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Research Article

The relief of El Cerrón: insights into central Iberian elite identity in the Late Iron Age

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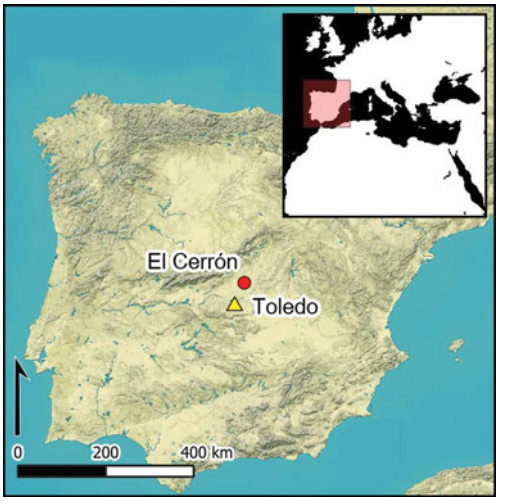

The Late Iron Age (fourth–first centuries BC) district of Carpetania in the Central Iberian Peninsula is traditionally cast as a marginal territory, where cultural development is primarily attributed to acculturation, diffusionism and imitation. Here, the authors critically re-evaluate published evidence from the site of El Cerrón, Illescas, focusing on a decorated terracotta relief with a 'Mediterraneanising' style to argue that the local elite was not a passive actor in history. Instead, the community at El Cerrón actively engaged in the cultural dynamics that shaped not only the Iberian Peninsula but also the wider Mediterranean basin during this crucial period.

Keywords: Western Europe, Iberia, Late Iron Age, art, interaction, elite, Mediterraneanisation process

Introduction

Following Morris's (2003) notion of 'Mediterraneanisation'—a process that shaped the Mediterranean in ways somewhat analogous to globalisation—some scholars began to revisit preconceptions surrounding the Mediterranean in the first millennium BC, including the nature of relationships between coastal and inland areas (e.g. Hodos 2020; López-Ruiz 2022; Riva & Grau-Mira 2022; Blanco-González *et al.* 2023). A critical reappraisal of the Late Iron Age (fourth–first centuries BC) archaeology from El Cerrón (Illescas, Toledo), in the Middle Tagus Valley (ancient Carpetania) of central Iberia, fits within this scholarly trend.

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Both Strabo, writing in the first century BC (*Geography* 3.3.1; Jones 1923: 61–65), and Pliny the Elder, in the first century AD (*Natural History* 3.3.25; Rackham 1942: 22–23), distinguish Carpetania from Celtiberia, to the north-east of the peninsula. However, in academic literature, Carpetania is often examined through the lens of surrounding, better-known districts—the Vaccaean region, Vettonia and Celtiberia—suggested to exhibit a higher degree of power centralisation and social stratification (Urbina Martínez 1998; De Torres Rodríguez 2014; Ruiz Zapatero 2014; Álvarez Sanchís & Ruiz Zapatero 2019). This has led to a traditional view of Carpetania as a marginal, heterarchical territory where cultural development can be explained through acculturation, imitation and diffusionism (Blasco Bosqued & Blanco García 2014). Although Polybius (*The Histories* 3.14.2; Paton *et al.* 2010: 36–37), writing in the second century BC, described the Carpetanians as "the strongest tribe in the district" during the Hannibalic Wars of the late third century BC, El Cerrón was initially interpreted as a 'Celtiberian hillfort' based on its "structures and pottery evidence" (Valiente Cánovas & Balmaseda Muncharaz 1981: 217; see below). Other scholars link the Carpetanians to either the Celtic peoples of the Meseta Central or the Southern Iberian peoples (Blasco Bosqued & Blanco García 2014; Ortega Ruiz 2014; Álvarez Sanchís & Ruiz Zapatero 2019).

The site of El Cerrón is an atypical 'Celtiberian hillfort' for three reasons: the presence of three overlapping—possibly sacred—buildings of non-Celtic tradition; Mediterranean and northern Iberia elite imports; and a decorated terracotta relief showing a 'Mediterraneanising' taste. By critically re-evaluating the published evidence for elite artefacts and architecture, and their contexts of discovery at the site, this article aims to shed new light on Carpetanian elite identity and agency in the Late Iron Age.

The site of El Cerrón (Illescas, Toledo, Spain)

Located in the southern part of the Meseta Central, the site of El Cerrón sits upon a small oval-shaped mound (about 1ha) rising between 2m and 8m above the surrounding area (Balmaseda Muncharaz & Valiente Cánovas 1979: 159). Though investigated over multiple field seasons (in 1977, 1979–1980, 1982, 1985, 1989, 2005–2006), excavation typically focused on small trenches (see Figure 1).

Valiente Cánovas (1994) relies on material culture, especially pottery, and three radiocarbon dates from charcoal (CSIC-568: 2100±50 BP, 351 cal BC–cal AD 22; CSIC-569: 2160±50 BP, 362–53 cal BC; CSIC-570: 2280±50 BP, 413–197 cal BC; Alonso 1994: 205—dates subsequently modelled in OxCal v.4.4.4 (Bronk Ramsey 2021), using IntCal20 calibration curve (Reimer *et al.* 2020)) to suggest three continuous phases of occupation: the emergence of the settlement at the beginning of the fourth century BC (first phase), and its continuation through the mid and late fourth century BC (second phase) into the third and the early second centuries BC (third phase). Structures found near the site suggest a more widespread occupation of the area in the third phase (Martín Bañón 2010; see Figure 1). After an extended period of abandonment, the site was resettled during the Middle Ages (twelfth–thirteenth centuries AD) (Valiente Cánovas & Balmaseda Muncharaz 1981: 217). Although radiocarbon dates from charcoal must be viewed with caution (e.g. potential for earlier estimates due to the burning of old timber—the old-wood effect;

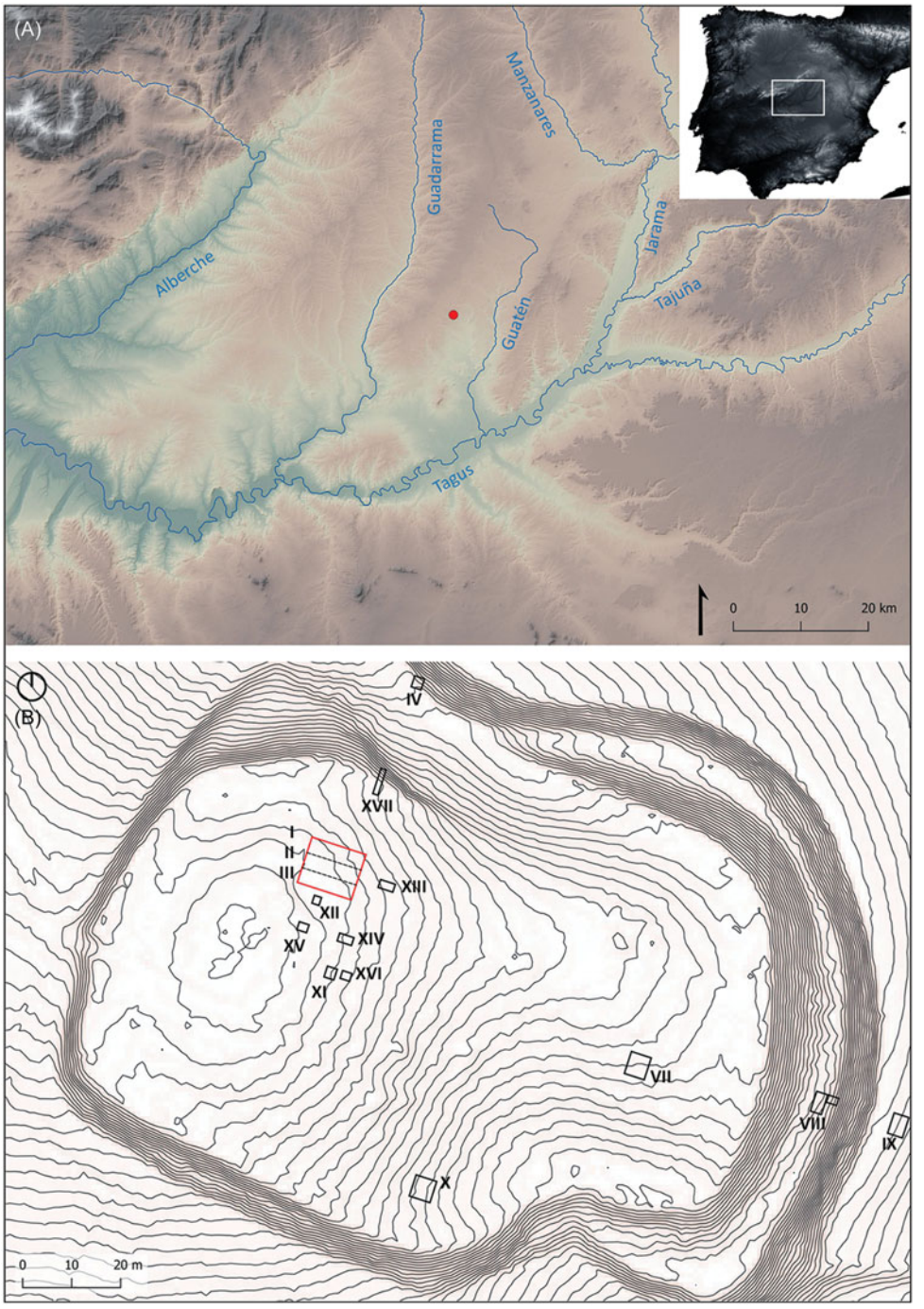

Figure 1. The site of El Cerrón (Illescas, Toledo, Spain): A) location in central Iberia along the river Tagus valley (red dot); B) map of the mound showing the location of trenches; the relief was discovered in the trench marked in red (adapted from Valiente Cánovas 1994: fig. 4) (figure by authors).

Schiffer 1986), published material culture seems to confirm the proposed Late Iron Age occupation phases (Balmaseda Muncharaz & Valiente Cánovas 1979; Valiente Cánovas & Balmaseda Muncharaz 1981, 1983; Valiente Cánovas 1990, 1994, 2021).

A few Late Iron Age structures, only partially preserved, were found during the small-scale excavations at El Cerrón; these followed the local building tradition, with stone foundations and mudbrick walls (Valiente Cánovas & Balmaseda Muncharaz 1981: 215). In the north-west sector of the site, close to the top of the mound, one building (Structure 2) contained a bench-mounted terracotta relief. The prominent location of Structure 2 may indicate its social and/or political importance, particularly as excavation revealed that it was preceded and superseded by similar building structures; the three structures linked to the three phases of occupation (Valiente Cánovas & Balmaseda Muncharaz 1981: 215–17). The earliest structure (Structure 1) had an east–west orientation, a rectangular layout (8.6 × 4.8m), stone foundations and adobe walls (Valiente Cánovas & Balmaseda Muncharaz 1981: 216–17; Figure 2). The floor was made of compact clay and the presence of postholes suggests wooden columns; a rectangular hearth occupied the central area (Valiente Cánovas & Balmaseda Muncharaz 1981: 217). The lack of an eastern wall might indicate that it was a lean-to structure (Valiente Cánovas 1994: 45). A fire event seems to have marked the end of the use of Structure 1 (Valiente Cánovas & Balmaseda Muncharaz 1981: 216–17), and Structure 2 was built on top soon after.

Structure 2 had an orientation (east–west), layout and dimensions (9 × 4.8m) similar to Structure 1 and was also probably a lean-to building (Valiente Cánovas 1994: 45, 184; Figure 2). Postholes were dug into the floor but, this time, stone wedges kept the wooden columns in place (Valiente Cánovas & Balmaseda Muncharaz 1981: 216). In the south-east part of the structure, a clay hearth and pottery sherds were unearthed, as well as metal objects and animal bones (Balmaseda Muncharaz & Valiente Cánovas 1981: 194). Remnants of white (limestone) and red paint may have been preserved on the walls and floors of Structures 1 and 2 (Valiente Cánovas 1990: 331). The terracotta relief discovered in this building fitted within a continuous mudbrick bench/altar attached to the western wall and was covered by wall and roof debris (Balmaseda Muncharaz 1994: 171–72; Figure 3). The end of the use of this structure is also marked by a fire event (Valiente Cánovas & Balmaseda Muncharaz 1981: 216) and a third structure (Structure 3) with a similar layout and dimensions was built on top. No archaeological finds are associated with this final structure (Valiente Cánovas & Balmaseda Muncharaz 1981: 215–16; see Figure 2).

The function of Structure 2 has been debated since its discovery. It has been interpreted as a house (Valiente Cánovas & Balmaseda Muncharaz 1981: 217), a place of worship and pilgrimage (Valiente Cánovas 2021: 268) or a shrine (Almagro-Gorbea & Berrocal-Rangel 1997: 573, 577–82; Almagro-Gorbea & Moneo Rodríguez 1999: 55–56). Similarities in the mound-top location, rectangular layout, internal spatial organisation and associated finds permit close comparison with the shrine at Castrejón de Capote (Higuera la Real, Badajoz; see Figures 1, 2 & 4)—located about 400km southwest of El Cerrón and dated to the mid-second century BC—suggesting that the interpretation of Structure 2 as a shrine is perhaps most probable.

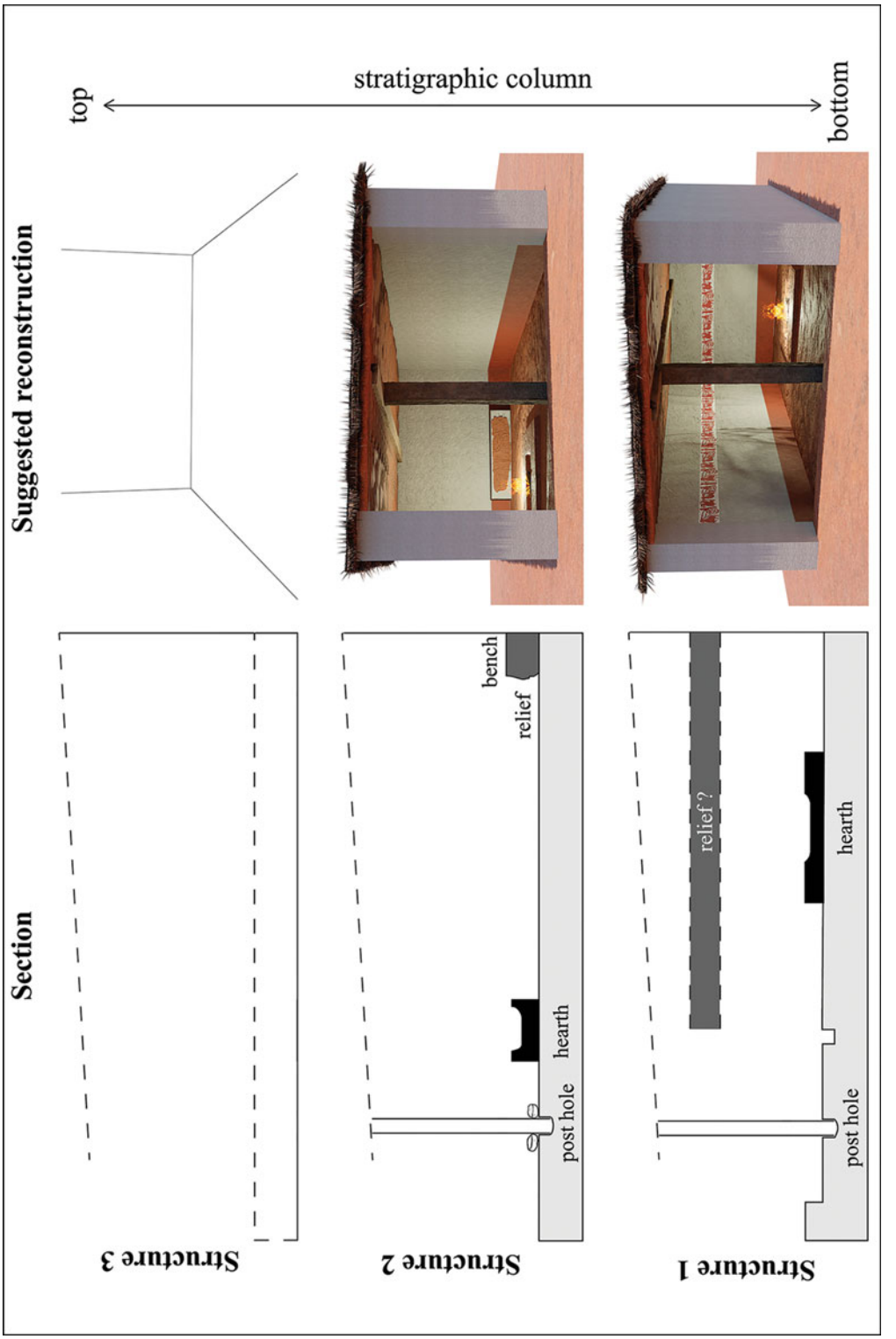

Figure 2. Sections and suggested reconstructions of Structures 1 to 3 (sections after Valiente Cánovas 1994: 184–85, figs. 63 & 64; Almagro-Gorbea & Berrocal-Rangel 1997: 574, fig. 3; reconstructions by F. Checa Valles).

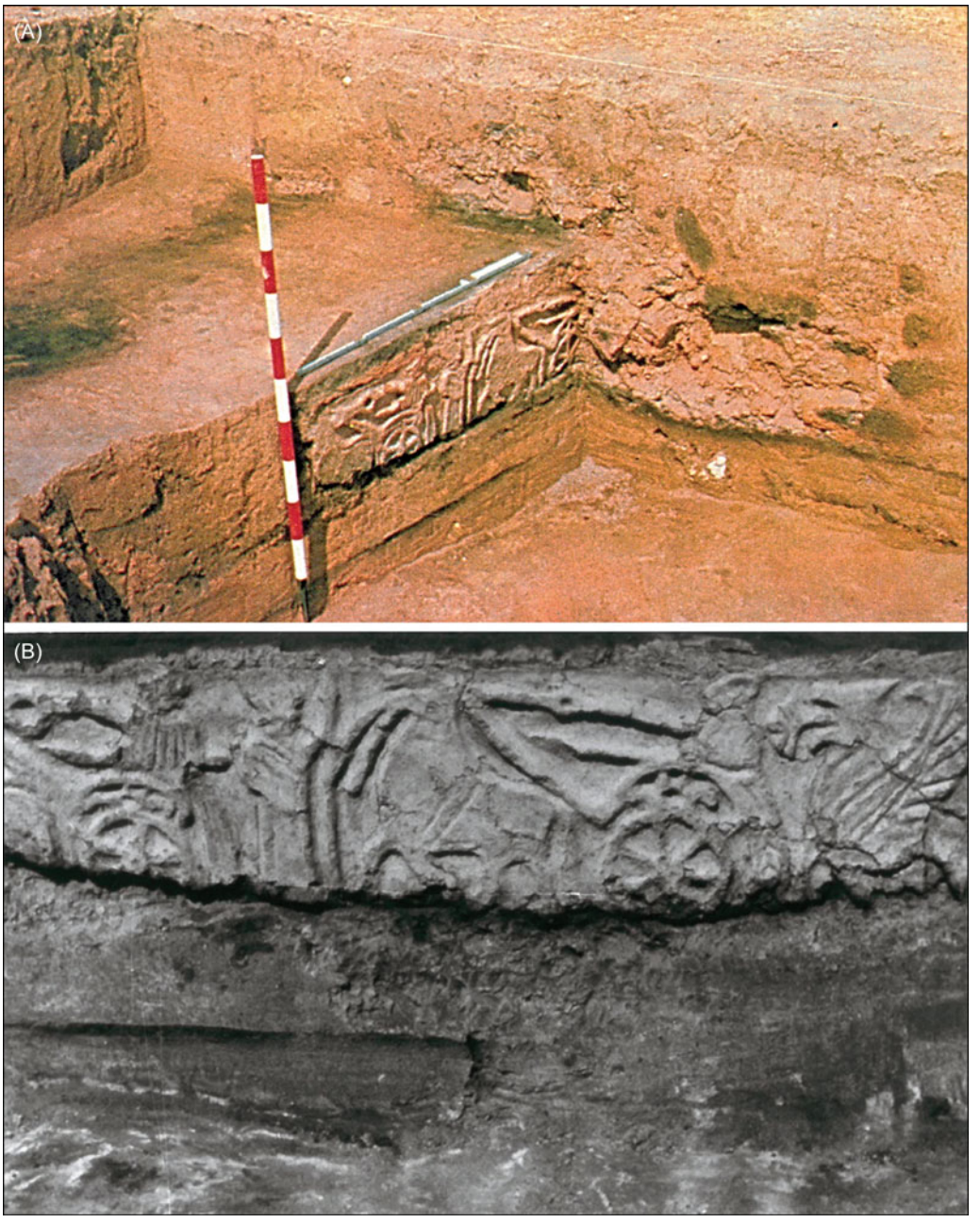

Figure 3. Colour and greyscale images of the relief shortly after its discovery in 1979 (after Valiente Cánovas & Balmaseda Muncharaz 1981: 53, fig. 1).

Terracotta relief: a critical discussion of the decorative motif

The terracotta relief discovered within Structure 2 appears to be a fragment (1.35 × 0.33m; Figure 5A) of a larger composition. The scene shows a parade proceeding from right to left,

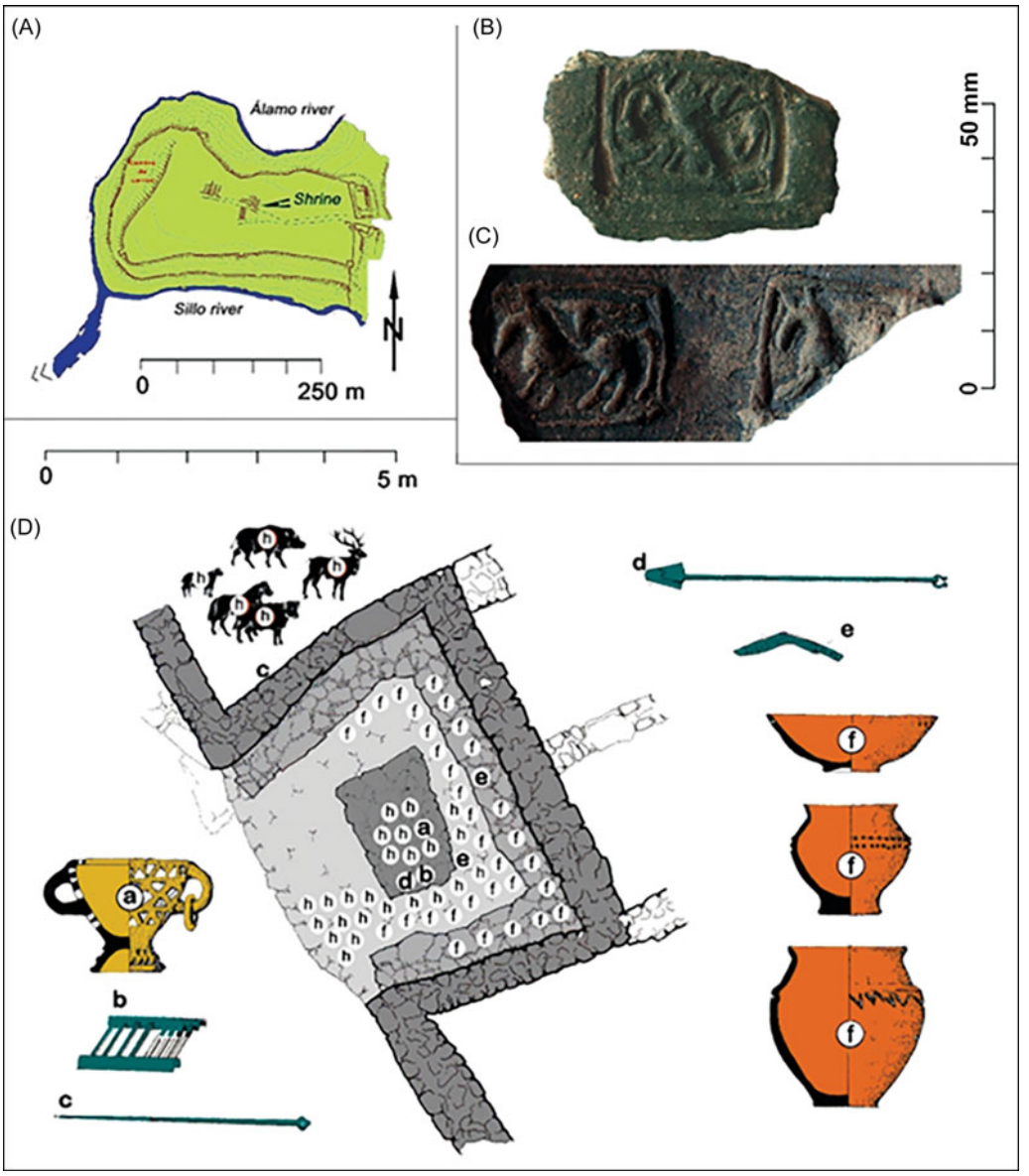

Figure 4. A) Layout of the hillfort at Castrejón de Capote with the location of the shrine highlighted; B & C) stamps depicting griffins/Pegasus found within the shrine; and D) plan of the shrine of Castrejón de Capote and the distribution of finds (figure by authors; A & D after Berrocal-Rangel 2006: 19, fig. 2; photographs B & C by G. Cabanillas de la Torre).

with the rightmost figure a griffin, depicted standing or in movement with a possibly floral motif (a lotus flower?) stemming from its open mouth (Figure 5). Left of the griffin is the first of two, probably male, charioteers, each wearing oval-shaped headgear and a long dress, the lower part seemingly decorated with a herringbone pattern in the first instance and longitudinal lines in the second. Each rides a two-wheeled chariot, with six spokes per wheel

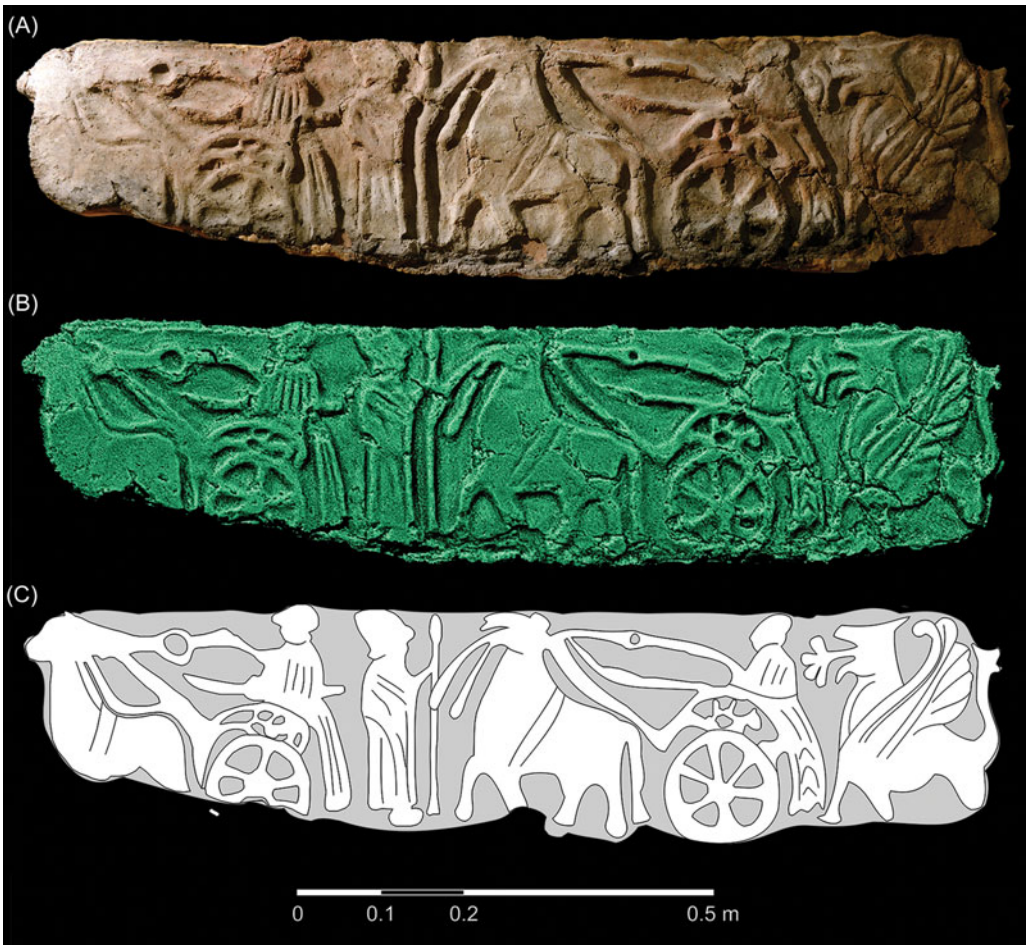

Figure 5. The relief from Structure 2 at El Cerrón, comparing a digital photograph (A), a filtered photograph (B) and an artistic rendering (C) (Museo de Santa Cruz de Toledo; Ministerio de Cultura y Deporte; inventory number: CE23580; photograph by J. Blánquez Pérez; drawing by P. Sánchez de Oro).

and part of the forecarriage visible above the wheels. The charioteers hold reins that are connected by rings to the horses' bits; the draught pole is visible below the reins. The first horse is represented as a chubby four-legged animal with a girth strap crossing its back and belly, and two oblong floral elements sprouting from its mouth (possibly part of the horse's harness); the horse to the left of the scene is incomplete, the girth strap is its only visible decoration. A second horse probably also pulled each chariot, but is not visible in the relief due to the lack of perspective. Between the two chariots is a standing human figure wearing a long tunic/cloak—probably originally decorated—and pointed headgear. The preserved scene ends with the second horse described above.

Parallels for the scene at El Cerrón are found on the Mediterranean coast of the Iberian Peninsula (Vidal de Brandt 1975; Le Meaux 2010; Figure 6). The griffin is a frequent decorative motif in this area; the earliest example identified to date being the sixth-century

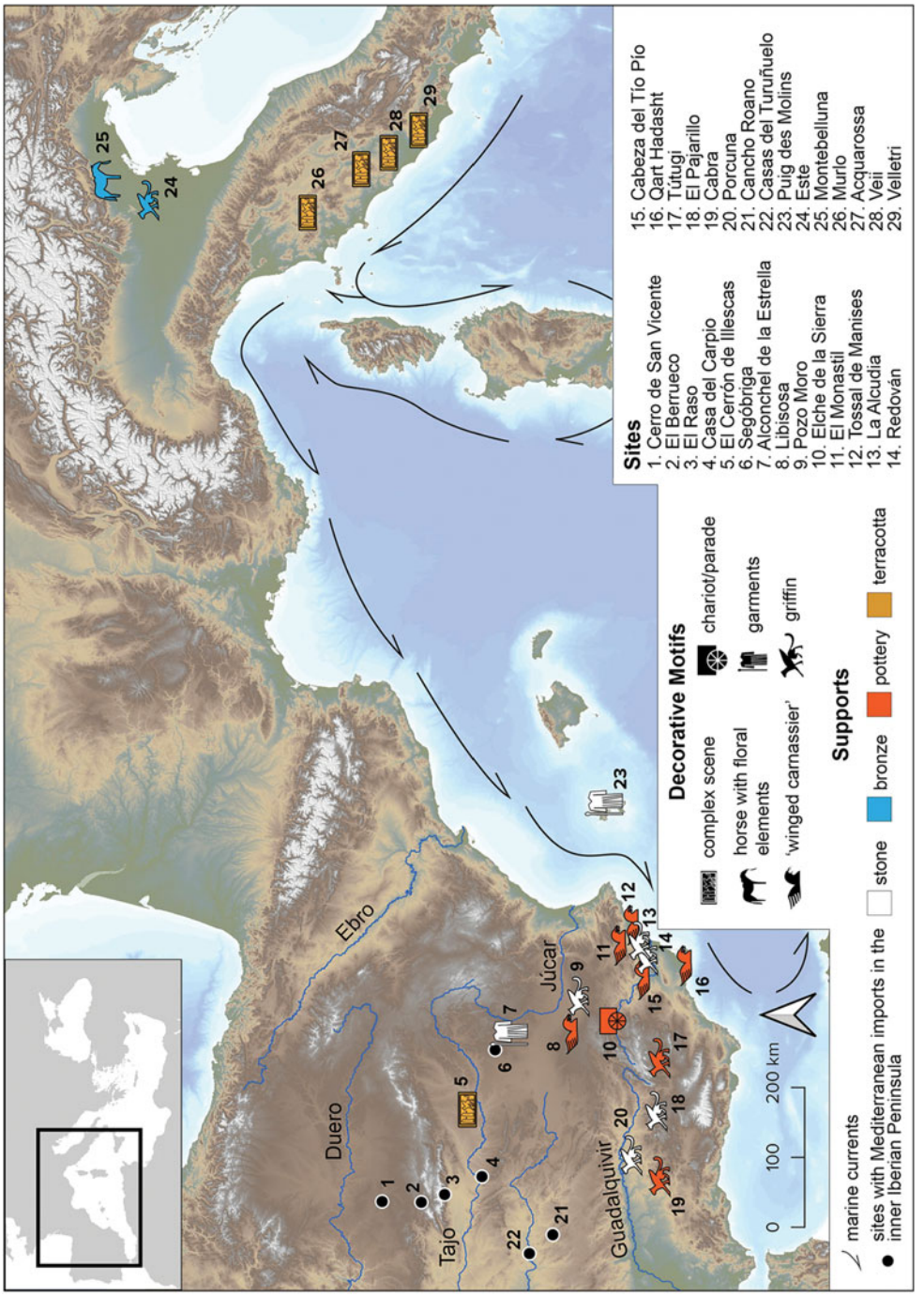

Figure 6. Distribution map showing parallels for the motifs depicted on the relief found at El Cerrón (figure by authors).

BC stone relief at Pozo Moro (Almagro-Gorbea 1983: 204, pl. 23a). Griffins are found on sculptures at the cemetery of Cerrillo Blanco at Porcuna (Figure 7A) and the sanctuary of El Pajarillo at Huelma, both in Jaén (Figure 7B), and at the sites of Redován and La Alcudia in Alicante (Figure 7C); all dated between the late sixth and the early fourth centuries BC (Izquierdo Peraile 2003: 268). The fourth-century BC stone *larnax* found at the cemetery of Túgi in Galera also shows a griffin (Figure 7D; Blázquez Martínez 1957: fig. 2). Griffins are further attested on pottery vessels: on a fifth-century BC urn held at the Museum of Cabra in Córdoba (Figure 7E; Blánquez Pérez & Belén Deamos 2003: 100–101, 130–37), and on the so-called 'winged carnassiers (carnivores)' found in the south-east of the Iberian Peninsula that date to the end of the second and the beginning of the first century BC (Figures 6 & 7F; Uroz Rodríguez 2007).

The *kalathos* of Elche de la Sierra, Albacete, dated to the late second century BC (Figure 7G; Eiroa García1986), provides a possible parallel for the parade scene, though in this instance characterised by the movement of goods, most probably gifts, including one horse and items transported on a two-wheeled cart. Yet, differences in the medium—a painted pottery vessel—and the date of the *kalathos*, as well as its possible funerary interpretation (Eiroa García1986: 84), mean that it is not a close parallel for the relief found at El Cerrón. Chariots pulled by horses are, however, well attested on Phoenician scarabs from the fifth–fourth centuries BC (Gubel 1988: 160–63, pls. XXVIIIb & XXXII; Boardman 2003: 81–82; Elayi & Elayi 2014) that are also found in Spain (Boardman 1984: 49, nos. 80, 81, pl. XIV, nos. 80–88; Conde 2003: 237–40).

In the relief at El Cerrón, particular emphasis is given to the figure standing between the two charioteers. Valiente Cánovas and Balmaseda Muncharaz (1981: 219; see also Balmaseda Muncharaz 1994) interpret this figure either as a female in the act of greeting the charioteer facing them or as a deity, characterised by their different dress and headgear compared to the charioteers (Balmaseda Muncharaz 1994: 231–32). The oblong feature held by the standing figure can be interpreted either as a spear or as a *bâton the commandment* (command staff). Bronze votive figurines with conical headgear are not uncommon in Iberian sanctuaries between the eighth century BC and the Roman period (Nicolini 1969; Prados Torreira 1992). Moreover, an enthroned deity with a spear is depicted on an early-fifth-century BC Phoenician scarab found at Alconchel de la Estrella at Cuenca, near El Cerrón (Almagro-Gorbea & Millán Martínez 2013). A female enthroned deity holding a spear is also depicted on a late-fifth/early-fourth-century BC stone box found in grave 76 at the cemetery of Galera in Granada (Chapa Brunet 2004: 247, fig. 3). Standing gods with a spear, or *bâton the commandment*, are also well documented on scarabs from Ibiza (Boardman 1984: 44–47, pls. XI–XIII, nos. 60, 62, 68–72). Culican (1960: 47–48) suggests that the spear can be linked to the gods Melqart and Baal, as documented in several Phoenician seals; notably, a temple dedicated to Melqart is found in Gadir, modern-day Cádiz (Mierse 2012: 288–90).

Discussion

The terracotta relief found in Structure 2 at El Cerrón may be the most inland example of 'Mediterraneanisation' found, to date, in the Iberian Peninsula (Figures 5 & 6). Its

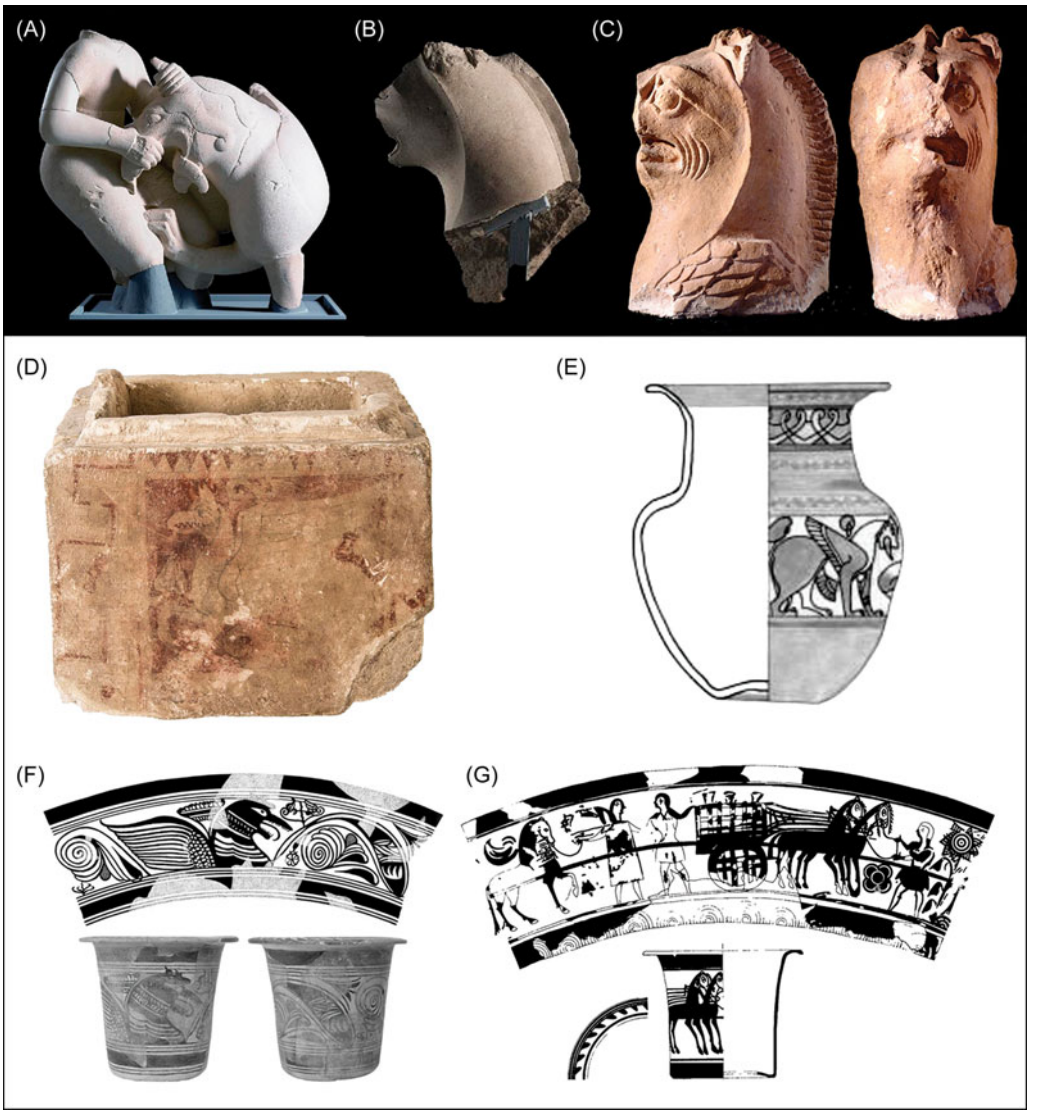

Figure 7. Selected comparisons to the relief of El Cerrón: A) the 'Griphomaquia' of Cerrillo Blanco, Porcuna, Jaén (https://ceres.mcu.es/pages/Viewer?accion=4&Museo=&AMuseo=MJ&Ninv=CE/DA01683/E08&txt_id_imagen=3); B) the griffin of El Pajarillo, Huelma, Jaén (https://ceres.mcu.es/pages/Viewer?accion=4&AMuseo=MJ&Ninv=DJ/DA02923/06); C) the griffin from La Alcudia (LA-688), Elche, Alicante (https://web.ua.es/es/laalcudia/las-piezas-que-hablan.html); D) the larnax *from the cemetery of Túrugi, Galera, Granada (https://ceres.mcu.es/pages/Viewer?accion=4&Museo=MAN&AMuseo=MAN&Ninv=1940/27/GALER/T76/1A&txt_id_imagen=2&txt_rotar=0&txt_contraste=0); E) vessel from Cabra, Córdoba (Blánquez Pérez 2002: 45, fig. 2); F) the* kalathos *from La Alcudia (Uroz Rodríguez 2007: pl. 1); G) the* kalathos *of Elche de la Sierra (Eiroa 1986: 77, fig. 2).*

stratigraphic location and associated pottery sherds, including a fragment of Attic pottery (Figure 8A), indicate that the relief was probably housed in Structure 2 during the second phase of occupation at El Cerrón, between the mid and late fourth century BC

(Valiente Cánovas 1994). Nevertheless, the preservation of the relief itself and its location—fitted within the bench/altar made of mudbrick (see Figure 3)—suggests that it originally belonged to a larger composition and its presence in Structure 2 represents reuse. The full relief could originally have hung inside Structure 1 and, after the fire, the best-preserved section was retained and placed inside Structure 2, emphasising the continuity of place. It is also possible that the relief originally decorated an aristocratic residence—possibly located near Structure 2, though not yet identified—or a cultic place, similar to the terracotta plaques from Archaic (sixth–fifth centuries BC) Etruria and *Latium* in central Italy (Roth-Murray 2007: 142), which depict elite activities (Roth-Murray 2007: 139, 145). Although geographically distant, the complex scenes of elite activities shown on the Italic terracotta plaques—horse/cart races, banquets, processions/parades and assemblies (Roth-Murray 2007: 145)—are similar to those depicted on the relief found at El Cerrón. Moreover, these plaques represent the only contemporaneous use of terracotta as a medium for such scenes, although this could reflect a preservation bias in the archaeological record of the Iberian Peninsula.

Two possible interpretations for the relief found at El Cerrón have been suggested by Balmaseda Muncharaz and Valiente Cánovas (1979: 231–34). Focusing on the charioteers, they may have been two heroic figures or two deities whose totemic/apotropaic animal was the griffin, or possibly two deceased individuals journeying to the Underworld; in the latter case, the griffin could have been their psychopomp (spirit guide), and the standing figure is gesturing farewell. Although this interpretation finds parallels in the Iberian Peninsula (Eiroa García 1986), a funerary scene does not well fit with the context of discovery. On the contrary, the first interpretation better fits local and Mediterranean parallels, where elite power is strongly tied to cults of (heroised) ancestors, used for legitimation and protection purposes (Almagro-Gorbea & Lorrio Alvarado 2011).

Whatever the purpose of the original structure that hosted the full scene—be it an elite residence or a cultic place—it is probable that the relief hung in a clearly visible position. Maintenance of a fragment within the bench/altar that stood opposite the entrance to Structure 2, a possible shrine, suggests that although the relief was not entirely preserved, it continued to play an important role for the community living at the site. Valiente Cánovas (1994) suggests that the settlement emerged at the beginning of the fourth century BC; given the current absence of evidence for an older occupation at the site, this is also the most probable date for the production of the relief.

The fourth century BC was a period of instability and turmoil in Carpetania, with an increase in social complexity and conflict for power in the Middle Tagus Valley possibly linked to a surplus in crop production and a growing population favoured by the late sub-Atlantic climate phase (De Torres Rodríguez 2013: 107–108, 351–52, and references therein). The material culture at this time is characterised by wheel-made pottery, suggesting a standardised local production that included vessels better suited for storage; iron tools, mainly related to ploughing and farming, which allowed the cultivation of heavier soils; and imports, showing an increase in the wealth of local communities (De Torres Rodríguez 2013: 351–52; Urbina Martínez 2014: 182–85). A new settlement pattern also emerged; while previous sites were placed on plains close to fresh-water streams and productive land, from the fourth century BC onwards settlements also occupied more defensive locations

Figure 8. Imports and local imitations of exotica and Iberian products found at El Cerrón: A) Attic pottery, probably a kylix *or a* skyphos *dated to the fourth century BC found in Trench I; B) Iberian imitation of a red-slip bowl found in Trench II; C) Iberian grey pottery* unguentarium *found in Trench II; D) glass bead found in the ploughsoil; E) bronze Iberian style ex-voto found in the ploughsoil; F) bronze horse-shaped fibula probably from northern Italy found in Trench IX (photographs A–E by P. Sánchez de Oro; F: https://cultura.castillalamancha.es/patrimonio/catalogo-patrimonio-cultural/yacimiento-arqueologico-de-el-cerron-de-illescas).*

such as hilltops, surrounded by ramparts, walls and moats (Urbina Martínez 2005: 45–46). The first occupation phase at El Cerrón contains imports and local imitations—at least two of them recovered in the ploughsoil (Figure 8D & E)—of both Mediterranean and Iberian goods dated between the fourth and second centuries BC (Figure 8). It is, however, possible that this pattern of import and imitation could have already started by the end of the fifth

century BC, as indicated by discoveries at other inland Iberian sites (Pereira Sieso 2012; Celestino Pérez 2013, 2023; Martín Ruiz 2020; Vives-Ferrándiz Sánchez 2021; Cebrián Fernández 2022; Blanco-González *et al.* 2023; Celestino Pérez *et al.* 2023; Miguel-Naranjo *et al.* 2023; see also Figure 6).

The 'Mediterraneanising' relief and imported artefacts suggest that the Carpetanian elite was capable of reaching Mediterranean markets, most probably through the southern Iberian Peninsula along the so-called Iberian *Via Salaria* (Almagro-Gorbea *et al.* 2021; Cebrián Fernández 2022) and/or the rivers Tagus and Guadiana (Figure 6). Interaction with further areas is also attested by a bronze horse-shaped fibula found at El Cerrón (Figure 8F), which can be characterised as an import from northern Italy based on existing parallels (Sundwall 1943: 256, fig. 8; Graells i Fabregat 2022: 140). These finds contradict the traditional interpretation of a Late Iron Age Carpetania characterised by heterarchy or *status quo* (De Torres Rodríguez 2013: 442) and, instead, help support the idea of an active participation of the local elite in wider Mediterranean, and northern Iberian, influences that were consciously adopted and adapted to fit the elite needs.

The griffin motif in the relief at El Cerrón is telling, in this sense, as it appears to depict a lotus flower stemming from its open mouth (see Figure 5). To date, no close parallel for this motif has been found in the Iberian Peninsula, neither decorating locally made artefacts nor imported goods. Parallels are found, however, in Situla Art, a 660/650–275 BC artisanal tradition that arose between the Apennines and the Eastern Alps characterised by sheet-bronze objects with embossed and/or incised decoration given an eastern Mediterranean (i.e. Orientalising) taste depicting animals, plants and/or human figures generally distributed in friezes (Saccoccio 2023). Lotus flowers are prevalent in Situla Art, though griffins are rare; possibly only two examples exist (at Este and Oppeano, in north-east Italy) and neither are depicted with a lotus flower stemming from their mouth (Zaghetto 2017: 25, fig. 2, 98, fig. 48 c, 105). Floral features may also be recognised in the oblong elements stemming from the mouth of the fully preserved horse in the relief at El Cerrón; this motif is again found in Situla Art, including depictions of ungulates (e.g. Montebelluna situla, lowest frieze, north-east Italy; Saccoccio 2023: 84, fig. 10a2). Given the physical distance between the griffins of the Iberian Peninsula and the Situla Art of northern Italy (see Figure 6), a potential link between these disparate artistic phenomena is provided by Phoenician merchants and craftsmen who progressively spread knowledge and (eastern) 'Mediterraneanising' influence across the Mediterranean basin from east to west. In the case of the Iberian Peninsula, Phoenician scarabs seem to have played a major role in disseminating this 'Mediterraneanising' motif (see discussion above).

Given the available data, Structures 1 and 2 at El Cerrón could be interpreted as shrines (see Almagro-Gorbea & Berrocal-Rangel 1997). Although little is known about Structure 3, its location—superimposed upon two previous possible shrines—might allow a similar interpretation. Moreover, we believe that the two distinct episodes of fire that affected Structures 1 and 2 are consistent with other indicators of instability and turmoil from the fourth century BC onwards in Carpetania (see above). Nevertheless, the reuse of the relief, even if only partially preserved, within Structure 2 could have acted as a means for the local elite to legitimise its power, power that possibly ultimately derived from the protection of heroised ancestors (see Almagro-Gorbea & Lorrio Alvarado 2011).

Conclusions

Critical re-evaluation of published archaeological evidence from El Cerrón allows us to suggest that, although traditionally viewed as a marginal district, Carpetania was fully embedded in networks of 'Mediterraneanisation' and northern Iberian exchange during the Late Iron Age. Through these connections, 'Mediterraneanising' and Iberian customs and goods were consciously adopted and adapted by the local elite, most probably to legitimise power and status. The 'Mediterraneanising' terracotta relief at El Cerrón indicates that these wider influences were apparent by at least the fourth century BC, coinciding with a period of instability and turmoil in Carpetania marked by the emergence of a more defensive settlement pattern associated with increased production, population size, conflict and social complexity.

Our findings highlight a critical need to challenge long-standing assumptions and confront biases that have shaped Mediterranean interaction studies, especially regarding districts traditionally labelled as 'marginal'. By rethinking these perspectives, we create a more inclusive and nuanced view of historical dynamics, allowing us to gather insights into the complexities of the past and their lasting impact.

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