
Do hunter-gatherers dream of a Neolithic sheep?

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Résumé

After Philip K. Dick 1968 novel, *Do hunter-gatherers dream of a Neolithic Sheep?* will discuss cultural models in confrontation, moving beyond generalized, even if unconsciously, presumption that less sophisticated groups – hunter-gatherers - aimed, like androids with human expectations, to mimetize more elaborated societies – the Neolithic ones. This presumption, however, stands on a debatable issue that consider particular cultural achievements and norms as elements equally valued by different groups, who necessarily would share an anthropological hunger towards technological and economic complexity.

In southwestern Iberia – a finisterra where Mesolithic hunter-gatherers are deeply rooted in main paleoestuaries – the discussion of the Neolithisation was traditionally based on Neolithic groups and traits, underestimating the hunter-gatherer role in this transitional process. Nevertheless, different social strategies can be observed in the archaeological record concerning hunter-gatherer's attitudes towards the Neolithic, from active/ passive acculturation processes to different forms of cultural resistance. To establish which and when those particular social strategies were underway in the Early Neolithic and the Final Mesolithic, chronology, settlement patterns, material culture, food procurement strategies and funerary practices should be compared.

This presentation will focus on Final Mesolithic and Early Neolithic lithic technologies, considering raw material procurement strategies, core exploitation process, blanks, geometric armatures (mainly segments) and microburins from the Mesolithic shell midden of Cabeço das Amoreiras (Sado valley) and the Early Neolithic open air settlement of Valada do Mato (inner Alentejo), both sites located in the southern Portugal and occupied at the end of the 6th millennium cal BC, according to the available 14C dates and the material cultural typology.

Through the inventory of differences and similitudes of the flaked technology of the Final Mesolithic and the Early Neolithic, we aim to identify the presence of Mesolithic traditions within Neolithic groups and, at the same time, the ways in which hunter-gatherers confront/adopt/adapt the expansion of farming communities raising the question on whether they have ever dreamed, as expected in the Europocentric literature, of a Neolithic sheep?

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Mots-Clés: Final Mesolithic, Early Neolithic, southwestern Iberia, lithic industries, cultural confrontation