Abstract

The present dissertation is the first systematic anthropobiological approach to the human remains exhumed from the caves of Poço Velho, in Cascais.

The caves of Poço Velho were occupied from the Upper Paleolithic until the Modern Era, being their use as a necropolis attributed to the Late Neolithic/Calcolithic.

The skeletal remains were disarticulated and scattered by the second and third caves. The anthropological analysis of these human remains has, as main aims, to retrieve information in order to achieve a better understanding of demographic, biological and social characteristics of the human populations of the Late Neolithic/Calcolithic of the Portuguese province of Estremadura.

In all, 5489 osseous elements were studied. The majority of them were fragmented. The state of preservation of adult bones was not significantly different from the non-adult one.

The great amount of fragmentation seriously limited the paleobiology analysis. Furthermore, layers of calcium carbonate covered some of the bones. Some others were submitted to the action of fire.

The minimum number of individuals estimation points to a total of 115, namely 93 adults and 22 sub-adults.

In what sex ratio is concerned, it seems that female adult individuals are slightly bettered represented than males. In relation to age profile, all age groups until the age of 50 years are represented. In all, the demographic profile is in favor of being in presence of a natural population.

The morphological analysis was done to know some physical attributes of the individuals under analysis and to compare them with coeval populations. Finally a paleopathological approach was undertaken in order to throw some light on the general health status as well as on the living conditions of these groups. From the analysis of the diseases which do leave traces on both bones and teeth, degenerative pathologies, non-specific infectious diseases as well as some particular cases such as Dish and an eventual case of Perthes disease, could be detached.