

Interchange in Pre- and Protohistory

Case Studies in Iberia, Romania, Turkey and Israel

Edited by

Ana Cruz and Juan F. Gibaja



BAR International Series 2891

2018

Published in 2018 by
BAR Publishing, Oxford

BAR International Series 2891

Interchange in Pre- and Protohistory

ISBN 978 1 4073 1636 9

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COVER IMAGE *Drawing by Luís Pascual Repiso. Originally published in Rojo Guerra et al. (2005): Un desafío a la Eternidad: Tumbas monumentales del Valle de Ambrona. Arqueología en Castilla y León, Memorias Arqueología en Castilla y León 14. Junta de Castilla y León, Consejería de Cultura y Turismo.*

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Printed in England

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Abstract

This book initiated with the desire to be a knowledge diffusion tool, for experienced researchers, students, and even enthusiast amateur archaeologists. The chronological, geographical and thematic framework in which the different chapters are framed are so broad that, without a doubt this is a “broad spectrum” monograph. The addressed themes, however interrelated allow the reader to have a broad, yet synthetic vision of the various subjects exploited, produced and exchanged throughout much of the recent prehistory at the two extremes. of the Mediterranean. However, this is an entangled geographical framework, throughout the texts references are made to the contacts that communities living in those periods had with other groups settled in other parts of Europe, Asia and Africa.

Although this variability of periods and geographical contexts can lead the reader to miss details of historical moments or sites recorded in each of the chapters, such information can be obtained through the extensive bibliography quoted by each of the authors.

The reader will certainly revel in a diachronic perspective of the importance that certain raw materials and items have had for the prehistorical societies, how they were studied and analysed by the different authors, what type of techniques can be applied, and above all, the proposed interpretative implications.

This last aspect, the interpretative, we believe is one of the most important milestones that emerge from this work. For the authors, the relevant is not to analyze such raw materials or items themselves, but the information they have provided to build and raise multiple interpretations of social, economic and technical behaviours. This is a merit of the researchers who have written the texts, because often the conclusions of many of these studies end up focusing on the more technical and methodological aspects, forgetting the people who in the past elaborated and used them. We understand as archaeologists that the ultimate objective of our research is to make historical interpretations.

In short, the editors, the coordinators and the authors of this book hope that this work can attract the interest of all those dedicated people and lovers of archaeology, increasing the knowledge of our most remote ancestors. As coordinators, we take these words to thank them for all the effort they have made so that today this book is a reality.

Introduction

On April of 2015, in the Polytechnic Institute of Tomar (Portugal), Dr. Ana R. Cruz organized the 2nd Peninsular Roundtable dedicated to the thematic “Tráfego de Objetos: Sintomas das ideologías dominantes na Iberia” in translation “Objects routing: Symptoms of the Dominant ideologies in Iberia”. Shortly after the symposium, and due to the discussions and generated opinions, the initiative to edit a volume focused on this topic was put forward, converging examples, not only of the prehistory of the Iberian Peninsula, but also other Mediterranean regions and Central European areas.

Questions on the origin, supply and exchange of raw materials were intensely discussed in recent decades. If one is to revise the European bibliography on the Iberian Peninsula, it will perceive the importance of these themes and the associated large number of publications. However, in such literature, there are not many occasions where the main objective is to present an interpretative discourse of the handled information, that is to say, to make the connection between the object per se to the societies that generated them.

This book is not intended to build a report around a common theme, about a specific period or a particular material. Our idea is to explain how different researchers working on different topics address the issues of intergroup relationships through the analysis of certain raw materials. This more diachronic view allows the reader to obtain a broader view on some of the research lines that are being dealt with in different areas of the Mediterranean. We understand that this monographic book opens its doors to researchers who work over a large chronological period, and not so much about a specific moment for which there are usually Congresses and published monographic works. Some research routes that can help other researchers to know some of the lines of work that are currently being carried out and the methodologies used to know the origin of the raw materials used and analysed in the preparation of Ornaments, ceramic vessels, lithic instruments, etc.

The interest of the scientific community to discover the origin of the archaeological objects as means of approximation to multiple aspects of social, economic and ideological character, is the DNA of research since the inception of Archaeology. However, in recent years, such aspects gained enormous relevance as a result of the multiple radiometric techniques that are applied, offering better resolution, in determining the sources of raw material. Such techniques, in any case, are available to researchers and investigators who have very different theoretical approaches, implying distinct hypothesis and equally diverse interpretations. Looking through the

different chapters this book, the reader will be aware of the multitude of hypothesis and interpretations that keep this science alive.

The studies put forward in this volume reflect the theoretical proposals and new radiometric technologies applied to multiple materials, from ceramics, lithic tools, shell ornaments, amber to the use of dyes. All papers presented, without exception, hold as a common link the use of radiometric techniques, especially in relation to the recognition of the origin of such artefacts, giving us a broad geographical coverage of such past societies. Information that refers to the existence, during the Neolithic period and in some cases earlier, of consolidated contact networks between communities geographically remote from each other. Sporadic contacts and intergroup relations allowed them to supply themselves with certain items used in artisan activities or due to their importance used in funerary practices. Be that as it may, in all certainty, these relationships between populations did not simply remain in the exchange of objects or raw materials, but they served to maintain other types of linkages at a much higher level to ensure the proliferation of the groups and their socio-economic organization.

It is precisely the action of obtaining, treating and producing goods made with exogenous materials that led many authors, as can be seen in the various articles of this book, to talk about issues as relevant as the origins of the Neolithic. The role that these assets had in the socio-economic structure of human groups studied, their linkage with the symbolic, the information they provide in relation to the existence or not of social dissymmetry – as materials used by certain persons or documented in their burials-, or the data they offer us about the complex networks and interactions that existed in the prehistory between communities settled in different areas of the Mediterranean. In short, the works presented in this volume refer to us and talk about ourselves, our history and our present.

Although the initial idea was to coordinate a book in which there were articles referring to contexts from different parts of the Mediterranean, several factors have prevented it: the time requested of the authors to send their texts (avoiding that the book ended up taking Several years); the number of researchers whose studies focus on the theme of the book; the researchers who participated in the proceedings of the Congress where this work initiated; and those researchers personally invited by the editors, from recognised merit or innovation. In any case, the achieved results present chapters referring to periods, deposits and materials found in archaeological contexts located at both ends of the Mediterranean.

Making a brief comment on each one of the presented papers:

1. Catalin Lazar, Monica Maragarit and Valentin Radu present a detailed study around the *Spondylus* ornaments in the Balkan area, South-eastern Romania, towards the 5th Millennium BC. The way they were obtained and treated was not only related to economic activities, being an element of exchange widely used in that period, and whose origin should be sought in the Mediterranean or the Atlantic, but has a social and symbolic value to the usually documented use in funerary contexts. So much so, that the authors claims: “The *Spondylus* ornaments used by past communities in domestic activities or in funeral contexts as part of construction, affirmation and maintenance of ideologies, identity process”. Interpretations referring to the scope of the ritual, social identity, status, after death, among others, are continuously present in this work.
2. Bahattin Çelik presents us with an interesting work on the first Neolithic settlements of the South-eastern Turkey in which cult structures built with pillars are documented. This type of settlement forms part of the Neolithic genesis and the social, economic and ideological changes that occurred in the east of the Mediterranean during the Pre-pottery Neolithic period A and part of the period B (PPNA and PPNB). Its importance is essential to address the study of those societies in which this constructive tradition is found not only in Turkey but also in Syria or Iraq.
3. The work of Miriam Cubas brings us back to the dawn of the Neolithic period in the Iberian Peninsula through her studies on the provenance, technology and morphology of ceramic production. After carrying out a thorough and detailed presentation of the published state of the art, the author lays out the possibilities offered by the study of determination of different materials used in the ceramics as a means of approximation to the source areas controlled by those first communities of farmers and pastoralists. It also addresses the contacts that they could maintain between different Neolithic societies and their relationship with the origin of certain technical and decorative traditions.
4. The work of Antonio F. Carvalho introduces a new and revolutionary variable that combines with the various radiometric studies carried out in different documented materials from ancient middle Neolithic contexts of Portuguese Extremadura: The Isotopic analyses on human bone remains. The author combines this information in a brilliant way, not only to evaluate the contacts between groups, but also the degree of mobility of the studied populations. Furthermore, the author seeks to deepen the knowledge of the social organization of Neolithic communities allegedly considered egalitarian.
5. Ramón Fábregas, Arturo de Lombera, Carlos Rodríguez-Rellán and Pierre Petrequin show us the importance of alpine origin axe production, not only in much of central and Western Europe, but particularly in the Iberian Peninsula. Its distribution from Catalonia to Galicia has led them to consider the importance that in the Neolithic period, as well as in more recent periods, exchange networks represented. Contacts between groups hundreds of kilometres apart is demonstrated using such axes. Their presence, often in funerary contexts, confers to these instruments an importance that exceeds the purely functional aspects.
6. The work of Juan F. Gibaja and collaborators addresses the study of the origin and production of a set of instruments and ornaments that are usually documented in the Neolithic sepulchres from the northeast Iberian Peninsula, which is known as the “culture of Fosa graves”. For this it takes as reference the most important deposit, the site holding the largest number of graves and known by the richness of its archaeological material: the Bòbila Madurell-Can Gambús. The differences in the contents of graves and funerary structures have been the elements to propose interpretations referring to social dissymmetry within these societies.
7. Also on this thematic, Lusa analyses the work of Leonor Rocha, Jorge de Oliveira, Cristina Barrocas Dias, José Mirão, Luís Dias and Ana Manhita, centred their study on the determination and Origin of cinnabar and Amber. These materials, documented in many megalithic monuments of the Portuguese Alentejo, have their source areas located hundreds of kilometres from the analysed sites. However, this work does not only stop at that interpretative level, which explains the consolidated contacts and commercial networks that existed at that time, but goes beyond. The fact that such materials are associated with certain burials and individuals allows them to propose explanations of a social nature. In other words, they had a symbolic value that also reflected the social status of the individual who possessed them.
8. The work of Ana Cruz focuses on the analysis of the different funerary strategies documented in the shelter of Morgado Superior, along different moments of prehistory, from the Neolithic to the Bronze Age. The archaeological material from the Bronze Age refers to relations and exchanges between communities settled in different parts of the Portuguese geography, and even with the Spanish region of Almería. The contemporaneity between the sepulchral dolmen contexts and those made in caves is an interesting problem that the author approaches. Finally, both the type of deposit and the documented materials are compared with other Portuguese archaeological contexts, which facilitates its synchronous reading.

9. Rodrigo Villalobos' contribution is extremely suggestive. The quantitative evaluation carried out by a series of variables in relation to certain artefacts and ornaments elaborated from the Neolithic to the copper age in the north Spanish plateau context, allows him to make certain interpretative inferences of Social, economic and of symbolic character. For this, it quantifies in each of the periods the amount of energy invested in the production of such objects/instruments, the number of colours employed and the proportion of people involved in such production.
10. Nuria Castañeda studies the importance of lithic tools in archaeological contexts of the Chalcolithic-bronze age in the Iberian Peninsula. Comparatively, in such contexts the metal objects and instruments, are those that have acquired significant relevance in making interpretative constructions. In this sense, it is surprising the little attention that the lithic studies have received in deposits of such periods with respect to previous moments. However, as the author demonstrates, the information they provide with regards to the economic, social and symbolic activities in which their production and use are framed are fundamental to understanding the societies in analysis.
11. Rodrigo Banha da Silva presents a rigorous and detailed view of Late Bronze Age contexts in the territories surrounding the Tagus estuary (Portugal). By assessing the existing information, not only of the treated period, but also of previous moments. The author makes a significant effort to raise interpretations of socio-economic character. This work refers to issues as relevant as the presence of central settlements that manage certain resources, the production and control of exchanges, etc. As Rodrigo Villalobos, does for the north of the Spanish plateau, he also quantifies in each of the treated periods: the amount of energy invested in the production of such objects/instruments, the number of colours employed and the number of individuals involved in such production.
12. Eduardo Porfirio and Miguel Sierra. Once again with an interesting article that deals with the analysis of the raw materials of exogenous origin documented in Portuguese deposits. Its origin coming from different points of the peninsula, as well as influences from other areas of the Mediterranean, the Atlantic or North Africa. This paper reflects the broad and consolidated networks of interchange in the recent prehistory, from the Chalcolithic until the end of the Bronze Age. To discuss this diversity of contacts and relationships, they present as an example the study they have developed around a hypogeum, that of Torre Velha 3, located in the Alentejo region.
13. José M. Rodanés and Jesús V. Picazo through the analysis of certain assets and their chronological correlation evaluate the genesis of Late Bronze age and Early Iron Age societies through the contacts that could exist between different communities. External influences from different points and the roles played by indigenous communities in the development of this historical process is addressed in a brilliant way. Without a doubt, this work opens new ways of thinking and discussing these periods.
14. Itzhaq Shai, Casey Sharp, Antonio de Freitas, Deborah Cassuto and Chris McKinny present us a tremendously interesting contribution. It addresses the study of contacts and Intergroup relations during the Bronze Age of communities located in the southern Levant with others located in different parts of the Mediterranean such as: Egypt, Cyprus, northern Syria and the Aegean. In this respect, different materials analysed, with special attention to ceramics, are the guiding thread that leads the authors to propose the existence of a complex network of contacts during that historical moment.
15. The interesting article by David Ben-Shlomo on the Philistine communities of the southern coastal plains of Israel during the beginning of the Iron Age reiterates the information that certain elements of the archaeological record, especially the Ceramics contribute to the knowledge of the origin of some populations and the influences and contacts they have had with other groups settled in various areas of the eastern Mediterranean. It is certainly another valuable contribution to this book in which ceramics play an important role as means of historical interpretation.

In short, the book can be read from two different perspectives. On the one hand, the information that each author offer from the studies developed in relation to the studied period, the analysed deposits and the treated materials. This information has an individual character and can only be related to chapters focused on periods and similar geographical areas. On the other hand, a general reading can be made in relation to the different techniques that are being used for the study of the materials and the interpretative proposals based on the obtained results. This last vision can offer the reader an image of the methodologies used and the possibilities that they offer.

When all is said and done, we want to finalise by thanking all the authors who have contributed towards this book, to those who participated in that second Peninsular Roundtable held in Tomar, to the institutions involved (Institute Polytechnic of Tomar, Intitución Milá and Fontanals – CSIC-, ANA. And to the editorial itself British Archaeological reports (BAR) and its editors, for all the efforts made, and of course, to Thomas Perrin, Laure Salanova, Rafael Garrido and Leonardo Garcia Sanjuán for the book review. Their analysis, valuation and opinions which have most certainly contributed to improve this new step in the knowledge of Peninsular Archaeology.

Ana Cruz & Juan F. Gibaja



Romania - Map of the target area and the archaeological sites.
Source: José Martinho Lourenço.