
Demographic Processes in Iberia During the Neolithic: a Quantitative Approach in a Evolutionary Framework

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Résumé

The transition to agriculture is a key period of Humanity's History, providing unresolved puzzles with important implications for subsequent periods. Evolution of first agricultural societies, which presents phases of expansion and cultural homogeneity followed by periods of "collapse" and diversity, is probably the most interesting among them.

This phenomenon is not exclusive of early stages of Neolithic. During the third millennium BC, several so-called 'complex' societies emerged along the Iberian Peninsula. Such societies presented some of the above-referred features like: Strong demographic growth and large population aggregations, monumental construction, extension (through large regions) of ideo-technic elements and specialized crafts, as well as the presence of exotic (extra-regional and, even, extra-Iberian) raw materials like ivory and amber (signaling long-range exchange networks). Nevertheless, by the end of that millennium, the cultural landscape shows (once again) fragmented and regionalized. Moreover there was a new economical and spatial re-organization setting the basis for the Bronze Age.

Beyond the obvious differences of scale, both cases offer clear parallels; both suggest that there are hints of cycles of significant growth and dispersal ('collapse') beginning with the earliest agriculturally based societies. However, it is not clear yet whether such cycles are common or rare, and what are the actual mechanisms underlying them.

In this paper we propose to use the radiocarbon data together with archaeological information derived from the surveys carried out in the last decades in the east of Spain in order to explore, a) the existence of this kind of cycles during the late prehistoric periods (7500-2000 cal BC) in Iberia; b) the reliability of the SCDPD curves as a proxy of demographic data; and c) their characters and the probable mechanism underlying them.

Mots-Clés: neolithic, demographic proxies, evolutionary framework, Iberia

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