

# Resumo/Abstract

Quando, em 1995, foram iniciadas as escavações no povoado ao ar livre do Neolítico antigo da Valada do Mato (Évora), os dados provenientes das prospecções realizadas no local demonstravam a existência, no interior alentejano, de um povoamento atribuível a uma etapa pré-megalítica não conhecida na região que, até então se admitia ter sido reocupada, no Holocénico, pelos construtores dos mais antigos monumentos megalíticos.

O projecto de investigação criado em torno deste sítio destinava-se a caracterizar cronológica e culturalmente estas populações, e a definir a dinâmica histórica que explanasse a expansão neolítica para territórios de interior, área claramente marginal face aos modelos mesolíticos de implantação no espaço.

O sítio da Valada do Mato, datado do primeiro quartel do V milénio cal BC, foi classificado como um lugar de ocupação permanente de uma comunidade que praticava uma economia mista, e que possuía, integrados numa matriz cultural neolítica consolidada, alguns elementos específicos das tecnologias líticas dos grupos mesolíticos, que não estavam atestados com a mesma intensidade em outros contextos neolíticos contemporâneos.

A explanação dos processos sociais que estiveram na origem de uma ocupação como a detectada na Valada do Mato implicava uma revisão crítica dos modelos já construídos para explicar o processo de neolitização do Sul de Portugal, decorrido a partir de meados do VI milénio cal BC.

As propostas de pendor indigenista pareceram, atendendo aos dados provenientes dos contextos mesolíticos, pouco adequadas para justificar este processo de mudança cultural, dado que não se detectam substantivas alterações tecno-económicas nos sistemas dos caçadores-recolectores, que ocupavam ecossistemas de alta produtividade natural.

As leituras assentes na difusão démica, a partir da qual se teria gerado uma fronteira cultural de longa duração - fugazmente interrompida apenas em inícios do V milénio cal BC, de acordo com a informação preservada no concheiro sadino das Amoreiras - não explicavam algumas das características artefactuais existentes nos primeiros contextos neolíticos, que se diferenciavam das definidas nos lugares de origem destes colonos.

Partindo do registo arqueográfico, admitiu-se, em alternativa, a existência desde a primeira fase do processo, iniciado com a entrada de elementos exógenos, de múltiplos mecanismos de interacção entre “colonos” e “indígenas”, que a diferentes escalas intervêm nos fenómenos de *fusão diferencial* que caracterizam a neolitização do Sul de Portugal.

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In 1995, I have begun digging in Valada do Mato (Évora), an ancient Neolithic open air site, settled in an area where megalithic communities were believed to be the first Holocene settlers.

Neolithization process was expected to occurred mainly in coastal areas (SW Coast, Estremadura, lower Mondego basin), and the few ancient Neolithic pottery sherds recovered in Escoural cave (Montemor-o-Novo), were not enough to understood when, how and why Neolithic communities occupied the interior south of Portugal.

Recovering chronological and cultural data about these ancient neolithic communities were central issues in this research project, as it was trying to understand the historical process which led to Neolithic inland expansion, beyond hunters-gatherers traditional territories.

In southern and central Portugal, after first appearance of Neolithic cultural traits (pottery, polished stone tools and domesticates), by the middle of the 6th millennium cal BC, Mesolithic groups still occupying their traditional environments kept their traditional way of life, depending only on wild species. A few pottery sherds were recovered in some of these shell middens, but except in Sado valley shell midden of Amoreiras, it's not clear if those ceramics were contemporary with final Mesolithic occupation of those shell middens.

Since the middle of the 6th millennium cal BC, two different stories seem to run side by side. Archaeological record shows both Mesolithic and Neolithic groups with different material culture, different economic strategies and different burial practices.

Valada do Mato dated to the first quarter of 5th millennium BC, was a stable habitat of people depending on a mixed economy showing cultural traits of both Mesolithic and Neolithic cultural package, not previously known in synchronic Neolithic sites.

Understanding social dynamics that stood beyond Neolithic sites such as Valada do Mato implied testing demic and cultural diffusion models against archaeological data connected with southern Portugal neolithization that have begun around the middle of the 6th millennium cal BC.

Since no data reflects an acculturation process going on in Mesolithic habitats cultural diffusion models doesn't seem able to explain this cultural change.

Demic diffusion perspectives claim for an enduring cultural frontier, only disrupted in the beginnings of the 5th millennium cal BC, as it is showed in the Sado valley shell-midden of Amoreiras, do not convincingly explain some of the ancient Neolithic material cultural features in southern Portugal which do not resemble the original places from which this "colonist" came.

Since both models do not explain the multicultural picture that emerged since the middle of the 6th millennium cal BC, other forms of social interaction were searched for.

In Valada do Mato we can see one kind of historical consequences of the spread of Neolithic to the Western coast of Iberian Peninsula. If cardial colonies were responsible for introduction of pottery and domesticates they seem to rapidly lose their cultural personality and quickly adopt some local Mesolithic features.

By the end of 6th millennium cal BC southern Portugal was occupied by different cultural groups. The last hunters-gatherers were still settled in some of their traditional ecological backgrounds while Neolithic communities expanded inland.

A *differential fusion process* is expected to have occurred, where different cultural systems would have been able to give diverse answers to external stimulus.