

Death as Archaeology of Transition: Thoughts and Materials

Papers from the II International Conference of
Transition Archaeology: Death Archaeology
29th April – 1st May 2013

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A LAPA DO SONO (SESIMBRA, PORTUGAL) – NEWS ABOUT A NEOLITHIC FUNERARY CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

The Lapa do Sono cave (Sesimbra, Portugal), was identified in 2005 during a speleological survey. It was apparently intact at the time of its discovery. During that work, the site could be classified as a Prehistoric burial cave, as some human bones (including a complete skull) and pottery sherds were found. A detailed analysis of the latter and the ¹⁴C of the skull confirm its classification in the regional late Early Neolithic.

This paper presents a preliminary description and characterization of this context, which will constitute the basis for further archaeological field work.

Keywords: Burial caves; Sesimbra; Lapa do Sono; Neolithic

RESUMO

A Lapa do Sono (Sesimbra, Portugal) foi identificada em 2005, no decurso de trabalhos de levantamento espeleológico, encontrando-se aparentemente intacta à data da sua descoberta.

No âmbito do levantamento e das observações superficiais entretanto realizadas para definir as características e a formação do depósito arqueológico existente, foi possível perceber que se trata de uma gruta com uma ocupação funerária, tendo já anteriormente sido recolhido um crânio no seu interior, e alguns fragmentos de cerâmica.

A análise detalhada deste espólio bem como a datação ¹⁴C entretanto realizada apontam para uma ocupação enquadrada dentro do Neolítico antigo evoluído da região.

São estes dados preliminares, descrição e caracterização sumária deste arqueossítio, que aqui se apresentam e que constituem a base para a intervenção arqueológica que, no presente ano, se inicia.

Palavras-chave: Grutas sepulcrais naturais; Sesimbra; Lapa do Sono; Neolítico

1. INTRODUCTION

The project “Occupations of Prehistory [recent] Arrábida - OPA” has as main objective the study of human occupation in this region during the recent pre-history, in particular the study of Ancient / Middle Neolithic. This work focuses on the data, still preliminary, obtained in this project, which began in 2012, and is grounded in other previous studies. Lapa do Sono is located near the small town of Pinheirinhos, Zambujal (being about from the road Pinheirinhos/Casais da Serra 1.5km), geographical location is M: 110659; P: 163783, at an altitude of 200m. Not being detected in the current landscape. The access to the interior of the cave is done through a small, opening artificially made by speleologists, an horizontal progression with polygonal features, tracing of compliance approximately 19m and a vertical drop, which from the entrance measured 6m. At the presente moment,

the cave is divided into two distinct areas, designated by us of Sector A and Sector B.

Near the entrance (Sector A), the cave appears to be full of archaeological sediments. The space comprised between the top layer and the ceiling of the cave is less than 1m, in this area, and measures from its length and lower width, respectively 4m and 6m. The land's original surface, has a reddish tone, *terra rossa*, which consists in fine grain scarcely compacted, recording human bones and pottery.

Section (B) corresponds to the area presently deeper of the cave and also larger, which access is done through a very narrow passage between archaeological sediments and rock. It has a maximum height of 2m and an area of approximately 100m² and is characterized by the presence in many speleothems (stalactites, stalagmites, columns). The archaeological remains are scarce in this space, and those that occur appear to result from Sector A. It is also observed nearby of the walls, a calcite deposit, although it seems unlikely, can eventually hide archaeological remains.

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