

Foreword

Research on the Iberian Copper Age has undergone an impressive transformation in the last two decades. At the end of 1990's, the debate still revolved around the data available for the two sites that had dominated this field of research in the second half of the twentieth century: Los Millares (Almería, Spain) and Zambujal (Torres Vedras, Portugal). In Spain, the study of chalcolithic societies was clearly based on the large number of excavations carried out in the Southeast since the times of Luis Siret, which, as well as Los Millares, included sites such as Almizaraque, Terrera Ventura, Las Pilas and El Barranquete in Almería, and Cerro de la Virgen, El Malagón and Los Castillejos de las Peñas de la Gitanos in Granada. This resulted in a synecdoche of sorts, by which a small set of sites, located in a relatively small region with very specific ecological conditions, was taken as representative of the whole of the Iberian Peninsula.

This great imbalance has been dramatically corrected in the last twenty years thanks to the development of research in the central and western regions of Iberia. Two main factors explain this change. On one hand, “rescue archaeology” due to urban development and major public works has boosted the study of chalcolithic sites in at least three very relevant territories: the Portuguese Alentejo (as a result of the construction of the Alqueva dam); El Aljarafe, near the city of Seville, where the Valencina mega-site is located; and the region of Madrid. On account of these “rescue archaeology” interventions, a number of important new sites have been discovered and excavated, including Perdigões, Porto Torrão, Camino de las Yeseras and Humanejos. In other previously known sites excavations have redoubled as is the case of Valencina and Marroquies Bajos. Moreover, in the last quarter of century research in the South-eastern sites has not kept up with that being undertaken in the above-mentioned sites, and has slowed down considerably or even ground to a halt. Excavations carried out throughout the 1980s and 1990s at sites such as Los Millares or Almizaraque have never been systematically published.

On the other hand, apart from the effect of ‘territorial compensation’, which has allowed a much more complete and representative view of Chalcolithic societies in Iberia, there has also been considerable progress in terms of the methods used. Several of the sites in central and western Iberia have benefited from the great growth and diversification of technical advances archaeology has experienced in recent decades. This is evident in the recent multidisciplinary monographs published for Valencina (García Sanjuán *et al.*, 2013; Fernández Flores *et al.*, 2016), Bolores (Lillios *et al.*, 2015), Perdigões (Valera, 2018), Humanejos (Garrido-Pena *et al.*, 2019), Porto

das Carretas (Soares, 2013) and Cardim 6 (Valera *et al.*, 2019), all of which place a very strong emphasis on the application of modern scientific methods. Moreover, this ‘new wave’ of investigations of Chalcolithic sites has given great importance to the study of the human bone record, promoting bioarchaeology (or physical anthropology) beyond its conventional scope, through cutting edge methods of analysis, such as radiocarbon dating by AMS and its probabilistic modelling by Bayesian statistics, geochemical characterization (e.g. mercury contamination), DNA characterization or stable isotope studies for the determination of dietary and mobility patterns. For obvious reasons, early major studies published for chalcolithic sites of the Spanish south-east such as Los Millares (Almagro Basch and Arribas Palau, 1963), Almizaraque (Almagro Gorbea, 1965), Zambujal (Sangmeister *et al.*, 1966), Sangmeister and Schubart, 1981), Cerro de la Virgen (Schule, 1980) and Terrera Ventura (Gusi Jener and Olaría Puyoles, 1991) did not benefit from these advances. In some of them, as is notably the case in Zambujal, human bones are scarce, but in others, such as Los Millares, there has never been a systematic study of them.

Therefore, despite its absence in those earlier studies, the human bone record has recently acquired a major role in the study of the Copper Age. This makes sense in terms of the strong presence of funerary practices in chalcolithic social life, which is manifested in the large number of tombs discovered in all of the sites studied (cf. Zambujal as an exception), the spectacular monumentality of some of them, the investments involved in their construction, the amount (and often the sophistication and beauty) of the material culture buried in them, and the omnipresence of the human record in structures which were not previously envisaged as funerary, as is the case of pits and ditches.

Thus, it is no exaggeration to state that from pioneering studies (Jiménez-Brobeil, 1988) bioarchaeology has become a major protagonist of recent studies of the Iberian Copper Age. The book ‘Resting in Peace or in Pieces? Tomb I and Death Management in the 3rd Millennium BC at the Perdigões Enclosure (Reguengos de Monsaraz, Portugal)’ by Lucy Shaw Evangelista is excellent proof of this. This work sets the standard for what a complete bioarchaeological study of an Iberian Copper Age funerary context should be. A ‘standard’ which, apart from some notable exceptions, has not existed until now. But the interest of this study does not lie solely in the fact that it provides an inescapable reference, regarding the approach and methods that should be applied to address the investigation of demography, biology and material conditions of life of chalcolithic populations. It is also of interest for a number of other reasons.

First of all, it is important because it stems from a project that is contributing enormously to the advancement of the investigation of the Iberian Copper Age. After 20 years of uninterrupted research, the extensive bibliographic production available (see Valera 2018 for an overview) reveals how much Perdigões has revolutionized the ‘traditional’ knowledge of Iberian chalcolithic societies. Despite its considerable size (16 hectares), the monumentality and density of some of its structures (ditched enclosures, megalithic chambers, stone circles), and the abundance and richness of material culture, revealing social practices of great complexity persistently occurring over 1500 years, Perdigões is not a ‘settlement’ in the sense of a stable settled population in the same way as ‘classic’ chalcolithic sites, such as Los Millares and Zambujal, have traditionally been understood. The excellent interdisciplinary quality and scientific rigour that characterizes the investigation of this site is another point in its favour. It is highly significant that the most important investigations of the Portuguese chalcolithic period are being undertaken by a private company, ERA Archaeology. This fact invites reflection on the capacity of scientific institutions to evolve at the same pace as new theoretical approaches and new methods. I am also convinced that Spanish “rescue archaeology” has much to learn from the quality and rigour that appears to be the norm in Portuguese professional practice. I say this based on first-hand experience of the poor conditions with which ‘rescue archaeology’ operates at the Valencia mega-site. Research on Perdigões has been characterized by fresh and intelligent theoretical approaches, something that we must also pay attention to in Spain, where the study of the Copper Age has often been dominated by theoretical narratives presented almost as doctrine – to the point of rigorism – often leading to assumptions being transformed into empirical propositions without bothering with the tedious process of empirical testing. Furthermore, the fieldwork carried out at Perdigões is characterized by great methodological rigour and a high sense of responsibility regarding the publication of the excavation results, something that at times has also been amiss in the study of major Spanish sites such as Antequera, Los Millares or Marroquies Bajos.

But apart from revealing to us questions of great interest about the current state of research on the Iberian Copper Age, Shaw Evangelista’s work on Perdigões’ Tomb I offers an important empirical understanding of the type of funerary practices that took place there and of the demographics, biology and living conditions of the people who were buried in it. This is a significant achievement, especially if one considers the poor conservation and high degree of fragmentation of the human bone material recovered, which amounts to 62,000 fragments. Shaw Evangelista’s efforts sheds light on multiple aspects of the population of 103 individuals buried in this tomb (55 adults and 48 non-adults). Some of them deserve further comment.

In the first place, from the point of view of funerary practices, Tomb I was used for the probable secondary

inhumation of human remains for which no partial or complete recognizable anatomical connections were identified. The prevalence of a pattern of secondary inhumation inevitably poses the question of where were the corpses originally decomposed (perhaps as part of a previous process of primary burial). Among many others, the possibility that the bones could have been transported into Perdigões from surrounding locations cannot be discarded. In fact, that would be totally consistent with the interpretation of this site as a gathering place, and not as a stable settlement (village) in the classic sense. These data can be seen under the light of the growing body of evidence that, throughout the European continent, suggests the importance of periodic gatherings, carried out on special occasions (most likely with astronomical significance) in central places of special social, ideological and symbolic relevance. This research line is of great importance for other Late Neolithic and Copper Age Iberian sites, for which evidence of stable occupation (for example, large-scale stone civil or architecture, or deep stratigraphic deposits) are scarce or non-existent, as is the case of the Valencina mega-site. Irrespective of whether or not future evidence confirms the importance of the seasonal nature of the occupation and use of certain specific sites, this line of inquiry is of great value, for it enriches and broadens the study of chalcolithic sites traditionally interpreted as villages (Los Millares, Zambujal, Marroquies Bajos, etc.).

Secondly, it is important to note that the bones identified in Tomb I reflect a ‘natural’ population, which allows us to evaluate this ‘dead’ population as a reflection of the ‘living’ society. This observation is of major significance, as amongst the bewildering diversity of Copper Age funerary practices it is not uncommon to find contexts that do not appear to reflect the living population – see for example Cintas-Peña *et al.*, 2018 for a discussion of the case of Valencina. Some tombs were used to deposit the living population as they died; however, others were used to deposit groups of people selected according to various criteria, as is the case of Montelirio.

Thirdly, it is necessary to emphasize the detailed analysis of the bone record in terms of temporality and sequence. With the support of radiocarbon and stratigraphic analysis Shaw Evangelista succeeds in interpreting the four stages of the use of the tomb in demographic terms, which is excellently reflected in figure 121. The awareness that the author shows in relation to the importance of the biographical approach is of great importance in the study of monuments that were used persistently over centuries: social practices do change over time. A good example is the fact that Phase 2B of Tomb I is the one with a highest deposition of grave goods but at the same time the one with the fewest human remains, unlike Phase 2D where the exact opposite happens. In my opinion, the author rightly points out that while it is difficult to be sure why this phenomenon occurred, it may have to do with the fact that the material culture deposited in the tomb was not necessarily intended to accompany specific individuals, but rather the group deposited in the tomb. This underlines

the difficulty in interpreting the funerary record of the Late Neolithic and the Copper Age in terms of collectivity vs. individuality and the risk of making facile assumptions about it. Chalcolithic mortuary practices and probably the social organization of the living, reveal an important component of ‘collectivism’ or ‘communalism’. However, that did not preclude an important element of individuality and agency in both. Recent work suggests that in the first half of the 3rd millennium BCE, southern Iberian societies were immersed in social processes by which the self-aggrandizing efforts of certain ‘wannabe’ leaders and ambitious groups (factional units, lineages), and the general social background of economic and social communalism were at odds with each other. Between the 29th and 27th centuries BCE, when Tomb I of Perdigões was in use, this was especially true at Valencina, as reflected in the tombs of the ‘ivory merchant’ and the Montelirio ‘priestesses’ (García Sanjuán, 2018a; 2018b; 2018c; 2019). The trend towards a more pronounced social hierarchisation, expressed largely in a higher frequency of individual tombs, would become stronger in the late centuries of the 3rd millennium.

Fourthly, from a demographic viewpoint, it is important to note that the population buried in Tomb 1 enjoyed reasonably good health, with a low degree of tooth wear, almost residual cariogenic lesions and low frequency of infectious, congenital or metabolic conditions or trauma. The only pathologies found fairly frequently are joint diseases, mostly on upper and lower limbs and backbone. Shaw Evangelista makes an effort to contextualise her results, both within the site of Perdigões itself, and in the general context of the Portuguese Chalcolithic, which endows her work with a relevance that goes well beyond that of the individual site study. This part of the book is truly a demographic and sociological study of the Iberian Copper Age. It is tempting to envisage a not-so-distant future in which studies like this will help to establish wide-ranging generalisations regarding the living conditions of Iberian Copper Age societies, through statistical comparisons based on the growing number of bioarchaeological data available for sites such as Valencina, Marroquíes Bajos and Camino de las Yeseras.

Altogether, we can only congratulate the author of this book, along with the whole of the scientific team deployed by ERA at Perdigões under the leadership of Antonio Carlos Valera, for the great contribution it makes to the study of Late Prehistoric Iberia. With a currently documented MNI of 545 Perdigões presents one of the largest collections of human bones in 3rd millennium Iberia. As the author herself points out, given the small fraction of the site that has been excavated, it is fair to assume that in the future this collection will be significantly augmented. If research criteria as thorough and rigorous as those presented in this book are deployed in the future, and there is truly no reason to fear this will not be the case, great progress will be achieved: our knowledge of the social and material conditions of human life in the 3rd millennium will be rich and precise in ways we can barely dare to imagine now.

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Leonardo García Sanjuán
Professor in Prehistory
University of Sevilla

Sevilla, September 2019

Introduction

The Perdigões archaeological site is a 20-hectare ditched enclosure culturally identifiable as part of the Southwest Iberian Late Middle Neolithic/Chalcolithic (3500–2000 BC). Continuous archaeological interventions, led by Era Arqueologia, S.A. have been taking place at the site since 1997, unearthing several funerary structures with traces of a variety of mortuary practices. In Perdigões death is very much present in the archaeological record and the study of the rituals surrounding death, as happens when dealing with other ancient cultures, allows us a glimpse into the world of the living. Indeed, each group of individuals approaches death in different manners, with different treatments given to the human body for different reasons: it can be handled, deposited or altered due to ritual practices, sanitary purposes or beliefs in the afterlife (Parker Pearson, 2000; Stutz and Tarlow, 2013).

Over the years Perdigões has become one of the most important investigation projects in the Iberian Peninsula for this period, and the Perdigões Global Research Programme (NIA-ERA-Arqueologia) coordinates various projects integrating specialists from very different scientific areas (Valera *et al.*, 2007; Silva *et al.*, 2010, Marquez Romero *et al.*, 2011). Because of its extraordinary results it has become an essential source for the study of recent Pre-Historic populations and their attitudes towards death. Death is an inevitable biological process with a clear social impact, to which each culture gives a particular response. Currently five different types of funerary repositories have been identified in Perdigões, which include at least three very distinct body treatments and cover a time span of about 1500 years: primary depositions in pits, collective commingled depositions in structured architectural megalithic tombs, deposition of commingled and collective human cremated remains in pits and open area and finally, depositions of loose human bones in ditches, exposed to fire or not.

The first funerary structures to be discovered were Tomb I and II set in the Eastern side of the site in the so-called necropolis area. Although normally referred to as ‘*tholoi*’ these structures lack a corbelled dome and so, although they belong to the megalithic tradition of construction, they represent a new kind of architecture, which appears in the archaeological record in the transition between the fourth and the third millennia BC, probably materializing changes in the way death and the treatment given to the deceased was regarded (Lago *et al.*, 1998; Evangelista, 2004; Valera *et al.*, 2000).

Excavations of Tombs I in the Perdigões archaeological complex were undertaken using state-of-the-art methods. The great investment in terms of field work, which

continued in the laboratory, provided valuable clues for a better understanding of the burial practices of the local populations, which were much more complex and varied than was thought until recent years (Boaventura *et al.*, 2014; Silva *et al.*, 2014; Silva *et al.*, 2015, Valera *et al.*, 2014a).

The data arising from the study of Perdigões Tomb I raise questions concerning of the nature of deposition of the human remains. The bones and fragments were found completely commingled and reached us in a very poor state of conservation. The high number of human bones and fragments recovered from Tomb I is clear evidence of the complex use of the monument over an unknown period of time around the first half of the third millennium. Other than this, it is difficult to state with any certainty or reach any firm conclusions regarding the particular rituals involved or which phase in the particular and generic rituals associated with death these remains relate to. This raises a number of questions regarding the apparently long process of manipulation of bodies, from the moment of death until the moment when they were unearthed in these structures.

Where did the original deposition occur? Inside the Tomb, elsewhere within the enclosures or somewhere completely different? Are these remains evidence of a crystallization of a sequence of moments and is it possible that the one represented in Tomb I was not intended to be a final moment? What is the significance of the prolongation of the ritual of death which implies a primary deposition of bodies with characteristics we know little about, followed by the repetition of acts, with the deposition of parts of bodies in other structures, which were specially built for this purpose? (Valera *et al.*, 2000:101 and following.)

When looking at funerary practices in recent pre-history, complete understanding of the ritual aspect involved is impossible. Using the methods available, this book is an attempt to shed light on this process and reach a better understanding. Indeed, such continuous funerary practices, and their repetitive nature, are extremely detrimental to the analysis of osteological data from human remains; osteobiographies are difficult to reconstruct, the relationship between individuals and artefacts is almost impossible to establish, the construction of paleodemographic profiles becomes a difficult task. What is more the bone surface is severely damaged by post-depositional trampling and also by human transportation and manipulation, leading to erosion, crushing, and fracturing, limiting paleopathological diagnosis.

In spite of the evident limitations involved in the anthropological study of Tomb I it nonetheless proved

a relevant exercise: not only did it provide important additional biological information on the people deposited at Perdigões but it also provided results, which when compared with those already obtained for the rest of the site helped elucidate the cultural and mental framework behind the perception of death and choices regarding death management strategies in these populations.

Our intention with this book was, through the application of standard anthropological analysis of the human remains recovered from Tomb I in Perdigões, to contribute to the better understanding of the Late Neolithic/Chalcolithic populations that used the Perdigões enclosure as a burial site and their attitudes towards death. We intended to come forward in the comprehension of their death management strategies in the light of what is known about the mental framework of these populations, which can also be assessed through other archaeological evidence. Data obtained through this anthropological study were utilized for the paleodemographic reconstruction and for the identification of potential patterns in mortuary practices of the skeletal sample. The identification of thousands of human bone fragments suggested the presence of a large number of individuals in this collection and the degree of fragmentation and commingling suggested that Tomb I may have functioned as a location for the continued deposition of human bones with a specific role and possibly meaning in the scope of what is known for the rest of the funerary practices taking place in Perdigões. This adds relevant information for the understanding of Chalcolithic funerary behaviours and practices. The overall purpose was to try to understand the specific treatment given to the dead of Tomb I in Perdigões. The other types of burials identified in the site and the variation in funerary practices could respond to social status, diachronic changes in funerary practices revealing significant differences in the perception of social identity and treatment of the dead. Unfortunately, only a small part of the human remains exhumed in Perdigões are studied from a bioarchaeological point of view and so comparisons had to be found outside the boundaries of Perdigões enclosures, in the other *tholos/tholoi*-type structures known in the south of what is today Portuguese territory.

Structure of this book

This work is divided into eight chapters.

- Chapter 1 – The introductory chapter, the aims and objectives of this work are outlined and contextual information for the research is offered through a description of what is known about funerary practices in south Portugal during recent prehistory. The wider context of Southwest Iberia is also mentioned.
- Chapter 2 – Narrows the scope and presents a context for Tomb I, the basis of this work, through an introduction to the Perdigões Archaeological complex, where it is located and the known funerary structures in the site.
- Chapters 3 and 4 – Describe the sample and present the methods used for this study.

- Chapter 5 – The results of the analysis of the monument are presented, starting with the per-phase study results followed by the total-results obtained for Tomb I. The advantages of this two-fold approach are also discussed.
- Chapter 6 – The results are discussed including a comparative analysis with all the available bioarchaeological information for the other funerary monuments, not only in Perdigões but also other south Portugal *tholos/tholoi*-type monuments.
- Chapter 7 – The results are used to propose a model of what could be happening in the large enclosures of southwest Iberia.
- Chapter 8 – summarises the general conclusions of this study, identifying its limitations and proposes ideas for future research.

Background for funerary practices in Recent Prehistory in South Portugal

Indeed, it is possible to consider what is broadly known as Neolithic/Chalcolithic period in South Portugal and see it as a unity regarding basic social and cultural order and structure, prevailing belief systems and ideology that are the underlying factors and cultural determinants behind the choice of the mortuary practices of any given society or human group (Carr, 1995). In order to understand the past, the mortuary context in which individuals are buried must be considered and the funerary rituals associated with their passing, as the dead are often manipulated and disposed by the living (Osterholtz *et al.*, 2014; Parker Pearson, 2000). The relationship between the living and the dead varies as some cultures do not perceive death as the inevitable end of life (Parker Pearson 2000; Stutz and Tarlow, 2013). Some may view death as a rite of passage where the individual transfers from one social state to another, while other cultures perceive death as a metaphoric symbol of regeneration that ties into human fertility and agriculture (Parker Pearson, 2000).

Furthermore, disposal of the dead is a special cultural process or series of processes that demonstrates a relationship between the living and the dead (Parker Pearson 2000; Sprague, 2005; Stutz and Tarlow, 2013). The dead are often interred in a variety of places as a physical separation is required for a variety of reasons, including health and sanitation, the grieving process, and cultural preferences. These decisions on how and where to dispose of the deceased are influenced by perception of death and possibly the need to maintain physical or spatial connection to the dead via their remains.

Consequently, the attempt to discuss recent pre-historic funerary practices in the South of Portugal is a complex enterprise, at minimum. For the period between circa 3500 BC until the end of the third millennium BC there are many funerary features scattered around a vast territory that assume such a variety of architectures, formations processes, depositional contexts, number of individuals, degree of preservation and mortuary rites that the effort to systematise all the available information is not an easy