

CABEÇO DA ANTA. Seventh archaeological campaign to excavate a prehistoric megalithic tomb with mound (4th to 3rd millennium BC)

Calendar 9 to 30 August 2019

Objectives Following the work carried out in the last years, it is our purpose to continue the investigation of the building methods and funeral rites used for this dolmen with a chamber and nine slabs, already delimited on the surface and covered by a large *tumulus* (35 metres in diameter and almost 3.5 metres high).

Two other megalithic monuments were explored (*Cão do Ribeiro*, *Vale de Alvito*) which, like Cabeço da Anta, also form part of the in the footpath PR1 *History in the Landscape*. These three monuments were identified in the first half of the 20th century by the German archaeologist Georg Leisner and are included in the inventory *Die Megalithgraber Der Iberischen Halbinsel*, published posthumously in 1998 (Vera Leisner, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Walter de Gruyter. Berlin, New York).

Work done at Cabeço da Anta led to the characterization of several substructures, to a great extent due to the fact this monument was much better preserved than Cão do Ribeiro and Vale de Alvito.

At the eastern side of the chamber, we could identify a block we consider the closing slab of the gap existing between the top of the chamber and the top of the passage, suggesting that the passage is positioned to the East (not yet visible). In so far, we recovered just a few archaeological artifacts and, despite the excavation reached virtually three metres deep (counted from the top of the highest slab), the bottom levels of the chamber, with potential funerary depositions, are still to be attained.

The mound is very well preserved both in plan and height, being slightly higher than the top of the biggest slab. A few sampling trenches were opened in the mound, especially two radial sampling trenches with orthogonal directions covering all the mound, from the chamber to the periphery. Despite this planimetric cover, the excavation did not reach

much depth, with the exception of the chamber area. The research has documented an extensive use of clay, but with a more complex vertical structuration than the observed at the other two monuments, and the inclusion of planar stone substructures very close to the top of the mound. The excavation of one of the trenches all the way down to the bedrock may reveal a more heterogeneous stratigraphy than what was perceived until the date, and such knowledge may contribute to recover important information about the original composition of the more eroded mounds. As the case of Vale de Alvito, mound's stone peripheral markers appeared at the end of both orthogonal trenches.

Cabeço da Anta was made almost exclusively of metasedimentary rocks available locally, being scarce the use of filonous quartz, similarly to Cão do Ribeiro and Vale de Alvito. But one of the orthostats of the chamber, made of quartzite, had certainly a more distant origin, of at least 11 kilometres, what is indicative of a very exigent construction project.

We think the continuity of archaeological work at these megalithic monuments, notably Cabeço da Anta, reinforced by complementary physical, chemical, palaeoenvironmental, and archaeometric analysis, will be fundamental for a more profound knowledge of these megalithic architectures and associated rituals, funerary or not, and to a closer approach to the matrix and evolution of prehistoric settlement in this territory. This kind of effort was materialized through the development of a research programme covering all the Late Prehistory of the region: project "Mesopotamos".

Location Moitas, county of Proença-a-Nova, Intermunicipal Community of Beira Baixa.

Programme Archaeological excavation (16 days / three weeks) ■ Other activities

Archaeological excavation team Site Director: João Caninas ■ Sector Supervisors and specialized staff: Mário Monteiro, Fernando Robles Henriques, Pedro Baptista and Emanuel Carvalho ■ Participants.



Location of the municipality of Proença-a-Nova on mainland Portugal.



View of Cabeço da Anta.



View of the archaeological dig of the chamber at the end of the campaign (2017)



The team (2018)



Some texts about megalithism of the region

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