

# La Monédière (Bessan, Hérault, France), archaeological fruit and seed remains

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## Introduction

The trading post of La Monédière (Bessan) is a major site of coastal Languedoc (southern France), situated near Agde (fig. 1) and excavated by Chronoterre Archéologie in 2014. It was founded during the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC and abandoned at the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. La Monédière is an important site for understanding exchanges between Greeks, Etruscans and Iberians and indigenous Gauls.

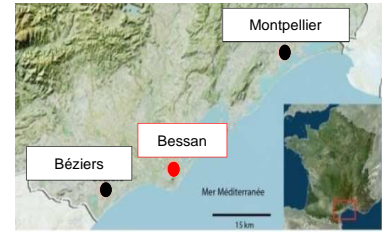
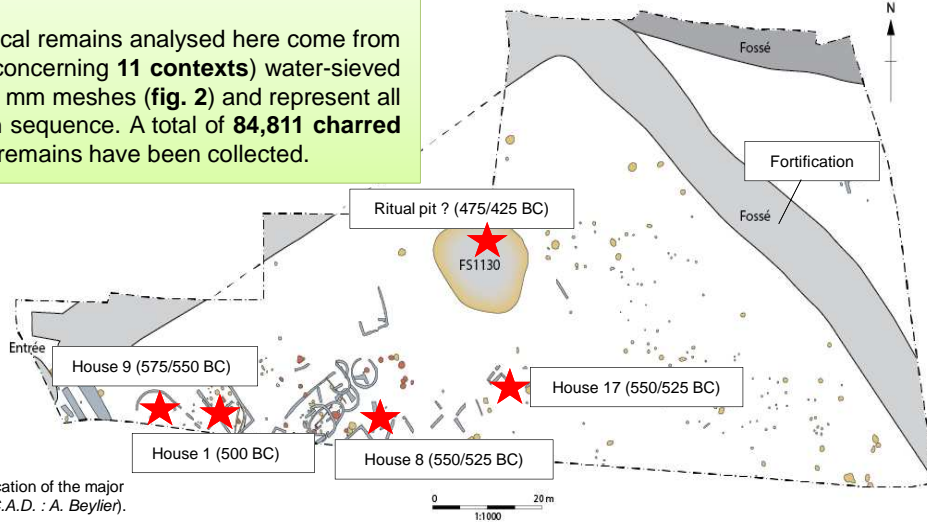


Fig. 1 - Situation of La Monédière (Bessan)

## Material and methods

Archaeobotanical remains analysed here come from **48 samples** (concerning **11 contexts**) water-sieved to 4, 2 and 0.5 mm meshes (fig. 2) and represent all the occupation sequence. A total of **84,811 charred seed and fruit remains** have been collected.



La Monédière. In red : location of the major samples and contexts. (C.A.D. : A. Beylier).

575/550 BC			
Context	Samples	Litres	
Other	Destruction	1	10
Other	Backfill	2	20
House 9	Vase	4	29
House 9 + other	Fireplace	7	77
Other	Ground	1	10
550/525 BC			
Context	Samples	Litres	
House 17 + other	Fireplace	2	17
House 17	Ground	1	10
House 17	Pit	2	7
House 8	Post hole	2	15
525/450 BC			
Context	Samples	Litres	
House 1 + other	Destruction	3	22
Other	Fireplace	3	14
Massive pit + other	Pit	3	30
Other	Backfill	1	10
Other	Other	7	50
450/400 BC			
Context	Samples	Litres	
Other	Pit	8	85

Fig. 2 - Number of samples and litres according to contexts

## Results and discussion

Cereals are predominant during the whole occupation of the site, especially **hulled barley** (*Hordeum vulgare*), **naked wheats** (*Triticum aestivum/durum/turgidum*) and **common millet** (*Panicum miliaceum*) (fig. 3). Pulses are also quite common particularly **grass or red peas** (*Lathyrus sativus/cicera*), **bitter vetches** (*Vicia ervilia*) and **broad beans** (*Vicia faba var. minor*). Fruit are surprisingly almost absent and even **grapes** (*Vitis vinifera*) are scarce (fig. 4). As regards to wild plants both winter cereals and spring weeds are the most represented (fig. 5). Several **storage** methods are used for cereals and pulses: pits, ceramic containers (*amphorae*), perishable containers (baskets) and granaries. Concerning **processing practices** after harvesting, the quite abundant presence of chaff show the by-products of the last cleaning before consumption.

La Monédière presents many similarities with other contemporaneous sites of southern France mainly concerning cereals and pulses, but there is a clear difference: the **absence of fruits and specially grapevines**. Is this specificity due to the permanent presence of Mediterranean merchants in the site? Did they prefer to import wine instead of producing it locally?

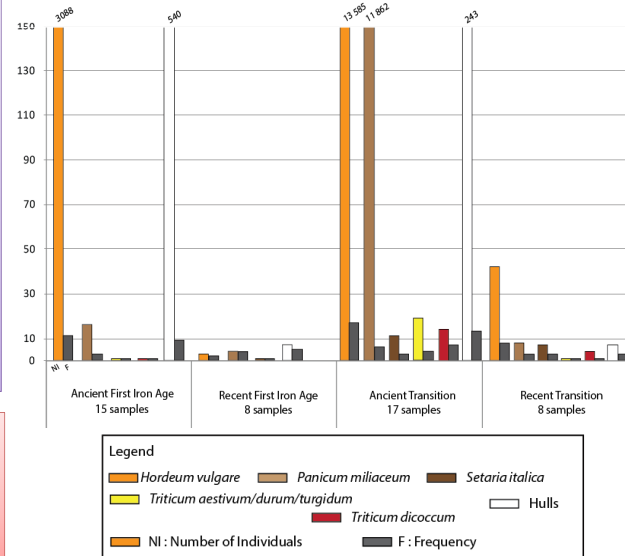


Fig. 3 - Number of individuals and frequency for cereals



*Triticum aestivum/durum/turgidum*



*Pisum sativum*

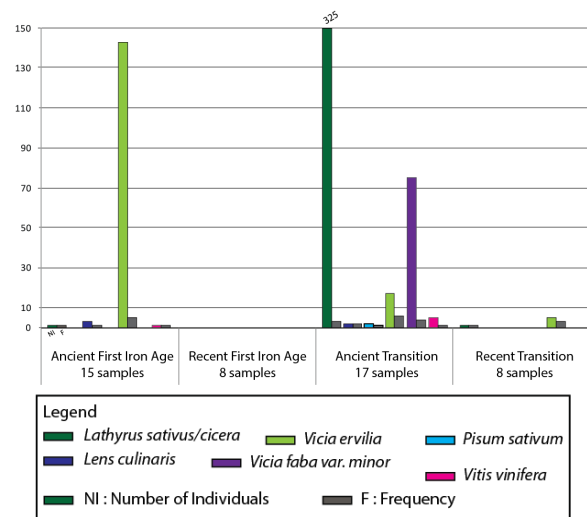


Fig. 4 - Number of individuals and frequency for pulses and fruit

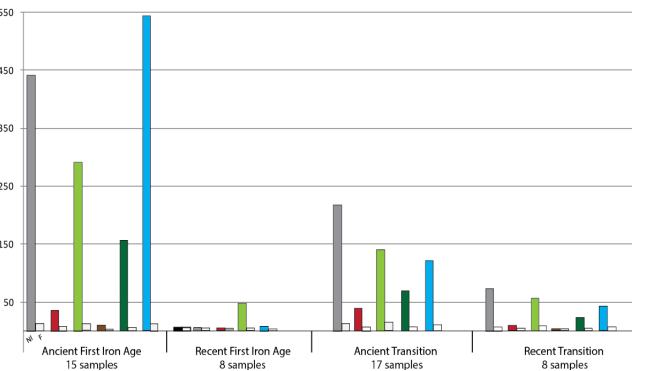


Fig. 5 - Number of individuals and frequency for wild plants