

**CURRENT APPROACHES  
TO COLLECTIVE  
BURIALS IN THE LATE  
EUROPEAN PREHISTORY**

**Edited by**

**Tiago Tomé, Marta Díaz-Zorita Bonilla,  
Ana Maria Silva, Claudia Cunha,  
Rui Boaventura**

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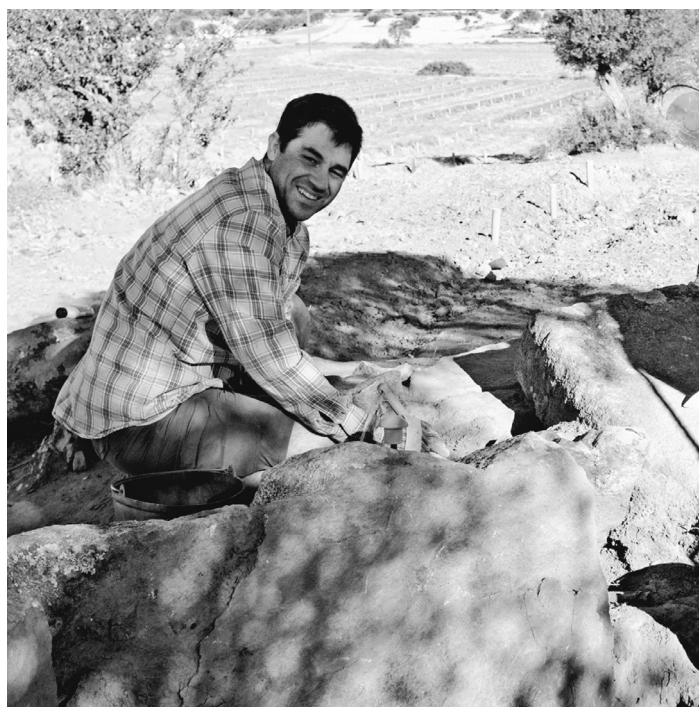
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***In Memoriam***  
**Rui Boaventura (February 10th 1971 – May 28th 2016)**



RUI BOAVENTURA EXCAVATING AT QUINTA DO FREIXO IN 2012  
(PHOTO BY GLEN JONES)

In 2014, Rui Boaventura was a member of the organizing committee of the XVII World UISPP Congress session that would ultimately result in this volume. Unfortunately, the condition that would lead to his premature demise manifested itself not long afterwards and he was unable to provide his precious help in the edition of this proceedings volume. For that reason, this volume is dedicated to his memory.

Despite his young age, Rui Boaventura was a well-known figure in the study of Prehistoric societies in Portugal. Having completed his undergraduate studies at the University of Lisbon in 1993, his early years would be dedicated to high-school teaching at several schools, along with the participation in archaeological excavations.

In the late 1990's, while working as an archaeologist in the Northern Alentejo, a region where he had distant family roots, his attention would be drawn to the Late Prehistoric communities of that area, particularly the ones at the 4th/3rd millennia BCE. On that context, he would develop research on the megalithic monuments of Rabuje, a relatively little known group of monuments originally included in the seminal works by Vera and Georg Leisner in the mid-XXth century. As an archaeologist working for the then newly-created Instituto Português de Arqueologia<sup>1</sup>, he continued researching settlement sites of the same period in that area, one of which would constitute the theme of his 2001 Master dissertation at the University of Lisbon, under the coordination of Prof. Victor Gonçalves – published under the title '*O sítio Calcolítico do Pombal (Monforte). Uma recuperação possível de velhos e novos dados*'. This early work already revealed his focus on detailed analysis of archaeological information, as well as an understanding of the need to look at materials from older excavations with fresh eyes.

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<sup>1</sup> Portuguese Institute for Archaeology, now extinct.



As of 2002, he moved to the Lisbon area, where he would continue his study of Neolithic-Chalcolithic societies, coordinating the excavation of several burial monuments in the region. Those works were the basis of his PhD research (*‘As antas e o Megalitismo na região de Lisboa’*, 2010). Once again this work was carried out under the supervision of Victor Gonçalves at the University of Lisbon. This would allow him to assess a territory where much more research on Late Prehistoric communities had been done, leading to richer, albeit more complex, interpretations. Thus, he dedicated efforts to studying collections from the Megalithic burials of the Lisbon area, curated at the Portuguese National Archaeological Museum and the Museum of the Portuguese Geological and Mining Institute. He also carried out a rigorous compilation of documents, cataloguing the Leisner Archive, kept at the Instituto Português de Arqueologia’s facilities under an agreement with the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut and set up a wide range of collaborations aiming at interdisciplinary approaches, regarding absolute chronology and bioanthropological analysis.

This interest in interdisciplinary approaches resulted in the establishment of a research programme (Mega Osteology), led by the association Portanta, under which collaborations with Ana Maria Silva, Maria Teresa Ferreira (Research Centre for Anthropology and Health – University of Coimbra) and Maria Hillier (Max Planck Institute Leipzig) were developed. He would recognize quite early in his career the importance of Biological Anthropology’s more recent methods to the interpretation of prehistoric collective burials.

Since 2011, he was a post-doctoral researcher with UNIARQ (University of Lisbon) and University State of Pennsylvania. Although his interests were diversified, his research kept focusing on megaliths and funerary practices on the 4th/3rd millennia BCE. With Ana Maria Silva he produced several studies, regarding funerary practices, mobility/migration and violence. On a collaboration in Carlos Odriozola’s (University of Seville) project, along with Ana Catarina Sousa and Rodrigo Villalobos, he studied green stone adornments of Portuguese sites. With Katina Lillios (National Science Foundation), he cooperated in a project at the Sizandro Valley.

As of 2013, Boaventura coordinated the MEGAGEO project, funded by the Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia, partnering with geologists working at the Universities of Évora (Patrícia Moita, Jorge Pedro and Pedro Nogueira) and Aveiro (José Santos). This project aimed at the understanding of the geological provenance of stones used in building dolmens in Central and Southern Portugal, focusing on three regional case-studies: Monforte, Redondo (both on Northern Alentejo) and Lisbon (Lower Estremadura). He performed several excavations in cooperation with Rui Mataloto, namely at Redondo (Quinta do Freixo 4, Candieira, Godinhos), Monforte (Lacrau 2 e 3, Enxara de Cima 1) and Vila Franca de Xira (Monte Serves).

In 2014 he was one of the organizers of Session A25b of the XVII World UISPP Congress (*‘Current Approaches to Collective Burials in the Late European Prehistory’*), held at Burgos (Spain). His name was an obvious choice for us ever since the first moment we thought about organizing this meeting. This volume is a result of that session and his contribution to the debates was quite relevant.

In November 2015, with Rui Mataloto, he organized Megatalks, an international congress held at Redondo, gathering researchers of megalithic sites from Britain, Sweden, France, Spain and Portugal.

His scientific interests were highly interconnected, including Neolithic and Chalcolithic funerary practices, mobility and migration, war and interpersonal violence, gender, Geoarchaeology, History of Archaeology, among others.

A researcher at UNIARQ, his work was characterized by an intense research activity, particularly at the National Archaeological Museum, but nevertheless keeping active collaborations with research centers both in Portugal (CIAS, University of Coimbra) and abroad (University of Louisville). He was also the coordinator of the Portanta association. His work was several times awarded with

research grants from Fundação Ciência e Tecnologia, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, American Institute of Archaeology, Dorot Foundation and Deutsches Archäologisches Institut.

A member of the American Institute of Archaeology, Associação dos Arqueólogos Portugueses and Associação Profissional de Arqueólogos (of which he was a member of the directing board), Rui Boaventura was also an active voice in many moments related to the development of Archaeology in Portugal, such as the debate around the dismantling of government archaeological facilities in Portugal. He authored numerous publications, including two books, dozens of articles and book chapters, both in Portugal and abroad.

His was the cause of knowledge, but also the one of Humanism. This much was evident in the quotation by Albert Einstein with which he usually ended his e-mail messages: *‘The ideals which have always shone before me and filled me with the joy of living are goodness, beauty, and truth’*. His tireless curiosity and enthusiasm about Late Prehistoric societies of the Iberian Peninsula would prove invaluable to the study of collective burials in Portugal. Portuguese Archaeology lost one of its most promising minds. Rui Boaventura was an accomplished archaeologist, a smart and provocative thinker, a gracious and open-minded debater and a great partner. But most of all, he was a loving father of three bright sons whom he taught his love for the Portuguese countryside and Archaeology. His many friends and colleagues will miss him deeply for the researcher and the human being he was. His family will miss a dedicated father, a loving son, brother, partner...

Ana Catarina Sousa, Tiago Tomé, Ana Maria Silva

## Foreword to the XVII UISPP Congress Proceedings Series Edition

Luiz Oosterbeek  
Secretary-General

UISPP has a long history, starting with the old International Association of Anthropology and Archaeology, back in 1865, until the foundation of UISPP itself in Bern, in 1931, and its growing relevance after WWII, from the 1950's. We also became members of the International Council of Philosophy and Human Sciences, associate of UNESCO, in 1955.

In its XIVth world congress in 2001, in Liège, UISPP started a reorganization process that was deepened in the congresses of Lisbon (2006) and Florianópolis (2011), leading to its current structure, solidly anchored in more than twenty-five international scientific commissions, each coordinating a major cluster of research within six major chapters: Historiography, methods and theories; Culture, economy and environments; Archaeology of specific environments; Art and culture; Technology and economy; Archaeology and societies.

The XVIIth world congress of 2014, in Burgos, with the strong support of Fundación Atapuerca and other institutions, involved over 1700 papers from almost 60 countries of all continents. The proceedings, edited in this series but also as special issues of specialized scientific journals, will remain as the most important outcome of the congress.

Research faces growing threats all over the planet, due to lack of funding, repressive behavior and other constraints. UISPP moves ahead in this context with a strictly scientific programme, focused on the origins and evolution of humans, without conceding any room to short term agendas that are not root in the interest of knowledge.

In the long run, which is the terrain of knowledge and science, not much will remain from the contextual political constraints, as severe or dramatic as they may be, but the new advances into understanding the human past and its cultural diversity will last, this being a relevant contribution for contemporary and future societies.

This is what UISPP is for, and this is also why we are currently engaged in contributing for the relaunching of Human Sciences in their relations with social and natural sciences, namely collaborating with the International Year of Global Understanding, in 2016, and with the World Conference of the Humanities, in 2017.

The next congresses of UISPP, in Melbourne (2017) and in Geneva (2020), will confirm this route.

# Introduction

Tiago Tomé, Marta Díaz-Zorita Bonilla, Ana Maria Silva and Claudia Cunha

The present volume originated in session A25b ('Current Approaches to Collective Burials in the Late European Prehistory') of the XVII World Congress of the International Union of the Prehistoric and Protohistoric Sciences (UISPP), held in Burgos in September 2014.

Collective burials are quite a common feature in Prehistoric Europe, with the gathering of multiple individuals in a shared burial place occurring in different types of burial structures (natural caves, megalithic structures, artificial caves, corbelled-roof tombs, pits, etc.). Such features are generally associated with communities along the agropastoralist transition and fully agricultural societies of the Neolithic and Chalcolithic.

Over the last few decades, a renewed interest in the study of Prehistoric collective burials and specifically on the human skeletal remains they contained has emerged. Such interest is a consequence of biological anthropologists adopting methods focused on the understanding and reconstruction of the formation processes of funerary contexts, an increment in physicochemical analysis such as radiocarbon dating, ancient DNA and stable isotopes studies, as well as a growing collaboration between anthropologists and archaeologists. All this led to a larger integration of bioanthropological data within archaeological interpretation, eventually resulting in the emergence of a new disciplinary field, Bioarchaeology. This allows us to currently hold a deeper understanding of these communities, as well as of their funerary practices.

For a long time, human skeletal remains exhumed from collective burials were dismissed as valuable sources of information, their studies being limited mostly to morphological assessments and subsequent classification in predefined 'races'. They currently represent a starting point for diversified, often interdisciplinary, research projects, allowing for a more accurate reconstruction of funerary practices, as well as of palaeobiological and environmental aspects, which are fundamental for the understanding of populations in the Late Prehistory of Europe and of the processes leading to the emergence of agricultural societies in this part of the world.

The XVII World UISPP Congress venue (Spain) probably resulted in a greater focus of the contributions to this session on southern Europe. We believe, nonetheless, that this also reflects recent developments on this subject in southern European countries, with bioarchaeological studies becoming ever more common and in line with international practices.

The articles in this volume provide examples of different approaches currently being developed on Prehistoric collective burials of southern Europe, mostly focusing on case studies, but also including contributions of a more methodological scope:

Díaz-Zorita Bonilla *et al.* present a detailed bioarchaeological study of the remains recovered from the Tomb 3 of La Pijotilla, a key site to understand social dynamics in south-west Spain Copper Age mega-sites. This paper aims to contribute on how to record an extremely fragmented human assemblage with cutting edge techniques.

The contribution by Marado *et al.* is more of a theoretical and methodological proposal, on the importance of dental tooth wear assessment to the understanding of the communities buried on collective burials, based on Portuguese examples. Such methodological approaches are important in the sense that they are tools for understanding human behavior and the interaction between man and the resources provided by the environment.

Edo *et al.* present a detailed assessment of funerary treatment at a cave in northeastern Spain (Can Sadurní), where several individuals were deposited in tightly bound shrouds, along with votive offerings.

Rolfo *et al.* offer an overall description of the research developed on the burial cave of Mora Cavorso (central Italy), combining information from material culture and human remains, namely in terms of a paleobiological assessment and stable isotope studies.

Fernández-Crespo puts forward a general assessment of the human remains exhumed from a group of megalithic monuments in La Rioja, northern Spain, focusing on both paleobiological and funerary aspects.

González Rabanal *et al.* propose an approach that has become common over the last few decades: the reassessment, in light of modern methods, of skeletal assemblages previously recovered from El Espinoso cave, in Asturias (northern Spain).

Lai *et al.* provide us an insight into the diet of Copper Age Sardinia (Italy), through an isotopic analysis of remains recovered from the S. Caterina di Pittinuri burial.

López Aldana and Pajuelo Pando offer new information for another classic Copper Age site of southern Spain, Valencina de la Concepción, describing new burial structures, funerary practices and morphological features, as well as presenting aDNA data, crucial for our understanding of biological affinities within populations that occupied the region.

Pereira *et al.* develop an assessment of three different sites located in southern Portugal, where pits were used for multiple burials (adults and non-adults), spanning from the Late Neolithic to the Bronze Age. Among the more relevant data is the evidence of non-masticatory use of two teeth recovered from pit 102 of Monte do Vale do Ouro 2 and evidences of exposure to fire on individuals from pit 97 from the same site.

Robles Carrasco *et al.* also focus on Valencina de la Concepción, describing results from a bioarchaeological assessment of one of the site's excavated sectors.

The volume closes with a case-study by Tomé *et al.* on computer applications to the study of funerary contexts, through a GIS assessment of the spatial dispersion of human remains inside burial caves in central Portugal.

Diverse chrono-cultural contexts are included in this ensemble of texts – the oldest cases being the 6th millennium BCE depositions at Mora Cavorso and the 5th millennium BCE depositions at Can Sadurní, although the majority of collective burials discussed in this volume date to the 4th-3rd millennia BCE (Camos megaliths, S. Caterina di Pittinuri, Valencina de la Concepción, Cadaval, Gruta dos Ossos). Some later cases are also presented, namely from the 2nd millennium BCE (El Espinoso, Monte do Vale do Ouro 2). Additionally, some sites reveal the presence of several collective burial periods (Peña Guerra II and Collado Palomero I in the Camos megaliths or Monte do Vale do Ouro 2). This chronological diversity suggests that no single explanation can be put forward to the collective burial phenomenon as a whole – different symbolic realities must have existed, dependent upon spatial and temporal dimensions.

In summary, this volume represents an important contribution to the understanding of the funerary practices related to collective burials from the 6th up to the 2nd millennia BCE in Southern Europe. Not only funerary contexts of main archaeological sites from these periods are discussed, but also new approaches are suggested to deal with them. These include multi-disciplinary and cutting edge bioarchaeological analysis.

We believe that there is still much work to be done in order to understand the formation processes of these complex funerary contexts, but investigation is leading towards a wider approach, where Bioarchaeology is playing a major role. This includes the improvement on the excavation and exhumation strategies, the combination of more accurate methods of analysis of the osteological record and the application of several biochemical techniques such as radiocarbon, aDNA and stable isotope analysis. The next few decades will undoubtedly foment deeper knowledge on these Late Prehistoric societies, as well as more solid understanding of the diverse processes of agropastoralist transition.



PARTICIPANTS IN THE 'CURRENT APPROACHES TO COLLECTIVE BURIALS IN THE LATE EUROPEAN PREHISTORY' SESSION OF THE 2014 UISPP CONGRESS.