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THE DIVERSITY OF IDEOTECHNIC OBJECTS AT PERDIGÕES ENCLOSURE: A FIRST INVENTORY OF ITEMS AND PROBLEMS

António Carlos Valera (1)

Resumen

Este trabajo presenta una aproximación preliminar al conjunto de artefactos ideotécnicos del Neolítico Final y Calcolítico del recinto de fosos de Perdigões /Reguengos de Monsaraz, Portugal). Se aporta un inventario. Estos items están organizados en diecinueve categorías tipológicas y se analizan en relación con su materia prima, contexto y cronología. Basándonos en la información disponible, se discuten algunas cuestiones sobre las interacciones y el papel social de estos objetos en Perdigões

Palabras clave: Perdigões, objetos ideotécnicos, recintos de fosos, Neolítico y Calcolítico

Abstract

This paper presents a preliminary approach to the global assemblage of the Late Neolithic and Chalcolithic ideotechnic items recorded in Perdigões enclosures (Reguengos de Monsaraz, Portugal). An inventory of the available data is provided. These items are organized in nineteen typological categories and are analyzed in terms of raw material, context and chronology. Based on the available information, some questions regarding interaction and the social role of these objects at Perdigões are discussed.

Key words: Perdigões, ideotechnic objects, enclosures, Neolithic and Chalcolithic

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1.-INTRODUCTION

During the Late Neolithic and Chalcolithic (3400 – 2200 BC) Southwest Iberia witnessed the development of several large ditched enclosures that tend to present a significant concentration of ideotechnic items in their artefact assemblages, frequently elaborated in exotic raw materials. That is the case at La Pijotilla, Badajoz (Hurtado 1980, 2008, 2010) or at Valencina de la Concepción, Seville (Hurtado 2013) and also at Perdigões, Reguengos de Monsaraz. At these complex and long lasting sites, ideotechnic objects played an active part in the social relations and practices that were taking place there and contributed to the social meanings of the contexts in which they were deposited.

Symbolizing and expressing levels of the ideological sub-system, these items always carry the danger of subjectivism to interpretation, a danger that might give way to more or less free speculation or degenerate in paralyzing descriptivism. Being as attractive as difficult to approach, these items constitute, nevertheless, a precious window to the minds, ideologies and visions of the world of Neolithic and Chalcolithic southern Iberian societies, to their rationality and beliefs, and to their interactions and identity strategies.

Regarding the Perdigões materials, there are already some essays on the possible social roles played by some of these objects, like the *lunulae*, the naturalistic anthropomorphic figurines, the zoomorphic figurines, the “almeriense idols” or the phalange idols (Valera 2010; Valera & Evangelista 2014; Valera *et al.* 2014; Valera 2012; Valera 2015).

In this preliminary approach to the Perdigões global assemblage, an inventory of items organized by types is provided and a generic characterization by raw material, context and general chronology is done. Problems regarding interaction and participation in spheres of shared ideological principals will then be discussed and questions about the active social performance of some of these objects in Perdigões will be raised. First, though, some terminological clarification is needed.

2.-QUESTIONS OF TERMINOLOGY AND CLASSIFICATION

What is an ideotechnic item? The term was created by Binford in his taxonomy of material culture based on the idea that materials function in appropriate cultural sub-systems (Binford 1962). He defined three general categories of objects according to their area of primary functionality: the technomic, related to the physical environment; the socio-technic, related to contexts of the social system; the ideotechnic, defined as artefacts that “(...) have their primary functional context in the ideological component of the social system. These are items which signify and symbolize the ideological rationalizations for the social system (...)” (Binford 1962: 219). This categorization, though, has been frequently criticized for its rigid compartmentalization of the social arenas where objects are active. The main argument is that an object may play active social roles in different social sub-systems at the same time or, through a biographical approach, can be seen to enter and to leave different dimension of the social

system during its life. Therefore, to be related to “ideological rationalizations” is not a property of some objects, but a state, a condition (in the sense of Appadurai 1986), into which any object may enter at a given moment of its biography.

By assuming this biographical perspective it becomes more difficult to discriminate the objects that might have been socially active in signifying and symbolizing the “ideological rationalizations”, for any object in a given circumstance and in a specific context might have played such a role. For instance, how to classify a bell beaker with its geometric decoration and deer representation? Is it an element of social distinction, playing its role in the social subsystem? Is it symbolizing ideological principals related to the animal? Is it used as a container? Or is it all of this at the same time? And what about a vessel in a tomb? And what if that same object was in the middle of a ditch? The problem with Binford’s scheme is the functionalist idea that we can easily separate and isolate spheres of social activity in Prehistoric societies and that those separated spheres correspond to different contexts and scenarios and to different groups of objects, something that contextualism has shown to be a difficult and sometimes misleading construction.

So, is it the concept of ideotechnic objects still operative and useful? In fact, Binford’s formulation talks about “primary functional context”, that is to say that an object is made having in mind specific tasks “primarily” related to specific activities and social roles, independently of the possibility of being used in others or be invested of new symbolic meanings during its life. Ideotechnic objects would be those that were made to function specifically

within the ideological sphere, and if some are difficult to discriminate through their constitutive attributes, others can more easily and in reasonable grounds be ascribed to that category. If it is not easy to discriminate all the objects that might have assumed symbolic ideological principals (ex. the fragmentation of a pot and the resulting fragments may assume particular symbolic meanings or not – Valera 2012), there are some objects that, through their attributes and independently of the context of deposition and other social roles, may be related to the ideological sphere of social life. They are just a fraction of the materials that were invested of ideological meaning, but they represent a fraction that was intended to play that social role and that we can discriminate beyond context. It is in this sense that the category of ideotechnic items will be used here, restricted to mobile items by methodological options.

3.-IDEOTECHNIC ITEMS AT PERDIGÕES

At Perdigões ditched enclosures 216 items that can be ascribed to the ideotechnic category in the terms established above have been recorded so far (Table 1).

3.1Types

Taken globally, the 216 items were classified into 19 categories of objects. The major type corresponds to the phalanx idols (72 occurrences, corresponding to 33% of the total), with a study already published (Valera 2015). They correspond mainly to *Cervus sp.* and *Equus sp.* transformed first phalanges (*Sus sp.*, *Ovis/Capra* and *Bos sp.* first phalanges are present but extremely rare), being 12 of them

decorated (Figure 5: 3). They are all from chalcolithic funerary contexts with one exception (from a chalcolithic pit).

The next larger group corresponds to the small stone vessels (24 - 11%) made of limestone or marble/calcite and all that have preserved contextual origin are from chalcolithic funerary contexts (Figure 6: 1-4). The betils have a similar representation (23 - 10,7%), being 3 oculated (1,4%) and 3 with flat heads (also known as Tolva idols, that were here integrated in the general category of betils) and are also predominantly present in funerary contexts with two exceptions in pits (Figure 2: 11-16).

Anthropomorphic naturalistic figurines (Figure 2: 1-5), also addressed in a previous publication (Valera & Evangelista 2013), are all made of ivory and were deposited in the chalcolithic funerary contexts with cremated human remains in Pit 40 and Ambiance 1 (see Valera *et al.* 2014 for detailed

descriptions). Corresponding to a minimum number of individuals of 14, they represent 6,5% of the global assemblage. The schematic anthropomorphic figurines (Figure 2: 6-10; Figure 3: 4-7; Figure 4: 4-6), with a total number of 23 objects (10,7%) present a significant variety of morphologies and ways of suggesting the human body, with particular preponderance of the thin plaques with representation of the solar eyes and facial tattoos (14 - 6,5%). Ivory is the dominant raw material (14 cases), but bone (2), ceramic (3) and schist (2) are also present. Again, the main contexts of deposition are funerary ones (only four items were recorded in non-funerary features).

Also with a schematic anthropomorphic shape, the Almeriense idols (also known as "cruciformes" - Figure 1: 1) were considered a category apart due to their well patterned morphologies and have already been published (Valera 2012). There are six of them (2,8%), all in bone and from Late Neolithic non-funerary contexts.

Type	Nº	%	Raw materials								Context			Chronology		
			Bone	Limestone	Marble/Calcite	Ivory	Ceramics	Schist	Quartz	Not determined	Funerary	Non funerary	Surface	Late Neolithic	Chalcolithic	Undetermined
Almerienses	6	2,78	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	6	-	-
Undecorated Betils	20	9,26	-	5	13	-	-	1	-	1	14	2	4	-	16	4
Oculated Betils	3	1,39	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	3	-
Stone vessels	24	11,1	-	22	2	-	-	-	-	-	23	-	1	-	23	1
Anthropomorphic Naturalistic (MNI)	14	6,48	-	-	-	14	-	-	-	-	14	-	-	-	14	-
Anthropomorphic Schematic Oculated/Tatoos (NMI)	14	6,48	2	-	-	12	-	-	-	-	14	-	-	-	14	-
Other Anthropomorphic Schematic	9	4,17	-	-	-	2	3	2	-	2	4	4	1	-	8	1
Zoomorphic Naturalistic	9	4,17	-	-	-	7	2	-	-	-	6	-	3	-	6	3
Zoomorphic Schematic	5	2,31	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	1	4	-	1	4
Geometric Decorated Plaques	6	2,78	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	1	1	4	1	1	4
Other Decorated Plaques	6	2,78	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	3	3	2	1	3
Lunulae	14	6,48	-	-	-	14	-	-	-	-	14	-	-	-	14	-
Staff	1	0,46	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-
Phalanges	72	33,3	72	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	71	1	-	-	72	-
Schematic figure with breasts	1	0,46	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
"Pillow"	1	0,46	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-
"Horn idols"	9	4,17	-	-	-	9	-	-	-	-	1	3	5	2	2	5
Vessel with symbolic decoration	1	0,46	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-
Large Quartz Crystal	1	0,46	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	-
Totals	216	100	80	28	17	50	22	15	1	3	169	21	26	11	179	26

Table 1.- Inventory of the ideotechnic items from Perdigões

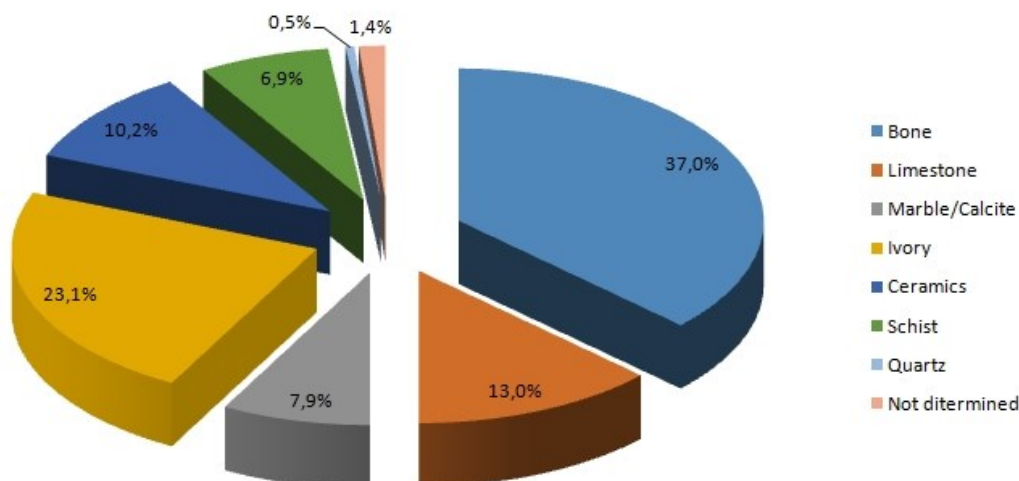
Zoomorphic figurines (14 – 6,5%), also published (Valera, Evangelista, Castanheira, 2014), have a more or less naturalistic or schematic morphology, are made out of ivory or ceramics, present a Chalcolithic chronology and prevail in funerary contexts (with one exception). The figurines in ivory present a pronounced miniaturization (Figure 5:1).

There are six geometric decorated schist plaques (2,8%). Five of these objects correspond to the traditional geometric plaques present in the regional megalitism (Figure 3: 1-3). The majority (4) are surface finds and only a fragment of one, re-

-polished and reused, was collected in a preserved context (the Chalcolithic Tomb 1). The other correspond to a trapezoidal small plaque, roughly shaped, decorated with a reticulated of thin incised lines, collected in Late Neolithic ditch 6 (Figure 1: 4). Other six schist plaques present elongated morphologies. Two of them were recorded in a Late Neolithic large pit, corresponding to a roughly shaped plaque decorated with a reticulated of thin incised lines and to a trapezoidal small and thin plaque with the representation of a pair of eyes (small carved dots) in both sides. A small and thin polished undecorated plaque was recorded in a Chalcolithic deposit and three other elongated



Fig.1.- Late Neolithic ideotechnic items. 1. Almeriense idols (or "cruciformes"); 2. "Horn" idols; 3. Roughly shaped and decorated schist plaque.



Graphic 1- Distribution of ideotechnic items by raw materials.

plaques were collected on the surface: one decorated with thin incisions, other with two thin incisions representing the facial tattoos of symbolic decorations and finally a polished undecorated one.

The *lunulae* (Figure 5: 2) correspond to an already published and discussed assemblage (Valera 2010) of semi-circular or semi-ellipsoid objects, all made of ivory and deposit in Chalcolithic Tomb 2. Only one was complete and the fragments of the others except one belong to the left side of the object, suggesting a practice of intentional fragmentation.

The so called "horn idols" ("morrillos" in Spain) are represented by nine objects, one of them decorated with incised lines (Figure 1: 2-3). Two are from Late Neolithic context, two from Chalcolithic contexts and five were collected at the surface.

Finally, with only one specimen, there is a decorated ivory staff from Chalcolithic Tomb 1 (Figure 4: 7), a ceramic "pillow" (Figure 4: 1) and a large quartz prismatic crystal from the same context and a ceramic schematic human figurine with breasts

and a groove in the base (possibly symbolizing the sex – Figure 3: 8) from a perturbed context also already published (Milesi *et al.* 2013).

3.2.Raw materials: a global perspective.

Made of diversified raw materials (Graphic 1), these items are predominantly made out of bone (37%) and ivory (23,1%). The preponderance of bone, though, is mainly due to the number of phalanx idols (72, corresponding to 90% of the items made of bone), and only the six almeriense idols and two anthropomorphic schematic oculated idols are also made of this material. So bone is used for a quite restricted variety of types. On the contrary, ivory is used in 6 different types and together with ceramic (that represents 10,2%) present the higher variability of objects. Limestone and marble/calcite objects correspond to the small pots and the betil idols, and represent 13% and 7,9% respectively, but it is interesting to note that the great majority of the betils are made out of marble/calcite while the majority of the vessels are of limestone. Schist is present in 6,9% of the items and quartz crystal corresponds just to one object (0,5%).

If we compare the local available raw materials (bone, ceramic and schist) with the exogenous ones (ivory, limestone, marble/calcite and quartz crystal), the former slightly prevail with 55,1% over 44,9%. In terms of variety the numbers are also balanced, with local raw materials being used in 13 of the considered types of items and the exogenous raw materials present in 10. So, in global terms, there is a balance between the local and exogenous raw materials regarding this assemblage of ideotechnic items. A balance that is broken when we introduce the variable time, as discussed below.

3.3 Context

At Perdigões, the majority of ideotechnic items were deposited in funerary contexts (78%). Non-funerary contexts provided 10% and objects with no preserved context (collected at the surface or in ploughed layers) represent 12%. If we consider

only the preserved contexts, then the items from funerary features raise up to 89% of the total.

These funerary contexts with ideotechnic items are all Chalcolithic and present interesting contrasts (Valera *et al.* 2014). In the eastern extremity of the enclosures there is a concentration of tombs. One was just defined superficially and two were completely excavated, corresponding to *tholoi* type tombs used for secondary depositions. In the centre of the enclosures two pits were used for the deposition of cremated human remains, revealing different architectures and ritual practices. The distribution of ideotechnic items between these two sets of funerary features is relatively unbalanced, with 70% (119) of the objects deposited in *tholoi* type tombs (Tomb 3, just defined at the top, provided only one item), while the remaining 30% (50) were associated to the deposition of cremated remains.

Type	Nº	Funerary context				
		Tomb 1	Tomb 2	Tomb 3	Pit 16	Pit 40/Assemblage 1
Almerieses	6	—	—	—	—	—
Undecorated Betils	20	—	3	—	—	11
Oculated Betils	3	—	—	—	—	3
Stone vessels	24	15	7	—	—	1
Anthropomorphic Naturalistic (MNI)	14	—	—	—	—	14
Anthropomorphic Schematic Oculated/Tatoos (NMI)	14	—	—	—	6	8
Other Anthropomorphic Schematic	9	3	1	—	—	—
Zoomorphic Naturalistic	9	4	2	—	—	—
Zoomorphic Schematic	5	—	—	—	—	—
Geometric Decorated Plaques	6	1	—	—	—	—
Other Decorated Plaques	6	—	—	—	—	—
Lunulae	14	—	14	—	—	—
Staff	1	1	—	—	—	—
Phalanges	72	25	39	1	1	5
Schematic figure with breasts	1	—	—	—	—	—
"Pillow"	1	1	—	—	—	—
"Horn idols"	9	—	—	—	—	1
Vessel with symbolic decoration	1	—	1	—	—	—
Large Quartz Crystal	1	1	—	—	—	—
Totals	216	51	67	1	7	43

Table 2.— Distribution of the ideotechnic items in the funerary contexts at Perdigões.

Furthermore, there is also an unbalanced distribution of the types. The anthropomorphic naturalistic figurines and the schematic ones with the representation of the eyes, facial tattoos and hair are exclusive of the depositions with cremated remains. On the contrary, the lunulae, the zoomorphic figurines, the staff, the "pillow", the vessel with symbolic decoration, the reuse of geometric

decorated schist plaques and the quartz prismatic crystal are exclusive of the *tholoi* type tombs. And even in the shared items there is an unbalanced distribution: 91,5% of the phalanx idols and 91,6% of the stone pots are in the *tholoi* type tombs, and 82,4% of the betils (including all the decorated ones) were associated to the cremated human remains. These contextual disparities are also



Fig.2.- 1-5. Naturalistic anthropomorphic figurines in ivory; 6-10. Schematic anthropomorphic figurines in bone and ivory; 11-16. Limestone and marble/calcite betils.

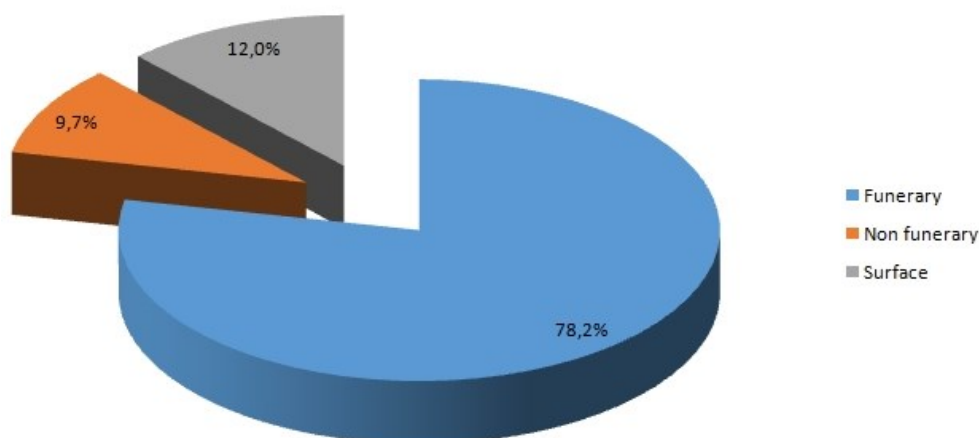
reinforced by other significant differences in other artefact categories, like blades (inexistent in the depositions of cremated remains) or the arrow heads (with different typologies). So, the ideotechnic items, together with architecture, body treatment and other votive materials, help to establish significant contextual contrasts between these sets of funerary contexts that absolute chronology shows to have been partially contemporaneous (Valera *et al.* 2014).

3.4. Chronology

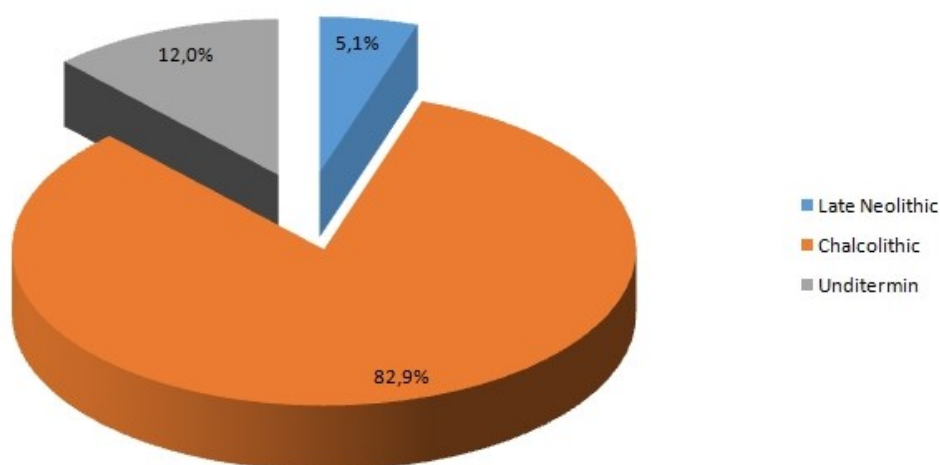
In terms of chronology (Graphic 3), we can observe significant differences in numbers, variety

and context of the ideotechnic items over time, namely between the Late Neolithic and the Chalcolithic phases of Perdigões.

In fact, during the Late Neolithic phase (3400–2900 BC) the number of recorded items is quite small (only 11 cases, corresponding to 5,1% of the total) and the types are few (Almeriense idols, decorated plaques and “horn” idols), being the raw materials restricted to bone, ceramic and schist. So, if in global terms the locally available and exogenous raw materials have a balanced presence (see above), in chronological terms that balance disappears, with locally available materials being



Graphic 2 – Distribution of ideotechnic items by context



Graphic 3 – Distribution of ideotechnic items by chronological phase.

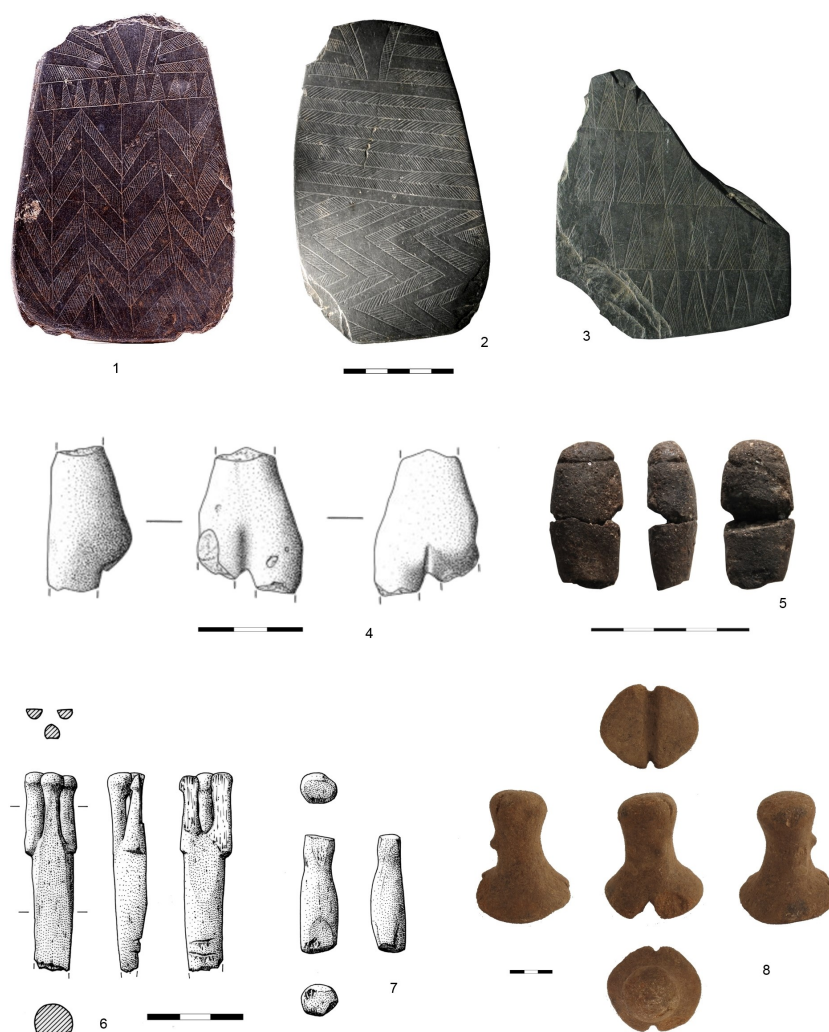


Fig.3.– 1-3. Decorated schist plaque idols; 4. Fragment of body of figurine in clay; 5. Schematic anthropomorphic figurine in clay; 6-7. Schematic anthropomorphic figurines in ivory; 8. Tolve idols in clay.

exclusive in this early phase of the site's life. It is also interesting to notice that all these items were recorded in non-funerary contexts: they were deposited in the bottom of ditch 12 (five almeriense idols), in ditch 6 (one decorated schist plaque) in "Sanja" 1 (one "horn" idol) and in a large pit (one almeriense idol, one decorated schist plaque and one "horn" idol).

During the Chalcolithic phase (2900–2200 BC) the number of ideotechnic items increases significantly (179 records, corresponding to 82,9%) and their typologies and raw materials become more

diversified, where anthropomorphism, expressed through more or less naturalistic or schematic designs, is predominant: worked deer and horse phalanges, undecorated or oculated betils or plaques, reutilizations of geometric decorated schist plaques, naturalistic human figurines, zoomorphic figurines, schematic figurines, lunulae, staff, "horn idols" and other unique items (like the "pillow" or the large prismatic quartz). The used raw materials present a wider variety and ivory, marble, limestone and quartz were added to bone, ceramic and schist, with the exogenous ones representing now 73,6%. Another significant difference to the



Fig. 4.- 1. "Peelow"; 2. Small schist plaque with representation of the facial tattoos; 3. Schematic zoomorphic figurine; 4-6. Stone anthropomorphic figure. 7. Ivory staff; 8. Schist betil.

previous phase is the contexts where the majority of these items were recorded: out of the 179 items 169 (94%) were collected in funerary contexts (Tables 1 and 2). According to present available absolute chronology (Valera *et al.* 2014), this increase and diversification occurred mainly during the middle/third quarter of the 3rd millennium BC (2600-2300 BC).

4.- A PRELIMINARY APPROACH TO THE IDEOTECHNIC ITEMS AT PERDIGÕES

A first repertoire of the mobile items from Per-

digões that can be ascribed to the ideotechnic category in reasonable terms was presented here, but will certainly grow in numbers with the continuation of research at the site. This assemblage reveals a considerable variety in terms of typology and raw materials and presents particular circumstances regarding chronology and context.

In diachronic terms, there is an increase of numbers and diversification of types over time. Relatively rare and less diverse during the Late Neolithic, the number of these items considerably grows during the Chalcolithic and typological and stylistic diversity increases. This chronological

trajectory is also expressed in terms of context. In the Late Neolithic the few ideotechnic items are always deposited in non-funerary contexts, while during the Chalcolithic the predominant contexts of deposition are the funerary ones (a contrast, for example, with the available information for Valencina de la Concepción, where only five items considered idols were recorded in funerary contexts -

Hurtado 2013: 324). Furthermore, the raw materials used in these items are locally available and restricted to bone, schist and ceramic during the Late Neolithic, while in the Chalcolithic the exogenous raw materials appear and become predominant.

This diachronic behaviour of ideotechnic items

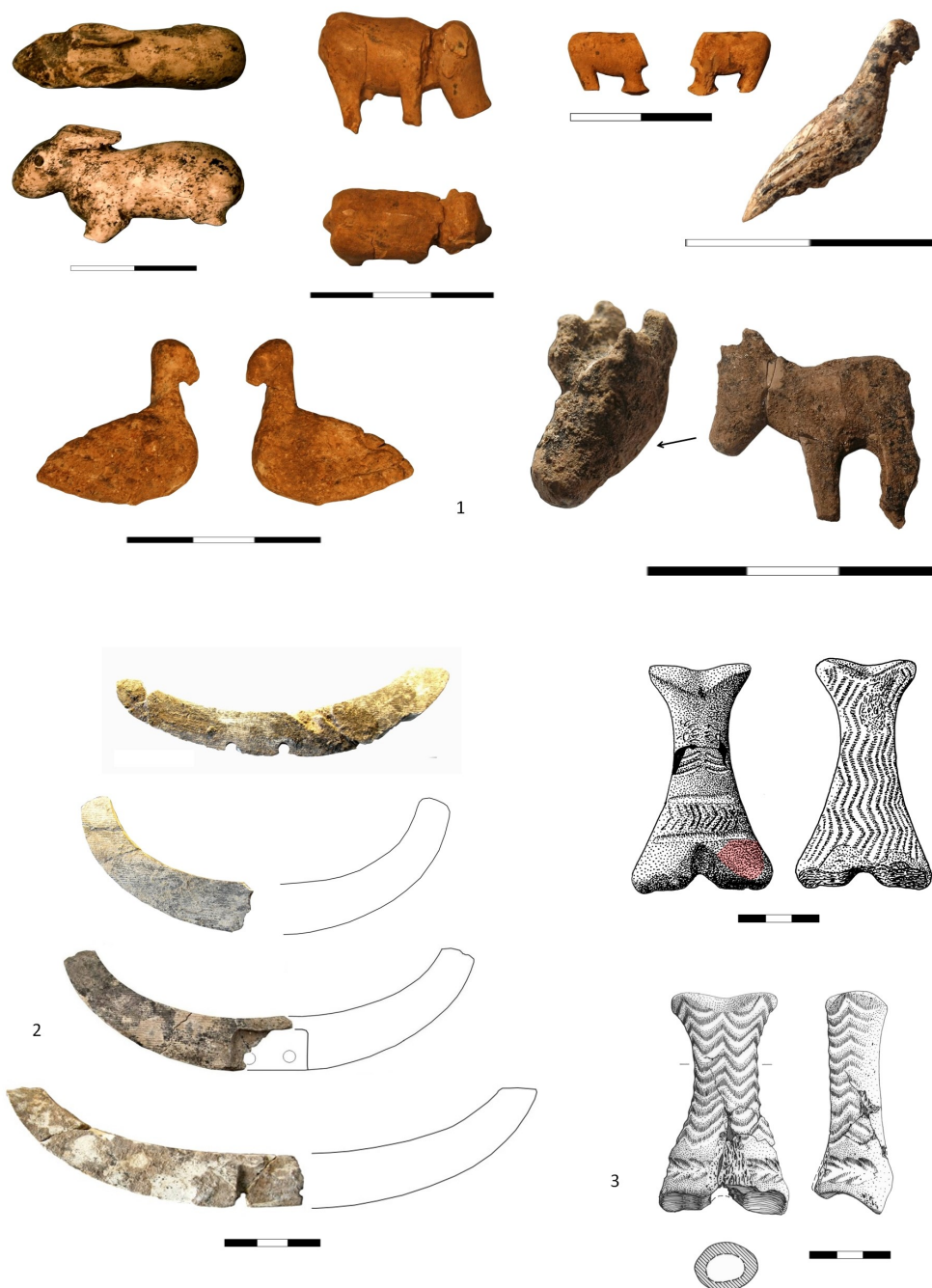


Fig. 5. – 1. Zoomorphic figurines in ivory; 2. Ivory lunulae; 3. Decorated horse phalanges.

traduces a progressive increase of the forms of ideological display at Perdigões that is in accordance with a trajectory of social complexity that was followed in Southwest Iberia during the second half of the 4th and 3rd millennium BC and that would collapse by the end of that millennium. It was recently underlined that the impressive quantity and variety of ideotechnic items produced during the Chalcolithic in South Portugal establishes a massive contrast with what is known after 2000BC, where the number of items that can be ascribed to this category is residual (Valera 2014, 2015). The middle /

third quarter of the 3rd millennium BC seem to have been the zenith of these forms of ideological expression, right before an abrupt decay.

In fact, at least since the catalogue of Almagro Gorbea (1973) that there is the perception of a vast assemblage of iconographic representations, frequently sharing some attributes (like the solar eyes, the facial tattoos or the hair representations), that covers all the southern half of Iberian Peninsula between the late 4th millennium and the end of the 3rd millennium BC. This global iconographic produc-

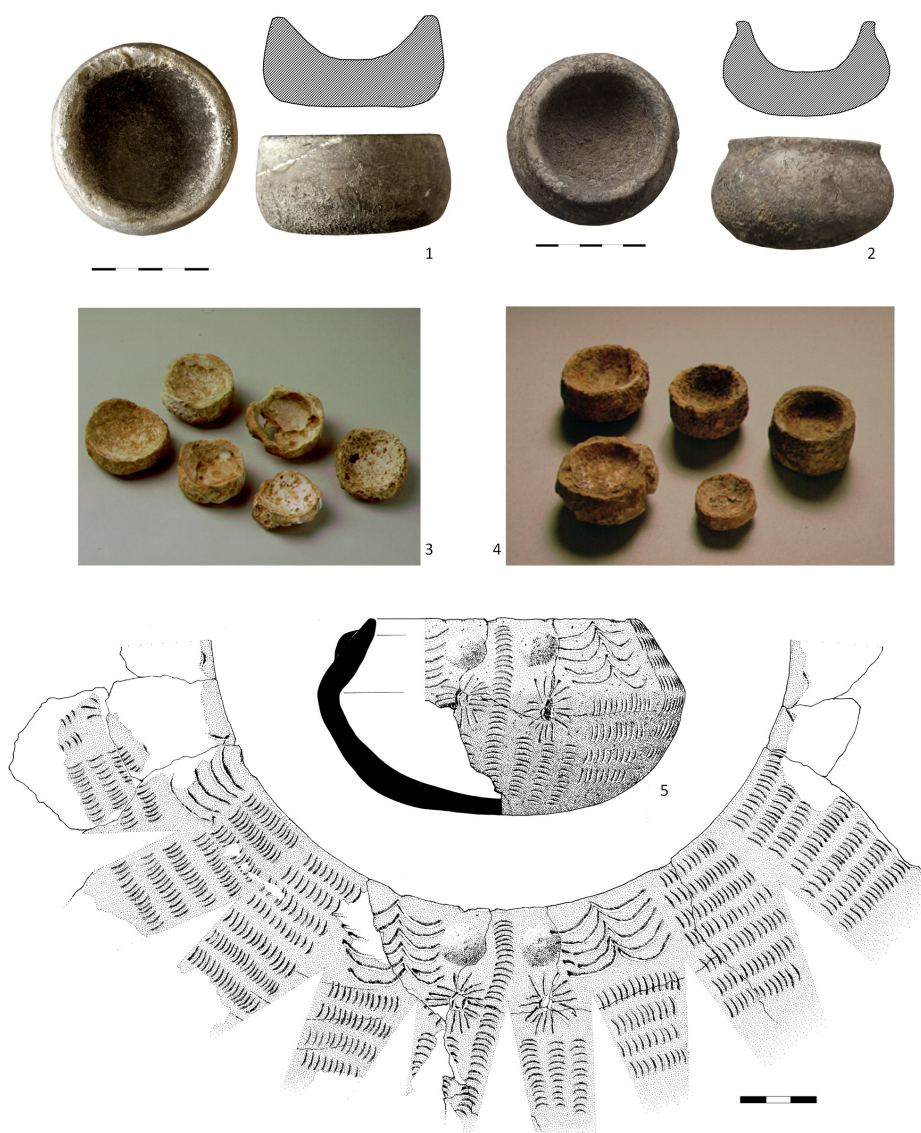


Fig. 6. – 1-4. Limestone and marble pots; 5. Pot with symbolic decoration.

tion is characterized by a significant stylistic diversity and, under a general sense of resemblance that could correspond to shared cosmologies and ideological principles over this vast area, one can recognize the link of certain representations and styles to specific regions (Hurtado 2008, 2010).

By analysing the assemblage at Perdigões in the multiple scales of local, regional and supra-regional, the presence of items that imply different levels of interaction and integration can be attested.

Although existing in small numbers (and mainly without preserved context), the geometric decorated schist plaques (or “plaque idols” as are usually called), represent a link with a local tradition. Emerging in the Late Neolithic, and spread over the Southwest, in Portuguese Estremadura, Spanish Extremadura, western Andalucía and Alentejo, these items present their greater concentration in the Évora region (Lillios 2002), to which Perdigões belongs. At a more local scale, several passage graves of the megalithic landscape of Reguengos de Monsaraz provided significant numbers of these “plaque idols” (the most impressive example being the Anta Grande do Olival da Pega with 134 pieces). A same local/regional relation may be seen in the ivory staff made in an exogenous raw material, representing an object that has its major concentration in the megalithic monuments of the area (there are 7 just at the referred Anta Grande do Olival da Pega) and is frequently represented in megalithic art, like in menhir 1 of Perdigões itself (Gomes 1997a), in the large menhir-stelae of Monte da Ribeira (Gonçalves *et al.* 1997), that was just 3 km east of Perdigões and in visual connection

with the site, or in the local menhirs of Bulhoa, Vídigueiras (Gomes 1997a) and the menhir-stelae of Barrocal (Gomes 2007).

However, the great majority of ideothecnic items present in Perdigões are from groups that have a wider distribution in southern Iberia.

The *lunulae*, as objects, seem to be concentrated in the Portuguese Estremadura, where they are made out of limestone. In Alentejo, they are rare, but an exemplar (yet unpublished) was recorded at the site of Carrascal 2 (Ferreira do Alentejo). However, the representations of *lunulae* is quite frequent in the regional cromlechs, such as Almendres or Portela dos Mogos (Gomes 1997b). Their presence at Perdigões (made in ivory) seems to be inscribed in an ideological concept shared between Alentejo and the Lisbon peninsula, but, as it happens with the staff, using a different and exogenous raw material.

Other items reveal a distribution all over South Iberia, as is the case of the phalanx idols (decorated or just modified and polished), the vessels with symbolic decoration, the anthropomorphic figurines, the betils or the almeriese idols. The latter can be found from the Lisbon Peninsula to Almería and Valencia Spanish provinces. The naturalistic well patterned human figurines are distributed from Los Millares to the Portuguese Estremadura, with the two major concentrations in La Pijotilla (where they are mainly in stone) and in Perdigões (exclusively in ivory). Regarding the anthropomorphic plaques with representation of the eyes, facial tattoos and hair, they are present (made of stone) in neighbouring Spanish Extremadura, while

in the Southeast Iberia (Los Millares; Las Angosturas) they are made of bone and ivory. This variability was seen as a regionalization of a common meaningful representation (Hurtado 2008). In this context, it should be noted that in Perdigões these thin plaques are made of bone or ivory, having significant similarities with some of the objects from Los Millares, while the stone plaques, so typical of La Pijotilla and other sites of the "Tierra de Barros", are still absent from Perdigões.

In fact, although relatively close to La Pijotilla or San Blás (about 90km to the first and 30km to the second), where the ideotechnic items are also present with significant numbers, Perdigões reveal a certain degree of divergence in stylistic variation of some of the ideotechnic representations of wider distribution. In addition to the referred schematic anthropomorphic oculated plaques there is also the case of the betils. According to the distribution of styles proposed by Hurtado for the oculated stone idols (Hurtado 2008), those plaques with encircled eyes, thick eyebrows, facial tattoos and hair would correspond precisely to the middle Guadiana basin, while the south of Portugal would be characterized by the so called Moncarapacho idols with their solar eyes, the Guadalquivir by the encircled eyes and presence of hair (in addition to thin eyebrows and facial tattoos) but with cylindrical shapes, and the Portuguese Estremadura by the predominant cylindrical shapes and the eyes represented by dots and the facial tattoos represented by small lines, normally no more than a pair of two. Again, it is interesting to note that the three decorated betils from Perdigões present stylistic variations that could be related to several of these regions. One cylindrical slightly flattened betil with

the eyes represented by dots and with a pair of only two facial tattoos could be stylistically ascribed to the Portuguese Estremadura (Figure 2: 13), where, as it happens in Perdigões, the majority of the stone betils are undecorated; the fragment of cylindrical betil with the encircled eyes, a pair of four facial tattoos and zigzag hair could be related to the Guadalquivir prototypes (Figure 2: 11); finally, one of conic tendency with two pairs of four facial tattoos, thick eyebrows and solar eyes (that almost seem to be encircled by the proximity to the eyebrows and facial tattoos) represent a mixture of stylistic traits that we can see in the Moncarapacho betils and in the Guadalquivir and Middle Guadiana basin (Figure 2: 12).

Other betils can be related to these neighbouring areas. This is the case of betils with flat heads (also designated by Tolva idols). They are present in Algarve, at Pêra (Cardoso 2002), but are also frequent in Almeria (Almagro Gorbea 1973), being apparently rare in area between (although present at Valencina de la Concepción – Hurtado 2013). The miniature zoomorphic figurines in ivory have similar parallels both in Portuguese Estremadura and the Guadalquivir valley (Valera *et al.* 2014). In the later the use of large quartz prismatic crystals in funerary contexts is also known (Fortez González *et al.* 2008). Finally, small stone pots are well known in all of these border areas of central Alentejo.

In fact, Perdigões has a central location in regard to these several regions that were engaged, during the 3rd millennium BC, in trajectories of social complexity. It is therefore expectable that, during this period, when a significant increase of

trans-regional interaction is documented, objects and stylistic influences with different provenances in neighbouring territories would arrive at Perdigões, generating more heterogenic stylistic assemblages of ideotechnic items. The recent discussion about the presence of exogenous materials (Valera in press) shows that Perdigões was involved in an interaction network that involved all the Southwest quadrant of Iberia and the north-west of Africa. The preliminary results on human mobility through isotopic analyses show a significant percentage of outsiders amongst the human remains present at Perdigões, indicating that the site would have been an important place where people of different provenances converged. These circumstances, together with the importance of funerary practices and body manipulations as one of the main traits of the Chalcolithic phase at Perdigões, with evidences of feasting and with the symbolism associated to the site location and astronomic orientations, points to a place where highly ritualized social practices would have occurred with the capacity of assembling people from different peripheral regions.

The presence of a significant number of ideotechnic items of ample distribution, predominantly made of exogenous raw materials would then be explained by the nature of the site's social role and by its ability to become a congregation centre in an interregional network.

As to the social role that these items could have played in Perdigões, there seems to be differences between the Late Neolithic and the Chalcolithic phases, expressed in the differences in numbers, raw materials, variety and context. During

the 3rd millennium the final context of deposition was predominantly funerary. The presence of some few items outside funerary contexts suggests that these items could have been used in other contexts before their final deposition, but the tombs seem to have been their last intended scenario. It has been suggested (Valera in press) that this massive presence of ideotechnic items and exogenous materials in funerary contexts could signify that Perdigões was mainly a place of consumption (rather than a redistributive centre), an idea that is reinforced by the absence of evident counterparts for trade activity. A consumption that was related to wealth and symbolic squander social practices performed in the context of social emulation and identity management strategies. This group competition and management of identities could explain why contemporaneous funerary contexts, such as the tholoi type tombs and the pits with cremated remains, have simultaneously so many exogenous, prestigious and ideotechnic items and so different assemblages in terms of typology and style.

As to more specific meanings and function, many of these objects have traditionally been categorized as idols (a term used in this paper more as a traditional name for some items than a form of categorization) and associated to gods or goddesses. In recent decades, though, this essentialist interpretation has been questioned and a diversity of functions related to specific social roles were proposed: objects serving in identity strategies, or referring to tangible individuals, social positions, ancestors referents, symbols of power or prestige goods, or several of these roles at the same time (Hamilton 1996; Bailey, 1994, 1996, 2005; Ucko

1996; Schaan 2001; Hurtado 2010; Valera & Evangelista 2014).

In this context of more diverse social roles, some of the items could function as links between the living and the dead, as was suggested for the fragmentation pattern of the lunulae in Tomb 2 (Valera 2010). Others might traduce identity bonds of totemic nature, as discussed for the naturalistic zoomorphic representations (Valera *et al.* 2014). The naturalistic anthropomorphic figurines, because of their stylistic homogeneity in all southern Iberia, could be invested of socio-political meaning in favour of emergent social inequalities in this vast territory (Hurtado 2008), using their body postures as forms of communication (Valera & Evangelista 2014) and their contexts of depositions as forms of identity management (Valera *et al.* 2015). The quartz crystal, on the other hand, could be related to shamanistic practices, as it was suggested for the contexts of the lower Guadalquivir based on the work of M. Eliade about societies where this raw material is considered a symbol of vitality, with magic powers and ability of connecting to the ancestors (Forteza González *et al.* 2008).

It is not easy, though, to interpret the social role of all of these items without the possibility of accessing their meaning and symbolism in solid grounds. For instance, it is not clear if the presence of the solar eyes, facial tattoos, eyebrows and hair (all together or in variable compositions) in different shapes and raw materials correspond to a same representation submitted to stylistic variation or if that variation implies also variation in meaning and role. One thing, though, emerges from this assemblage of ideotechnic items: they

seem to have been attached to ideas that, in a way or another, involved the need for anthropomorphic forms of expression. In fact, the majority of the considered objects present an anthropomorphic shape (64,4%, 74% if we exclude the pots for their specificities), shaped in a naturalistic style or in more schematic and suggested ways. This indicates that we are dealing with ideological formulations that are conceived and organized having as model the human and the human society. To what extent this anthropomorphism is still imbedded in animistic perceptions of the world or traduces emergent anthropocentric ideologies developing behind new forms of social organization is not easy to discriminate. Nonetheless, the coincidence of the disappearance of these iconographic productions with the disappearance of the construction and use of ditched enclosures by the end of the 3rd millennium BC (namely the large ones, where these items are always well represented) seems to indicate that we face not just a collapse of a social trajectory but also of the ideologies in which it was supported.

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