risk exercise, or even one with imagined representations.

In addition, the nature of borders has repercussions in the way they are (or could be) perceived and marked. Physical or natural, conceptual, emotional and cultural, they offer levels of visibility tremendously variable, to us and to those we study.

² SENNA-MARTINEZ *et al.*, 2011: 412-413, Figs. 1, 2; SILVA, 2005: II, Map 7.

³ ABARQUERO MORAS, 2005: Fig. 20; 2012.

The tracing of the border is done in a linear way, with a wall separating the ones on the inside from the ones on the outside, inviting transgression or imposing respect, and therefore being made on the limbo of stability. It is done with the course of the river, which can fluctuate, overflowing its bed, deviating it or cancelling it according to its flow and, in the same way, the border will vary; but there are also «rivers that unite»⁴, connecting its banks, besides being big axes of mobility. It is done with the skyline scratched over the mountain massif, even if with mutations due to daylight and the seasons, cloud height and mistiness.

In some cases, the natural borders are reinforced with anthropic markers. In that sense we have, for example, the case of the mountain ridge of Serra do Ralo (Celorico da Beira), of high impact on the landscape (Fig. 2A), and the two stelae found there, near each other, stelae differentiated both conceptually and chronologically, which grant temporal thickness to the site (Figs. 2B and C). Structuring itself as a border in a linear horizon by constituting a natural border, the Serra could have defined territories from neighbour communities⁵. Neighbour, yet not apart, inasmuch as the two stelae would simultaneously point out a place of reference for the communities, i. e., with a «sense of place»⁶, while transforming it in a *place-border*. The borders can also (re)unite.

The conceptual borders defined by a group or a set of groups that self-recognize as an identity differentiated from others (from the socioeconomic to the politic domain, from the ideologic to the material, or with all of this incorporated), i. e., with a consciousness and a feeling of belonging (with an *ethnos*), are hardly ever seized when there are no texts or protagonists to communicate with. That consciousness didn't need to express itself physically (v. g., with types of artefacts, ways of building), just like the same materialities could be assimilated by different groups, groups that would look for their differences through other intangible elements (such as deities, action conducts or values). Ethnoarchaeology highlights multiple examples⁷ which could be taken as «inspirational», but not as direct elements of comparison between the past and the present.

And even when the texts *do* exist, the dangers remain. This difficulty shows, for instance, through the dissonant and unsolvable proposals made by some researchers — following to a large extent, the inspiring and pristine works of Jorge de Alarcão, who surpassed himself with renewed argumentation⁸ — in an effort to fixate in sub-regions with defined borders the various *populi* of Beira Interior mentioned by roman written sources and identified as Lusitanians (Fig. 1B).

⁴ RIBEIRO, 1986: 141.

⁵ VILAÇA, SANTOS, GOMES, 2011: 309-310.

⁶ FELD, BASSO, 1996: 11.

⁷ v. g., HODDER, 1982.

⁸ v. g., ALARCÃO, 2001, 2005.

However, that same difficulty, besides arising from the preconception that a border should not be seen as a static entity, rather as oscillating in regard to the processes of interaction between communities⁹, comes from another potential factor which we now take into consideration: the hypothesis of the territorial limits of each group not having to touch each other, even if we admit a certain stability. On the contrary, we should admit the existence of social devices of self-regulation by (and between) neighbour groups, devices that would create faded and neutral areas, meaning, no-man's land(s). The border of one would not have to coincide with the border of another, and thus the border can unfold into a frontline (vanguard) and a backline (rearguard). Therefore, this territorial «cushion» would restrain tensions, although without terminating them, whilst providing conditions to the controlled development of the necessary (re)adjustments. It is precisely because of this, the contradictions and the dialectic inherent to human groups, their social reproduction, that we do not search for stable borders and neither for clearly outlined borders. With low or null occupation density, these areas of variable dimension, being neutral, transform themselves into what we can call *passage-way-borders*, permeable and with different scale fluxes, even if of reduced visibility to the researcher.

In short, any of the layouts listed here — and they were only a few —, from the most conventional of political-administrative scope, defined by a line, to the cultural, which can encapsule differences without being able to fix them, the border is always a construction, a simulation: the reality of a border is created by the meaning attributed to it¹⁰. In this sense, the limits which we establish and the meanings we give them do not have to be, of course, the same as the ones given by past entities — people, objects, spaces and ideas —, all together in (inter)action, where the borders are, once again, lost.

If we aim to understand the social dynamics, then maybe it would be wise to reason not in function of borders, but of «frontierisation processes» in a sociological sense¹¹. Both are open by their very nature, not allowing for their confinement on a map or on whatever profile could be traced by a list of items. These are ever shifting processes, reconfigurable, in a perpetual motion.

2. A THESIS AND ITS FOUNDATIONS

It has been twenty years since the publication of the first synthesis proposing the existence of convergence and cultural hybridization processes in Beira Interior during the Chalcolithic and the Final Bronze Age¹². Later publications return to this subject, developing it

⁹ VILAÇA, 2004: 52.

¹⁰ HOUTUM, 2011: 50.

¹¹ CARDIN, ALBUQUERQUE, 2018: 123.

¹² VILAÇA, 2000: 174, 178.

further¹³, additionally suggesting that this borderland between the Douro and the Tagus rivers was a region of high permeability and cultural transgressions, or in other words, that in it many «Beiras» could be fitted, surpassing any geographical dimension and instilling a multifaceted feature: the «Atlantic Beira», the «Beira of Meseta», the «Beira of Extremadura», the «Mediterranean Beira». At the same time, it was proposed the long-term development of these cultural miscegenation phenomena, at least since the Chalcolithic¹⁴. But this perspective does not translate into a phenomenon of regular tendency over the III, II and I millennia BC, particularly with the insufficient data in a broad region with various voids that result in the disintegration of any narrative inscribed in linear time.

Nevertheless, the thesis, supported by multiple empiric evidence derived mainly from individual or collaborative projects, focused in particular on the end of the II millennium BC and the beginning of the following millennium. One of the conclusions we had already drawn was the confirmation of the absence of occupied continuity between the Middle Bronze Age and the Final Bronze Age, as well as between the latter and the Early Iron Age, at least at the more intensely explored central and meridional areas of Beira Interior¹⁵. It should be noted that this last consideration relates to the Early Iron Age and not to Iron Age as a whole. And, evidently, those remarks were conditioned by our knowledge at the time.

The question was then if, in the case of there having been a populational concentration with new centres of *habitat*, created or not from scratch, these settlements¹⁶ had stayed in the same territories of those of the Final Bronze Age, or if new lands, places not previously valued, had been occupied¹⁷. In other words, it was pondered if the discontinuities in settlement occupation could also be accompanied by a break in the pattern of space occupation.

The problem arose also when it came to the definition of chronological frames, in the sense that archaeological evidence for the Early Iron Age was unknown. Such indefiniteness was mitigated by resorting to the provisional concept of «Ancient Protohistory», applied to the situations evidently previous to V-IV centuries BC but not undeniably insertable on the Final Bronze Age, i. e., XII-IX centuries BC¹⁸.

The questions this text aims to answer have to do with the reasons behind the persistence of the ideas expressed above, if that culturally multifaceted profile should be reinforced or reconsidered, if it is or not sustainable to separate a Final Bronze Age from

¹³ VILAÇA, 2005: 21-22; 2013a: 213-215.

¹⁴ VILAÇA, 2008a: 165-168.

¹⁵ VILAÇA, 1995.

¹⁶ Concept used in a generalist way and encompassing very distinct situations, corresponding only to places where people have lived.

¹⁷ VILAÇA, 1995: 423.

¹⁸ VILAÇA, 2000: 174, 176.

an Early Iron Age, if the Final Bronze Age emerges without explicit and direct links to its preceding phase, if ruptures or continuities prevail, be it specifically relating to inhabited places, or in terms of general settlement.

We start with the answers, which we present now, and argue them later.

Yes, the existence of Final Bronze Age sites seems to be able to maintain itself in a scenery without pre-existing occupation of those places, or, if there had been — as it was previously recognised —, they mediated many centuries of abandonment, meaning these occupations were not sequential. Not only we don't know of any unmistakable data that would change this panorama, but also an identical phenomenon seems to happen in north of Beira Interior, as a recent synthesis shows¹⁹.

Yes, it is justifiable to talk of an Early Iron Age in this region, since there are empiric evidences to consider — see, in particular, the cases of Vila do Touro (Sabugal), Cabeço das Fráguas (Guarda) and Cachouça (Idanha-a-Nova) —, which means that provisional concept has expired or, in case it remains, be it only as a backup for dubious situations. This is one of the major grounds of the protohistory of Beira Interior. Examples include the «*peinadas*» ceramics of Vila do Touro (under study) and of Cachouça²⁰, or the wheel-turned manufactured pottery of orientalisng matrix from the latter site²¹, or the fibulae of type Alcores and type Bencarrón from the former site²².

And yes, there are plenty of reasons to keep defending, and reinforcing, the idea that in Beira Interior there was the development of multifaceted social dynamics with transcultural and transregional openness, and in long diachrony, for which is now possible to deduce new elements that expand into Iron Age.

Before proceeding with the reasoning behind these answers, focused, as mentioned in the beginning, only in certain categories of ceramics, it is crucial to look at some natural traces of the region and of its individuality; it is crucial because we recognise their fundamental role in the processes of interaction, of «frontierisation», of the communities of the Beira, their inhabitants and those passing through.

The geostrategic features of Beira Interior and their characterization are already systematized in multiple works by the author²³, reason why we will only stress here some of the most prominent points: i) the positioning at the coastal/interior interface, between the Atlantic world, the continentality of the Meseta and, to south, the peninsular Mediterranean «front»; ii) the shared territories where the river basins of the major Iberic rivers (Douro and Tagus) almost touch on their way to the west Atlantic; iii) the crossed orientation between those fluvial axis — east/west — and their respective affluent rivers

¹⁹ CARDOSO, 2014: 93.

²⁰ VILAÇA, 2007.

²¹ VILAÇA, BASÍLIO, 2000.

²² PONTE, VILAÇA, OSÓRIO, 2017.

²³ v. g., VILAÇA, 1995: 66-74; 2013a: 193-196.

— south/north and north/south; iv) the deep geomorphologic contrast, with *plateaus* and extensive plains, with mountain chains and mountains torn by natural passageways that converge into «circulation corridors»; v) the often emerging existence of isolated mountains shaped from granite, resulting in expressive reference points, frequently anthropized; vi) the diversity and complementarity of the resources from the mountain, from the forest, from the plain, from the rivers, providing food and building materials; vii) the peculiarity of the level of other strategic resources of transregional repercussions, in specific the main elements of the metallic minerals' palette, alluvial or not: mainly tin (v. g., Ribera da Gaia, Guarda and Upper Zêzere), copper (v. g., Quarta Feira, Sabugal, Vila Velha de Ródão), gold (v. g., Upper Zêzere, Erges, Águeda), lead (v. g., Almofala, Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo) and iron (v. g., Salvador, Penamacor).

These seven axes shape the layout of Beira Interior as a global region, in all its internal heterogeneity, whilst also resonating on the communities who inhabit there and their autonomy, as well as the people who move in various directions and, evidently, with highly variable intensity rhythms.

3. A PATH THROUGH THE CERAMICS

Let's ponder, then, the argumentative weigh of the answers mentioned above, supported by the ceramic evidence.

Even though the study of ceramics is extremely time-consuming, it is of unmistakable importance when it comes to understanding the production techniques, the storage practices, the habits of food preparation and consumption, the exchange networks of past communities, etc. On the other hand, the stylistic identities of certain pottery types reveal some differentiation on the ways they were made and conceptualized, the ways they expressed aesthetic sensibilities, how they marked identities and group strategies (v. g., age, gender, ethnicity levels), as well as certainly being able to reveal themselves to the researcher as important chrono-cultural markers.

The ongoing research combined with the knowledge produced since the last quarter of the twentieth century shows a pottery group of particular stylistic personality at Beira Interior, easily recognisable for their features, i. e., the symbiosis of form, of pastes, of decorative techniques and compositions, which allow for its overall textural, plastic, chromatic and visual expression. Employing the more widely used terms in the archaeological vocabulary, we list the following groups as the most expressive pottery types: «Cogeces or proto-Cogotas type», «Cogotas I type», «Lapa do Fumo type», «Baiões type», «Carambolo type», «*peinadas*» or «*a peine*» ceramics²⁴, wheeled-turned pottery of «orientalising» origin or inspiration.

²⁴ We chose to keep the Spanish term in order to distinguish this Iron Age pottery from the Chalcolithic «combed» pottery; in this way, we avoid the frequent misunderstandings caused by some authors mentioning combed pottery without proper illustration.

It's important to note that these categories are not representative of the pottery universe of the region in question; on the contrary, seeing as all of them, regardless of chronologies and of the nature of the origin sites, are always a minority, sometimes only residual, in their respective contexts. Their styles and their percentual record enable their classification as prestige ware, regardless of being local or imported productions, imitations or reinventions.

It's also clear, through a reading of the cartography, that they do not have a homogeneous nor random distribution. Some tendencies are verified whilst many empty spots flourish at the same time, whose meaning could and should be diverse. The data relates to the outcomes of what is known and studied, and what has been studied focuses mainly in three areas, already explained in the synthesis of 2005: the Lower Coa, including the plateau and mountain west area delimited by Távora river; the Guarda/Sabugal region, particularly the later; and the Castelo Branco platform²⁵. Thus, while it could be premature to evaluate the full meaning of the big gaps documented in Middle Coa, in the area between Coa and Águeda rivers («invading» here the Spanish territory), or at the Upper Zêzere, for example, it remains indispensable to continue to deepen the interpretations developed until now, in order to consolidate or rectify them.

3.1. «Proto-Cogotas type» and «Cogotas I» type pottery

Very recently it was possible to broadly re-evaluate the «proto-Cogotas type» and the «Cogotas I type» pottery of Beira Interior, regarding the study of Caria Talaia site (Sabugal), with occupation dating from middle of the second half of the II millennium BC and where an expressive container of probable foreign origin was found (Fig. 3)²⁶.

It is important to note that the identification of a site like this, steep and overlooking the Coa river, with occupation dating from the transition of the Middle Bronze Age to the beginning of the Final Bronze Age, had never happen before at the Centre/South of Beira Interior. Therefore, we have to admit that one of the most expressive territorialisation processes of this region, well represented by the Final Bronze Age hilltop settlements of strong visual impact as referential and identitary markers of the communities²⁷, could in fact had originated some time before. Future research must seek other situations that would allow this idea to develop further.

The joint consideration of these two pottery types, with clearly different characteristics and chronologies, but with resilient stylistic traces, distended or reinvented over the course of the II millennium BC, is partly justified by the fragile properties of some of their contexts (many of the findings derived from prospection contexts), or by the lack

²⁵ VILAÇA, 2005: Fig.1.

²⁶ VILAÇA *et al.*, 2020, with specific literature.

²⁷ v. g., VILAÇA, 2000: 171; VILAÇA, BAPTISTA, 2020: 26-28.

of published data, which do not always allow for the certainty needed in developing a more substantial assessment. In this way, we chose not to include all the information.

Its distribution counts with about twenty records (Fig. 4), portraying the considerations made on the penultimate paragraph and the knowledge of some of the provenance or deposition contexts demonstrates they are not bound to a specific site category. It is true that the sites considered as settlements stand out, broadly covering in its entirety the area between the Douro and the Tagus rivers, with distinct variability regarding the chronological, functional and geomorphologic levels, even if frequently emerging in summits and prominent sites — which, we must stress, are usually of strong visual impact.

It must be taken into account the specificity of their presence on sites known as «enclosures», limited to Beira Transmontana (Castelo Velho de Freixo de Numão and Castanheiro do Vento), in these particular cases intensely excavated and where the earliest samples of proto-Cogotas pottery can be found²⁸.

Lastly, it is worth noting the absence, to date, of sites with pits with this type of pottery, considered in both cases (sites and pottery) very peculiar in contexts of the Meseta. We would go so far as to call the situation of Beira Interior one of «false realities» because the explanation has to be associated with the circumstances and constraints of the findings (and those not found); in this regard, note as well the case of Picoto (Guarda), an Iron Age (VI-V centuries BC) site with pits, which would have hardly been identified were it not for the construction of the existing IP2²⁹.

Among the hilltop settlements with Cogotas I type pottery, i. e., from Final Bronze Age, is Vilar Maior (Sabugal) site, where the largest and most diverse group of this pottery type of Beira Interior was found (Fig. 5)³⁰. And, for their geographic singularity, being south of Cordilheira Central, we should also point out the cases of Monte do Frade (Penamacor) and Moreirinha (Idanha-a-Nova), where this type of pottery exists, even if residually³¹. New findings produced from ongoing research concerning the latter site will certainly originate other considerations.

To sum up, with this unavoidably brief revision of the matter it seems to be clear that throughout the course of the II millennium BC distinct communities, with socio-economic and ideologic contexts equally diverse, manipulated pottery with a common and persistent stylistic background, pottery considered favourable of emulation. This would have been the primary mechanism responsible for the similarities between distinct pottery groups of the II millennium BC of the Cogotas I scope, arising from the potters whose inspiration came from pottery prototypes of their own past, perceived

²⁸ CARNEIRO, 2011; PEREIRA, 1999.

²⁹ PERESTRELO, SANTOS, OSÓRIO, 2003.

³⁰ PERNADAS, OSÓRIO, VILAÇA, 2016.

³¹ VILAÇA, 1995: 154-155, 158, 231-233, est. LXXXIX-5, CV-2, CCXXIII-3.

as ancestral realities³². This interpretation did not convey (not that it was needed) any unitary meaning from the cultural point of view³³. Nevertheless, they portray what is there of more expressive concerning the Bronze Age materialities of the west part of the Meseta, the somewhat diffuse and far-reaching, but not random, way they stretch out throughout Beira Interior.

3.2. «Baiões type» pottery

Unlike the previous type, the «Baiões type» pottery first identified at Alegrios (Idanha-a-Nova) site never had a comprehensive analysis of the set found. In this case, it was possible to determine their very peculiar context, a natural shelter, certainly of ritual nature and where the use of fire seemed to have played an important part³⁴.

It is well known that these ceramics relates to a type strictly connected to the Central Beira and to one of the most impressive Final Bronze Age sites — Nossa Senhora da Guia de Baiões —, where its name derives from³⁵.

In terms of the decorative grammar, which counts with more than fifty patterns/compositions, it shares a conceptual and aesthetic matrix of geometric pattern (Fig. 6) with other contemporary pottery groups (v. g., «Lapa do Fumo type» and «Carambolo type» pottery), which is also replicated in bronze and gold³⁶. However, it distances itself from those other types in terms of the technique used, that is, post-firing incision — although in some cases the incision is made on «crude» (pre-fired) paste, but only if on a phase of extreme dryness.

This technical peculiarity could suggest, at least as a theoretical hypothesis, that the production chain of this type of pottery could unfold not only into two sequential moments — manufacture and decoration —, but also into two-step moments with interludes distant and interrupted between themselves. That is to say, these ceramics could have been produced, manipulated and circulated without decoration, which would only occur at a later stage and in differentiated spaces, and even with other protagonists, i. e., with other stories. If not probable, at least possible, this distancing allows for a reading of this pottery type in a very particular way.

The records carried out in Beira Interior and their contexts (Fig. 7) further suggest three things: that its occurrence is very rare, that the number of vessels/fragments *per site*³⁷ is residual, that its distribution is more expressive around the oriental foothills of Serra da Estrela and south of Serra da Malcata. On the assumption that they should

³² BLANCO GONZÁLEZ, 2015: 47.

³³ VILAÇA *et al.*, 2020: 112.

³⁴ VILAÇA, 1995: 166; 2013a: 205, Fig. 10.

³⁵ Concerning this matter, see a recent synthesis: VILAÇA, 2020.

³⁶ VILAÇA, 2013a: 214; VILAÇA *et al.*, 2018: 58.

³⁷ In the case of Cabeço das Fráguas there is no information available, only a general reference to its existence (SANTOS, SCHATTNER, 2010: 103).

translate links between the region in question, where they are most expressive, it is clear that we are facing different and opposite paths, which we associate to the «Cogotas I type» pottery.

3.3. «Carambolo type» pottery

Focusing now on the distribution of the «Carambolo type» pottery (Fig. 8), which is situated between the Final Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age according to good contexts and absolute dating³⁸, it is made clear that the record shows close numerical proximity as well as the same pattern of distribution of the «Baiões type» pottery in Beira Interior, as a remarkable coincidence as the fact that both types equally have different geographical and cultural roots (the former from Central Beira and the latter from Lower Guadalquivir).

The term used above refers to red-painted pottery which we recognise as a group not only with specificities regarding the type particular of the Lower Guadalquivir — for instance, the baroque and figurative decorations frequent of the Andalusian region are completely absent —, but also heterogeneous as a whole and in every context, which was particularly clear in the cases of Moreirinha and Vila do Touro (Fig. 9)³⁹.

Nevertheless, the group from Beira holds a transversal background, marked by the high quality of the manufactures, with regional pottery categories of low volumetric capacity, that only could have served as containers for small amounts of substances, in that sense, which would also be of rare and high social value, in line with the costs of manufacture. Similarly, the decoration granted a unique stylistic identity, entirely dominated by the red colour (of different shades) and linear geometric lines, even if some vessels exist with compact painting applied to their surfaces. In technical terms, a feature of high interest relates to recognizing that the painted decoration could overlap the pattern-burnished decoration, completely or partially covering it, and overall granting a range of interpretative possibilities that demand future attention⁴⁰. One of those would be, hypothetically and in line with what was said regarding the «Baiões type» pottery, the potential presence of two distinct actors, disclosed by its decoration.

Without ruling out the possibility, rooted in its heterogeneity, of «Carambolo type» pottery from the Beira group having different origins, it is still important to consider the existence of probable local (re)creations inscribed in social practices of emulation by the communities concerning the conceptual-aesthetic innovations. Consequently, this opened a circulation corridor which, even if incorporating distinct and alternative paths, would all overlap in the same direction, from south to north, from the Mediterranean world to the mineral and metal nuclear area of the Beira.

³⁸ VILAÇA *et al.*, 2018: 80-84.

³⁹ VILAÇA *et al.*, 2018.

⁴⁰ VILAÇA *et al.*, 2018: 72.

Other goods surely crossed the same path at the dawn of the I millennium BC, incorporating these flows between the Atlantic world — which is also that of Beira Interior — and the Mediterranean world, highlighting between them new resources, raw materials, products, technologies, styles (resorting to lost-wax casting), control systems (v. g., fibulae, tweezers, glass, iron, amber, ponderals)⁴¹. To these it should be added the peculiar technique of gilding metals with thermal diffusivity, identified on a gilded copper nail from Crasto of São Romão (Seia) and considered of Mediterranean origin⁴². In the latter case, since it relates not only to objects but also to a specific technique imported from the exterior, it should be considered the potential presence of foreign craftsmen, skilled in such technique, or of someone from the inside who saw how it was made abroad, insofar as if the objects can be emulated, the same cannot be said of the technique.

All of these and others that are still present, even if not tangible (v. g., combs, mirrors, helmets), through their depiction on stelae and statue-menhirs of the region and have metaphorically incorporated a «Mediterranean wave» which has swept and dissolved itself between the communities of the Beira, and beyond.

3.4. «Lapa do Fumo type» pottery

It is in this Centre/South region of Beira Interior that a fourth type of exceptional ware can be found, known as the pattern-burnished or «Lapa do Fumo type» pottery.

Besides being considered regional manufactures, particularly because they have far superior numbers in relation to the two types previously mentioned, among the researchers it is also generally accepted a strong connection of this type with the Lower Tagus region, with Alentejo, with the far west and the meridional region of the Iberic Peninsula⁴³. However, the identification of two different variants — burnished grooves and burnished strips, in this case with a potential dichromatic effect —, variants which can be found on the same contexts, still express extremely different distribution tendencies⁴⁴. As far as we know, and counting once again with the constraints of the data, this second variant gradually dissipates as we move north⁴⁵.

And, once again, the tendency for that division seems to come from the latitudes adjacent to the Cordilheira Central. This perception will have to be validated when the empiric evidences which support the attribution of multiple sites to the Final Bronze Age are better understood, namely in the north of Beira Interior. A recent work focused

⁴¹ VILAÇA, 1995: 323, 352; 2008b; 2013b, with previous literature.

⁴² FIGUEIREDO *et al.*, 2010.

⁴³ v. g., OSÓRIO, 2013: 137-138; 2017, with references; VILAÇA, CARDOSO, 2017: 264-267.

⁴⁴ VILAÇA, 1995: 283-284, 297.

⁴⁵ Even without cartographic support, which we chose not to elaborate since these two variants are not recognized in all the literature, our personal knowledge of the ceramic universe of the Beira gives us some security regarding the statement made.

on this region does not account for burnish-decorated pottery in any of its variants and in any of the eight studied sites⁴⁶.

3.5. «*Peinadas*» or «*a peine*» ceramics

The «Lapa do Fumo type» pottery, which deserves many other considerations⁴⁷, disappears when another pottery type starts to circulate in Beira Interior, a type which brings us back to the Meseta. We are now speaking about the «*peinadas*» or «*a peine*» ceramics, which can be traced throughout Iron Age, at least since the VII century BC to the II century BC⁴⁸.

In fact, subjacent to this pottery type are extremely diverse realities, from the manual and the wheel-turned manufactures, to the existence of at least three categories distributed over a wide region, suggesting different workshops of stylistic proportions and with repercussions regarding the delimitation of borders, would it not have been for the consideration of this pottery type as an «ethnic portable marker»⁴⁹. It remains to be seen if any of these subgroups of Meseta are mirrored in Beira Interior, or if it is recognisable on the latter a new subgroup.

In that sense, it is not the moment to dwell over the «*a peine*» ceramics of Beira Interior, since they lack a systematic and combined analysis that would challenge the material border of the artefacts against their contexts and other archaeological entities. At any rate, through a generic assessment it seems possible to identify ceramics of variable chronology, with extremely diverse shapes and manufactures, with clearly differentiated stylistic patterns, but with seemingly expressive stylistic proximities to the area of Salamanca (Fig. 10).

There are nine sites with reliable data, all on hilltops and all bound to habitational contexts⁵⁰. We are currently working on some of them, namely on the data relating to the excavations of Vila do Touro and other sites on Sabugal, which already allows, in terms of distribution, the glimpse of a model that mimics the traces of «Cogotas I type» pottery: a scattered and extensive trace in Beira Interior, yet not random (Fig. 11).

As it is well known, several researchers have advocated for the idea that the «*a peine*» ceramics were a distinctive element between Vettones and Lusitanians⁵¹. It was even proposed that such boundary was along the Higher Coa, though diffusedly⁵² or rigidly, turning the river into a border line, even if recognising on this case its fragility, be it in the roman or the pre-roman period⁵³.

⁴⁶ CARDOSO, 2014: 77, 79, Table 2.

⁴⁷ OSÓRIO, 2013.

⁴⁸ ÁLVAREZ SANCHÍS, 2010; 2018: 94.

⁴⁹ ÁLVAREZ SANCHÍS, 2010: 305-307, 310.

⁵⁰ COIXÃO, 2000; OSÓRIO, 2005; SOARES, 2019: 19; VILAÇA, 1995; 2007.

⁵¹ v. g., ÁLVAREZ SANCHÍS, 2010.

⁵² OSÓRIO, 2009: 103.

⁵³ CARVALHO, 2007: 72.

If we were to subscribe to this line of thought and considering the records known to date, we would have to say that the border between Vettones and Lusitanians did not only advance to west, surpassing the line of Coa river and reaching the territories to south, but also increased. And if we consider the Lusitanians as lacking exclusive materialities (v. g., pottery, weapons) of identity reference⁵⁴, and rather expressing their identity on an ideological and religious level⁵⁵, then we are comparing groups that are not only different, but with extremely differentiated social strategies of affirmation. While one values the material culture through its pottery (and other markers, like the *verracos* or the large settlements of proto-urban nature) as a way of social cohesion; the other, equivalent to a «hidden ethnic group» in the archaeological record⁵⁶, seems to have made it secondary, which is not, however, necessarily a sign of socio-political lassitude.

4. IN RETROSPECTIVE

Overall and taking into consideration the ceramic record as an identity and contact marker that entails stylistic territories, two generic tendencies emerge.

One is the openness of Beira Interior to the west Meseta expressed in a «breath» extremely dilated in time, the most dilated and without many apparent ruptures since the first half of the II millennium to the middle of the I millennium BC, at the very least. The «proto-Cogotas», «Cogotas I» and «a *peine*» types represent the materialities of this connection, this frontierisation process. Territorially, this is also the most comprehensive movement, tearing Beira Interior's own internal borders (of different shades, considering that, to south, those are blurred) and breaking them in the north, beyond the Douro. Sites like Fraga dos Corvos (Macedo de Cavaleiros)⁵⁷ or the site of Foz do Medal (Vale do Sabor)⁵⁸ contribute to the broadening of similar stylistic territories.

Another tendency reaffirms this cultural acceptance, extending and diversifying the links between Beira Interior and Beira Central, from the former to the Tagus, to the Extremadura and west Andalusia and, along those paths, to the Mediterranean world. This tentacular-like openness intensifies (without beginning) in the transition of the II to the I millennia BC and is particularly visible around and south of the mountain range of Cordilheira Central, where tin and copper resources are equally present. Thus, whereas the «Cogotas I type» pottery is manifested from north to south of the area in question, the «Baiões type», the «Lapa do Fumo type» and the «Carambolo type» seem to be more «selective» on their territorial distribution. But that is not all. These distinct categories

⁵⁴ VILAÇA, 2005: 21-22.

⁵⁵ ALARCÃO, 2001: 311 and following.

⁵⁶ HODDER, 1982: 187.

⁵⁷ LUÍS, 2013; REPREZAS, 2013, SENNA-MARTINEZ, on this book.

⁵⁸ GASPAR *et al.*, 2014.

while not systematic and simultaneously associated between them on a local level, still intertwine each other on a regional level (Fig. 12).

It is this second tendency that encompasses the first wheel-turned pottery of «orientalising» nature, for now limited to Cachouça⁵⁹. Though a site by itself has little to add, it is still remarkable to note that this is the most southern and the closest to the edges of that peninsular world seasoned by the Mediterranean, inviting us, in that region, to an exercise of bifocal glance, from the Extremadura to the Lower Tagus, or vice-versa. Again, and once more, always looking past the borders of Beira Interior.

Although these two generic tendencies are recognised, neither can be dissociated from the emphasis placed by the communities on the domestic contexts, the house, the inhabited places, as centres of productive and sociable activities, as identity references and territorial markers in the long diachrony examined in this text.

With other points of reference (v. g., metalwork, the stelae and their technique, the Coa weapons) it would be possible — it is possible — to recognise this multiculturalism of Beira Interior, a mixed region, where borders can hardly be seen, even if expressive processes of frontierisation can be glimpsed, filtered by the agency power of the communities of the Beira and the «others», through time and through their perpetual motion⁶⁰.

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⁵⁹ VILAÇA, BASÍLIO, 2000; VILAÇA, 2007.

⁶⁰ *Movimento Perpétuo (Perpetual Motion)*, title of the first work by the poet António Gedeão, alias of Rómulo de Carvalho (1956, Coimbra: Atlântida edition) and also of the first record (1971) of the extraordinary composer and guitar-player Carlos Paredes <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0sVryi7Nuf4>>.

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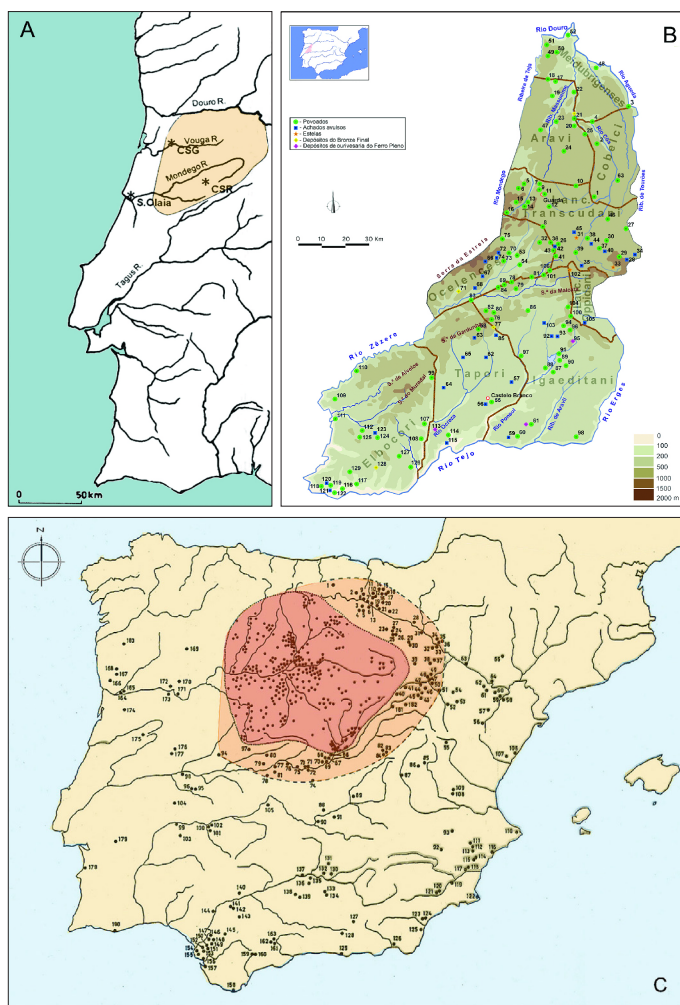


Fig. 1. A — Delimitation of the area of Baíões/ Santa Luzia Cultural Group (according to SENNA-MARTINEZ *et al.*, 2011, fig. 1, adapted). B — Location of Beira Interior's populi (according to Silva, 2005, map 7). C — Distribution of the ceramic findings related to Cogotas I. Nuclear Zone (red colour) and Contact Zone (dark yellow colour) (according to ABARQUERO MORAS, 2005: Fig. 20, adapted)



Fig. 2. A — Serra do Ralo (Celorico da Beira, approximate West/Southwest view), with the location of where the stelae were found; B and C — Stelae 1 and 2 of Pedra da Atalaia (pictures by Danilo Pavone)

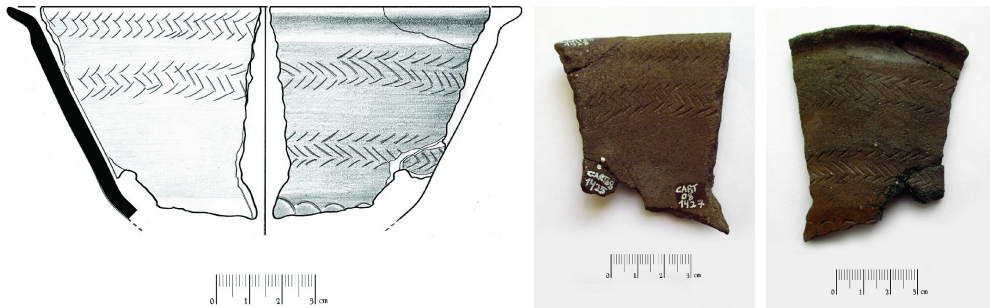


Fig. 3. Cogotas I type pottery vessel of Caria Talaia (Sabugal)

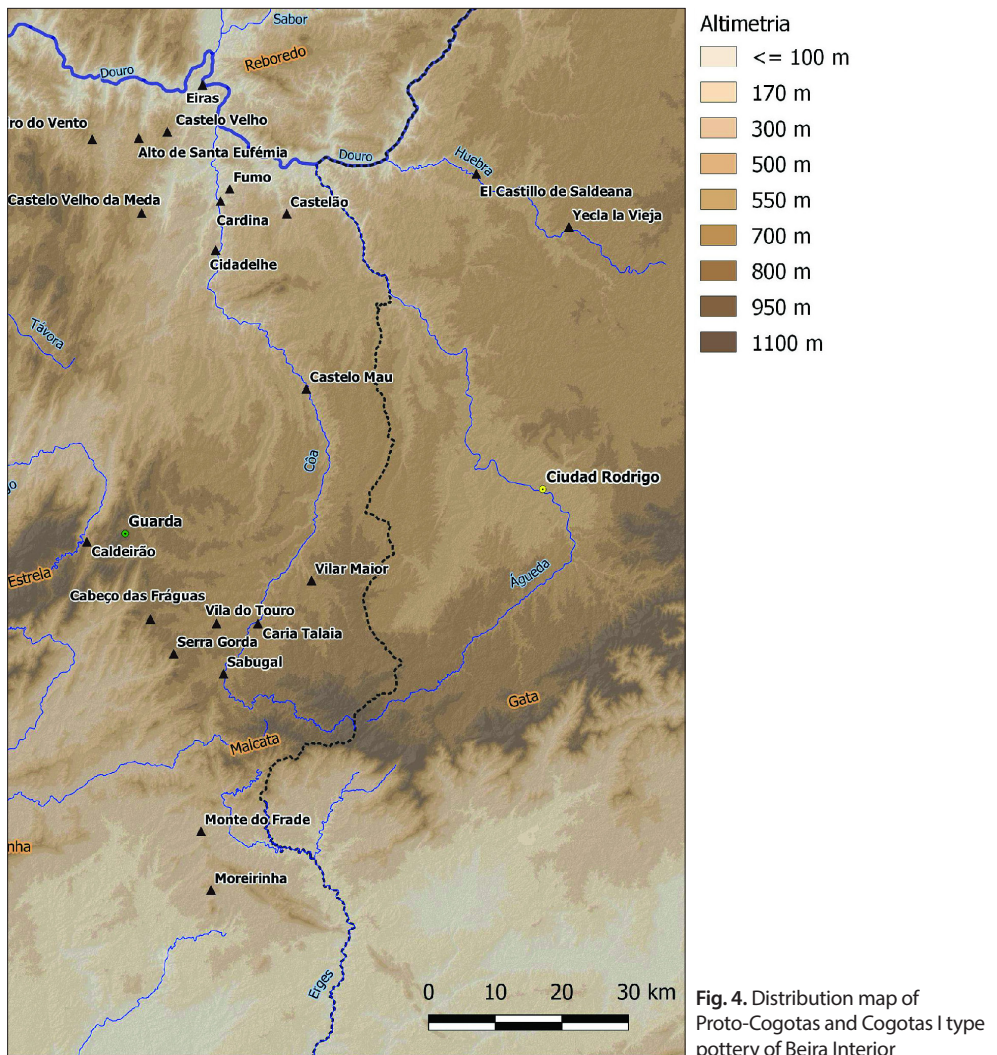


Fig. 4. Distribution map of Proto-Cogotas and Cogotas I type pottery of Beira Interior

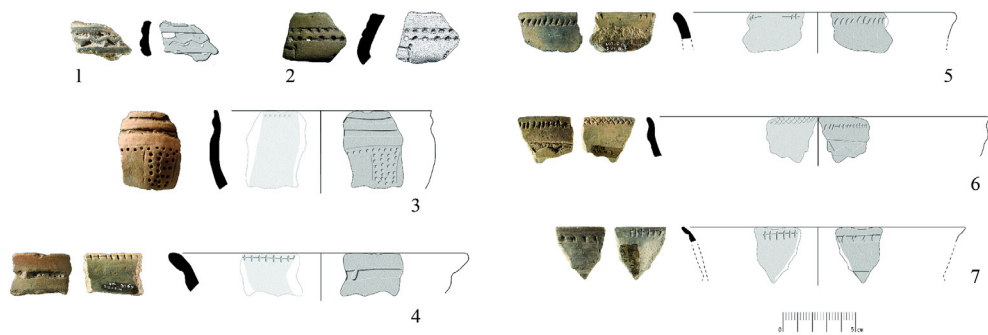


Fig. 5. Cogotas I type pottery of Vila Maior (Sabugal)

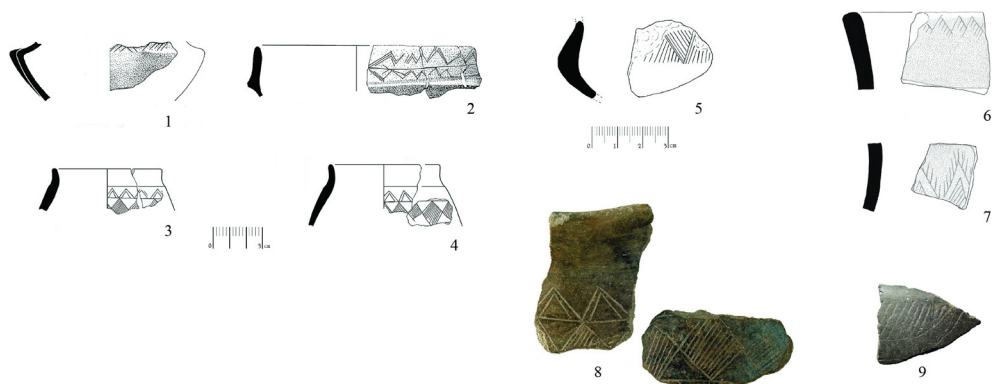


Fig. 6. Baiões type pottery of Beira Interior: 1 and 2 Cachouça (Idanha-a-Nova); 3, 4 and 8 Alegrios (Idanha-a-Nova); 5 Castelo Velho (Louriçal); 6 and 7 Monte Verão (Guarda); 9 Vilar Maior (Sabugal)

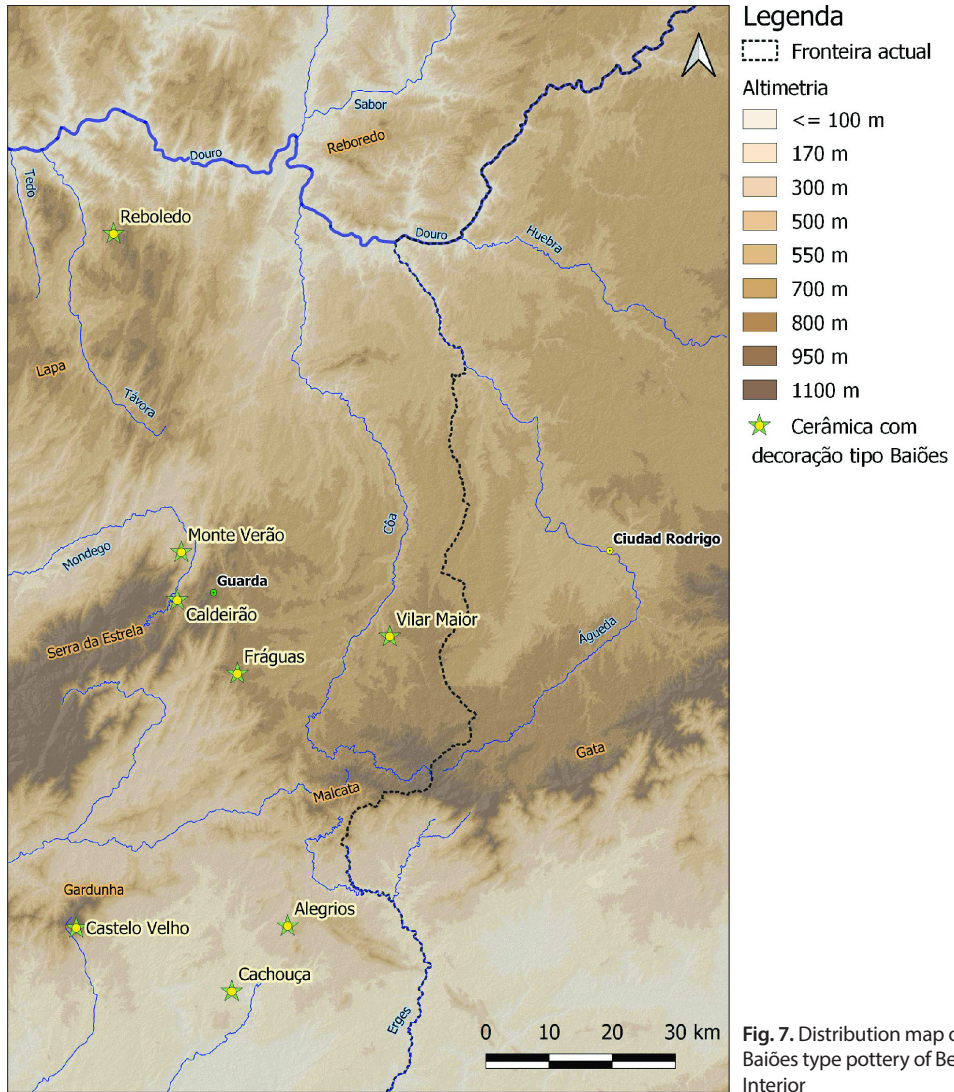


Fig. 7. Distribution map of Baiões type pottery of Beira Interior

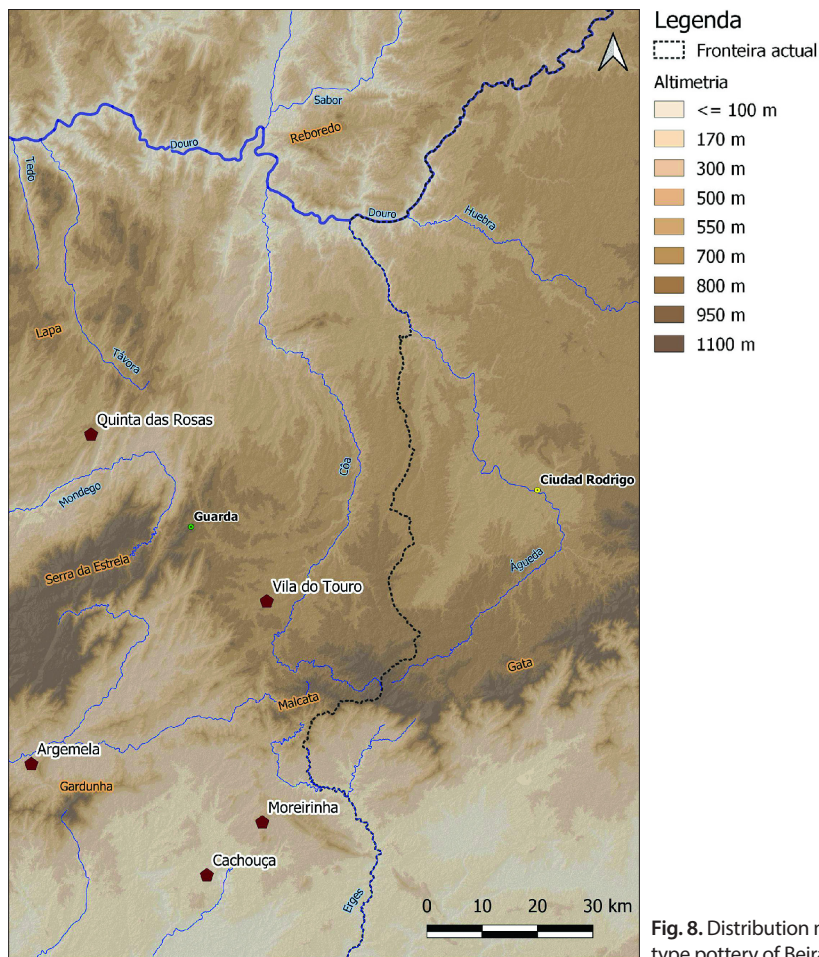


Fig. 8. Distribution map of Carambolo type pottery of Beira Interior

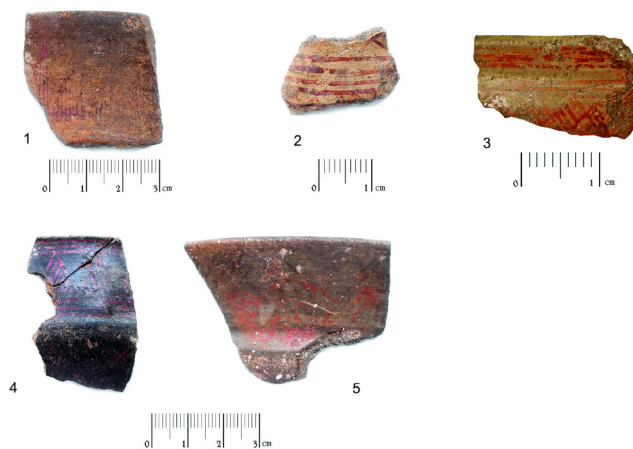


Fig. 9. Carambolo type pottery of Beira Interior: 1 and 5 Vila do Touro (Sabugal); 2 and 3 Moreirinha (Idanha-a-Nova); 4 Cabeço da Argemela (Fundão)

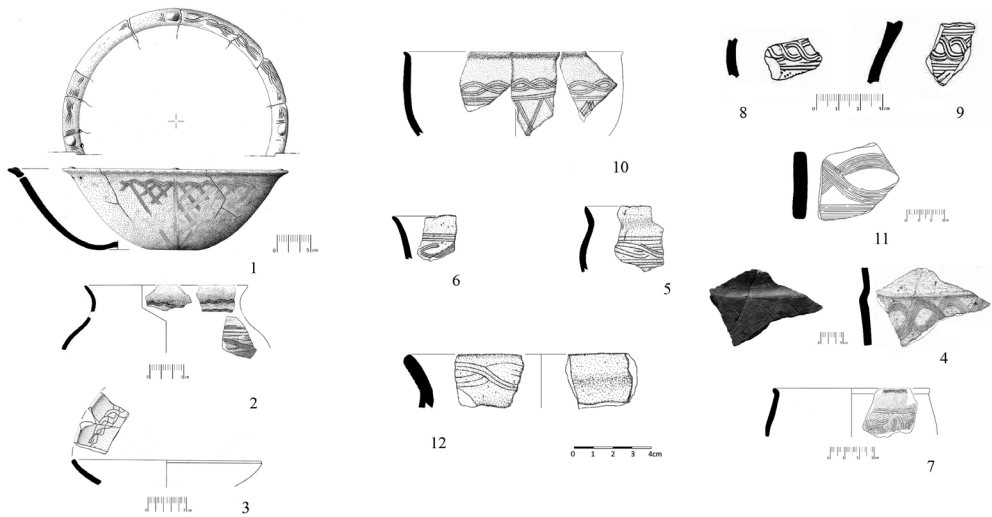


Fig. 10. *Peinadas* ceramics of Beira Interior: 1 and 3 Cachouça (Idanha-a-Nova); 2 Alegrios (Idanha-a-Nova); 4 and 7 Sabugal; 5, 6, 10 and 12 Vila do Touro (Sabugal); 8, 9 and 11 Sabugal Velho (4, 5, 6, 7, 10 and 12 not published; drawings by Inês Soares)

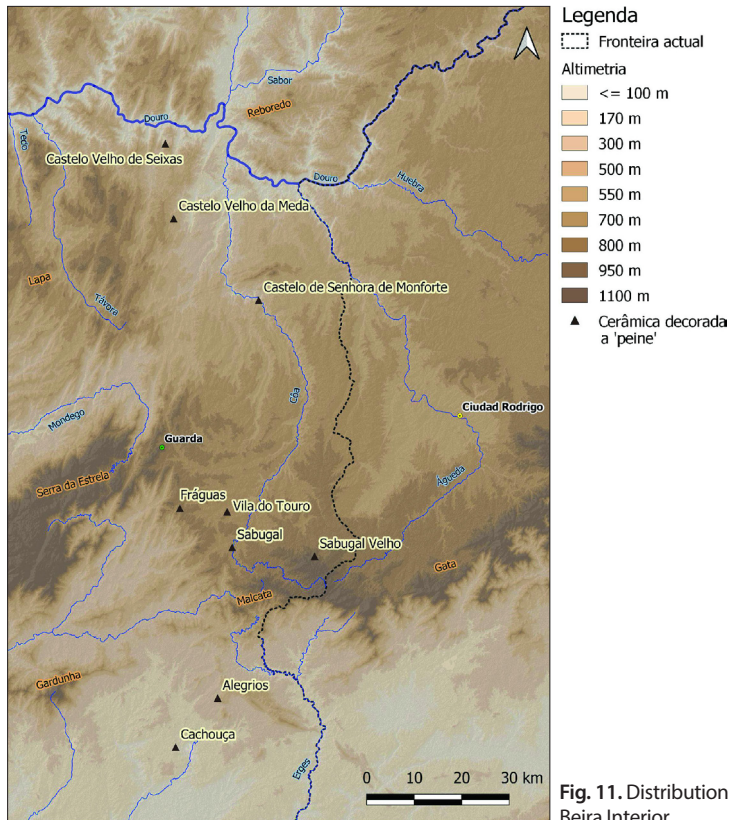


Fig. 11. Distribution map of *peinada* pottery of Beira Interior

