Rendering Death: Ideological and Archaeological Narratives from Recent Prehistory (Iberia)

Proceedings of the conference held in Abrantes, Portugal, 11 May 2013

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BAR International Series 2648
2014

Published by

Archaeopress
Publishers of British Archaeological Reports
Gordon House
276 Banbury Road
Oxford OX2 7ED
England
bar@archaeopress.com
www.archaeopress.com

BAR S2648

Rendering Death: Ideological and Archaeological Narratives from Recent Prehistory (Iberia)

ISBN 978 1 4073 1287 3

Printed in England by Information Press, Oxford

All BAR titles are available from:

Hadrian Books Ltd
122 Banbury Road
Oxford
OX2 7BP
England
www.hadrianbooks.co.uk

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The mound at Cimo dos Valeiros (Serra Vermelha, Oleiros, Castelo Branco). A Neolithic burial site in the Central Cordillera, south of Serra da Estrela

João Carlos Caninas, Mário Monteiro, André Pereira, Emanuel Carvalho, Francisco Henriques, João Araújo Gomes & Lídia Fernandes, Álvaro Batista

Abstract

Since 2002, archaeological prospection carried out in the context of the Pinhal Interior Wind Farm Project (GENERG Group SA) has led to the discovery and study of mound structures, apparently used for burial purposes, on the final stretch of the Central Cordillera, south of Serra da Estrela.

This paper presents the results of the partial excavation of one of those structures, the mound of Cimo dos Valeiros, located at an altitude of 916 m in the mountains of Serra Vermelha (county of Oleiros). It consists of a mound of around 9 m in diameter constructed in sandy-clay material and capped with clasts of metasedimentary rocks. Excavation revealed an elliptical chamber and archaeological materials that suggest it was in use in the Neolithic.

This data indicates a new boundary in the occurrence of prehistoric burial structures in the uplands of Central Portugal. It also means that their area of distribution in the region of Castelo Branco extends between two high points of the Tagus basin, i.e. from the banks of the river to the highest mountains, passing through various intermediate formations that include hillocks and slopes of the ancient massif, peneplains, detritral tables and alluvial plains.

Key Words: Cordillera Central (Portugal), Serra Vermelha, mound, Neolithic, wind farm

Resumo

O Projecto Eólico do Pinhal Interior, do Grupo GENERG SA, proporcionou, a partir de 2002, a descoberta e o estudo das primeiras estruturas monticulares, de finalidade aparentemente funerária, em pontos culminantes da Cordilheira Central a Sul da Serra da Estrela.

Apresentam-se os resultados da escavação parcial de uma dessas estruturas, a mamoa do Cimo dos Valeiros, situada a 916 m de altitude, na Serra Vermelha (concelho de Oleiros). Consiste num montículo com cerca de 9 m de diâmetro, construído com material areno-argiloso e capeado com clastos de rochas metassedimentares. A escavação revelou uma câmara elíptica e materiais arqueológicos que apontam para uma utilização no Neolítico.

Estes dados indicam uma nova fronteira na ocorrência de arquitecturas funerárias pré-históricas nas terras altas de Portugal Central. Por outro lado, alargam a sua distribuição na região de Castelo Branco entre dois extremos altimétricos da bacia do Tejo, ou seja, desde as margens daquele grande rio até aos relevos mais elevados, passando por uma diversidade de orografias intermédias onde se incluem cabeços e lombas do maciço antigo, peneplanícies, mesas detríticas e planícies aluviais.

Palavras-chave: Cordilheira Central (Portugal), Serra Vermelha, mamoa, Neolítico, parque eólico

Introduction

Circular artificial mounds in earth and stones were first discovered in the central mountain range (Central Cordillera) of Portugal during the archaeological prospection carried out in the county of Oleiros between 2002 and 2005 in the context of the environmental studies for the GENERG Group Wind Farm Project at Pinhal Interior. These constructions were interpreted as prehistoric burial sites (barrows, tumuli), and the antiquity of some of them (Vale de Mós, Feiteiras and Selada do Cavalo) was confirmed through archaeological excavations. Those studies have since been presented in various scientific conferences and published in specialist journals (Caninas et. al., 2004, 2005, 2008 and 2011).

This paper briefly presents the results of the archaeological intervention carried out at one of these structures, the mound of Feiteiras, now known as Cimo dos Valeiros.

This work was funded by the GENERG Group through the Portuguese archaeological company EMERITA, with logistic and topographical support provided by Oleiros Town Council. The aerial photographs of the tumuli were taken from the top of an aerogenerator by a technician from the company Vestas. IPPAR also supplied one of their technicians (EC) to participate in this intervention. The text was translated by Karen Bennett.

1. Location and background

The mound at Cimo dos Valeiros and the two small tumuli nearby (Cimo da Cova dos Bacelos) are located on a long slope that diverges from the dorsal ridge of Serra Vermelha (Figure 5.1). This mountain range, which reaches its maximum altitude at Povoinha, lies in a general NE-SW direction, forming a watershed between the basins of the River Zêzere in the north and the Sertã in the south. It is part of the relief structure that occupies the final stretch of the Portuguese zone of the Iberian

Central Cordillera, generally known as the Maciço de Alvélos.

The slope in question runs between the geodesic point of Povoínha (970 m) and the banks of the River Sertã, underlying the geodesic point of Mosteiro (756 m). The tumuli are set at an altitude of 916 m (Cimo dos Valeiros) and 907 m (the two others), with broad views over the landscape in all directions, except to the north. They are inscribed into the vast formation of metasedimentary rocks of the Beiras Group (Palaeozoic), with occurrences of quartz in philonian seams that fill earlier fractures. The nearest settlement, the village of Cavalo, is on a lower slope, facing westward.

2. Aims

The tumuli are located near both a path and the planned line of the electric cable designed to link two of the aerogenerators of the Alvélos Wind Farm. In the wake of the environmental impact assessment, it was decided to keep this cable route away from the tumuli in order to minimize negative impacts of the project. A (partial) archaeological excavation was carried out as a compensatory measure, with the aim of describing those structures and confirming their connection with burial rites in recent prehistory.

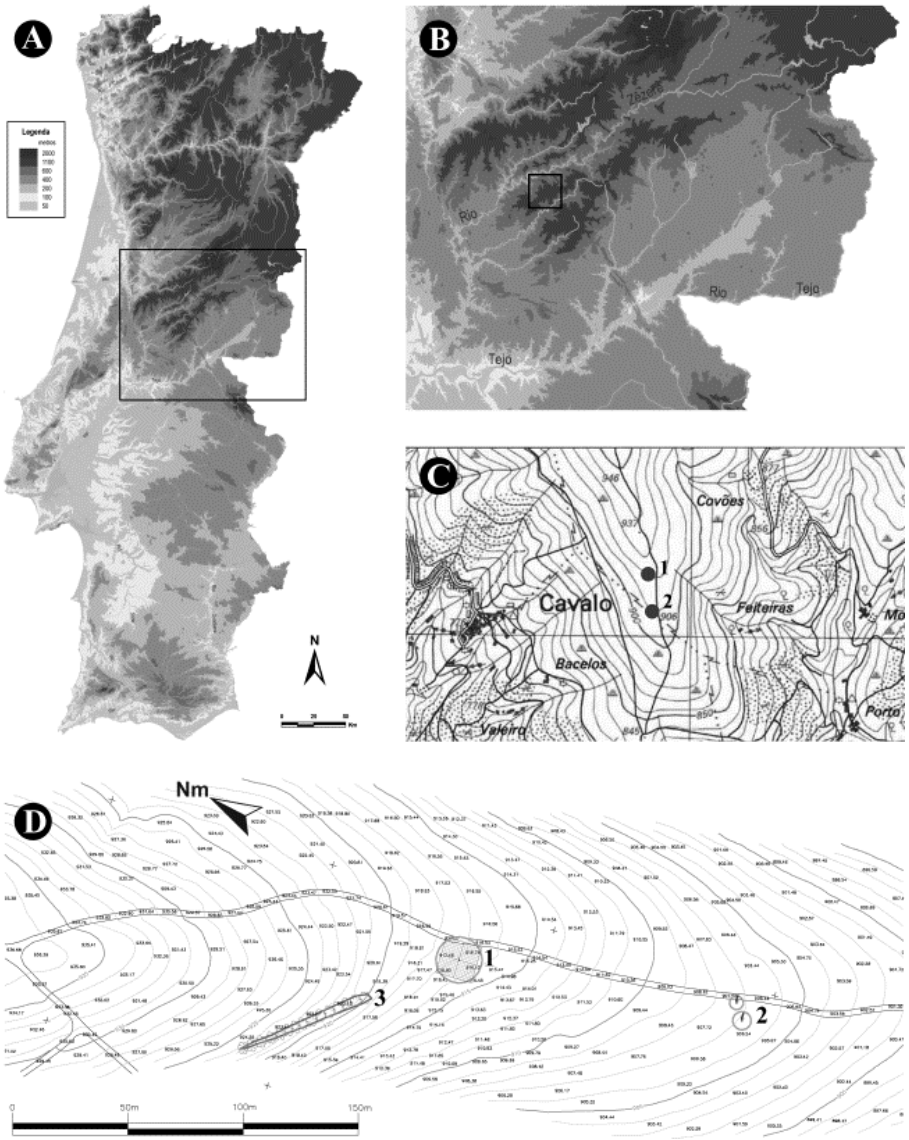

Figure 5.1: (A) Location of the Central Inland region of Portugal between the Central Cordillera and the valley of the River Tagus on the relief map of mainland Portugal (adapted from the thematic maps available at www.guiadeportugal.pt). (B) Enlargement of previous map. The square marks the stretch of Serra Vermelha where the tumuli of Cimo dos Valeiros and Cimo da Cova dos Bacelos are located. (C) Location of the tumuli of Cimo dos Valeiros (1) and Cimo da Cova dos Bacelos (2) on an extract of Sheet 277 of the Military Map of Portugal at a scale of 1:25.000 (Army Cartography Department). (D) Location of the tumuli of Cimo dos Valeiros (1), Cimo da Cova dos Bacelos (2) and a rocky outcrop (3) on the topographic plan drawn up prior to the execution of the Alvélos Wind Farm project (source: GENERG).

In August 2002, when the mound at Cimo dos Valeiros was discovered during the study phase of the wind farm project, there were doubts as to whether it would qualify as a prehistoric burial site, due to the dense vegetation (heather and broom) that covered it. Later, after the vegetation had been cleared away, the archaeological interest of the site was confirmed through surface observation. It consisted of a small semi-circular mound, 8.5 m in diameter, clearly defined above ground, with a dense protective layer of stones (Figure 5.2 - A to D). The depression and rarefaction of the clasts in the central zone seemed to indicate the position of the burial container and the possibility that this had been violated at some point. The centre of the monument was located about 7.5 m west of a path with wheel marks, which followed the line of the ridge. This description was included in the 2005 environmental status report for the wind farm project (RECAPE).

Before 2005, another two barrows had been discovered at Cimo da Cova dos Bacelos, around 120 m south of the mound of Cimo dos Valeiros. They are located a short distance from one another, west of the ridge path mentioned above. The larger mound (Figure 5.3 - G) is around 6 m in diameter and consisted mostly of metasedimentary rock clasts, while the other (Figure 5.3 - H), around 4 m in diameter, is mostly of milky quartz and was partially amputated when the path was created. This discovery was made by the archaeologist Carlos Banha of Portuguese Archaeology Institute in the company of two of the authors of this paper (JCC and FH).

3. Fieldwork

The fieldwork, begun in 2006, was directed by JCC and lasted for 33 days. In addition to the authors of this paper, the following archaeologists also participated: Fernando Robles Henriques, José Luis Monteiro, Alexandre Correia, Luis Carvalho, Alexandre Lima, Alexandre Canha and Masters' student Marta Correia.

Although works had been authorized on all three tumuli, the excavation focused exclusively on the mound of Cimo dos Valeiros, due to the limited resources available and also because the work on this monument lasted longer than had initially been anticipated. In the case of the two tombs at Cimo da Cova dos Bacelos, the intervention was restricted to a detailed topographical survey of an area of 15 m x 17 m that included the two structures. The study areas (of Cimo dos Valeiros and Cimo da Cova dos Bacelos) were connected to the geodesic network by Inês Fernandes, topographer at the Oleiros Town Council.

3.1. Study area

The archaeological study area (SA) at Cimo dos Valeiros consisted of a square with sides of 16m, divided by two axes at right angles intersecting at the geometric centre of the monument (depression). One of those axes was oriented in a roughly north-south direction following the gradient of the slope of the ground. The SA (256 m2) was divided into a grid with cells 1 m2, identified by a letter and a number (A to Q on the xx axis; 1 to 16 on the yy axis). The surface sediment was removed from an area 70 m2, which represented the maximum area achieved by the archaeological excavation. The depth excavation, with dismantling of the structure, covered an area of 13 m2. The sediments removed in both processes were dry-sifted.

After the SA had been defined, it was found that the centre of the monument was almost perfectly aligned with a linear vertically-stratified outcrop located immediately to the northwest (Figure 5.1 - D3 and Figure 5.2 - C), which we believe would have served as a quarry for the construction of the mound.

3.2. Structure

The detailed topographical survey carried out at the start of the intervention (see level curves in Figure 5.4) document a difference in level of around 2 m in the SA with the lowest point located in the southwest corner. The slope of the land, with the accumulation of sediments at the northern side and erosion on the southern side, may explain the deformation of the mound, observed at the surface.

Before beginning the intrusive actions of surface sediment removal and excavation, but after the removal of the vegetation from the SA, vertical photographs were taken of each grid cell, taking in the whole of the mound. These were then used to draw Level 1 (surface). The image obtained (partially represented on the western side of Figure 5.4) showed a regular pattern with regard to the distribution of clasts around the central depression, with a greater density on the top. There was also an abnormal accumulation of stones on the northeastern side in cells J6, J7, L6 and L7, which may also have been moved there during a possible violation of site, and a greater scattering of stones on the eastern side. Some larger blocks were integrated into the mound structure or lying loose on top of it, including some which, from their configuration, may have been orthostats, uprooted during the course of the hypothetical violation of the central chamber.

The stone structure visible on the surface consisted mostly of metagraywacke clasts of a range of calibres, from pebbles to boulders (Wentworth scale). There were also clasts of milky quartz, though these were smaller and fewer in number. The proximity of the outcrop, from which elongated boulders still protrude today (Figure 5.2 - E), may have motivated the choice of stone in the construction of this monument, though there might also have been symbolic reasons for aligning the quarry with the mound.[14]

We decided to begin the surface sediment removal in the northeastern quadrant (qNE) as the mound structure was better conserved there. The objective was to describe the

[14] Mound 1 of Selada do Cavalo (Oleiros) is also in a proximity relationship with a linear outcrop.

structure on the top of the mound and reveal other substructures such as internal or peripheral contention rings. This surface sediment removal extended in area into the southeastern quadrant (qSE) and also partially into the northwestern (qNW) and southwestern (qSW) ones as well, in the zone surrounding the central depression.

A second objective consisted of identifying the burial container which, we supposed, would coincide with the depression observed on the surface. The third was to excavate a radial trench on the mound in order to characterize its vertical structuring. This trench was oriented in a south-north direction and was in qNE, in cells L8, M8, N8 and O8. Cell O8 was used for the stratigraphic testing.

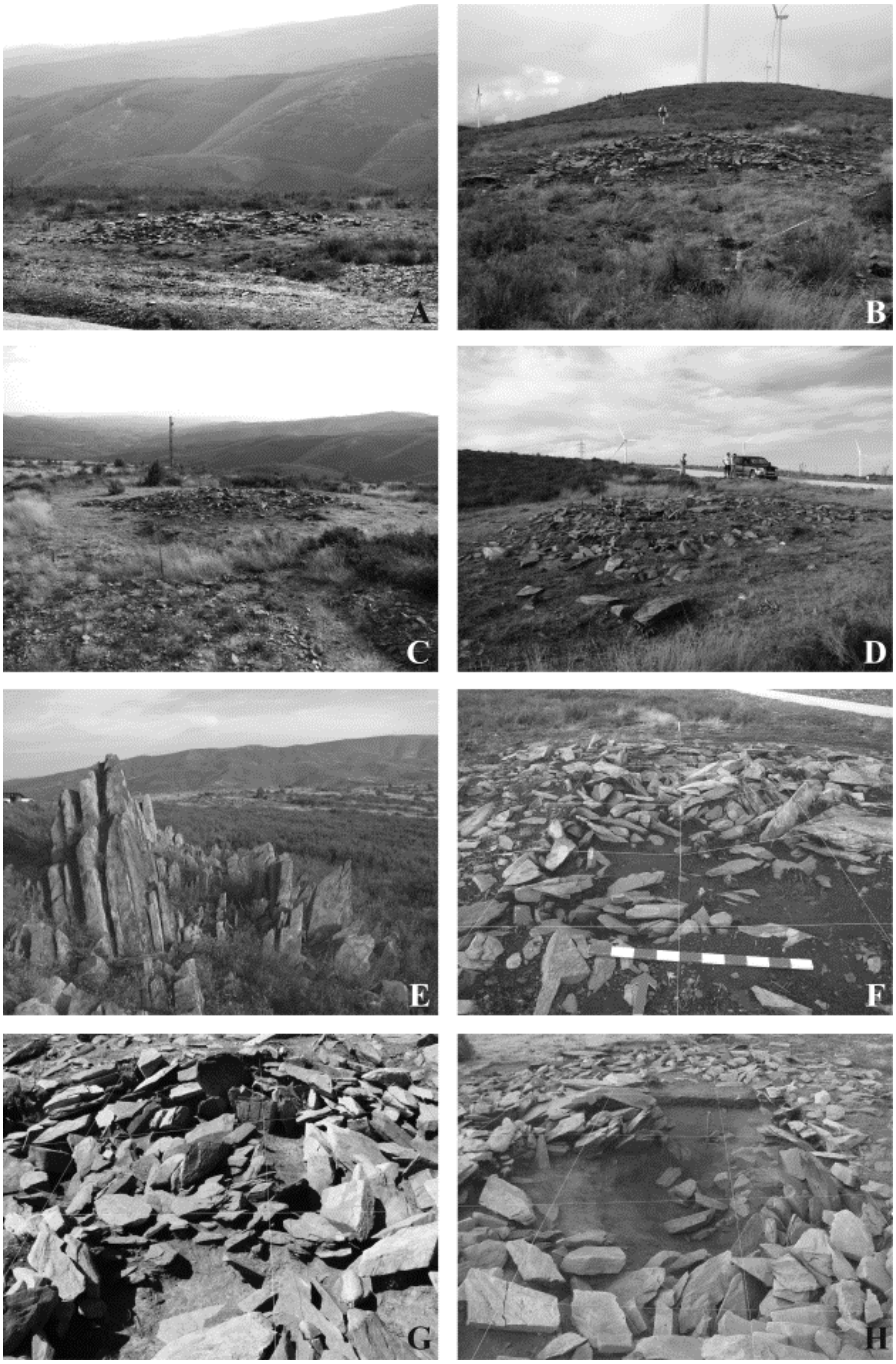

Figure 5.2: Views of the monument at the start of work: (A) from the northeast, with the Minas do Cavalo in the background; (B) from the southeast; (C) from the northwest, with the valley of the River Sertã in the background; (D) from the southwest. (E) Alignment of the monument with a 60m-long linear outcrop, with the Serra da Lontreira or Cabeço Rainho in the background. Phases of excavation of the central area, corresponding to a chamber, seen from the south (F); from the east (G); from the north (H).

The general surface sediment removal revealed more of the stone structure (SU02)[15] in the central and eastern parts of the mound (see partial representation in Level 2 in Figure 5.4). At this stage, it was not possible to know if this structure formed a cairn or if it was simply a superficial protection layer. The stratigraphic unit removed during this process (SU01) consisted of loose dark-brown topsoil (Costa, 2011) that was not very thick and contained ashes and foliage on the top.

The image of Level 2 reinforced what had been obtained in Level 1, indicating the predominance of metagraywacke clasts consisting mostly of cobbles and boulders. The presence of milky quartz, as had been noted on the surface, was minimal and limited to pebbles and cobbles located along the edge of the mound, particularly in the qNE.

On the periphery, particularly in the qNE where the surface sediment removal was more extensive, we found metagraywacke pieces in a horizontal position, disconnected and scattered. Moving closer to the centre of the mound, the lithic fragments became larger and more numerous, and were more tightly imbricated. Many of these pieces were implanted in the ground in both the radial and perimeter positions (in the latter case as if forming a kind of structural brace).

In H7, extending into H6 and H8, there was a long thick boulder of metagraywacke, almost 2 m in length, immersed in the tumular mass, in a relatively central position. This was the largest piece found during the excavation. Its function will only be properly understood with more extensive excavations. However, its presence may not necessarily be significant, if we recall the explanation given for the presence of a large stone imbricated in the cairn of Mound 4 of Rapadouro in Vila Nova de Paiva: "the fact that the builders did not make use of it [as an orthostat] was probably due not only to its size (approximately two metres long […]), but also to its irregularity" (Cruz & Canha, 1997: 17).

During this process, a boulder with geometric engravings (Figure 5.3 - E and F) was identified on the southern periphery, in D8. The motif, carved into the end of a metagraywacke boulder, consisted of two open-based triangles in sequence with a slight lateral overlap. The boulder was very fragmented, particularly on the left side above the marks, where there may once have been other engravings.

A second stage of work consisted in the excavation of the depression in the central part of the mound, which we believed may have indicated the position of the burial container, given its centrality. Much of the excavation effort was concentrated in this space, with the removal of successive "levels" of metagraywacke clasts (cobbles and boulders) and the drawing of the respective plans (Figure 5.5 - A).

The dimension and arrangement of these elements, which were successively layered to fill the depression, might suggest that they occupied a space that had previously been empty or emptied, and that they had come from a roof consisting of imbricated blocks, possibly supported by wood,[16] or had resulted from the fall of the stone roof of the mound into the interior of that depression. Inside the cavity, we found no pieces of a size compatible with orthostats or roof slabs. However, the clasts that we removed could also have resulted from the successive fragmentation of larger blocks, possibly orthostats and pieces of the buttressing around the central container.

This interpretation is supported by the existence, in J9, I8 and I9, of elongated well-entrenched, subvertical blocks tilting inwards towards the interior of the space covered by those cells, and even by J8, suggesting that they might have been primary orthostats, secondary ones or pieces of the buttressing surrounding the central chamber. Moreover, at the limit of the excavation area, and most obviously in the north (in L8 and L9) and west, there were a number of very tilted imbricated slabs, which suggested a buttressing structure for the burial chamber.

On the eastern side, particularly in the transition between J7 and J8, there was a hole in the stone covering, which we attribute to a more severe collapse of stones into the central depression. Alternatively, the stones may have been removed during a violation and taken outside and deposited in the adjacent cells to the east, where there was an accumulation of looser stones.

To the south, in cells H8 and H9, there was another space that was devoid of any stone structure, possibly as a result of a violation and the removal of the building stones. In support of this hypothesis, there was in cell H7 an elongated block that could have been a small standing stone or a piece of buttressing functioning as a second row of orthostats. Such duplication of the orthostat row is not uncommon in the region (it may be seen in the anta at Silveirinha in Castelo Branco or at the Corgos anta in Idanha-a-Nova, for example) and has been described as "a reinforcement row for the upright slabs of the chamber" (Almeida & Ferreira, 1958).

[15] SU02 was defined as the cluster of clasts of various calibres, occupying the whole surface of the mound, which were mostly angular pieces, though also included some rolled pieces, possibly of fluvial origin. They make up the protective stone covering on the surface and the buttresses of the chamber revealed by this excavation.

[16] The assessment of the raw material available in the outcrop concluded that it could not have provided a monolithic lid (i.e. a large slab, as occurs with granite architectures).

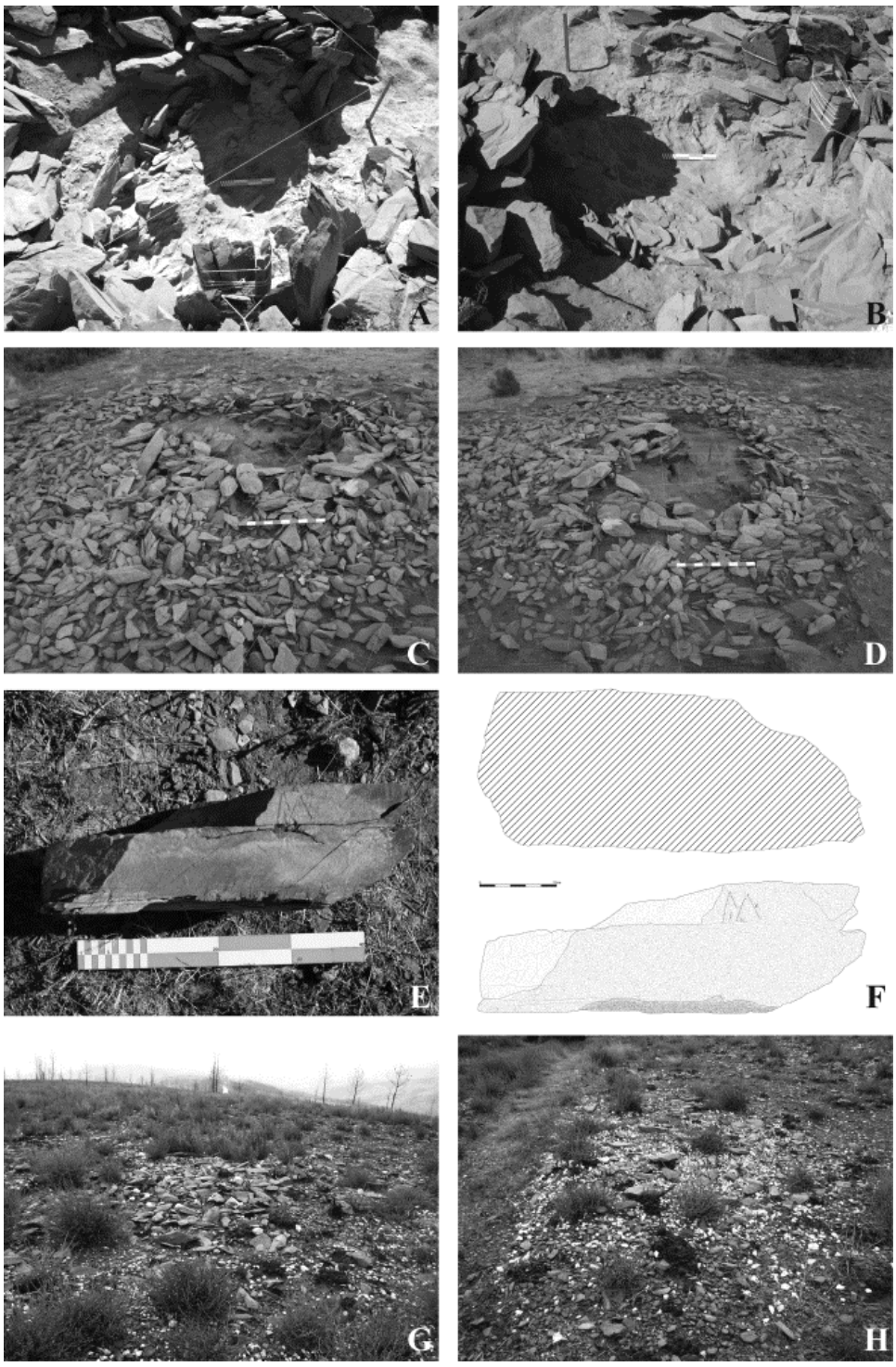

Figure 5.3: Phases of the excavation of the elliptical chamber (A, B). Surface sediment removal, seen from the northwest (C) and north (D). Boulder with carved symbols (E, F). The two tumuli of Cimo da Cova dos Bacelos (G, H), the second amputated by the path on the eastern side.

After the clasts of this central area had been removed, the outlines of two depressions were clearly visible (Figure 5.2 - H), the larger one occupying cells I8, I9, J8, J9, L8 and L9 and the other positioned further south in cells H8 and H9. These cavities seem to correspond to a covering over with clay material of two episodes of violation, which may have occurred at the same time or sequentially. The violation seems to have been more severe in the central cavity, given the depth attained, which went beyond the floor of the monument as far as the geological substratum (SU08). The dimension of the filling suggests that this was a (very) ancient violation. During the excavation, marks were also identified on the edges of small schist clasts, probably made by picks.

At the edge of the cavity, particularly on the western and southeastern sides, negative impressions made by stones (orthostats or buttresses) were detected. It was found that the deeply entrenched stone in J9 could not have been a first-line orthostat, as it was set at a relatively high level.

However, it could have been a piece of buttressing or a slab from the reinforcement row. On the southeastern side of the cavity, in J8, there was a dense rockfill of large blocks, which meant that it was not permit to detect a possible substructure, such as a corridor, extending in a southeasterly direction.
The filling that was removed from this central cavity formed a specific stratigraphic unit (SU04) consisting essentially of clasts of metagraywaque, and some milky quartz. The former were larger and had many crevices filled with a loose dark-coloured sediment with a marked organic component identical to that found in the surface chamber (SU01) (the organic component diminished with depth, with the exception of roots). Underlying this unit and lining the negative impressions of the cavities, we found finer more compact sediment with fewer and smaller clasts (SU3b).

An identical formation with similar characteristics was found at the end of the surface sediment removal process. Later, during the excavation of the trench, this was found to be a structural unit, an embankment (SU03), in a situation of primary deposition, presumably distributed throughout the whole volume of the mound, though this was only partially visible during the removal of surface sediment and excavation of the trench and chamber. It formed the filling of the nucleus of the mound, outside the container and confined between the ground and the protective stone covering. It was around 25 cm thick in the central area, diminishing towards the periphery. SU03b may correspond to the SU03 in secondary position, i.e. the filling of that cavity after it had been abandoned and left to deteriorate (or was violated), with the disappearance of the orthostats.

On the lowest level of the central cavity, there was a compact sedimentary formation (SU07) that was redder in colour, with small metagraywaque plaques, corresponding to the horizon of alteration of the geological substratum. In stratigraphic tests performed on O8, outside the mound, it was found that the surface unit (SU01) passed to the level of alteration of the geological substratum (SU07) through SU03, with a gradual reduction in thickness from the centre to the periphery.

We decided to go ahead with a depth excavation in order to better understand the situation in the central cavity. The results obtained (Figures 5.4 and 5.5 - A) were again very interesting. In fact, the removal of SU03b hid a tenuous though very regular sequence of small embedded clasts and alveoli, configuring SU05, which we interpreted to be the foundation of an orthostat structure since disappeared, which would have been ellipsoidal in contour, with its axis oriented in a northwest-southeasterly direction.

The roof of this cavity, now clearly delimited, may have been structured in wood covered by vegetable material and imbricated slabs. The orthostat structure, whose foundations were identified, may have been formed by elongated graywacke blocks extracted from the nearby outcrop, or alternatively, by trunks of wood, though it is not possible to demonstrate this last hypothesis.

One very interesting aspect of this foundational structure is the northwest-southeasterly orientation of its largest axis, which is not in accordance with the elongation observed in the two violation cavities. On the other hand, this orientation would be compatible with the decentring of this chamber in a northwesterly direction in relation to the stone mass of the mound and its (corrected) geometric centre. This slightly decentred position suggests the extension of the mortuary structure to the southeast, perhaps in the form of a corridor or other type of substructure.

On the outer edge of SU05 (the sequence of props and cavities that define the contour of the container) we identified a bed of small metagraywacke clasts (SU06), possibly of anthropic origin, underlying SU03. It was marginally identified on the southeastern side of the chamber, although it may have continued in a regular fashion around the whole periphery of this substructure.

The third phase of work corresponded to the excavation of the trench in cells L8, M8, N8 and O8. Given the resources available, we aimed to understand the structuring of the mound in depth, which would be easier in this zone as only two cells would have to be excavated (O8 had already been excavated for the stratification test). It would have been very useful if this diagnosis could have been completed with another radial trench (for example, on the boundary between the two easternmost cells), but that was not possible, as already mentioned, due to limited resources.

When the stones exposed by the surface sediment removal in M8 and N8 were also removed, it revealed that, at depth (Figure 5.5 - B), there was no continuity with regard to the placement of stones, confirming that this stone structure did not form a cairn but was restricted to a superficial stone covering. Underlying this structure, there was an embankment of light-coloured granulous sediment (SU03), stretching directly down to the geological substratum (SU07, SU08). In cell N8, it was not obvious how the periphery of the mound had been marked, though that limit could have been attributed to the alignment of larger blocks recorded there, thereby conferring a diameter of around 8 m to the mound. For conservation reasons, we decided not to dismantle the structure occupying cell L8, which seemed to include the buttressing of the chamber.

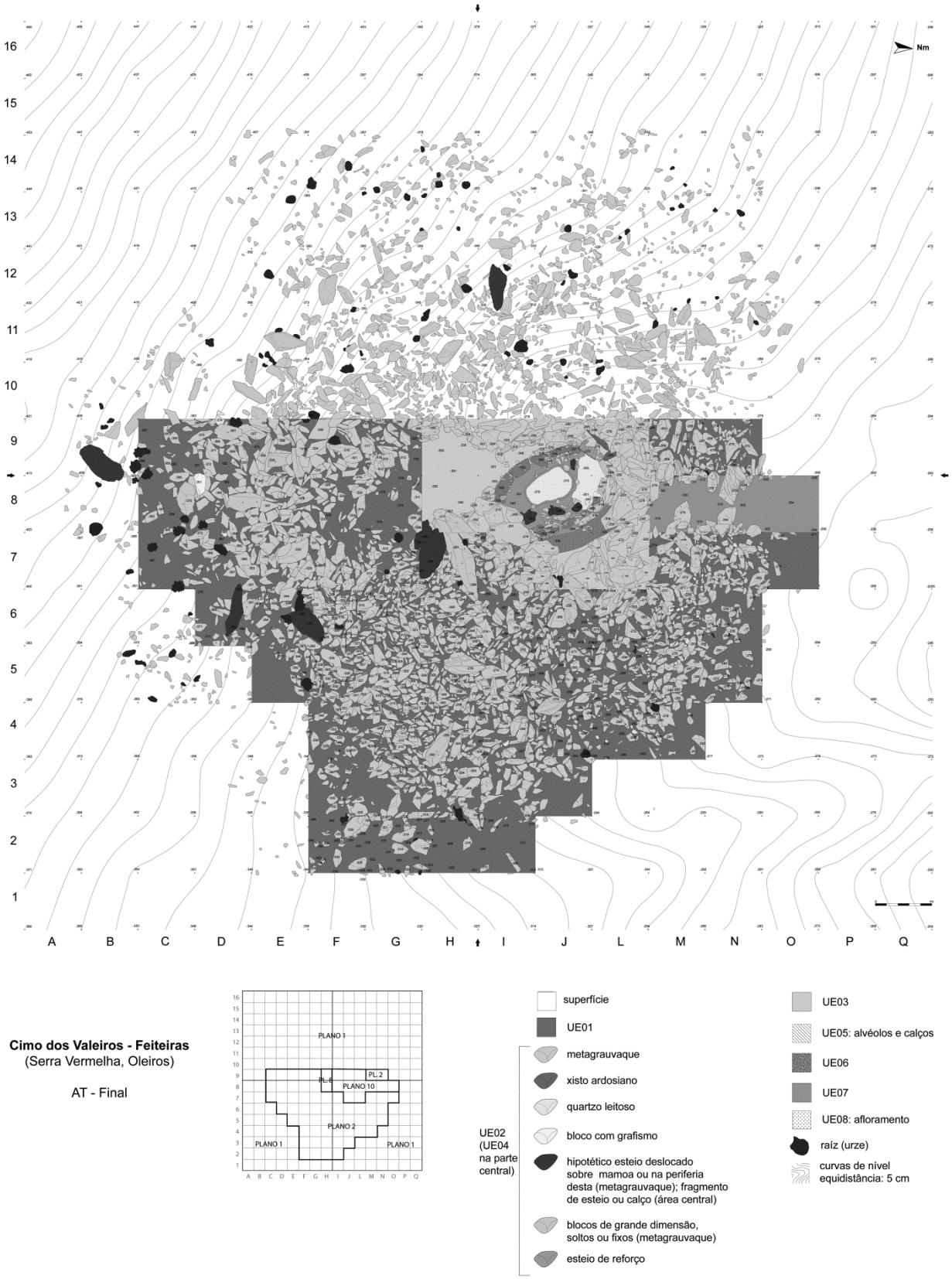

Figure 5.4: General plan of the end of the archaeological intervention, consisting of parts of Levels 1, 2, 8 and 10.

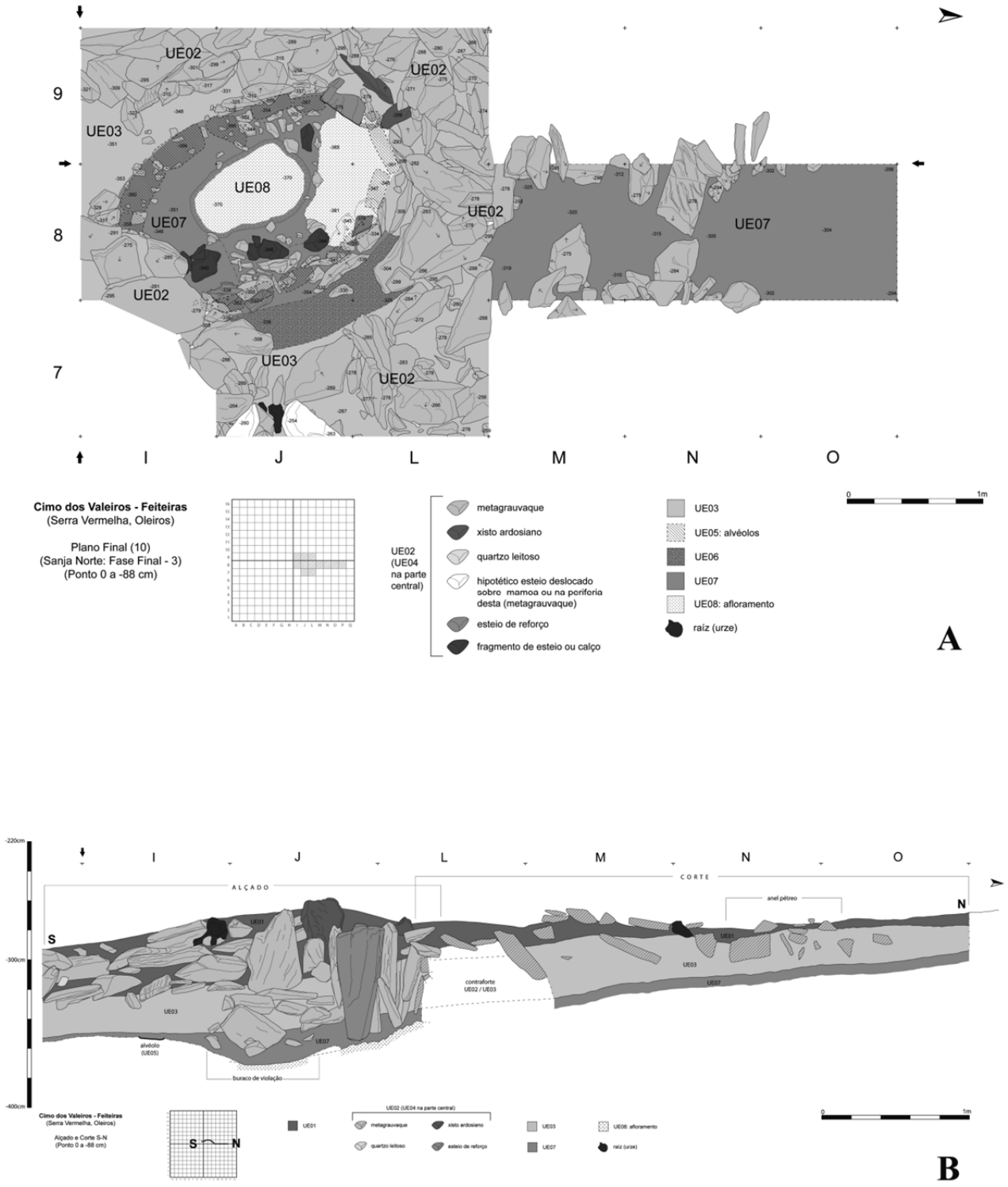

Figure 5.5: (A) Final excavation level in the central area of the mound. (B) Cross-section and vertical elevation between the northwestern and northeastern cells, from the centre of AE, including the burial container and trench.

3.3. Archaeological remains

The artefacts of archaeological interest collected during the course of this intervention are represented in Figure 5.6. There were few of them, and they were not very diverse. However, from their type, it is possible to date the use of this structure to the Neolithic period and initiate a discussion about it, considering the presence of significant pieces such as the geometric pieces and blade.

However, there is not enough data to enable us to fully understand the monument for various reasons. Firstly, these pieces were found on the mound, probably in secondary position and disconnected, given their insertion into SU01, perhaps moved through violation. Though all sediments were sifted, no artefact was found inside the chamber. What is more, the archaeological intervention only partially uncovered the structure of the monument; hence, it would be desirable to continue the investigation, particularly into the easternmost cells, where other substructures and more significant ritual deposits may be hidden.

4. Discussion and conclusions

The information that we have obtained from this excavation is still very incomplete from the structural, artefactual and ritual points of view, given the very partial nature of the study.

The chamber uncovered could be adjacent to a main chamber that is still hidden. As examples of this scenario, we could cite the western chambers of the tholoi of Lousal 1, Grândola and S. Bartolomé de La Torre, Huelva (Leisner & Leisner, 1959: est. 44 and 49) and Praia das Maças,[17] Sintra (Gonçalves, 1983). However, it seems more likely that its decentred position indicates the presence of a corridor running in a southeasterly direction.

In accordance with a criterion of presence/absence of certain types of artefacts, our provisional proposal for the chronology of this monument would date its use to the 4th millennium, even taking into account the persistence of geometric pieces and the absence of engraved schist plate and arrow heads. However, this timeframe could only be confirmed with further excavations and absolute datings, without which there is the risk of archaism and isolation due to the mountainous context.

The absence of polished stone tools (axes, hoes, etc) may be less significant, given that pieces of this type are more easily recognisable and may thus have been coveted (perhaps even for their magical qualities[18] [cf. Eliade, 1992]) and removed[19] by violators. Their absence in the archaeological excavation does not necessarily mean that they were absent from the whole mortuary package.

The absence of artefacts within the chamber should be noted. The lack of non-degradable materials inside may have been intentional. In fact, the pieces collected were at superficial levels of the mound, lying there, as (we supposed) they would have been thrown during the course of the violation. The isolation of various pieces and their stratigraphic insertion does not seem to correspond to the ritual deposit on the mound, though they occur in the archaeological record, particularly between the protective covering and the nucleus of the mound (Cruz, 1992: 65).

Alternatively, the lack of artefacts, and even of residues of artefacts, inside that chamber could be explained by their removal at an early stage when the space was less covered over. But we do know of cases of monuments that are empty, such as the anta Amieiro 3 at Idanha-a-Nova (Cardoso, Caninas & Henriques, 2003), where not only the chamber but also the corridor and atrium were unusually empty.

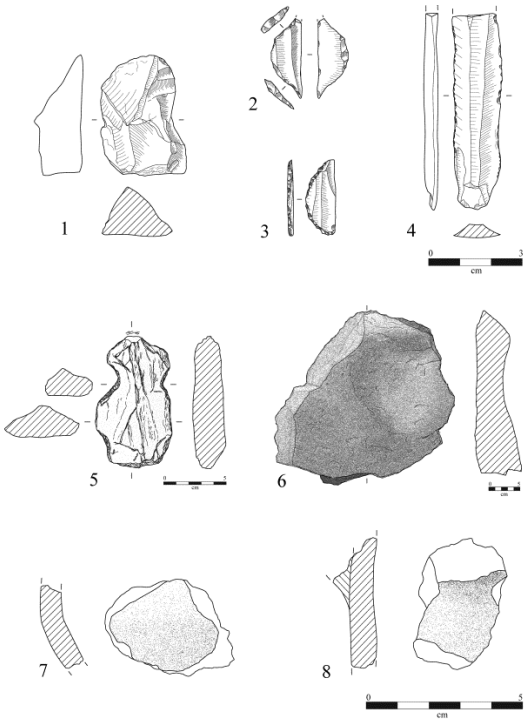

Figure 5.6: Artefacts collected during the archaeological works (indicating the SU and cell position): (1) scraper, silex, SU01, E8; (2) geometric, silex, SU01, H9; (3) geometric, silex, SU01, D7; (4) blade fragment silex, SU01/04, H8; (5) weight or idol, metagraywacke, SU01, L5; (6) mealing stone, metagraywacke, SU01, G2; (7) fragment of the bowl of a hand-made slightly carinated ceramic vessel, SU01, M7; (8) fragment of the bowl of a hand-made ceramic vessel with nipple, SU01, M7.

[17] In this site, the remains show that the western chamber corresponds to a first mortuary phase from the Middle-Final Neolithic, while the tholos revealed the use of the Final Neolithic-Early Chalcolithic, according to Gonçalves (1983).

[18] As, for example, when they have been inserted into the foundations of houses or into cracks in the walls to protect against electrical discharges during thunderstorms.

[19] The first regional archaeological chart (Proença Jr, 1910) records only ten polished stone tools in the county of Oleiros.

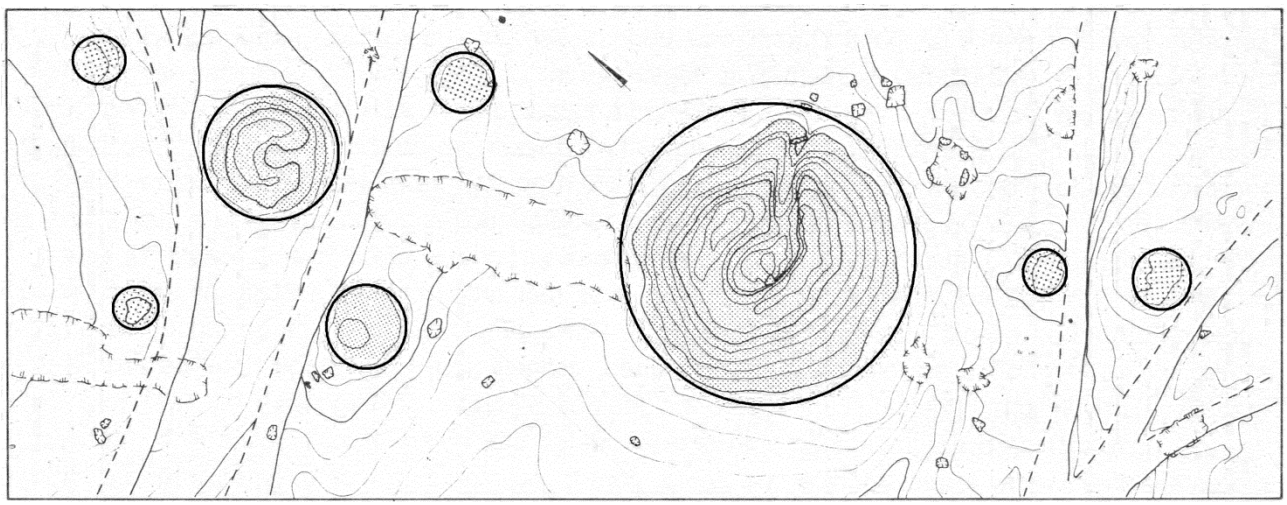

Figure 5.7: Necropolis at Fonte da Malga (based on Kalb, 1994).

However, given the limited nature of this excavation, the hypothesis should be raised that the chamber discovered does not correspond to the burial container, and that this is still hidden. Or, more simply, there may never have existed any tomb at all, and this container is merely a cenotaph.[20] In addition, the convergence of structures with depositions alongside others that do not have them is documented in prehistoric mortuary structures (cf. Valera & Filipe, 2012).

In fact, an artefact package similar in composition to what we collected can be seen at Anta 4 of Rapadouro in Vila Nova de Paiva, a simple enclosed chamber covered by a 10 m diameter cairn (Cruz & Canha, 1997). This involved six small silex segments, a retouched micro-blade (hyaline quartz), residual flakestones, also in silex, and some ceramic fragments, forming a group attributed to the second half of the 5th millennium BC.
In another mountainous context, there is the case of the Hayas 1 tumulus in Cantabria, attributed to an earlier phase of regional megalithism, with remains restricted to microliths, blades and ceramics (Serna González, 1995).

If we look at the lowlands of southern Portugal, there is the necropolis complex at Atafonas, with its three phases of use (5th and 4th millennia BC), including tombs in the form of pits or with subcircular or oval chambers, covered by tumulus and archaic remains, considered proto-megalithic. The one from the oldest phase (a pit without a tumulus) contained bone remains, "three fragments of handmade ceramics, two large blades and one smaller one (the filling of the pit); two fragments of handmade ceramics, three geometric pieces and possibly one blade (burial level)" (Albergaria, 2007:16).

Artefacts from the oldest phase of the megalithism in the Upper Mondego region, attributable to the Middle Neolithic, are also characterized by "geometric patterns on blades (predominantly crescents and triangles), medium and large blades (mostly not retouched)" as well as ornamental items and polished stone tools, but with an absence of pottery (Senna-Martinez & Ventura, 2000: 37). This scenario is repeated in Arouca at the Escariz necropolis (Silva, 1988).

Amongst the artefacts collected at Cimo dos Valeiros, there is a metagraywacke pebble with roughly hewn side notches (Figure 5.6 – 5), which suggests that it might have been used as a weight, similar to the so-called net-sinkers or loom-weights, made from rolled flints which were notched on each side to enable fixation. However, this piece is less symmetrical than those, larger and heavier, and has not one but two pairs of notches on opposite sides.

Its similarity with the anthropomorphic idols of Southeast Iberia and the Mediterranean (Almagro Gorbea, 1973: 55) is very suggestive, if we consider that it is incomplete at the top and possibly also the bottom. In shape, it is also similar to one of the idols collected in the most recent dolmen of the mortuary complex at Dombate, connected to "the world of the south and the Mediterranean" (Bello Diéguez, 1994:289), dating from the 3rd millennium BC.

Other closer parallels may also be suggested. For example, there are the two small pieces identified in sites in the county of Sabugal, alongside manual ceramics and stone-working: a long, rounded pebble, 7 cm in length, with two notches on opposite sides on one of the ends, found in a context attributed to the Bronze Age at the Fornito site and presented as a "figurine in black rock" and "possible pendant" (Marcos, 2012: 54); a fragment of an elongated piece in greenish schist, 4 cm long, considered idoliform, fragmented at the ends and also with two notches on either side at one end, identified at the protohistoric site of Matrena II (Marcos, 2012. 58-59).

The block of metagraywacke engraved with two open-based triangles is another finding of great interest. The representation of broken lines, also known as zigzags, is common in megalithic monuments in Western Europe

[20] The first regional archaeological chart (Proença Jr, 1910) records only ten polished stone tools in the county of Oleiros.

and may take the form of engravings (incised or pecked) or paintings.

In northwest Iberia, there are cases of obsessive zigzag engravings, both vertical and horizontal, painted on the slabs of the antas of Mota Grande and Portela do Pau 2 (Baptista, 1980), attributable to the second half of the 5th millennium BC, on the anta at Padrão (Cruz & Gonçalves, 1994) in the region of Porto from the first half of the 4th millennium BC, at Pedra Coberta and Castiñeiras 1 and 2 (Peña Santos & Rey Garcia, 1980) in Galicia, or on the Minho coastline on a slab from an anta at Ereira (Silva, 1980) in Afife.

In the Central region, there is the anta of Areita (Gomes, *et. al.*, 1998: 65) in São João da Pesqueira, a monument with a chamber and corridor attributable to the 4th millennium BC, whose head slab has vertical zigzags flanking other geometric figures. One of the zigzags is a short line with three breaks, in the shape of a broken M. And in Spanish Estremadura, four orthostats from the chamber of the tholos at Granja de Toniñuelo (Bueno Ramírez & Balbín Berhmann, 1980) in Badajoz also have broken lines incised or painted, one of them very short. Identical incised zigzags frame the anthropomorphic stele identified there (Bueno Ramírez & Balbín Berhmann, 1980: 114).

But more interesting because of its greater formal proximity with Cimo dos Valeiros is the case of Cist A at Ínsua (Penedo Romero & Fábregas Valcarce, 1980) in Corunha, dating from the turn of the 3rd to the 2nd millennium BC, which has four orthostats engraved with simple triangular bands, which the authors liken to the graphic representations on the so-called engraved schist plates, aligning them with the megalithic art tradition.

In the open air, we could mention the presence of simple zigzags, with three breaks (in M), and open-base triangles, isolated or in pairs, at Pedra Escrita de Ridevides (Santos Jr, 1963) in Alfândega da Fé, a profusely carved rock, which is usually dated to between the Bronze and Iron Ages, the two incised Ms of Alto do Pobral (Caninas, *et. al.*, 2004) in Oleiros. The zigzag with three breaks, in the shape of an M, seems to be individualized in a type relative to the incised carvings of this region (2D form or simple zigzags in Coimbra & Garcês, 2013).

We could also cite their occurrence in panel 5 of Cueva del Castillo de Monfrague (Collado Giraldo & Garcia Arranz, 2006), the menhir of Vale de Rodrigo (Gomes, 1994) and the menhir-stele of the enclosure (Gomes, 2000) of Portela de Mogos (stele-menhir 1) and Almendres (stele-menhir 76), attributable to the Final Neolithic.

Of similar interest, despite the geographic distance, are similar carvings (in a context marked by numerous triangular figures of various types and zigzags) on orthostats of the monumental mortuary tumulus of Newgrange (O'Kelly, 1982), on the kerb, in the burial chamber and corridor and on slabs C8 of the chamber, R18 and L12 of the corridor and K2 and K7 of the outer stone ring. These engravings occur at the top of the respective pieces.

In the Cáceres region of Alcântara, there are numerous examples of such carved shapes, with a strong convergence of zigzags and triangles, both on the slabs of mortuary monuments and on engraved plaques amongst their mortuary remains, with strong connections to anthropomorphic representation. Other cases are found on orthostats in the province of Toledo, on menhirs at Azután and Navalcán, and in Cádiz on the Alberite necropolis (Bueno, *et. al.*, 1999; Bueno Ramírez, 1992; Bueno Ramírez, *at al.*, 1999; Bueno Ramírez & Balbín Behrmann, 2002).

One of these cases is the dolmen of Trincones 1, where simple zigzags occur on the orthostats, on a stele from the atrium and on the obverses of two anthropomorphic plaques (Bueno Ramírez, *at al.*, 1999), with a chronology attributed by the authors to the turn of the 4th to the 3rd millennium BC.

In the context of the broad representation of triangular figures, and particularly of zigzags in the European megalithic graphic tradition, the presence of figures like those at Cimo dos Valeiros may suggest another link between this monument and this cultural and symbolic universe.

It is open to discussion whether the burial complex of Feiteiras, with its three tumuli, forms a necropolis, indicating some form of continuity with ritual differentiation, or only spatial convergence with cultural discontinuity. Cimo dos Valeiros, larger in size, is around 120 m away from the two monuments of Cimo da Cova dos Bacelos (themselves very close together, with only 8 m between their respective centres). The response must necessarily be connected not only to external morphological aspects, which indicate differentiation or polymorphism, but also to the intrusive study of the two small structures of Cima da Cova dos Bacelos. This external morphological variability occurs in other sites within the county of Oleiros (Caninas, *et. al.*, 2008), where significant variations are found in the size and composition of mound structures, often in a proximity relationship.

The polymorphism of burial structures has been recorded and discussed in relation to other necropolises (Jorge, 1981), in some cases with a broad timespan betwen the Neolithic and Bronze Age, as for example at Fonte da Malga (Kalb & Hock, 1982; Kalb, 1994, Figure 5.7) in Viseu, where two Neolithic mounds are found side by side with six cairns from the Final Bronze Age. This necropolis is located in a mountain pass at an altitude of 720 m, crossed by five paths flanked with smaller monuments.

The necropolis of Rapadouro is also formed by four clearly differentiated tumuli (Cruz & Canha, 1997). Three

of those monuments are closer together, while the fourth is a significant distance away. The first three are attributed to the end of the Chalcolithic/beginning of the Bronze Age, while Monument 4 would have been occupied earlier (Middle Neolithic).

A final aspect that deserves attention and to which we will return on another occasion is the alignment between the mound of Cimo dos Valeiros with the linear rocky outcrop. It is of interest to understand if that alignment occurred by chance, though the proximity may have been determined by the fact that it represented a source of raw material (we presume it was used as a kind of quarry), or if the construction was located there for symbolic reasons.

Other examples of such spatial convergences may be found between megalithic monuments and natural resources. One such case is the 41 tumuli of Escariz (Arouca), many of which are rigorously aligned (in a straight line) with a quartz seam and the frontier between metagraywackes and granites (Silva, 1987: 24).

To conclude, the archaeological studies carried out at Cimo dos Valeiros provide results that are of interest for our understanding of the former human presence in the Portuguese zone of the Iberian Central Cordillera, thereby filling a gap in our knowledge resulting from the lack of archaeological investigation in this mountainous area. This possibility is exclusively due to the wind farm projects of the GENERG Group.

At Cimo dos Valeiros, it was possible to document (more clearly than in Selada do Cavalo 1 or in the tumuli excavated in the counties of Miranda do Corvo [Caninas, *et. al.*, 2012] and Pampilhosa da Serra [Batata & Gaspar, 2009, 2011]) an architecture that dates back to the Neolithic, and which largely exceeds the previous limits of the settlement of that region attributed to the Final Bronze Age (Batata, 2006), taking as reference above all the archaeological materials collected there. The burial structure, which is in keeping with known patterns of "earth" mounds with stone coverings, converges with this chronological attribution.

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