

Iron Age hillfort of CASTELO DO CHÃO DO TRIGO: second season of excavations

Period: August 13 to September 2, 2018

Objectives: following the first season of excavations, done in 2017, the main objective of the second campaign is to further investigate the structural and functional aspects of the organization of this middle to late first millennium b.c.e. hilltop fortified settlement. In 2017, we could confirm the presence of a probably very thick fortification structure, which, regardless the amount of destruction provoked by several centuries of agricultural use of the site, notably harsh in the last four or five decades, is still recoverable through archaeological methodology. In the 2018 campaign, we intend to increase the area of exposure of such fortification, as well as to find other structural evidences of Iron Age constructions.

Location: near Peral, municipality of Proença-a-Nova, Intermunicipal Community of Beira Baixa Portugal).

Programme: archaeological excavation (17 days); other field practices (site recording, findings labelling, archaeological surveying); lectures; leisure trips.

Archaeological excavation team: Paulo Félix (site director); Cátia Mendes and Catarina Gil (sector supervisors); other participants and volunteers (total of 9 participants).

Brief description of the archaeological site: Castelo do Chão do Trigo or, as local inhabitants know it, *Cerca do Castelo*, was described for the first time at the beginning of the second half of the 18th century in the inquiries that the state ordered to be done, following the devastating earthquake that destroyed Lisbon: it was then defined as a very ancient village surrounded by a wall with two visible entrances, a place where also a Roman coin treasure was supposedly discovered (it was immediately sold and its whereabouts lost for ever).

The settlement is located at a prominent hill bounded by a stream that draws a deep meander, which stresses even more the defensive traits of the emplacement. The most accessible path is the southwestern slope, where we anticipate the existence of the main entrance to the hillfort, a common feature in contemporary settlements all-over the Southwest of the Iberian Peninsula. The defensive wall is made of blocks and slabs collected from the local bedrock (schists and greywackes), placed in a very well-structured way and cemented with a sort of clayey mortar.

The findings are clearly dominated by pottery, hand-made or manufactured with the help of lightweight turntables and, possibly, some kind of kick wheel. Shapes are the customary for this epoch and regional context: round-shaped pots and jars with narrow necks, very everted rims, flat bases and no decoration. Other findings include a few lithic tools, fragments of several millstones, collar beads, and evidences of metallurgical practices.

We estimate this settlement was occupied in the period corresponding to the Late (or, Second) Iron Age, between the 5th/4th and the 1st century b.c.e., being the last date a *terminus ad quem* inferred from the lack of any material indication related to the control of the region by the Romans. It's worth remembering that this process took more than one century to be accomplished, from the first skirmishes with the Lusitanians (around 195 b.c.e.) to the pacification campaign lead by Caius Julius Caesar in 61/60 b.c.e.

The site overlooks the village of Chão de Galego. Northwest of this enclosure is a cavity known as *Buraca da Moura* (an unknown date mine) and a shelter with prehistoric paintings.



1. Location of Proença-a-Nova Municipality in mainland Portugal.



2. Panoramic view of the archaeological site

Useful references:

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