
Coastal Neolithic: A discussion on the evidence for interaction between hunter-gatherers and farmers in Barrosinha (Grândola, Portugal)

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Résumé

The substitution of subsistence systems focusing on the exploitation of the marine resources for others, which rely mainly on domestic species, and where the contribution of the former is nearly negligible, appears to be a very frequent pattern in the transition to the Neolithic in coastal areas. However, there are some exceptions. One of them is the group of late Neolithic/early Copper Age shell middens of Comporta, in the southern bank of the Sado estuary, in Portugal. These sites were explored in 1979 by two of us (Joaquina Soares and Carlos Tavares da Silva), displaying a very high density of marine or estuarine fish and invertebrate's remains.

In the context of a research project on the transition to the Neolithic in coastal areas of SW Europe (CoChange), we have recently re-excavated a series of well-preserved Mesolithic and Neolithic sites in the valley of the Sado river, one of the classic areas for the study of the late hunter-gatherers communities in southern Portugal. One of the issues raised in that research was the characterization of the latest stages on the intensive exploitation of marine or estuarine resources. With that aim, we have obtained new samples in Barrosinha, a large open-air site located on top of a dune facing the Sado estuary. In this communication we present the preliminary results of our investigations, including new Radiocarbon dates, and analysis of the industries and the faunal remains recovered in our test pits.

Mots-Clés: Marine resources, Late Neolithic, Portugal, shell middens

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