THE SYMBOLISM OF POWER IN CENTRAL PORTUGAL LATE BRONZE AGE COMMUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

The Portuguese “Beiras” constitute an almost unavoidable transit area between Portugal’s northern and south-central regions on one hand and the Spanish Northern Meseta on the other. Thus, in different historical moments (in the widest sense), it functions as a connecting plate between those regions, whose study is fundamental to the understanding of the inter-regional interaction and integration processes that are going on.

The work that has been done regionally during the last two decades allows us to debate some questions regarding the role of power symbolism in the origins and development of local Late Bronze Age communities (Grupo Baiões/Santa Luzia) and their interaction with contemporary “culture groups” from the surrounding areas as well as with the Atlantic and Mediterranean commerce networks of the late second and early first millennia BC.

We argue that the adoption and displaying of “foreign symbols of power” are some of the mechanisms responsible for the establishment and enforcing of local elites in an economic network that - we as well argue - is structured as a “wealth finance” system.


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