



Zoomorphic Vessel from La Zarcita
(Santa Bárbara de Casa, Huelva). Museo de Huelva.
Foto: Miguel Ángel Blanco de la Rubia.

ZOOMORPHIC FIGURINES AND THE PROBLEM OF HUMAN-ANIMAL RELATIONSHIP IN THE NEOLITHIC AND CHALCOLITHIC SOUTHWEST IBERIA

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Abstract:

Late Neolithic and Chalcolithic Southwest Iberian zoomorphic figurines stand out in the context of zoomorphic representations for their scarcity, most of them occurring in funerary contexts. They have mainly been described or simply referred and not given rightful thought. This paper proposes a review of some traditional readings, conceptualizing these figurines under the scope of a wider perspective, rehearsing social roles and focusing on the human/animal relation in prehistoric Iberia. Summarizing all known occurrences and analysing species, style, size and context of appearance, the understanding of the social roles they have played, by focusing on prehistoric ontologies and cognitive processes has been attempted. Hanging on the constant thread of *being* and *representing*, the paper presents alternative ways of interpreting these figurines, using current approaches towards the comprehension of the prehistoric mind and society.

Keywords: Zoomorphic figurines, Neolithic, Chalcolithic, Iberia, Human-Animal relationship.

FIGURAS ZOOMÓRFICAS Y EL PROBLEMA DE LAS RELACIONES HUMANOS-ANIMALES EN EL NEOLÍTICO Y CALCOLÍTICO DEL SUDOESTE DE LA PENÍNSULA IBÉRICA

Resumen:

Las figuritas zoomórficas del Neolítico Final y Calcolítico del Sudoeste Ibérico destacan en el contexto de las representaciones zoomórficas por su escasez, apareciendo casi siempre en contextos funerarios. Generalmente han sido apenas descritas o mencionadas, sin haber merecido un análisis más en profundidad. En este artículo se propone el estudio de estas figuritas, revisando algunas lecturas tradicionales y conceptualizándolas en base a una perspectiva más amplia, ensayando papeles sociales y con enfoque sobre la relación entre humanos y animales en la Iberia prehistórica. Resumiendo todos los casos conocidos y analizando especies, estilos, tallas y contexto de aparición, hemos intentado comprender los papeles sociales que han desempeñado, centrándonos en las ontologías y procesos cognitivos prehistóricos. Pendiendo del hilo constante de *ser* y *representar*, este artículo presenta modos alternativos de interpretar estas figuritas a través de planteamientos actuales dirigidos a la comprensión de la sociedad y la mente prehistóricas.

Palabras clave: zoomorfos, Neolítico, Calcolítico, Península Ibérica, relaciones humanos-animales.

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1. INTRODUCTION

During the second half of the 4th and the 3rd millennium BC, which in the traditional periodization for Southwestern Iberia corresponds in general to the Late Neolithic and Chalcolithic, we can recognize a new practice, absent in the immediate previous times: the carving and moulding of zoomorphic figurines and vessels. Made in different raw materials (mainly bone, ivory, several minerals, rocks and clay), with different sizes and styles, and representing multiple animal species, these objects are relatively rare, but mark a clear artefactual innovation in relation to what is known for the previous phases of the Neolithic in the region and in the subsequent Bronze Age.

Until recently these objects corresponded almost exclusively to small sculptures of lagomorphs, clay figurines of bovid and some representations of swine, bovid and birds in zoomorphic vessels (two birds as pin heads from Vila Nova de S. Pedro were exceptions). Until recently, they never raised a particular interest as a specific research issue and were usually mentioned as just another symbolic element in the descriptions of material assemblages that occurred at a given site, with some references to a possible social role: the majority was considered amulets, most of them related to fertility cults associated to the development of agrarian societies (Cardoso, 1996; 2004), or, in a recent inversion, as amulets against women infertility (Gonçalves, 2009). Only recently were they specifically addressed in a work (Thomas and Waterman, 2013) where they were associated to death and interpreted as a possible visual metaphor for the going into earth through the association of the permeability of rabbit warrens and of megalithic and cave tombs.

In the last decade, though, new zoomorphic figurines have been identified, bringing more diversity to the previous assemblage and raising some new questions regarding their meaning and social role. Simultaneously, theoretical developments provide new approaches to this kind of objects, pointing towards new angles for research (Wengrow, 2003; Buliett, 2005; Nanoglous, 2008), namely by integrating them in approaches concerned with ontological questions regarding human-animal relations, human identities and cosmologies.

2. CARVING AND MOULDING ZOOMORPHIC SCULPTURES AND VESSELS: A PARTICULAR DIMENSION OF THE HUMAN-ANIMAL RELATIONSHIP

One of the main arguments we want to sustain is that these sculptures can hardly be addressed outside of the wider problem of Human-Animal relationship or without considering what we think about the ontologies that presided to that relation, for they represent a central dimension of the cosmogonies and ideologies that framed the contexts in which these items operated. What these figurines might mean or how they were socially active depends a great deal on how animals were seen, how humans saw themselves and how the relations between them were perceived.

The recognition of an animal as such, or as a particular kind of animal, is not something neutral or evident. It is done in a cultural context of meanings and relations, where that animal acquires its social status and the boundaries of its social role, and this varies in time and space (Ingold, 1988; 1994; 2000; Miracle and Borić, 2008; Valera, 2012). The basic modern terms of the western human-animal relationships are historically situated and reflect a *status quo* that cannot be generalized even to the totality of the present world. So, we assume that those modern western terms, based on a radical separation of the human condition, where animals are perceived as a resource and managed according to economic strategies and utilitarian purposes, where they are considered simply as “goods”, “products” or “companion pets” (Valera, 2012), are not totally adequate as a background frame for the understanding of that same relation five thousand years ago.

In the course of human history, it is within the development of the “symbolic thinking” that we may locate the reasons for the human perception of separation from nature, a process that can be tracked (at least) since the Upper Paleolithic, based on the awareness and the ability to symbolically represent. However, a radical ontological separation occurs much later, for those first times seem to have been characterized by a strong feeling of participation, by a sense of belonging, by a perception of Nature from within and probably by a great diversity of ontological forms of organizing the world.

When the predator/prey relation (Mithen, 1999; Bulliet, 2005) characteristic of the first steps of the process of “becoming human” was overcome through symbolic organizations of the world, a new relation was established between people and animals, based on a progressive anthropisation and integration of other species in a human meaningful symbolic reality, developing animistic world views that framed the first forms of religious thinking (Malafouris, 2007). That relation was classified as a “pre-domestication” condition (Bulliet, 2005) and characterized by a “cognitive fluidity” (Mithen, 1999). The awareness of species started to be symbolically expressed, which is the basis for a future ontological separation of humans. But that consciousness was initially made through a more relational perception of animals and natural elements, generating more fluid and unbounded ways of thinking, classifying and being in the world, enabling animals to participate in the social relations as entities of their own right and tending to establish a continuum between animals and people, with a diversified range of possibilities in the middle (Ingold, 1994, 2000; Miracle and Borić, 2008; Valera, 2012). As Ingold put it, “we find nothing corresponding to the western concept of nature in hunter-gatherer representations, for they see no essential difference between the ways one relates to humans and to non-human constituents of environment.” (Ingold, 1994: 18).

The development of the Neolithic may be seen as a transition period, where relevant traces of these more fluid cosmologies can be found, generating hybrid situations in a phase of “domestication”, when more utilitarian forms of perceiving the world may have started to arise. The question is to what extent elements of those animistic cosmogonies were still active and conforming human-animal relationships during the Neolithic and Chalcolithic in Iberia, giving way to a more unstable and permeable categorization of the ontological status. As Ingold argues (1994), the transition from wild to domestic would be better conceptualized as a passage from a state of trust in hunter-gather societies to a state of dominance in herder ones. The Wild-Domestic dichotomy establishes a tight frontier between different conditions, while trust-domain are just different forms of relation within an integrated world, maintaining some permeability. The control over some animals does not necessarily imply a profound alteration of the bases of the relation with Nature, just a change in the terms that do not signify a radical separation of worlds as perceived today (Ingold, 2000).

It is not as if we assume an essential differentiation between modern and pre-modern ontologies. In fact, such a deterministic dichotomy has been submitted to criticism (Smith, 2001; Borić and Robb, 2008) and we can easily find today traces of diverse forms of animism, anthropomorphism and more permeable ontological boundaries. A relational existence is a characteristic of humanity (Bird-David, 1999). Nevertheless, different cultural contexts mould that relational existence, generating different forms of categorising or organizing the world and diverse processes of identification of the individual and the collective (Hallowell, 1960, Fowler, 2004), and we have plenty of data from Neolithic Europe that suggests that ontological boundaries may have been built as a “causewayed enclosure”, that is to say with many gates and connections.

The existence of a more distinct ontological fluidity and instability in Neolithic times has been argued and based on diverse concepts of individual personhood (Marriott, 1976; Bird-David, 1999; Fowler, 2004). The perception of a dividual existence (opposing the individual one) is more open and allows the transmission and participation of substances between bodies of living beings and between bodies and objects. This generates permeable categories and more relational connections between things and beings and between wholes and parts, which is the basis of shamanistic, animistic and magical practices and of the sociological importance of fragmentation (of objects, bodies or communities). Apart from this fluidity, or totally integrated with it, different forms of categorising and organizing the natural elements and beings (including humans) can be perceived in the ethnographic record, showing the contingency of “the way a man, in a particular society, sees himself in relation to all else.” (Hallowell, 1960: 21).

In this context, animals might not be organized as in a modern taxonomy and we might even question the existence of the concept of “animal” (which implies a radical ontological isolation of humans) and the application of the modern differentiation between living and non-living beings (objects, mountains, rocks may very well be considered as living entities and agents in the social stage – Hallowell’s “other than humans”). In a more animated and relational world strictly utilitarian notions of animals and things make less sense. On the contrary, we can perceive a world still inhabited by a diversity of beings with significant mobility, crossing ontological boundaries, allowing

circulation between bodies and relations of familiarity among different entities, building identity groups that break way from the modern utilitarian rationalization of the natural (Valera, 2012). Therefore, this matrix should be present when analysing activities such as hunting, herding, slaughtering, consumption, body manipulations and depositions, but also in the approaches to animal representations.

Besides these problems related to the ontological contexts of human-animal relation that, in our view, constitute the background frame to the social role of these figurines, we also have to justify their treatment as a separate assemblage comparatively to the representation of animals through other forms of “artistic” expression. In fact, in the so called schematic art of Neolithic and Chalcolithic Iberia, the animal depiction is frequent, painted or carved in rock shelters and megalithic monuments. During the Chalcolithic they also appear in pottery decoration, specially associated to the “symbolic decoration” (as, for instance, in the famous vessel from tomb 15 of Los Millares necropolis, Almeria – Martin Socas and Camalich Massieu, 1982) and to bell beaker pottery (with good examples in the Lisbon peninsula – Cardoso *et al.*, 1996; Soares, 2003), or apposed on loom weights (like in Vila Nova de S. Pedro (VNSP), Azambuja – Paço, 1970b). Two main aspects, though, give us good reason to believe that, although functioning in a same general cosmological context, the figurines can be treated separately.

One has to do with the represented species. If in the rock art of this period we can observe a smaller variation of species (mainly cervids, possibly dogs, representations of bovid heads or horns and possibly snakes), these zoomorphic sculptures present a much wider diversity of animals, suggesting that these objects might respond to different symbolic meanings.

The second reason has to do precisely with the possibilities of roles and uses that a small figurine or a zoomorphic vessel provide. The small sculptures can be transported, attached to other objects or clothes, used in necklaces, manipulated, placed over something, deposited in a great variety of contexts or used in different occasions, they can be ritually broken and, in the case of the vessels, they can contain. All of these characteristics offer these objects a range

of possibilities for symbolic use that parietal depictions do not have, vindicating them as a specific issue (but not necessarily as a homogeneous category) for inquiry in the context of the symbolic productions of these communities.

Finally, we must be aware that, by particularly addressing animal figurines we may tend to disregard another important connection, namely the treatment conceded to the animals themselves and to their remains.

Evidence of especial treatment conceded to animal remains is documented throughout Neolithic and Chalcolithic Europe. Iberia is not an exception and animal burials in pits occur in similar circumstances as human ones or can be associated to human body depositions in a same structure (Weiss-Krejci, 2006; Valera and Costa, 2013a). Just to quote some examples, we can refer to Polideportivo de Martos, Jaén (Cámara Serrano *et al.*, 2008), Marroquíes Bajos, Jaén (Cámara Serrano *et al.*, 2012), Alcalar, Portimão (Morán, 2008), Camino de las Yeseras, Madrid (Liesau *et al.*, 2008) or Perdigões, Évora (Valera, 2014) for the first situation and Camino del Molino, Murcia (Lomba Maurandi, *et al.*, 2009), Marroquíes Bajos (Cámara Serrano *et al.*, 2012), Perdigões (Cabaço, 2009) or Horta do Jacinto 1, Beja (Batista *et al.*, 2013) for the second. Equally frequent is the presence of animal parts in funerary contexts, especially limbs (Weiss-Krejci, 2006; Valera and Costa, 2013a), or the assemblage of specific animal bones with human bones or bodies. Examples of such associations are the cases of the Late Neolithic *hypogea* necropolis of Sobreira de Cima, Beja, where ovicaprid phalanges and human phalanges were put together in an ossuary (Valera and Costa, 2013b), and the Chalcolithic hypogeum of Monte da Comenda, Beja, where animal phalanges were associated to human bodies establishing correspondences between the size of the phalanges and the age of the individuals¹. Finally, we have evidence of human and animal unarticulated and scattered bones sharing the same contexts inside pits and ditches (for instance in the large south Iberian ditch enclosures – Valera and Godinho, 2010).

This communion between human and animal remains has also started to be addressed in the context of more holistic perspectives of human-animal rela-

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tions and of the social practices in which they participate (Márquez Romero, 2006; Valera, 2012; Valera and Costa, 2013a) as a manifestation of the world view that framed them. Once again, as observed in rock art or depictions in clay artefacts, we underline the need of crossing the data provided by zoomorphic figurines with the information that comes from the treatment conceded to animal remains in the attempt to understand both the cosmological background and its forms of expression. This fact, however, does not prevent an approach centred on figurines, with their specific symbolic potentials.

3. OBJECTS, CONTEXTS AND SPATIALITY

We were able to inventory a total number of 95 southern Iberian carved or moulded items that may be classified as zoomorphic (or objects with attached zoomorphic representations), distributed throughout 44 different sites (Table 1) predominantly located in the Southwestern quadrant of the peninsula (Plate 1). They correspond to figurines, vessels with animal heads attached to the rim (12 possible cases)

and animal sculptures attached to other objects (at least five cases: two combs, two possible pins and an object difficult to categorize).

In general, these items can be classified as zoomorphic by their morphological traits that represent parts (usually heads) or complete animal bodies, some with great realism and others in a more ambiguous way. In fact, the ontological fluidity is probably one of the reasons for hybridism, which associated to schematism generates difficulties in the interpretation of the represented animals.

Shaped with a more equivocal form is an assemblage of Chalcolithic objects from VNSP, in Portuguese Estremadura, with at least five pieces, and another from Perdigões in Central Alentejo, with four records. Made of clay, they shaped as an arch with a vertical protuberance at the top (Plate 2). In one case (from VNSP) that protuberance is missing (Plate 2: 1), but a small hole is present, suggesting the existence of a removable part. Their general appearance is, in fact, quite ambiguous, and it is hard to assume if they really are zoomorphic representations or anthropo-

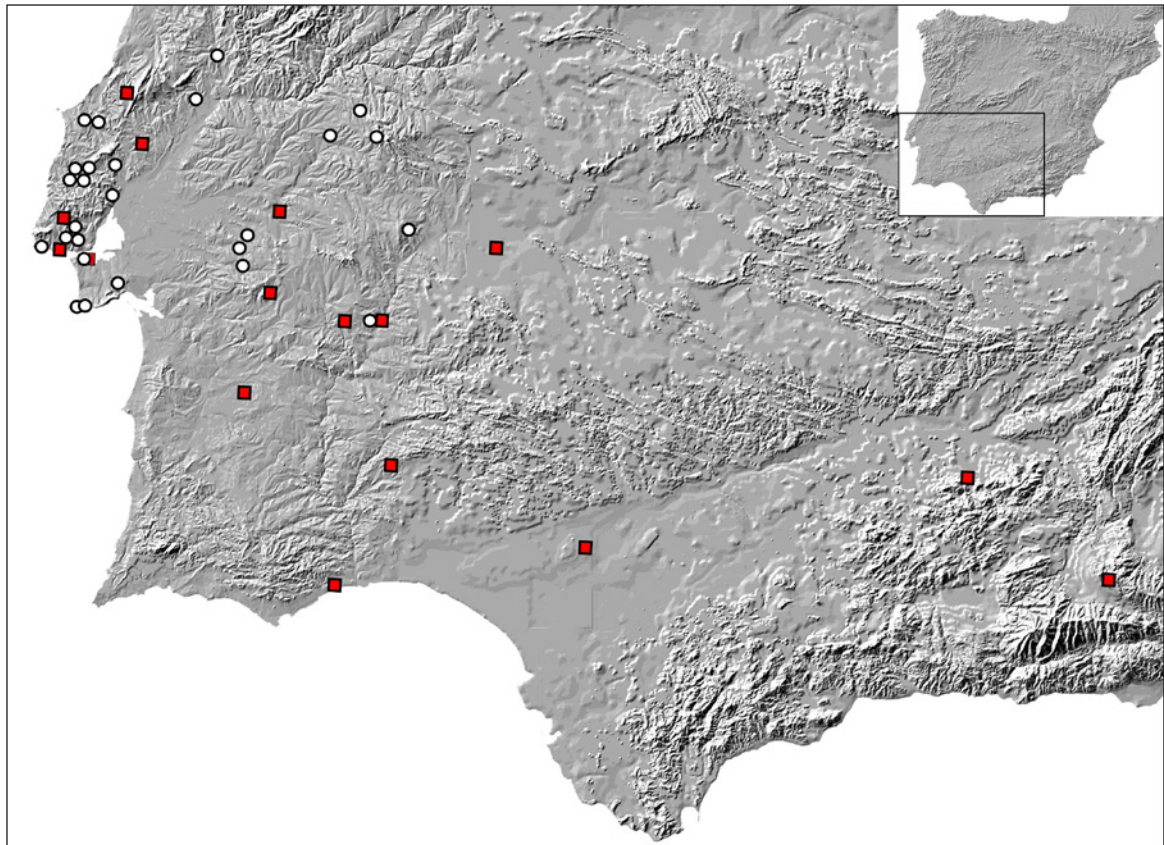


Plate 1. Location of the referred sites in the Iberian Peninsula. Circles correspond to sites with lagomorphs (except Perdigões); rectangles correspond to sites with other zoomorphic items.

Tab. 1. Inventory of the zoomorphic objects.

Site	Object	Context	Bib. Reference
Morgado Superior	Lagomorph	Natural cave: Funerary?	Cruz <i>et al.</i> , 2013
Lapa da Galinha	Lagomorph	Natural cave: Funerary?	Veiga Ferreira, 1970
Casa da Moura	Lagomorph	Natural cave: Funerary?	Leisner, 1965
Lapa do Suão	Lagomorph	Natural cave: Funerary?	Spindler, 1981
Lapa do Suão	Lagomorph	Natural cave: Funerary?	Spindler, 1981
Lapa do Suão	Double Lagomorph	Natural cave: Funerary?	Spindler, 1981
Cova da Moura	Lagomorph	Natural cave: Funerary?	Gallay and Spindler, 1970
Cova da Moura	Lagomorph	Natural cave: Funerary?	Gallay and Spindler, 1970
Cova da Moura	Lagomorph	Natural cave: Funerary?	Gallay and Spindler, 1970
Cova da Moura	Lagomorph	Natural cave: Funerary?	Gallay and Spindler, 1970
Quinta das Lapas	Double Lagomorph	Hypogeum: Funerary	Spindler, 1981
Quinta das Lapas	Lagomorph	Hypogeum: Funerary	Spindler, 1981
Cabeço da Arruda 1	Double Lagomorph	Hypogeum: Funerary	Leisner, 1965
Cabeço da Arruda	Lagomorph	Hypogeum: Funerary	Leisner, 1965
Cabeço da Arruda	Lagomorph	Hypogeum: Funerary	Leisner, 1965
Cabeço da Arruda	Lagomorph	Hypogeum: Funerary	Leisner, 1965
Cabeço da Arruda	Lagomorph	Hypogeum: Funerary	Leisner, 1965
Cabeço da Arruda	Lagomorph	Hypogeum: Funerary	Trindade and Veiga Ferreira, 1956
Cabeço da Arruda	Lagomorph	Hypogeum: Funerary	Trindade and Veiga Ferreira, 1956
Carrasca	Lagomorph	Natural cave: Funerary?	Leisner, 1965
Ota	Lagomorph	Habitat?	Veiga Ferreira, 1970
Quinta da Marquesa (VFX)	Lagomorph	?	Leisner, 1965
Casainhos	Lagomorph	Dolmen: Funerary	Leisner, 1965
Conchadas	Lagomorph	Dolmen: Funerary	Leisner, 1965
Conchadas	Lagomorph	Dolmen: Funerary	Leisner, 1965
Conchadas	Lagomorph	Dolmen: Funerary	Leisner, 1965
Carenque	Lagomorph	Hypogeum: Funerary	Leisner, 1965
Poço Velho	Double Lagomorph	Natural cave: Funerary?	Gonçalves, 2009
Poço Velho	Lagomorph	Natural cave: Funerary?	Gonçalves, 2009
Poço Velho	Lagomorph	Natural cave: Funerary?	Gonçalves, 2009
Anta Penedos de S. Miguel	Lagomorph	Dolmen: Funerary	Gonçalves, 2009
Portalegre	Lagomorph	?	Spindler, 1981
Tapada dos Matos	Lagomorph	Dolmen: Funerary	Spindler, 1981
Vale Figueira	Lagomorph	?	Spindler, 1981
Montemor-o-Novo	Lagomorph	Dolmen: Funerary	Veiga Ferreira, 1970
Anta Grande Comenda Igreja	Lagomorph	Dolmen: Funerary	Leisner and Leisner, 1959
Elvas	Lagomorph	?	Veiga Ferreira, 1970
S. Paulo 2	Lagomorph	Hypogeum: Funerary	Gonçalves <i>et al.</i> , 2004
S. Paulo 2	Swine - Pot	Hypogeum: Funerary	Unpublished
Lapa do Fumo	Lagomorph	Natural cave: Funerary	Serrão and Marques, 1971
Lapa do Bugio	Double Lagomorph	Natural cave: Funerary	Cardoso, 1992
Lapa do Bugio	Double Lagomorph	Natural cave: Funerary	Spindler, 1981
Olival da Pega 1	Lagomorph	Dolmen: Funerary	Leisner and Leisner, 1959
Olival da Pega 1	Lagomorph	Dolmen: Funerary	Leisner and Leisner, 1959
Quinta do Anjo	Lagomorph	Hypogeum: Funerary	Thomas and Waterman, 2013

Site	Object	Context	Bib. Reference
Rego da Murta II	Lagomorph	Dolmen: Funerary	Thomas and Waterman, 2013
Carvalhal	Swine – Pot	Natural cave: Funerary	Spindler, Veiga Ferreira, 1974
Vila Nova de São Pedro	Bird – Pin ?	Habitat ?	Carmo Archaeological Museum
Vila Nova de São Pedro	Bird – Pin?	Habitat ?	Paço, 1970a
Vila Nova de São Pedro	Bird – Pot	Habitat ?	Paço, 1970a
Vila Nova de São Pedro	Quadruped	Habitat ?	Carmo Archaeological Museum
Vila Nova de São Pedro	Quadruped ?	Habitat ?	Carmo Archaeological Museum
Vila Nova de São Pedro	Quadruped ?	Habitat ?	Carmo Archaeological Museum
Vila Nova de São Pedro	Quadruped ?	Habitat ?	Carmo Archaeological Museum
Vila Nova de São Pedro	Quadruped ?	Habitat ?	Carmo Archaeological Museum
Olelas	Swine – Pot	Monument 1: Funerary	Cardoso, 1996
Leceia	Bovid - hybrid ?	Deposit: Habitat?	Cardoso, 1996
Leceia	Bovid - hybrid ?	Deposit: Habitat?	Cardoso, 1996
Leceia	Bovid - hybrid ?	Deposit: Habitat?	Cardoso, 1996
Anta da Oliveira 1	Bird head	Dolmen: Funerary	Leisner and Leisner, 1959
La Pijotilla	Bovid	?	Hurtado Pérez, 1980
Anta Grande do Zambujeiro	Bird - Pot	Dolmen: Funerary	Rocha, 2013
Perdigões	Bovid – hybrid?	<i>Tholos</i> 1: Funerary	Valera <i>et al.</i> , 2007
Perdigões	Swine	<i>Tholos</i> 1: Funerary	Valera <i>et al.</i> , 2007
Perdigões	Bird	<i>Tholos</i> 1: Funerary	Unpublished
Perdigões	Bird	<i>Tholos</i> 1: Funerary	Unpublished
Perdigões	Bird	<i>Tholos</i> 2: Funerary	Valera <i>et al.</i> , 2007
Perdigões	Cervid	<i>Tholos</i> 2: Funerary	Unpublished
Perdigões	Bird – Pot?	Surface ?	Unpublished
Perdigões	Bird	Surface ?	Unpublished
Perdigões	Lagomorph	Surface ?	Valera <i>et al.</i> , 2007
Perdigões	Quadruped ?	Surface ?	Unpublished
Perdigões	Quadruped ?	Surface ?	Unpublished
Perdigões	Quadruped ?	Surface ?	Valera and Evangelista, 2014
Perdigões	Quadruped ?	Surface ?	Unpublished
Olival da Pega 2b	Fox	<i>Tholos</i> : Funerary	Gonçalves, 2009
Porto Torrão	Bovid - hybrid ?	Surface ?	Arnaud, 1993
La Zarcita 1	Bird - Pot	<i>Tholos</i> : Funerary	Leisner and Leisner, 1959
Marcela	Bird - Pot	<i>Tholos</i> : Funerary	Leisner and Leisner, 1959
Valencina de la Concepción	Equine – Pot	Pit: Funerary	García Sanjuán, 2013
Valencina de la Concepción	6 Swine - Comb	<i>Tholos</i> : Funerary	Unpublished
Valencina de la Concepción	1 Swine - Comb	<i>Tholos</i> : Funerary	Unpublished
Valencina de la Concepción	Bird	<i>Tholos</i> : Funerary	Unpublished
Valencina de la Concepción	Bovid	Pit: with human skull	López Aldana and Pajuelo Pando, 2013
Marroquíes Bajos	Bovid	Pit: Funerary	Cámara Serrano <i>et al.</i> , 2012
La Sabina	Bovid - Pot	<i>Tholos</i> : Funerary	Leisner and Leisner, 1943
Vaquero	Bird - Pot	<i>Tholos</i> : Funerary	Piñón Varela, 2004
Monte da Comenda	Bird – Unknown Obj.	Hypogeum: Funerary	Unpublished
Monte da Comenda	Fox – Unknown Obj.	Hypogeum: Funerary	Unpublished

morphic ones (or if that distinction should be made). One of the pieces from VNSP, though, quite similar to the others, presents not two, but four legs, revealing a quadruped, also with the top protuberance. This piece suggests that the others may also be representations of quadrupeds, since they are very thick and the pairs of legs may be represented in a joined position. The ambiguity, nonetheless, remains and might be an intended characteristic of these figurines, especially if we take into consideration that they appear in sites where quite realistic zoomorphic sculptures are also present.

Apart from this more ambiguous assemblage, we can recognize a significant diversity of represented species: lagomorphs, birds, bovid, cervid, fox, swine and equine.

Clearly, the most representative are the figurines that have been classified as lagomorphs (although some may raise doubts about their classification), with 45 figurines (except the one from Perdigões – see below), six of them double, from 27 different sites. These sites are all in Portuguese territory, concentrating in the Estremadura region (18 sites) with the rest of the cases revealing an extension towards East, reaching the Upper Alentejo region (Plate 1).

They are represented with a flat or arched back contour and discernible ears, tail and eyes and more rarely with a small line depicting the mouth or the indication of sex. They are made of bone, ivory or variscite. In six cases they are double, presenting two lagomorphs linked by the hindquarters. A significant number presents perforations in the paws, showing they were objects to be suspended in some manner (in necklaces or bracelets). Being sculptures, they are quite thin, sometimes flat, which gives them an almost two-dimensional appearance. In fact, they are relatively schematic and some are suggested more by the general shape or some traits (like the tails or the paws) than actually represented in detail (Plate 3: 2 and 18). Finally, they are small sized, with 12 mm to 32 mm in length and 7 mm to 19 mm high (Figure 1).

Their context is predominantly funerary. In fact, for those with known provenance, they appear in *hypogea* and megalithic passage graves (13 sites) and in natural caves where, in spite of problems of contextual nature, evidences of funerary practices have been recorded in almost every case. Only in one situation the reference of provenance is from a settlement



1



2

Plate 2. Quadrupeds. 1: from VNSP (Carmo Archaeological Museum); 2: from Perdigões ditched enclosure.

[Castro da Ota], but we do not know the nature of the context inside that settlement and, because it is an object from an old collection there is the possibility that the provenance is not entirely correct.

A chronological ascription is difficult for most of these objects, since contextual provenance and associations are frequently unclear and disturbed, where material from Neolithic and Chalcolithic chronology are often mixed. They probably have their origin and main period of use in the Late Neolithic (second half of the 4th millennium BC), as the contexts of Lapa do Fumo, Lapa do Bugio (both in Sesimbra) and many

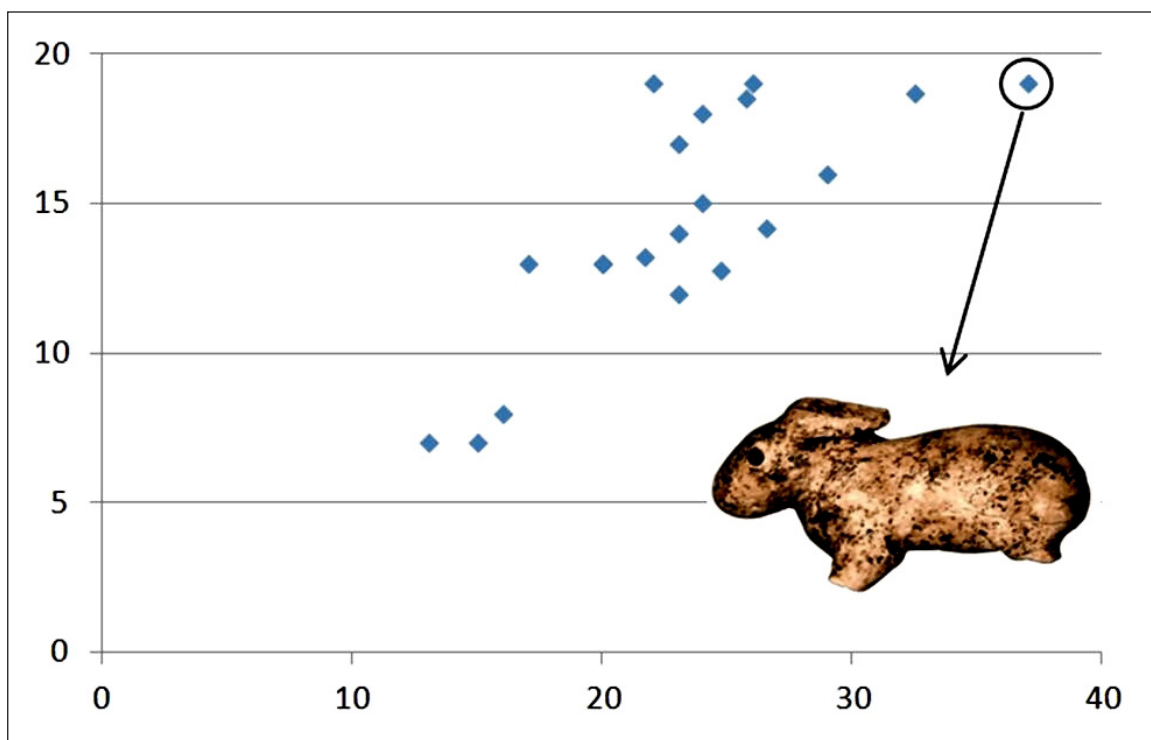


Fig. 1. Dimensions (length and height) of the lagomorphs, showing the slightly bigger dimensions of the Perdigões piece.

other cave and megalithic monuments suggest, but we cannot rule out the possibility of them still being in use in the Chalcolithic.

As an exception to this assemblage we must consider the lagomorph from Perdigões (Plate 4: 1). We do not know its specific context inside the enclosure (it is a surface find), but its morphological traits (as well as the dimensions – Figure 1) set it apart from the rest. Made of ivory, this lagomorph is slightly bigger than all the rest and presents a clearly different style, highly realistic, very well proportioned and with surprising attention to detail, to the point that we can confidently suggest it represents a hare. This naturalism contrasts with the tendency to a certain schematic appearance of almost all the other lagomorphs. On the contrary, this hare is stylistically closer to the other ivory zoomorphic figurines that came from the Perdigões *tholoi* tombs, even if they represent other species (Plate 4). It will be in that group of figurines that we will consider it.

Birds come in second, with 15 pieces, corresponding to five zoomorphic vessels and two other possible ones (Plate 7: 2-6), two probable pin heads (Plate 4:

9-10), one possible removable clay head (Plate 7: 1), three possible independent figurines of ivory (Plate 4: 4-5 and 7) and an ivory figurine possibly attached to an object where a fox is also represented (Plate 5: 4). A reference to a bird figurine is also known in the *tholos* of Montelirio² (Valencina de la Concepción, Seville). This assemblage correspond to nine different sites, and their contexts, once again, are essentially funerary (Table 1): amongst the ones with known context six are from *tholoi* type tombs (Perdigões Tombs 1 and 2, La Zarcita 1, Huelva, Marcela, Montelirio and El Vaquero, Seville), two are from megalithic passage graves (Anta Grande do Zambujeiro, Évora, and Anta da Oliveira 1, Mora) and one from an hypogeum (Monte da Comenda). The rest are from unknown contexts inside Perdigões and VNSP enclosures.

The chronological and spatial distribution of the bird representations seems to establish a significant contrast with the lagomorph figurines. Only dated with absolute chronology in the *tholos* type tombs of Perdigões (between 2870-2467 BC in tomb 1 and 2575-2200 BC in tomb 2 – Valera *et al.*, 2014), they appear in clear Chalcolithic contexts in the other *tholoi*, in

² In a press notice, the excavator of Montelirio (Ávaro Fernández) refers the presence of ten zoomorphic figurines, corresponding to swine and one bird (Europa Press, Castilleja de Guzmán, Sevilla), November 18th, 2009).

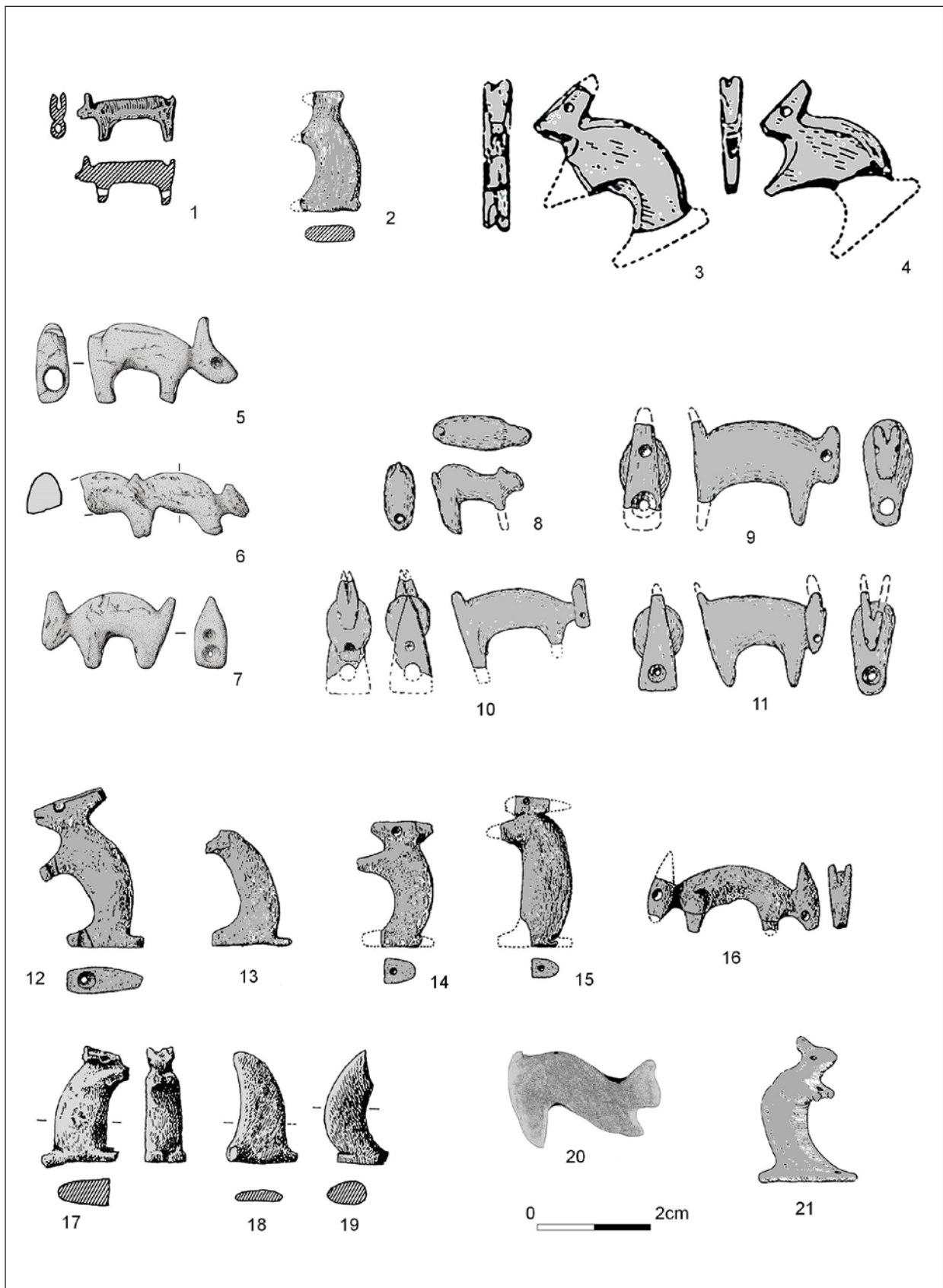


Plate 3. Examples of lagomorphs. 1: Anta Grande da Comenda da Igreja (Leisner and Leisner, 1959, adapted); 3-4: Anta 1 do Olival da Pega (idem); 5-7 Poço Velho natural caves (Gonçalves, 2009, adapted); 8-11: Cova da Moura natural cave (Gallay and Spindler, 1970, adapted); 12-16: Cabeço da Arruda 1 hypogeum (Leisner, 1965, Adapted); 17-19: Dolmen das Conchadas (idem); 20: Anta dos Penedos de São Miguel (Gonçalves, 2009, adapted); 21: Carenque hypogeum (Leisner, 1965, Adapted).



Plate 4. Zoomorphic figurines. 1-7: Perdigões; 8: Olival da Pega 2b [after Gonçalves, 2009, adapted]; 9-10: VNSP [Carmo Archaeological Museum and Paço, 1970a].

the hypogeum of Monte da Comenda and in VNSP. We do not know their exact contextual circumstances in the two passages graves, but in both cases chalcolithic reutilizations are known. So, it appears that the carving and moulding of birds is a practice that developed essentially during the 3rd millennium BC, while the lagomorphs seem to have originated (and maybe had their main period of existence) in the Late Neolithic. On the other hand, bird representations do

not occur in the same sites as lagomorphs (with the already referred exception of the Perdigões figurine) and their spatial distribution is now more spread throughout southern Iberia, being rare in the Portuguese Estremadura (so far only referenced at VNSP).

Bovids appear represented by clay fragments of five figurines (Leceia, Lisbon, Porto Torrão, Ferreira do Alentejo and La Pijotilla, Badajoz – Plate 6), one clay



Plate 5. Objects with attached zoomorphic figurines. 1-3: *Tholos* de Montelirio, Valencina de la Concepción (photos courtesy of Alvaro Fernández Flores, Ana Pajuelo Pando and Pedro López Aldana); 4: Monte da Comenda.

figurine (Valencina de la Concepción, Seville) one ivory figurine (Tomb 1 from Perdigões) and in one vessel (from the *Tholos* of Sabina, Granada – Plate: 7: 8). Some tend to present ambiguous characteristics that give them a certain hybrid aspect, leading to different possible interpretations. In fact, the figuri-

nes from Leceia (Plate 6: 1 to 3) were interpreted as representations of swine (Cardoso, 1996), especially due to the traits of their heads, and the fragment from Porto Torrão is classified as bovid or swine (Arnaud, 1993). However, if we carefully analyse the Leceia fragments, their hindquarters present a bovid

profile, with a very well marked spine, quite different from that of a swine. The same can be observed in the ivory figurine from Perdigões (Plate 4: 2) where the body, very realistically carved, clearly belongs to a bovid. But the head is too big in a proportioned body and, in spite of having fractures indicating the presence of horns, it has a shape resembling that of a swine. We consider these figurines to represent bovid, but, in at least the cases of Leceia and Perdigões, the heads and their morphology might suggest hybridism, where disproportioned swine heads are placed on bovid bodies. We cannot discriminate traits that enable to tell apart a domestic or wild condition of the represented bovid.

It is also interesting to note that, zoomorphic vessels apart, bovid is the only species represented through clay independent figurines (Leceia, Porto Torrão and La Pijotilla) and that, contrary to the ivory representation (Perdigões) and the zoomorphic vessel (Sabina), these clay figurines appear as fragments and in contexts that apparently are not funerary. In fact, in opposition to the other species, where almost all sculptures occur in funerary contexts, bovid are present in tombs only in two cases.

Geographically, they are concentrated in the Southwestern quadrant of the Iberian Peninsula, with the zoomorphic vessel from Sabina being the present exception, already in Southeast Iberia. As to their chronology, the fragments from Leceia are from a Late Neolithic layer, while the ivory figurine of Perdigões and the pot from Vaquero are from *tholoi* type Chalcolithic tombs (the Perdigões piece is dated by radiocarbon between 2870-2467 BC – Valera *et al.*, 2014). We do not have information about the precise contexts of the fragments from Porto Torrão and La Pijotilla.

Swine (with eleven representations) are also carved and moulded and have only been recorded in five sites. They appear represented with the head (with ears and eyes), the tail and the paws in the clay pot of Carvalhal, Alcobaça cave (Plate 7: 7), in the hypogeum of S. Paulo II, Almada (Plate 6: 6) and in the limestone vessel from Olelas, Sintra (Plate: 7: 9). But

their largest assemblage comes from the *tholos* of Montelirio, where several swine figurines are attached to two combs carved in ivory: six in one comb and another in the other (Plate 5: 1 to 3)³. A body from a very small figurine recovered in Perdigões Tomb 1 (Plate 4: 8) is very similar to these Montelirio swine sculptures and the manner in which the front paw is broken suggests that it may also have been attached to an object (such as a comb or a pin, both present in that same monument). As to the species of these animals, the heads of the clay zoomorphic vessels from Gruta do Carvalhal and S. Paulo II suggest a pig, but the details of the heads of the Montelirio ones point to wild boar⁴.

Finally, we have some species with extremely rare representations: two possible foxes, one cervid and one equine.

The possible foxes (interpreted as such due to their short height and long bodies and tails) are from the *Tholos* B of Olival da Pega 2, Évora (Plate 4: 6) and from the hypogeum of Monte da Comenda⁵ (Plate 5: 4). The first one corresponds to an individual piece (possibly made of ivory) with provenance in a funerary context dated generally between 2900-2500 BC (Gonçalves, 1999). The second, made of ivory, is also from a Chalcolithic funerary context and is attached to a long decorated object that may have included the bird with the same contextual provenance.

The cervid, also made of ivory, is from Perdigões Tomb 2, from a context dated between 2575-2200 BC. It displays the antlers, suggesting a male (Plate 4: 3).

The equine (Plate 8) corresponds to a zoomorphic vessel with the representation of the four limbs and the head, from a negative funerary structure of Valencina's sector PP4-Montelirio (Mora Molina *et al.*, 2013).

Finally, there is reference to a clay figurine with beaver teeth (Cámara Serrano *et al.* 2012: 50) from a pit grave in Marroquíes Bajos, but no mention is made to what kind of animal is represented, nor a description or drawing was provided.

3 See note 1.

4 We interpret these figurines as wild boars based on the morphological traits of the figurines, namely the trapezoidal profile presented by the animals (higher in the shoulder area and lower in the tail area) and the correlative size of the heads (large in relation to the body). The frequent presence of wild boar tusks (not transformed into adornments) in funerary contexts is also frequent, reinforcing the symbolic role that these animals might have assumed.

5 Excavations by Omnisknos Lda. company, directed by Sandrine Fernandes.

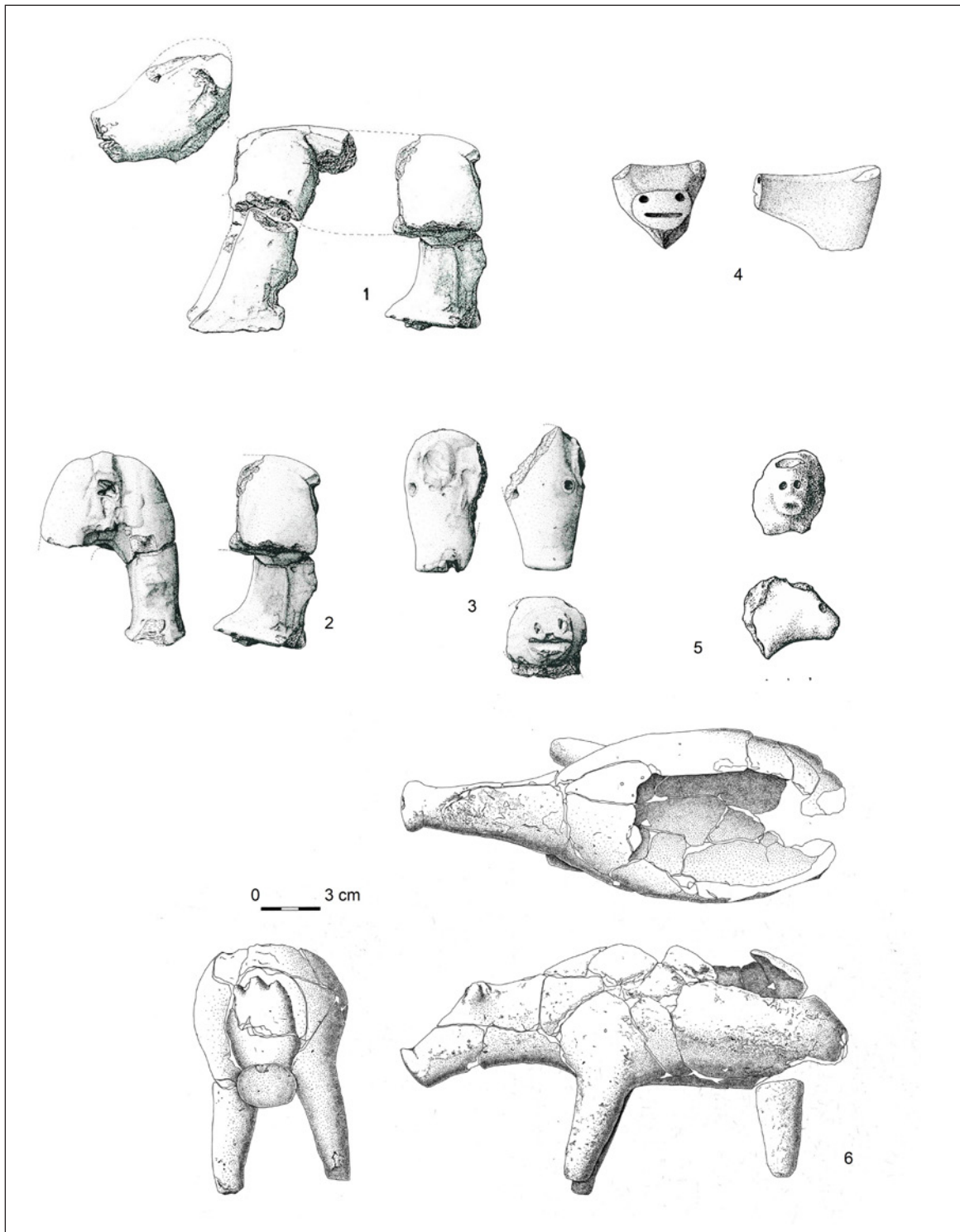


Plate 6. Clay figurines and zoomorphic pot. 1-3 Leceia (after Cardoso, 1996); 4: Pijotilla (after Hurtado, 1980); 5: Porto Torrão (after Arnaud, 1993); S. Paulo II (drawing courtesy of Luís Barros).

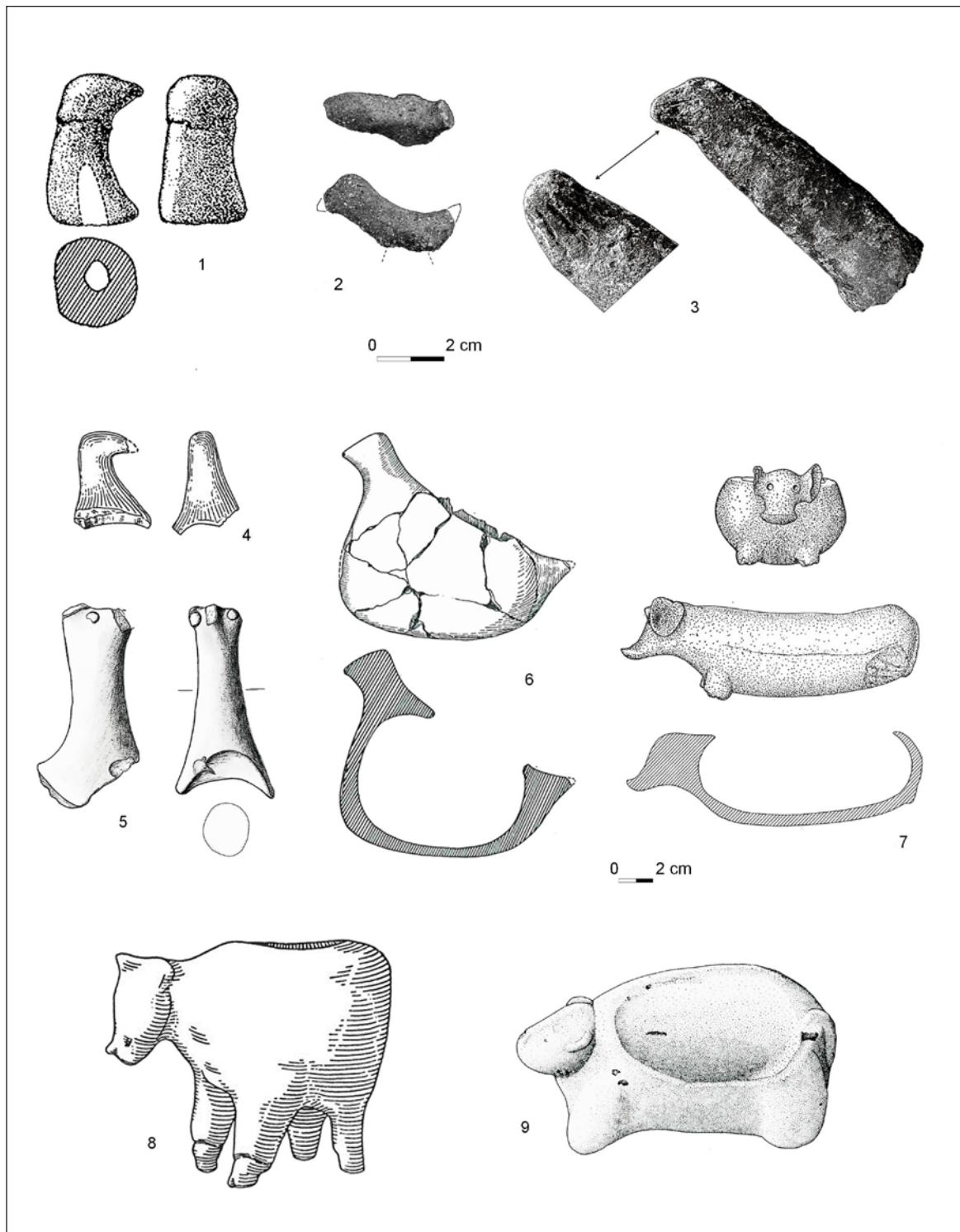


Plate 7. Zoomorphic heads and pots. 1: Anta da Oliveira 1 [Leisner and Leisner, 1959]; 2-3: Perdigões; 4: *Tholos* da Marcela (idem); 5: Anta Grande do Zambujeiro (drawing courtesy of Leonor Rocha); 6: *Tholos* de la Zarcita 1 [Leisner and Leisner, 1959]; 7: Carvalhal cave [Spindler e Veiga Ferreira, 1974]; 8: *Tholos* de Sabina [Leisner and Leisner, 1943; 9: Olelas [Cardoso, 1996].



Plate 8. Zoomorphic vessel from PP4-Montelirio sector of Valencina de la Concepción (Seville). Piece in study. Courtesy of the Research Group ATLAS (HUM-694), Seville University. Photo: Miguel Ángel Blanco de la Rubia.

4. THE SOCIAL ROLE OF THE ZOOMORPHIC SCULPTURES IN SOUTHERN IBERIA: EXPLORING MEANING.

How to interpret these figurines? What did they express? How were they used? These and many other questions are difficult to answer, for we are dealing with symbolic representations and symbols are unstable, with connotations constructed through a sequence of contexts where they were active, presenting significant ambiguity and a great variety of potential use. However, these difficulties cannot be taken as an excuse not to explore meaning and try to develop plausible interpretations for these figurines and for their social roles in the context of the Late Neolithic and Chalcolithic societies of Southern

Iberia, moving forward from a generic association to beliefs related to an economy of production.

4.1. OVERCOMING THE MEDITERRANEAN FRAME

The assumption of an agrarian ideology that spread over the Mediterranean basin has traditionally framed the interpretation of many figurines, human or animal, as related to a general fertility cult. In the last decades, though, the perception of Neolithic figurines found in the Balkan region and the Near East has considerably changed, and alternative approaches and interpretations have developed, based on quite diversified bodies of theory, concerned with different ontological perceptions of the world, with the social

role of the body or with the processes of symbolic representation (Ingold, 1988; 2000; Bailey, 1996; Hamilton *et al.*, 1996; Borić and Robb, 2008). But if these approaches are now reaching Iberian Neolithic archaeology, generating new inquiries, more careful analyses of the development of the production of Iberian figurines should be enough to question the homologies established with the Eastern Mediterranean. Three main aspects are to be underlined: chronology, number and contexts of figurines.

As to chronology, while in Neolithic Iberia the first animals sculptures seem to appear in the second half of the 4th millennium BC (in what is considered to be Late Neolithic), they were known in the Eastern Mediterranean since the early stages of the transition to a productive economy (Pre-Pottery Neolithic A and B) (Wengrow, 2003). Therefore, in Iberia the Neolithic zoomorphic figurines appear in a more advanced phase of the process, and the same might be said about the human figurines, with just a single case known for an Early Neolithic context (Diniz, 2008). Carved or moulded figurines do not seem to have had any significant role in the transition to and early development of the production systems and associated ideologies in Iberia as they clearly had in the Eastern Mediterranean. There, they do not just arise earlier in the process, but they also occur in large numbers. Although the numbers may vary considerably between regions, they can be counted by the hundreds in some sites (Wengrow, 2003: 143). Finally, another contrast emerges in terms of context: while in Eastern Mediterranean figurines tend to occur in domestic contexts, like houses, areas associated to activities involving fire and deposits interpreted as domestic rubbish, in Iberia, as we have seen, they appear predominantly in funerary contexts.

To these three observations we might add the fact that in PPNB over 70% of the zoomorphic figurines correspond to “horn quadrupeds of some sort” and that smaller mammals and birds are rare or absent (Wengrow, 2013: 152), and that they are essentially made of clay, while the picture we have for Iberia, when zoomorphic figurines appear, is quite different.

It is clear that figurines, anthropomorphic or zoomorphic (or hybrid), played an active and important role in the symbolic revolution (Cauvin, 2000) that seems

to have preceded the developments of plain Neolithic societies in the Near East and later in the Neolithic of the Balkans region in a way that finds no parallel in Iberia. As underlined before for Iberia, “figurines seem dispensable, eventually substituted by other symbolic elements, developed in the contexts of the Western Mediterranean cardial groups”⁶ (Diniz, 2008: 15). They occur later, related to different contexts and with different particularities, so to assume homologies of meanings or social roles under a similar general agrarian ideology seems inappropriate.

Free from this Oriental imperative, we can now start to question the South Iberian Neolithic and Chalcolithic zoomorphic sculptures regarding the represented species, their contexts, spatial distribution and chronology. And one first aspect arises: they do not seem to form a homogeneous category.

4.2. THE LAGOMORPHS...

The known collection of zoomorphic sculptures cannot be seen as a uniform assemblage of objects in terms of meaning and social role. In fact, they do not present themselves as a consistent group of depictions in terms of their basic theme, level of standardization or style, also having significant differences regarding their geographical distribution and even chronology. So, based on these criteria, we can start by defining two major groups of zoomorphic figurines in the global inventory: the lagomorphs and the others.

The group of lagomorphs presents a relatively high standardization in terms of size (Figure 1) and style (with the referred exception of the piece from Perdiggões). In this respect they tend to be less naturalistic, and some exhibit a strong schematism, in line with the rest of the known art for this period. The interpretative implications of a schematic depiction have been discussed elsewhere (Valera and Evangelista, 2014). The simplicity of the representation allows the observer a greater freedom of interpretation and inference. But, at the same time, may reflect a generalization of an idea and of the means for its transmission through allusive traits.

On the other hand, the fact that these lagomorphs are highly standardized leads us to think that they have their root in a common notion. If we analyse their geo-

⁶ Translation by the authors.

graphical distribution (Plate 1) and general chronology this perception is reinforced, suggesting they are a regional materialization of an idea. As referred before, they have been seen as related to birth and fertility (Cardoso, 1996; Gonçalves, 2009; Weiss-Krejci, 2011) due to the association of lagomorphs to a highly reproductive capacity, a hypothesis that we find quite plausible. But by doing so they function as a metaphoric projection (Malafouris, 2007) that uses the image of a lagomorph as a vehicle to convey a message that is not related directly to the animal itself but just uses a specific characteristic of the animal as an allegory. And within this broad sense related to an idea of reproduction we may look at the double lagomorphs as if sprouting from a common base or multiplying, suggesting that this representation supports the main idea behind these objects: renewal. Expressing and acting over the capability of regeneration, these objects (most of them pendants) may have been used as amulets, revealing an ability to act in transforming reality. Although arguing for a different meaning, by associating underground movements of rabbits to the return to the earth expressed by funerary monuments, the proposal of Thomas and Waterman (2013) follows the same general view of rabbit figurines as metaphors. The social role of the figurines would be achieved, not through the activation and participation of the animal, but through an idea it emanates.

This kind of performance, though, cannot be extendable to the rest of the zoomorphic sculptures, that, apart the Late Neolithic bovid from Leceia, date from the Chalcolithic.

4.3. ... AND THE "OTHERS"

In fact, during the 3rd millennium BC the range of the sculptured species broadens. The Late Neolithic lagomorphs seem to fade away although the lack of secure chronologies does not allow us to make categorical statements, and the lagomorph from Perdigões, probably Chalcolithic, seems to be a totally different issue. Swine, bovid, bird, cervus and equine are now sculpted or moulded in vessels. A sense of rarity is accentuated, for some species are represented only by a known exemplar. The absence of more zoomorphic figurines in the archaeological record may have its origin in a number of factors. But, in face of the intensive research and excavations of the last years in South Iberia, one might come to terms with the actual rarity of these pieces.

Another new circumstance is the vehicles used to represent the figures that are no longer exclusively small sculptures (and apparently never pendants). They now appear in four main types of objects that generate different several potential ways of use and deserve to be considered apart: miniature individual figurines, objects with zoomorphic figurines attached, zoomorphic clay containers and the clay figurines. All these innovative representations have implications we can try to explore. They are most likely manifestations of some sort of conscious life attributed to inanimate objects. In a world of more permeable boundaries, where the relations between humans and animals or other natural elements are fluid, these pieces reveal themselves as part of this magic and highly interactive world. One could interpret them as having multiple purposes, probably of magical connotations or as characters with tight relations with people.

4.3.1. Miniature individual figurines

Since the level of miniaturization continues and due to the degree of fragmentation, it is not possible, in some cases, to understand if we are dealing with individual elements or if they were part of a composed object. But a few are clearly recognizable as independent objects.

In Reguengos de Monsaraz we have ivory pieces representing a hare, a bovid, a cervid and three birds (the possible swine paws show signs of having been attached to another object) from Perdigões, and a fox from the OP2B *tholos*. Some more than others, they all present a naturalistic style and, with the exception of the hare (slightly bigger), they measure less than three centimetres.

When exploring the meaning of these figurines, the appeal to cross-cultural examples might be useful, not to provide an analogy by which to solve the problem, but to open new perceptions that simultaneously underline prejudices and unwrap alternative possibilities of understanding. That is the case of the Arctic hunters of the Bronze Age Dorset Culture, for whom it is argued that, in an animistic vision of the world, hunting might be considered an act where the animal offers itself to the hunter, in co-responsibility for the equilibrium in life, because it understands and voluntarily participates in the exchange of vitality that hunting is assumed to imply (Ingold, 2000). The carving of the animals in small sculptures,

where the objects are as important as the process of carving them, is seen as an act of thinking, as a way of carrying the animals in thought, maintaining the vitality of the relation among interdependent beings. "These tiny objects are the material embodiments of thoughts, or more strictly they are thoughts. The carver would not separate thinking in the head from thinking with the hands, nor, consequently, would he distinguish the products of these respective activities. But as embodied thoughts, carvings are of such a microcosmic scale that they can be turned around in the hand as can images in the mind. They are not designed to be set upon a pedestal and looked at, (...) indeed most will not stand up unless artificially mounted. Rather, like memories, they are held close to the person – generally fastened to the clothing – and are carried around with that person wherever he or she goes" (Ingold, 2000: 126-127). This interpretative hypothesis is according to the notion of animism as a way of knowledge in a relational way of being in the world (Bird-David, 1999; Ingold, 2000). The South Iberian figurines might function in similar ways, establishing levels of interdependence between humans and animals.

We can even venture further in line of Ingold's argumentation, and question the figurative character of these figurines and their status as symbolic representations. In an animistic environment, they might not be representations at all, but be the animal itself, in a mental frame where, through the process of psychological participation (Valera, 2008), the symbol (the figurine) participates of the essence of the symbolized (the animal), creating a homology between them. If this was the case, then these figurines might have been related to some sort of totemic ancestry, which would be more consistent with their rarity and diversity of represented species, but also with their predominant context, the funerary one, where they could *be* the shared ancestor.

This capacity of "being" is known in several ethnographical records. For example, amongst the Andean communities, even today, miniatures do not seem to represent the engagement of humans towards matter, only to have an agency of their own. These are not transcendent beings, they actually exist in the form of miniature icons, called *Illas* (Sillar, 1996; 2009). They work as intermediaries regulating the people's relationship with the *Apus*, their divinities. The nature of these encounters with the transcendent follows similar principals to those of Voodoo prac-

tice (Frazer, 1915; Gell, 1998): sympathetic magic and contagious magic. The difference between the two resides on the role of the miniature itself as a container of knowledge (Jones, 2013). In sympathetic magic, miniatures represent the subject of the ritual – they are iconic (Knappett, 2012). In contagious magic, however, a physical bond must exist between the subject and its representation, usually nails or treads of hair that are indexed to the miniature that then incorporates the subject. In this case, miniatures play different kinds of roles, either representing or being, by indexation.

But, in a fluid world, there are many other possibilities for the agency of these figurines, for they may also represent states of mind or parts of the cosmological world associated to specific animals, or shape transformations within permeable ontological categories. This last situation will be explored ahead, specifically in what concerns to birds.

4.3.2. Figurines attached to other objects

In this group are included the few objects that seem to present a composition of which animals are an essential part. The two most spectacular finds, from Valencina de la Concepción, are the two combs found in the *tholos* of Montelirio. Quite similar, both pieces show what might be interpreted as an assemblage of anthropomorphic figures surrounded by zoomorphic representations interpreted as wild boars, apparently in the same number as their human counterparts. The piece from Monte da Comenda is no less interesting, associating a fox and a bird (the evocation of La Fontaine is almost irresistible) and the other two are birds (one seems to represent a falcon) carved as pin heads.

These figurines have to be considered more than just mere decorative items since the carving of the animal, so rare in general, seems to transmit a potent message. But once again, it is not an easy task trying to convey meaning to these objects. Following the same line of inquiry and considering their extreme similarity in style, size and represented species to the individual figurines, we may argue that this kind of composite objects were produced and manipulated within the same general scope of meaning. However, the fact of being attached to objects has some implications. Being used in cloths or more probably in the hair, once again they report to us an image of extreme proximity between humans and animals, as

the pieces from Valencina so clearly evocate. Contrarily to individual figurines, they cannot “be turned around in the hand as can images in the mind”, but they could perform a same general role in the construction of identities. Could they be also a totemic expression? Or represent other forms of permeable boundaries between humans and animals?

4.3.3. Zoomorphic vessels

The known zoomorphic vessels represent mainly birds, followed by swine, an exemplar of a bovid and another of a horse. When the context of provenance is well established it is always a funerary one, dating from the Chalcolithic period. All are in clay, except the limestone pot from Olelas.

The specificity of these objects relies on the fact that their making implies a double intention. Not only does the figure of an animal gain life through the hands of the potter, as the produced objects have a very practical functionality: they are made to be able to contain.

Once again their rarity is striking, especially if we realize that the majority are made of clay, a raw material accessible to everyone, everywhere. If these objects, by their inherent symbolism were special, their few numbers reinforce that sense of exception, also underlined by the only horse present in the actual inventory.

In the assemblage of zoomorphic figurines their exceptionality is the possibility of linking a specific animal (or state represented by that animal) to substances that can be contained by the pot. These substances could be used in rituals of propitiation, veneration or of access to other dimensions or states of mind. In a way, it is as if they were carried by the animal in a context of very specific and ritualized practices. The boundaries among objects, between pot and animal are in this way transposed, and again categories become porous and ambiguous in the social roles they are called to play, making our hermeneutic effort extremely difficult.

4.4. CLAY FIGURINES

Finally we have the clay figurines, represented by the bovid and possible quadruped schematic representations. As the other groups, they are quite rare, how-

ever differing from them in several other aspects. First they occur in the Late Neolithic (at Leceia) and in the Chalcolithic (VNSP, Perdigões, Porto Torrão and La Pijotilla). Second, we can assume they represent a smaller number of species, although we can only actually speak of bovid (for the quadrupeds might represent many other animal, including bovid). Thirdly, their context is never a funerary one. Fourth, with the exception of the zoomorphic vessels, they are much bigger than the rest of the figurines. They are not made to be in some way attached to the human body or to be handled as the small miniatures. On the contrary, they seem to be made for standing somewhere. Finally, they assume (the quadrupeds at least) a highly schematic appearance and some ambiguity in the representations suggesting hybrid forms. In other words, they set apart quite well from the rest and probably have played different parts in the social scenario.

It is also interesting to notice that the majority is broken, appearing in fragments, although their thick structure made them more resistant than the thin, fine and small ivory figurines that tend to be found unbroken. Were they submitted to processes of intentional fragmentation similar to the ones known for other artefactual categories, as means of establishing links between people, places and occasions (Chapman and Gydarska, 2007; Valera, 2010)?

On the other hand, the possibility of hybridism might be suggested by the pieces from Leceia, as argued above. Hybridism can be expressed through many ways. The most evident is by joining body parts that are easily recognizable as belonging to different entities. Frequently, however, hybridism is just suggested, exploring ambiguity and combining identifiable traits with the possibilities provided by perception. Figurines can be carved or moulded in order to suggest different entities depending on the perspective of the observer and different perspectives of the same object may result in seeing and perceiving multiple things. When we face the clay figurines of Leceia (Plate 6: 3), or even the ivory bovid from Perdigões, a swine might be suggested and the rest of the body behind does not affect our perception. But if we see the figurines from behind, from the top or from the side (Plate 6: 1-2; Plate 4: 2), the realistic traits of the hindquarters immediately suggest a bovid, altering the initial perception of the animal. In the case of the figurine from Perdigões, the disproportioned head reinforces this duality and shows that it was intended.

This possible hybridism between two species, eventually both domestic, suggests that permeability would have existed also between animals, inclusively amongst domestic ones, suggesting that, although submitted to dominance and integrated in a productive economy, they could still maintain levels of ambiguous condition and meaning (see ahead).

5. ABOUT SOME GENERAL ATTRIBUTES

Finally, approaching these figurines as an assemblage, we can discriminate some general shared characteristics, if not by all, at least by a significant number of them. We will be dealing with these aspects by trying to answer four questions.

Why miniatures? With the exception of the zoomorphic vessels and the clay figurines, the rule is to produce miniatures of extremely high scale. Why is that so? First we must acknowledge that miniatures are not just a matter of scale. They are all about choice. Scale always implies a distortion of the original subject (Monmonier, 1981; 2005). Mapping, for instance, is always about compression (Bailey, 2005: 32) and selective concretization (Clark, 2010), since the reduction of the real implicates choice and hierarchy of what is to be present in the representation. It is always a process of abstraction and allows to "achieve the aim of condensing experience in order to manipulate it" (Jones, 2013: 369). Miniatures allow control and manipulation. They permit the handlers to read and infer information (Bailey, 2005: 53). They replace things and situations from the real world, providing means for a more effectively thinking and control of it (Clark, 2010; Jones, 2013). By producing these small figurines, meant to be handled or worn, the cosmological order is being maintained through process of psychological homology between real things in the world and their miniaturized representation (Valera, 2008), even when those symbols lose their figurative status to become actual beings.

There is also the question of body engagements. The handler of these pieces can just turn them around to observe them from the angles he wishes, positioning them at will, without having to experience the situations that, in the real world, he would have to actually live. Children experience that when playing with toys. The shift in body engagement is responsible, to a cer-

tain degree, for the possibility of abstraction (Bailey, 2005), providing the physical means for the social roles played by figurines. This certainly supports the idea of "miniaturization as a means of distilling or concentrating memory" (Jones, 2013). Miniatures become representations of the world in a microcosmos (Ingold, 2000: 126; Mack, 2007: 69-74) and a tool of control and order. The reduced size of a miniature, with all its implications, allows us to manipulate these artefacts at will. This understanding takes us to the sense of empowerment they provide the handler with (Bailey, 2005: 33), or as Lévi-Strauss put it, the figurative dominance over the subject of representation (1976: 46).

The empowerment over the miniaturized version invokes another sense, that of intimacy (Boas, 1996; Bailey, 2005; Tilghman, 2012). Detailing, on one hand, stimulates and emphasizes emotional connections towards the miniaturized pictures (Hagen, 2002; Tilghman, 2012). On the other hand, detailed pieces also provide the perception of alternative time and spaces (Delong, 1983). When observing a detailed picture filled with different classes of elements, the handler/viewer experiences a different perception of time, that seems longer than it actually is. These temporal voids could very much serve as a stimulus for development of a certain sense of personal engagement of the observer with the observed. The degree of intimacy, then, seems to rely on the amount of detail displayed by each piece, and it is interesting to notice that the more realistic zoomorphic figurines are the smallest, to be used closer to the human body or attached to objects directly connected to the body. If Ingold's analysis of the Inuit underlines the previous consciousness of a bond between human and animals and subsequent importance of the act of carving them (Ingold, 2000), then the power of detail would provide an extension of the experience of proximity. This would be another circumstance that would differentiate schematic representations from more realistic ones.

Such perspective provides us with quite interesting notes on the role of miniaturization as a process. A biographic approach to miniatures, could be argued, would value miniaturized objects as active components of thought (Jones, 2013), enabling them as agents in a relational engagement with humans. Being easily manipulated and transported, miniatures ignite intimate engagements, proper of a permeable world.

Why a predominance of birds? As we have seen, during the 3rd millennium BC, birds are one of the most represented animals in sculptures. They occur as what appears to be isolated figurines, attached to other objects and as zoomorphic vessels. Regarding the carved objects, they can present a significant naturalism that, in the case of one pin from VNSP and two figurines from Perdigões, achieves an extreme realism. The ability to fly was always impressive to humans and the connotations of flying and seeing from above (as a supernatural vision) have a universal relevance in human history. Many societies associate flying to the ability to go to the upper worlds, to reach other places of the cosmological maps and birds are often associated to souls and to the possibility of migration between conditions and bodies (Lewis-Williams and Pearce, 2005). Birds are often related to shamanism, as forms that can be assumed by the shaman in his inter-corporeal trips. In a still quite fluid world, the presence of practices that in general can be ascribed to some sort of shamanistic rites are perfectly plausible. At Perdigões Tomb 2, for instance, where bird figurines were found, a carpal-metacarpal bone of *Morus bassanus* (solon) was recovered (Cabaço, 2009). It is a marine bird (Perdigões is 200 km away from the sea) that dives and swims under water, and so being connotated with the ability of moving between worlds (air, earth and water). Although far in time and context, in the ethnographic records of Siberia it is strongly associated to shamanistic practices (Ojamaa, 1997). It is possible that, in the 3rd millennium BC Southwest Iberia, bird figurines and bird vessels could correspond to practices and persons with recognized ability to travel between substances and worlds, expressing and simultaneously reinforcing the perception of faded borders between humans and animals. The fact that birds also appear in funerary contexts (Weiss-Krejci, 2006; Liesau *et al.*, 2008) seems to reinforce this possible role connected with the passage through different conditions.

Why mainly funerary contexts? The great majority of the referenced zoomorphic objects were recorded in funerary contexts (the others are from undetermined context). Their recovery in these specific contexts can also be understood under an animist mental frame, where death is sometimes just a moment of passing or a temporary absence (Lewis-Williams and Pearce, 2005). Physical entities wither, die and decay but the spirit goes on to inhabit yet another element. Therefore birth is death and death is birth. Maybe this is

why death and the funerary world seems to be such an essential part of the prehistoric way of life, present everywhere and resisting when, with our dichotomous concepts of settlement and necropolis, we try to spatially restrict it. These zoomorphic figurines found their last social stage in funerary monuments, where animal remains are also common (Weiss-Krejci, 2006; Valera and Costa, 2013a). In many of them humans and animals are given a similar treatment. In death as in life, they (humans, animals and objects) lie together maintaining their strong ontological relation, for those are the more powerful places of fluidity between worlds, beings and entities.

Why so many wild species? Finally, one more aspect is to be underlined: standardized lagomorphs apart, for they probably have their main period of existence in the Late Neolithic, have a restricted regional distribution and perform a quite specific role, the majority of the zoomorphic sculptures seem to represent wild animals, especially during the 3rd millennium: birds, cervid, wild boar, horse⁷, fox and hare. In fact, bovid (and we cannot discard the possibility that these figurines are representations of aurochs, known in the faunal remains of the period in the region) and other suggested domestic species as the pig are in clear minority, while other important domestic animals such as sheep and goat are not represented. This image contrasts with the one provided by the animal remains in the archaeological record, where domestic species are clearly dominant, with the prevalence of swine, followed by ovicaprid and bovid. These are the most important animal in terms of subsistence and economic relations, and maybe because of that they are frequent in animal burials and structured depositions in pits and ditches, where wild animals, although present, seem less frequent. But wild animals appear to be preferred for carved and moulded zoomorphic representations, and a similar statement can also be made for the animals represented in rock art and in pottery and loom weights. What explanation can we offer for this discrepancy?

Let us return to the ideas of Ingold about the transition from trust to domination, seen as a change in the terms of the human-animal relations, but not in the conditions of the categories (that would promote a radical exteriorization of Man from the relational scenario of Nature). It is arguable, in face of the present data, that previous forms of relation, such as co-responsibility (Ingold, 1994; 2000), ancestry (tote-

mic associations) and forms of ontological mobility still endure regarding non-domestic animals, while they tend to disappear in the domestic ones, contributing to this apparent image of a dual treatment conceded to animals in the 3rd millennium, with a prevalence of domestic in ritual depositions and of the wild in depictions and sculptures (although the possible hybridism seen in bovid figurines may suggest the maintenance of certain levels of permeability in domestic animals).

The human-animal relation in 3rd millennium Southern Iberia seems, therefore, to be somehow in an ambiguous situation, revealing a fluid world of permeable categories where people still engage with nature in strong animistic terms, but also where new forms of relations are being developed related to the dominance exercised over several species and especially connected to the consciousness of the ability to dominate.

6. FINAL REMARKS

We cannot know if this sort of compounded affiliation corresponded to a whole system of belief and was the base of a specific social organization founded on a notion of kinship or mystical relationship with an element of the natural world. But there were surely emotional, ideological, mystical, ritual, reverential and maybe even genealogical relationships of social groups or specific members of a community to animals and natural objects. This relationship could assume various forms and involve specific procedures. The surrounding environment provided a source of imagery and symbolism for assisting humans in the act of building identity for their groups as well as their individual selves. These zoomorphic objects that reached us are a sort of faint whisper of this distant relational ontology where the human self seems to maintain strong levels of identification with the elements around it, bonding and exchanging essences, in a set of relations that agriculture and herding started to alter in terms, but may have not yet altered the basic condition of engaged entities at higher levels than just an exclusively economic one.

We argue that during the second half of 4th and during the 3rd millennium BC, forms of an animistic world view were still active. As Malafouris points out, through his cognitive approach, in animism humans deal with non-animate elements using the same neural networks and mechanisms they use with other humans, expanding "the boundaries of social mind by incorporating into the field of social cognition inanimate elements and things" (Malafouris, 2007: 201). Objects become socially active, not just as a vehicle for representing and communicating ideas within the human social field, but, like people, also elements that stimulate and bring into being new thoughts and actions, through which the world views were constructed. Figurines were one of those material elements that simultaneously translated and generated more fluid forms of being in the world.

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7 The presence of domesticated horse in Chalcolithic Iberia is still a debated issue. Zooarchaeology did not yet demonstrate the unquestionable presence of domestic horse and the comparative rarity (to other domestic animals) of horse bones in faunal bone collections from settlements or funerary contexts (Moreno Garcia and Valera, 2007), contrasting with the use of horse phalanges for symbolic purposes, suggesting that the animal is still out of domestic environments. So we opt to assume its wild condition.

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