

Early Celts in Burgundy appropriated Mediterranean products and feasting practices

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Selection of the Early Celtic vessels held in the archive of the Württemberg State Museum. Credit: Victor S. Brigola

Early Celts in eastern France imported Mediterranean pottery, as well as olive oil and wine, and may have appropriated Mediterranean feasting

practices, according to a study published June 19, 2019 in *PLOS ONE*, by Maxime Rageot from Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München and the University of Tübingen, and colleagues.

Hundreds of fragments of imported Mediterranean [pottery](#) have been excavated from the Early Celtic hillfort site of Vix-Mont Lassois in Burgundy, France. This study is the first to investigate the impact of these Mediterranean imports and of Mediterranean feasting/consumption practices on Early Celtic culture (7th—5th century BC), using molecular organic residue analysis techniques. The authors performed [gas chromatography](#) and GC-mass spectrometry analyses on organic residues extracted from 99 ceramic fragments found at Vix-Mont Lassois: some from 16 vessels imported from the Mediterranean and some from locally produced vessels from different contexts (elite, artisan, ritual, and military).

The results showed that the imported vessels were not only used for wine drinking as an appropriation of Mediterranean feasting practices, but also to drink local beers spiced with pine resins, in what appears to be an intercultural adaptation. Additional home-grown beverages were also found in local pottery, including what may have been millet-based beer, probably consumed only by low-status individuals, and barley-based beer and birch-derived beverages, which seemed to be consumed by high-status individuals. Local pine resins and plant oils were also identified. Beeswax was present in around 50% of the local pottery vessels, possibly indicating that mead was a popular fermented beverage or that the Early Celts liked to sweeten their beverages with honey.

The authors note that common foods such as wheat, barley and rye might have been present in the vessels but could not be detected by their analysis centuries later. Despite this limitation, this study sheds new light on the role of imported Mediterranean food and drink in helping shape Early Celtic feasting practices and demonstrates the potential of this type

of molecular analysis also for other [archaeological sites](#).

The authors add: "The Celts in the Early Iron Age did not just drink imported Greek wine from their imported Greek pottery. They also used the foreign vessels in their own way for drinking different kinds of local beer, as organic residue analysis of ca. 100 Early Iron Age local and Mediterranean drinking vessels from Mont Lassois (France) shows."

More information: Rageot M, Mötsch A, Schorer B, Bardel D, Winkler A, Sacchetti F, et al. (2019) New insights into Early Celtic consumption practices: Organic residue analyses of local and imported pottery from Vix-Mont Lassois. *PLoS ONE* 14(6): e0218001. doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0218001

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