Recent Prehistoric Enclosures and Funerary Practices in Europe

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**SKELETONS IN THE DITCH: FUNERARY ACTIVITY IN DITCHED ENCLOSURES OF PORTO TORRÃO (FERREIRA DO ALENTEJO, BEJA)**

Filipa Rodrigues

**ABSTRACT**

Porto Torrão is a prehistoric settlement site in the Alentejo lowlands. The site is crossed by the Ribeira do Vale do Ourol (stream), which flows into the Sado River a few kilometers away from the archaeological site. The site is known since the early 1980’s for its impressive dimensions and important archaeological occupation, from Late Neolithic to the Bell Beaker period (Arnaud, 1982, 1993); rescue excavations have been carried out since 2003. A double-ditch system was recognized on the right bank of the stream during the archaeological intervention (Valera and Filipe, 2004). In 2008, archaeological work at the site was extended due to the implementation of an irrigation system, in connection with and paid for by the management of the Alqueva reservoir (EDIA, SA). A topsoil strip disclosed a large number of find-rich features (Rebelo et al., 2009), which were then excavated in the framework of a collaborative effort that brought together a number of archaeological companies. Among others, the features include a double-ditch system identified on both sides of the stream, several pits located inside and outside the enclosed area, megalithic graves (tholoi) and hypogea (Santos et al., in print; Valera, in print). Thus, the total area of the archaeological site extended up to >500 ha.

This paper will discuss a particular type of funerary context excavated as part of the project, consisting of human skeletal parts mixed with faunal remains, sherds and stones. This context was found at the base of the inner ditch, on the left side of the stream. The human bones formed disorganized heaps and bore evidence that suggested defleshing. Both children and adults are present, but sexing of the remains has not been possible (Otte, 2010).

**KEY-WORDS:** Porto Torrão, ditched enclosures, SW Iberia, human remains.

1. **INTRODUCTORY NOTE**

During the 2009-2010 biennium a major preventive archaeological intervention was carried out at the already known archaeological site of Porto Torrão (Ferreira do Alentejo, Beja). The intervention took place following the implementation of the Bloco de Rega de Ferreira do Alentejo, a project developed by EDIA, SA (Empresa de Desenvolvimento e Infra-Estruturas de Alqueva, SA). EDIA also promoted all the archaeological works carried out both within the known limits of the site and on its vicinity.

A number of archaeology companies were involved in this comprehensive preventive archaeology project, working in different sectors of the archaeological site, under the coordination of Dr. António Faustino de Carvalho, an external consultant of EDIA, SA.

The information included in this paper results not only from the empirical data gathered by the author during the field and laboratory work carried out under her direct responsibility, but also from reports issued by the different archaeological teams working at the site and submitted to the Portuguese Archaeological Heritage Authority - IGESPAR, IP. Those reports were not yet approved by the Authority at the time when they were accessed by the author. Therefore, any errors or omissions are the sole responsibility of the author, excepting any information not included in the above referred documents.

According to the current Portuguese legislation, the excavation, recovery and preliminary analysis of human remains identified at Sector 3 East were performed by a physical anthropology expert, Dr. Iris Naire Otte.

2. **LOCATION**

The Porto Torrão archaeological site is located in Southwest Iberia, in the Portuguese region of Alentejo, near the town of Ferreira do Alentejo, some 25 kilometers from the city of Beja, which is the district capital (38°04’28.03” N; 8°07’35.80” W).

In geomorphological terms, the Porto Torrão area is part of the Baixo Alentejo penplain, a major relief unit in Southern Portugal, which is bounded northerly by the

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6 Sectors 1 and 2 were excavated by Neópica company, under the direction of Raquel Santos, Paulo Rebelo, Nuno Neto and Ana Vieira; sector 3 West by Archeostudos company, under the direction of João Rebuge, Anabela Sá and António Cheney; sectors 3 East, 4 and 6 by Crivarque company, under the direction of Filipa Rodrigues. The identified burial grounds, associated with the Porto Torrão archaeological site, were likewise excavated by different companies. The Monte do Pombal site was excavated by Era, Arqueologia company, under the direction of Susana Dias and Margarida Figueiredo; the Monte do Cardim site was excavated by Era, Arqueologia company, under the direction of Margarida Figueiredo; the Horta do João da Moura site was excavated by Era, Arqueologia company, under the direction of Tiago do Pereiro and by Styx, Estudos de Antropologia company, under the direction of Mónica Corga and Maria Teresa Ferreira; the Monte do Cerrasal site was excavated by Era, Arqueologia company, under the direction of Helena Santos and by Styx, Estudos de Antropologia company, under the direction of Maria João Neves and Catarina Mendes.

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Serra de Portel, westerly by the Sado river basin and the Serra da Vigia, southerly by the Serra do Caldeirão and easterly by the Serra de Barrancos.

Fig. 1 – Porto Torrão: Location.

This area is also defined by some authors as "Superfície de Beja", a sometimes perfect flattening, with scarce residual relief, resulting from slow erosion rejuvenation. Throughout this region, the average altitude of the peneplain ranges from 80 to 180 meters AMSL.

The Porto Torrão archaeological site location is also part of the Sado river basin, which features a poorly developed drainage system in this area, with little constrainment and a small number of temporary and permanent watercourses. The main permanent watercourses are the streams of Canhestro, Capela and Vale do Ouro, with an E-W orientation and runoff. The latter runs across the archaeological site, which suggests a “centralization” of this natural resource, which is critical for communities that set their economical subsystems upon agro-pastoral activities.

Concerning Geology, this area is characterized by the presence of Miocene sedimentary lithologies, featuring clays, marls, limestone and conglomerates, mostly corresponding to soft, pulverous rocks.

3. BRIEF HISTORY OF THE DISCOVERIES

The site was identified in the early 80’s of the twentieth century by Diogo Patricio. During that decade, several archaeological research works were carried out under the scientific direction of José Morais Arnaud.

In paper published in ’93, apart from providing a plan with the estimated area for the occupation of the site (about 100ha), J. M. Arnaud states that this site was "[...] one of the most important "Bell Beaker" sites of the Peninsula [...]", due to the density of this type of pottery (about 20 fragments/m²) (Arnaud, 1993). Thus, the research works conducted by Arnaud focused mainly on the study of the Bell Beaker issues, its chronology and origin.

Several sondages were carried out on a small elevation, considered as the geometrical center of the settlement, assuming (1) a thicker stratigraphy and (2) evidence of any existing defensive structures. The excavation of a 24m² area revealed a 1m thick stratigraphic sequence with 3 well defined layers. Absolute dates for each of these layers were obtained by the radiocarbon method.

On that basis, two phases of occupation were established:

- Layer 1 corresponds to a pre-Bell Beaker period;
- Layer 3 corresponds to a Bell Beaker context.

A continued occupation of the site, without any hiatus, was thus assumed (Arnaud, 1982, 1993).

Since the first results from Porto Torrão were published, the site has been referred several times in Iberian archaeological bibliography. These references always acknowledge the importance of its study to understand the evolution of the first food-producing societies in the Iberian Peninsula.

However, in spite of the site’s relevance, it was only in 2002 when new archaeological works were carried out at the site, in the scope of a “rescue archeology” project, carried out by Era, Arqueologia Company, under the direction of Iola Filipe and Antonio Carlos Valera.

This project brought up "the" big news about the prehistoric occupation of Porto Torrão: unlike the early '80s assumption that a walled structure existed at the site, it was obvious that Porto Torrão fitted into the “ditched enclosure” type of site. Two sections of large ditches and some pit structures were identified; a whole new type of architecture, unknown until then in Porto Torrão (Valera & Filipe, 2004).

Regarding the site’s diachrony, occupations and the filling phases of the ditches, it was observed that this has occurred in two distinct periods of recent Prehistory.

Thus:

- Ditch 1, corresponding to the inner ditch, has been filled during Late Neolithic;
- Ditch 2, corresponding to the outer ditch, has been filled during Chalcolithic, and the last phase of the filling period already occurred in the Bell Beaker Period (Valera & Filipe, 2004).

In 2008, work at the site was extended due to the implementation of an irrigation system, in connection with and paid for by the management of the Alqueva reservoir (EDIA, SA). A topsoil strip disclosed a large number of find-rich features (Rebelo at al., 2009), which were then excavated in the framework of a collaborative effort that brought together a number of archaeological companies.
Over 3000 m² were excavated, both inside and outside the enclosure, allowing to observe what no one, until now, had been able to see: a complex “web” of negative structures, with different morphologies and chronologies, and interspersed occupation levels, confirming the site’s long diachrony, which undoubtedly begins in the 2nd half of the 4th millennium and extends continuously throughout the 3rd millennium and up to Bronze Age.

Among others, the features include a double-ditch system identified on both sides of the stream, several pits located inside and outside the enclosed area, megalithic graves (tholoi at Monte do Cardim, Horta do João da Moura and Monte do Pombal), and hypogea (at Monte do Carrascal) (Santos et al., in print; Valera, in print). Thus, the total area of the archaeological site extended up to >500 ha.

### Table 1 – Porto Torrão: radiocarbon dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lab Number</th>
<th>Provenience</th>
<th>Sample*</th>
<th>δ¹³C (Vs)</th>
<th>Date BP</th>
<th>1 Cal BCE (68.2%%)</th>
<th>2 Cal BCE (68.2%%)</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ICEN-56</td>
<td>Profile 1 - Layer 1</td>
<td>Bc</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>4300 ± 80</td>
<td>3900-3600 (5.1)</td>
<td>3000-2800 (5.1)</td>
<td>Arnaut, 1992; Santos, in print</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICEN-55</td>
<td>Profile 1 - Layer 1 (same sample as ICEN-56)</td>
<td>Bc</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>4300±10</td>
<td>3910-3710 (12.3)</td>
<td>2960-2810 (16.0)</td>
<td>Arnaut, 1992; Santos, in print</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICEN-38</td>
<td>Profile 1 - Layer 2</td>
<td>Bc</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>4200±110</td>
<td>2600-2310 (10.1)</td>
<td>2320-2030 (15.1)</td>
<td>Arnaut, 1992; Santos, in print</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICEN-61</td>
<td>Profile 1 - Layer 3</td>
<td>Bc</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>4300±10</td>
<td>2600-2310 (10.1)</td>
<td>2320-2030 (15.1)</td>
<td>Arnaut, 1992; Santos, in print</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICEN-40</td>
<td>Profile 1 - Layer 4 (same sample as ICEN-41)</td>
<td>Bc</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>4200±10</td>
<td>2600-2310 (10.1)</td>
<td>2320-2030 (15.1)</td>
<td>Arnaut, 1992; Santos, in print</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sec-2036</td>
<td>Ditch 1 (top)</td>
<td>Asc</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>3490±90</td>
<td>2120-2090 (9.4)</td>
<td>1890-1530 (3.1)</td>
<td>Valera, 2004; Santos, in print</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sec-2169</td>
<td>Ditch 1 (top)</td>
<td>Asc</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>4240±70</td>
<td>2610-2670</td>
<td>2010-2680 (9.4)</td>
<td>Valera, 2012; Santos, in print</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sec-2232</td>
<td>Ditch 1 (middle)</td>
<td>Asc</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>4390±90</td>
<td>2910-2979</td>
<td>2325-2980 (9.5)</td>
<td>Valera, 2012; Santos, in print</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sec-2207</td>
<td>Ditch 2 (bottom)</td>
<td>Asc</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>3700±40</td>
<td>2220-1005</td>
<td>2280-1590 (9.4)</td>
<td>Valera, 2004; Santos, in print</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sec-2028</td>
<td>Ditch 2 (top)</td>
<td>Asc</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>3700±40</td>
<td>2220-1005</td>
<td>2280-1590 (9.4)</td>
<td>Valera, 2004; Santos, in print</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sec-2033</td>
<td>Ditch 2 (middle)</td>
<td>Asc</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>3100±10</td>
<td>2270-2190</td>
<td>2170-1700</td>
<td>Valera, in print</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sec-2234 (ou 2047)</td>
<td>Ditch 2 (middle)</td>
<td>Asc</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>4190±110</td>
<td>3910±110</td>
<td>2610-2141 (9.4)</td>
<td>Valera, 2012; Santos, in print</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sec-2039</td>
<td>Ditch 2 (middle)</td>
<td>Asc</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>3420±10</td>
<td>1860-1500</td>
<td>2310-1980</td>
<td>Valera, in print</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sec-2027</td>
<td>Pit 3</td>
<td>Asc</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>3690±10</td>
<td>2270-1940</td>
<td>2450-1700</td>
<td>Valera, in print</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Bc = Bone collagen (not available if human or animal); Asc = Animal bone collagen

3. THE 2009-2010 INTERVENTION: SECTOR 3 EAST DOUBLE-DITCH SYSTEM

As referred above, a double-ditch system was identified during the 2009-2010 archaeological intervention, on both sides of the Ribeira do Vale do Ouro; this confirms the architecture observed in 2003.

The identification of this ditch system is supported by four integrally excavated sections on sectors 1, 2 (Santos
et al., 2012), and 3 East, located on the left bank of the Ribeira do Vale do Ouro, and on sector 6, located on the stream’s right bank.

The system features large parallel, negative structures up to 6 m deep and 12 m wide.

Apart from their truly monumental dimensions, another aspect of these structures ought to be highlighted as well: the presence of transversal tunnels connecting the ditches. This particular feature might support the hypothesis that both ditches were opened simultaneously, in order to fulfill a common purpose, functioning as a single structure rather than as two separate and independent blocks. This approach assumes that this functionality would have existed prior to the ditches’ filling.

However, and considering the stratigraphic sequence observed in each of the ditches, filling appears to have occurred not only in different ways (natural/anthropic processes), but also at different occupation times, and always within the Chalcolithic diachrony.

To illustrate the above, see the ditch system identified on Sector 3 East, which corresponds to the context discussed in this paper.

3.1. **SECTOR 3 EAST: OUTER DITCH – DITCH II**

The outer ditch (Ditch II) is some 12m wide and about 6m deep, and roughly V-shaped. The inner interface features the opening for the above mentioned tunnel. From the stratigraphic point of view, its filling took place mainly due to natural processes. However, at a stage when it was already substantially filled, a small ditch was reopened, and later on delimited by an alignment of stones. We must also mention that the groundwater level was reached at the base of the structure, corresponding to the actual topographic elevation of the stream. The first deposit which accumulated inside the ditch, featuring laminated sediments, possibly indicates the circulation of water within the structure.

3.2. **SECTOR 3 EAST: INNER DITCH – DITCH I**

As far as the inner ditch is concerned, the sedimentation process is completely different, with a complex stratigraphic sequence, which features different structures and occupation levels, within successive and intercalated deposits of both anthropogenic and natural origin. Thus, the filling processes of such a structure can have different dynamics and probably different meanings, all within the same chronocultural stage.
The funerary context was found inside this ditch, but there is an interesting sequence of archaeological occupations above the burial, which should be addressed here as well:

Fig. 5 – Porto Torrão: Sector 3 East – Ditch I (Inner ditch) N Profile; A – reproduction of field drawing; B – photographic view

Phase 7: Clay structure ([32007])

After the filling of the ditch, but at a time when its interfaces were still visible, a parallel positive structure was built in the center of the negative structure, using clay as the main raw material. This structure is partially truncated by a soil profile ([∅]) which provided the few Bell Beaker pottery sherds recovered in this area. This soil profile, which exists in the whole of Sector 3 East, sealed Ditch I of Porto Torrão, making it absolutely imperceptible on the surface.

Fig. 6 – Sector 3 East, Ditch I: clay structure; A – Overall photo taken from the Southern side; B – Overall photo taken from the Western side; C – Field drawing, including the clay structure and the limits of the ditch.

Phase 6: Occupation Level 2 ([32043])

Two combustion structures of different types, which must have worked simultaneously, were identified close to the inner interface. These are: 1) a paved surface of irregular morphology composed of rock fragments from different lithologies, broken by the action of fire; 2) and a circular structure, molded into the sediment itself, the "combustion" / "brazier" taking place inside.

A large number of sherd s were recovered around these combustion structures, along with lithics (including a knapping area) and a faunal assemblage, featuring mammals and a lesser amount of malacological remains. The degree of preservation of these remains suggests a rapid sedimentation process, which allowed for in situ conservation, with few post-depositional processes that would have altered the original position of the finds; nevertheless, some degree of horizontal distribution was assumed from the beginning.

The three-dimensional piece-plotting used helps to corroborate this hypothesis, as organized distribution patterns were identified. Both pottery and lithics were concentrated in areas near the structures, the faunal remains being somewhat scattered all over the reference grid.

Fig. 7 – Sector 3 East, Ditch I: Occupation Level 2 – overall view and detail of the combustion structures.

Fig. 8 – Sector 3 East, Ditch I: Occupation Level 2 – 3D Piece-Plotting
Phase 5: Waste dump area

Below Occupation Level 2, a different deposit was identified, which revealed an assemblage of faunal remains; its main feature is the frequency of the same anatomical elements, among which: shoulder blades, jaws, vertebrae, radii, ribs and pelvises.

The species are not yet fully identified, but the presence of pig and ovicaprids is confirmed. A canid jaw was also recognized.

A total of 159 animal bones and bone fragments were recovered and three-dimensionally piece-plotted, in a rather restricted area. It should be noted that these ecofacts were found on the ditch’s central axis, despite the fact that at this depth the structure is some 6 m wide.

It is important to mention that the arrangement and preservation of these elements indicates, once more, a moment of rapid sediment deposition, a hypothesis also supported by the horizontality of this sedimentary unit, along with the horizontality and spatial distribution of the ecofacts.

Phase 5: Anthropic deposit

Fig. 9 – Sector 3 East, Ditch I: waste dump area; A – aerial photo of Ditch I, during excavation (courtesy of EDIA, SA); B – Overall photo taken from the Southern side

Below this stratigraphic unit, there is a deposit similar to the bedrock, which in this area is a soft rock, locally known as "caliço" due to its similarities with lime. This deposit occupies the central part of the negative structure, although it does not occupy its entire width (which in this excavation phase, at about 2.50 m below surface, was approximately 2m).

This deposit stops abruptly near the interfaces of the ditch, which may indicate the existence of a "barrier" along the walls of the structure that, in a way, prevented the expansion of the deposit. This abrupt interruption is also related to the presence of two small trenches, one along each interface, which might indicate the existence of a palisade. The formation of this deposit is clearly anthropic and shows signs of fire exposure (reddening).

Fig. 10 – Sector 3 East, Ditch I: waste dump area – 3D Piece-Plotting

Fig. 11 – Sector 3 East, Ditch I: Occupation Level 1 – pit hearth excavation sequence

Fig. 12 – Sector 3 East, Ditch I: anthropic deposit; A – Overall photo taken from the Northern side; B - Overall photo after the excavation of the small
trenches skirting the deposit, taken from the Northern side; C – Detail of a trench (east)

4. **Skeletons in the Ditch: The Context (Sector 3 East, Ditch I)**

The funerary use of this ditch was recognized when the ditch was already approximately 3.50 m deep and there was a pronounced narrowing of the walls, which also indicated that the base of the structure was near. In terms of excavation area, no more than 7m2 of this context were excavated; its thickness was less than 1m.

This funerary use of the inner ditch from Sector 3 East of Porto Torrão was revealed by the presence of about a hundred human bones, mixed with pottery sherds, stones and faunal remains, namely disorganized mammal bones. In some cases, the concentration of bones forms real piles and there are some anatomical connections, although a complete skeleton has never been found.

Different types of depositions were recorded, such as the following:

A. Two nearly complete non-adult crania, one of them articulated with the mandible and the first cervical vertebra; below the skulls, it was possible to see a cluster of bones belonging to young adults and adults, namely pelvis, right and left femur, scapula, humerus, ulna and clavicle (Otte, 2010);

B. A femur and tibia / fibula in anatomic articulation, which would have been deposited in flesh; below them a left hand was recorded, which kept in anatomical connection 7 carpal bones, 5 metacarpals, 5 proximal phalanges, 2 medial phalanges, articulating with ulna, humerus and radius; both limbs belong to adults (Otte, 2012);

C. A real "amalgam" of animal bones, human bones, pottery sherds and "caliço" stones.

In anatomical terms, nearly all human skeletal parts are represented.

Concerning age groups, the best represented groups are adults (26%), followed by subadults (8%), and only 6% of the remains are assigned to the young adult group. However, 60% of the exhumed remains could not be assigned to any age group.

From the graph showing the skeletal representation by age groups, we can infer the following: the subadults are best represented by the mandibles, skulls and vertebrae; the young adult group by the pelvic region and lower limbs; limbs are the best represented elements in adults.

These hundreds of human bones correspond to a minimum number of six individuals, including both adult and subadult individuals (Otte, 2010).
5. DISCUSSION

Now that the context was presented, its interpretation should be discussed. However, at this time there are more questions and doubts than answers and certainties about these facts.

Knowing that this type of context is common all over Europe and considering the interpretive hypothesis normally assigned to it, the following questions can be formulated:

1) Is this a "dump"? If so, why do we have human bones in anatomical connection?

2) Would this context be the result of emptying a funerary area located near the ditch (e.g., from the pit burials or the megalithic monuments)? If so, why are there more faunal remains than human bones?

3) Will it be the result of cannibalistic practices? Cut marks or any other form of forceful dismemberment were not visible to the naked eye. However, the high fragmentation degree of the collection added to the missing extremities of most bones can be a problem in the correct evaluation of this issue.

The truth is that all issues and questions arising when interpreting this context are centered on a single problem: would it be a primary deposition where human bones are deliberately deposited after partial fleshing, this hypothesis being compatible, for example, with the idea of cannibalism? Or is it a secondary deposition resulting from the primary treatment that was possibly given to the dead?
Furthermore, the multiplicity of funerary activities already known in this archaeological site only generates more doubts.

As mentioned before, the archaeological works carried out during the 2009-2010 biennium, covered not only a significant part of the enclosed area, but also neighboring areas, including the locations known as Monte do Cardim, Horta do João da Moura, Monte do Carrascal and Monte do Pombal.

The interventions carried out in these areas allowed not only to extend the archaeological site area to more than 500ha, but also to recognize a number of well defined burial areas, with distinct architectural solutions.

The archaeological excavations in these areas were carried out by different teams. The data described below are either included in the archaeological reports submitted to the project owner or personal communications from the excavation directors.

Thus, Monte do Cardim and Monte do Pombal match the tholos type structures, each of them being apparently isolated (Figueiredo, 2009; Dias & Figueiredo, 2009). On the other hand, Horta do João da Moura includes a group of at least five tholoi. Only two of these five tholoi were fully excavated (Pereiro, 2010; Corga & Ferreira, 2011) and the remaining three were identified during the archaeological monitoring of an urbanization project (personal information of Raquel Santos, Nuno Neto e Paulo Rebelo).

The site known as Monte do Carrascal features a distinct architectural solution: this is a set of hypogea, featuring four securely identified structures (Santos, 2010; Neves & Mendes, 2011). However, the geophysical survey performed at this site revealed dozens of anomalies that can be interpreted as similar structures (personal information of António Valera).

Furthermore, burial pits were also recognized inside the enclosed area (Granja, 2009; Umbelino & Amorim, 2010; Neoépica, 2011).

Thus, the funerary activity recorded so far in Porto Torrão can be described as follows:

A) non-megalithic burial pits, single or double, inside the enclosed area;

B) collective burials, such as tholoi (megalithic) and hypogea (non-megalithic) outside the enclosed area;

C) and precisely in the place that allows to differentiate what is "inside" from what is "outside", there are partially defleshed human remains, some dispersed, others in anatomical connection, as referred above; this is not a single situation, of only one individual, but rather a pattern that implies a collective practice.

What might be the meaning of such dichotomies as “inside/outside”, “megalithic/non-megalithic” or “single/collective”?

![Diagram of burial areas](image)

**Fig. 17 – Porto Torrão: variety of funerary activities**
The following are the demographic data obtained so far:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector / Site</th>
<th>Portrait</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Young Adult</th>
<th>Subadult</th>
<th>Adult</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sector 1 &amp; 2 Pits Inside</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sector 1 Inside</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sector 2 North Interior</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horta do João da Moura Outside</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monte do Carrascal Outside</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINAL TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2 – Porto Torrão: demographic data (A = Adult; YA = Young Adult; SA = Subadult)**

So far a minimal number of 238 individuals have been recognized in all interventions. However, some of these contexts were only partially excavated. And, in other cases, the funerary structures were identified, but not excavated – three tholoi from Horta do João da Moura and at least two hypogea and a probable tholoi at Monte do Carrascal (Pereiro, 2010; Corga & Ferreira, 2011).

All these facts clearly indicate that the minimum number of individuals would grow exponentially if these contexts were excavated. Not only because they are funerary contexts, but also because the cases mentioned - Horta do João da Moura and Monte do Carrascal - correspond to the areas with the highest number of individuals.

Regarding population data, there is some discrepancy concerning the sexual diagnosis of the individuals: female individuals are better represented than males. However, it should be taken into account that it was not possible to determine the gender of 79% of the sample, so there is a relevant margin of error, which suggests that this difference has no significance.
All age groups are represented with the highest incidence for adults (60%), followed by subadults (20%) and young adults (only 4%). In this case, the percentage of uncertainty concerning "age group" is much smaller, at only 16%.

Despite the fact that human remains appear throughout the entire archaeological complex, there is a clear prevalence of this type of context outside the enclosed area. And that is compatible with the notion of a relatively well bounded necropolis. Not in a particular place (there are funerary monuments on the East and South sides of the enclosed area) but markedly out the enclosed area.

If we pay attention to the dichotomy "individual burial" / "collective burial" the values show that 5% of the individuals were identified in single or double funerary contexts, while the remaining 95% were identified in collective funerary contexts.

Despite the size of the area excavated inside the enclosure (>3 000 m²), where a larger number of single burials were identified, this practice is only residual when the overall characteristics of the site are considered.

What could this mean, in social terms?

At the current stage of research at this archaeological site, the multiplicity and variety of funerary contexts is still missing radiometric datings for each of these contexts; this issue is expected to be solved in the near future.

However, if one considers their relative dating, these activities have possibly been synchronic, at some point:

- the inner ditch of Sector 3 East has a chronology based on the techno-typological analysis of material culture and chronostratigraphy, which fits in the first half of the third millennium BC;

- for the pit burials, in cases where a chronological attribution was possible, also based on the material culture associated with the burials, there are two distinct stages: Chalcolithic or Bell Beaker period (Santos et al, 2012; Rebuj et al., 2010);

- for the collective funerary monuments located outside the enclosed area, different phases of the monument’s use were defined in some cases, but in almost all situations, the end of the fourth millennium BC is a likely date for the beginning of its use, lasting until the beginning of the Bell Beaker period (Granja, 2009; Figueiredo, 2009; Dias & Figueiredo, 2009; Pereiro,
Without absolute datings that would enable the establishment of relationships between “single or double” and “collective” funerary activities, a social reading might be risky.

However, all these empirical data are compatible with the idea that Porto Torrão functioned as an aggregation site in a specific territory, where phenomena of social differentiation necessarily occurred, regardless of the subsystem that sets off that differentiation (economic, political, symbolic). And the different solutions / funerary activities already known also demonstrate a culturally diversified society.

6. CONCLUSION

So, returning to the funerary context of Sector 3 East inner ditch, is this just another way of dealing with Death?

The data that were presented here are relatively recent. At this time, the programming of a research project is underway; it will seek to compile the data of all archaeological interventions performed, so far, in the archaeological site of Porto Torrão.

It is expected that more empirical data will be available in the near future, which will enable us to chronologically and culturally characterize the economic subsystem and the symbolic behavior of the community who built, used and abandoned the archaeological site of Porto Torrão.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES


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