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Women Archaeologists' Contributions to Uncovering the Pre- and Proto-Historical Occupation of Northern Portugal

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Definition: The history of women archaeologists in Portugal and their contribution to the development of the discipline is yet to be studied. However, in recent years, some articles published in Portugal have contributed to the construction of this history. Some of these are from the year 2020, and although the coronavirus pandemic has affected the progress of these investigations, especially regarding fieldwork. Generally, these are quantitative studies based on the number of publications by women archaeologists and their references and interviews in newspapers. These articles, which require significant time for database analysis, have not yet explained the existing gaps. It is not the scope of this paper to pursue this quantitative scope; instead, it intends to conduct a qualitative analysis of the contribution of women archaeologists to the development of prehistoric studies in Northern Portugal. To achieve this goal, we are focusing on analysing the doctoral theses developed by women concerning pre- and proto-historic archaeology in Northern Portugal. With this evaluation, we intend to contribute to the history of Portuguese women's archaeology and, at the same time, highlight their methodological and conceptual achievements.

Keywords: women archaeologists; Northern Portugal; doctoral theses; prehistory; proto-history



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1. Introduction or Historical Overview of Women Archaeologists in Northern Portugal

The contribution of research developed by Portuguese women archaeologists to the development of the discipline is yet to be researched. The problem has begun to be debated only in the second half of the 1990s [1]. The first article to be published on this topic appeared in 1996 [2], followed by a void of publications until the last decade, in which few articles constituting valid contributions towards the construction of this history have been published. Some of them are even from the year 2020. However, in general, these are quantitative studies based on the number of publications by female archaeologists [1] and on mentions and interviews in newspapers [3] on the direction of archaeological excavations or other types of research projects [1,4].

These analyses almost always require a significant amount of time for database scrutiny. However, they have not addressed the gaps concerning the fundamental knowledge of female contribution to archaeology's history and/or the progress of understanding the past.

With this paper, we intend to analyse the contribution of women archaeologists' doctoral theses, focussing, above all, on the advances each brought to the knowledge of the evolution of the occupation of the territory of Northern Portugal during pre- and proto-historic times.

Recent research shows that, in terms of gender issues in the archaeological profession, Northern Portugal has not yet achieved the parity that was consolidated in the early twentieth century in the rest of the country [5]. The same delay had already been identified in the study developed by Filipa Dimas and Mariana Diniz [1] concerning the presence of female archaeologists as authors of articles published in archaeological journals from the north of the country.

On the other hand, the Northern region of the country played a significant role in the teaching of Archaeology in Portugal, both at the technical level, through the Professional School of Archaeology of Freixo, or, mainly, at a higher level, through the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Porto, which played a pioneering role with the creation of the bachelor’s in History and the major in Archaeology (1990), and later the bachelor’s in Archaeology (1999). The same institution had, since 1989, a master’s degree in Archaeology [5]. Unfortunately, they no longer have a PhD in archaeology, maintaining only bachelor’s and master’s degrees.

The Archaeology Unit of the University of Minho has developed several studies in this territory related to the middle basin of the Cávado River and systematic research projects conducted mainly by Manuela Martins and Ana Bettencourt, among others, which gave rise to their doctoral theses.

The evaluation we are now proposing represents an essential contribution to the history of Portuguese archaeology. We have analysed all the finished and publicly defended PhD theses deposited in the institutional repositories of all universities, searching for entries of completed doctoral theses. A second step was the selection of all theses that fit the conceptual and geographical framework of this paper, from which those performed by women were identified.

Because they are older, some of these theses were inaccessible in the institutional repositories. However, it was possible to access them through, for example, publications. In only one case, a total lack of information prevented the analysis.

This analysis resulted in the collection of thirteen PhD theses developed by female archaeologists. Eleven were presented at Portuguese Universities (four at the University of Porto, three at the University of Minho, two at the University of Coimbra, one at the University of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro and another one at the School of Arts and Humanities of the University of Lisbon) and two others at Spanish universities (one at the University of Granada and the other at the University of Santiago de Compostela). Chronologically these studies comprehend research projects based on pre- and proto-history and fall within the selected geographical area—Northern Portugal. The data collected are presented in a table (Table 1) to help the reader’s comprehension.

Table 1. PhD Theses between pre- and proto-history of Northern Portugal.

Title	Author	Geographic Area	Chronology	Others
Late Prehistoric Settlements of the Chaves, Vila Pouca de Aguiar Region (Trás-os-Montes Occidental): bases for the knowledge of the IIIrd and second millennia BC in Northern Portugal	Susana de Oliveira Jorge	Chaves Vila Pouca de Aguiar (Trás-os-Montes Occidental)	3rd and 2nd millennia BC.	Thesis presented in 1986 at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Porto. Open access to the repository. Published in 3 books in 1986.
Late Prehistory of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro	Maria de Jesus Sanches	Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro	Late Prehistory	Thesis presented in 1995 at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Porto. Closed access to the repository. Published in 2 books in 1997.

Table 1. Cont.

Title	Author	Geographic Area	Chronology	Others
The Tumular and Megalithic Phenomenon in the Galaico-Portuguese Region of Minho	Goreti Sousa	Upper Minho/Baixo Miño cross-border region	Late Prehistory	Thesis presented in 2012 at the Santiago de Compostela University. Open access to the repository. Unpublished.
Space Production Modalities in the Context of a Monumentalized Hill: The Prehistoric Site of Castanheiro do Vento in Vila Nova de Foz Côa	Ana Margarida Aparício do Vale	Chestnut of the Wind (Horta do Douro, Vila Nova de Fôz Côa)	3rd and 2nd millennia BC.	Thesis presented in 2012 at the University of Porto (FLUP). Open access to the repository. Unpublished.
The proto-historical settlement and the romanisation of the upper-stroke basin of Cávado	Manuela Martins	Cávado Middle Course Basin, Braga District	Proto-History and Romanization	Thesis presented in 1987 at the University of Minho. It does not exist in the repository. Published in 4 books between 1986 and 1991.
Landscape and Man in the Cávado Basin during the II nd and I st Millennia BC.	Ana Bettencourt	Cávado Basin, Braga district	Bronze Age and Early Iron Age	Thesis presented in 1999 at the University of Minho. It does not exist in the repository. Published in 4 books between 2000 and 2001.
The schematic art of Northeastern Trás-os-Montes: contexts and languages	Sofia Catarina Soares de Figueiredo	Northeastern Trás-os-Montes	Late Prehistory	Thesis presented in 2014 at the University of Minho. Open access to the repository. Published in one book in 2017.
The Atlantic art of the Monte de S. Romão (Guimarães) in the context of the post-Palaeolithic rock art of the Ave Basin—Northwestern Portugal	Daniela Dolores Faria Cardoso	Ave Basin—Northwestern Portugal	Palaeolithic to Middle or Modern Age	Thesis presented in 2015 at the University of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro (UTAD). Open access to the repository. Unpublished.
Change and transformation. Chalcolithic, Early and Middle Bronze in Eastern Trás-os-Montes: Reflections from Ceramic Containers	Elsa Verónica Penas Luís	Eastern Trás-os-Montes	Chalcolithic; Early Bronze and Middle Ages	Thesis presented in 2016 at the School of Arts and Humanities of the University of Lisbon. Open access to the repository. Unpublished.
Contributions to the history of the valorisation of archaeological heritage in Portugal	Olga Maria Pinto de Matos	Portugal	-	Thesis presented in 2003 at the University of Coimbra. Closed access to the repository. Unpublished.

Table 1. Cont.

Title	Author	Geographic Area	Chronology	Others
The Proto-Historical Settlement and the Romanization of the Coura River Upper Basin: Study, Musealization and Dissemination	Maria de Fátima Matos da Silva	Coura River Superior Basin, district of Viana do Castelo	Proto-History and Romanization	Thesis presented in 2008 at the University of Granada. Open access to the repository. Partially published in 2 books between 2007 and 2015.
The Crasto de Palheiros in the Iron Age. Contribution to the implementation of a new methodology in the study of ceramics	Dulcineia Candida Bernardo Pinto	Crasto de Palheiros, Murça	Iron Age	Thesis presented in 2012 at the University of Coimbra. Open access to the repository. Unpublished.
The coastal settlement between Cávado and Lima: from its origins to the Arab invasions	Marta Sofia Alves de Miranda Marques	The coastline between Cávado and the Lima Rivers	Palaeolithic to Arab invasions	Thesis presented in 2013 at the University of Porto (FLUP). Access is closed in the repository and not published.

The first evidence was the non-existence of a doctoral thesis developed by a female archaeologist discussing the ancient prehistory of Northern Portugal, whether Lower, Middle or Upper Palaeolithic. It is also noted that, in recent years, most doctoral theses have addressed localised problems, including case studies and studies of archaeological materials.

Through bibliographical research and the author's experience and knowledge, which immensely helped in the several stages of this research, we wondered if any of the volumes were disseminated through publications. We noticed that only half (50%) accomplished it. Furthermore, even in the seven doctoral theses that have been published, some of the volumes presented are not published because they are detailed studies or offered results of analyses presented as annexes.

The first thesis, which was publicly defended by a female archaeologist regarding investigations carried out in the chronological and geographical frames of the present study, was presented in 1986, and the last was presented in 2016.

In parallel, although it was not a particular goal of this article, we developed other bibliographic research aiming to verify the evolution of the archaeologists included in our research in terms of research and publications. We found that some continue to develop research projects in archaeology or other areas, publishing several articles. However, most have not followed this course.

2. The Contribution of Women Archaeologists to the Knowledge of the Occupation of the Territory in Prehistory

The first doctoral thesis to focus on the prehistory of Northern Portugal dates back to the affirmation of university archaeology in the late 1970s. In 1938, the thesis of Georg Leisner, "Verbreitung und Typologie der Galizisch-nordportugiesischen Megalithgräber" was published. This thesis remains one of the best works on the architectural typology of the megalithic monuments of the region. Georg's contribution is intertwined with that of his wife, Vera Leisner. Together, they contributed invaluable to the progress of knowledge about the peninsular megalithic phenomenon. Vera Leiner was also the first woman associated with an archaeological excavation in Portugal in 1943 [1], but her training was done in Germany.

In 1958, Vera Leisner individually published a study on a Mamoa of Trás-os-Montes, which may be considered the first publication by a woman on this topic in Northern Portugal (probably also the first at a peninsular level).

Since then, there have been several female archaeologists who, following in the footsteps of Vera Leisner, have added their contributions to this topic. However, our research focuses on evaluating doctoral theses, which are moments when major background work is produced. Therefore, concerning prehistory, our analysis focuses on four doctoral theses carried out by women who devoted their scientific interests to the late prehistory of Northern Portugal: Susana Oliveira Jorge, Maria de Jesus Sanches, Ana Vale, and Goreti Sousa.

The first two are part of the generation that began the renewal of Portuguese archaeology at the end of the 20th century. A generation of scientifically well-prepared archaeologists promoted the institutionalisation of archaeology and its social recognition as a science in its own right [6].

This generation carried out the first truly scientific excavations in megalithic monuments of Northern Portugal, particularly those developed around 1978 in Serra da Aboboreira. This was one of the most ambitious projects carried out in the region. From it, the main lines of force of the methodological action subsequently applied in the other areas of Northern Portugal have come out. In conceptual terms, this generation, of which Susana Oliveira Jorge and Maria de Jesus Sanches are part, moves beyond the diffusionist model installed in the previous era and promotes a processual interpretative paradigm.

The first female archaeologist to defend her doctoral thesis on recent prehistory in Northern Portugal was Susana Oliveira Jorge [7], with an investigation into the settlements of recent prehistory of the Chaves region. This focus of interest later extended to the entire Alto Trás-os-Montes territory. Still, as we have seen before, her name appears connected to essential projects for studying an important megalithic necropolis in other Northern regions, such as Serra da Aboboreira and Castro Laboreiro.

Her thesis, "Late Prehistoric Settlements of the Chaves, Vila Pouca de Aguiar Region (Trás-os-Montes Occidental): Bases for the knowledge of the third and second millennia BC in Northern Portugal", explores the results of the first systematic excavations carried out in settlements of recent prehistory in Northern Portugal, seeking to establish an interpretation of the cultural evolution of the region between the third and second millennia BC.

Of the eight settlements identified in the region of Telões-Chaves, Susana Oliveira Jorge excavated four: Vinha da Soutilha, S. Lourenço, Pastoria and Castelo de Aguiar. The results of these works, particularly the analysis of ceramic material, frame a cultural process during the third and beginning of the second millennium of progressive implementation in the territory of domestic settlements of clear Mediterranean identity, which are expressed archaeologically through the development of sedentary settlements.

However, the study of the settlements of the Telões-Chaves region, in connection with other archaeological sites, such as burials mounds, allows Susana Oliveira Jorge to highlight some particular characteristics of this sedentarization process in Northern Portugal, explicitly a smaller emphasis on territorial issues in favour of a greater symbolic valorisation of domestic material culture.

The early development of a housing context that seems to manipulate arsenical copper since the first half of the third millennium BC (in a region on the periphery of large centres holding that mineral) leads her to the hypothesis of a probable interaction from an ancient stage, between different peninsular areas. On the other hand, it raises the problem of characterising these communities with access to rare and prestigious metallic objects without any visible transformation on their social structure, which remains fundamentally based on egalitarian principles. Another hypothesis Susana Oliveira Jorge advocates is that these innovations may have entered the territory through the interior of the Iberian Peninsula, particularly the Spanish Meseta and the Douro Valley. But, in conceptual terms, the most prominent contribution of her thesis was the defence of the hypothesis that the divergence observed in the archaeological data from megalithic graves and contemporary sedentary settlements, detected around the third millennium BC and the beginnings of the following, could be explained by a cultural duality that could be related to two distinct dissemination paths.

Her research shows that the first Neolithic communities are associated with the beginning of megalithic culture around the second half of the fourth millennium BC, which could be related to perishable and fragile settlements near the tombs. The first signals of sedentary life are associated with a change in the implantation strategies, evidencing not only different implantation options but also the symbolic importance of the settlement as the fixed pole that brings the whole community together.

Susana Oliveira Jorge [8] pointed out some innovative ideas regarding the correlation between monuments/societies, among which is the possibility that, at an early stage, the first tombs were raised by communities still outside the Neolithic productive system.

In turn, the thesis of Maria de Jesus Sanches—“Late Prehistory of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro” [9]—explores the potentialities of a spatial study in the plateau of Mirandela. This systematic study began in the 1980s with the discovery and the beginning of the excavation of the archaeological station of Buraco da Pala, which proved highly relevant for understanding the neolithization process of the entire Northern region. The excavation of the Buraco da Pala shelter takes place between 1987 and 1990. It represents an innovation concerning the previous thesis by including, as a result of this interest in spatial analysis, the collection and analysis of anthracological and carpological material.

The material recovered in these excavation campaigns allowed Maria de Jesus Sanches to attest to the occupation of the shelter over three millennia (between the end of the sixth and the second millennia BC). These results were the foundations for characterising the settlement in this region during late prehistory.

Thus, the first signs of agropastoral communities in the region would appear around the end of the sixth millennium and extend throughout the fifth millennium, which agrees with Susana Oliveira Jorge’s hypothesis of culturally differentiated groups of meridional origin and affiliation. Open-air settlements and under-rock shelters would represent this initial Neolithic occupation. It would have been these groups that, at the end of the fifth millennium, began the construction of burial mounds.

In other words, Maria de Jesus Sanches observes, in the case of the Mirandês plateau, the same cultural diversity that Susana Oliveira Jorge had noted. However, in 1995, the available C14 dates pushed back all the dates associated with these phenomena.

The archaeological documentation of the fourth millennium would thus be associated with these burial mounds. However, three settlements and two regional shelters have contemporary occupations (Barrocal Alto, Castelo de Aguiar and Vinha da Soutilha and Buraco da Pala and Fraga d’Aia shelters). These occupations raise the hypothesis that the inhabitants of these settlements used burial mounds. The main evidence backing this hypothesis is, according to Maria de Jesus Sanches, the coincidence of the decorated ceramic material of these settlements and burials, dating from the fourth millennium, which, in turn, raises another hypothesis, that of continuity of occupation.

As mentioned above, one of the main contributions of Maria de Jesus Sanches’ thesis was the analysis of the ecological potential of the surrounding territory, which allowed a theoretical approximation of its economic potential. This analysis, starting from an appreciation of a pedestrian territory of 2 h, revealed a great diversity, including from territories with high floristic renewal capacity to territories with lower capacity for renewal, which could only support small pastoral communities in which agriculture would be a secondary activity.

So, Maria de Jesus Sanches assumed these could be short occupation settlements, implying some economic complementarity between these and the more prosperous territories.

The two theses defended in the 20th century share an interpretative focus supported by data collected in excavations of domestic settlements. Both have a regional scale and a wide scope, trying to characterise the general terms of the late prehistoric occupation of this region.

A third thesis, defended in 2012 by Ana Vale, maintains some of these traces that indicate its inclusion in the same ‘school’ but also shows innovative aspects that al-

ready put it in a new generation of archaeologists, which we can already frame in a post-processual paradigm.

The thesis, “Space Production Modalities in the Context of a Monumentalized Hill: The Prehistoric Site of Castanheiro do Vento in Vila Nova de Foz Côa” [10], focuses on the results of the excavation campaigns of the prehistoric site of Castanheiro do Vento (carried out between 1998 and 2010). However, always starting from this data and its interpretation develops several reflections on archaeological theory and practice centred around the interpretations of “walled enclosures”.

In fact, contrary to previous theses, the results of these campaigns had already been widely disseminated by a series of publications signed by the team responsible for the archaeological works. They have even been interpreted in the context of another doctoral thesis [11].

Ana Vale presents a critical rereading of these results at the interpretative level, problematising issues such as movement, light perception, immersion, paths, audiences, chaining of practices, non-correspondence between the formal similarity and similarity of gestures, materials, and their stories, and so forth. It is an exercise in microanalysis of the site and its architecture, exploring, for example, the potential of deposition as spatial formations.

We must highlight another essential contribution of this thesis. The author introduces a critical perspective on archaeological interpretations for this cultural context and discusses gender prejudices perpetuated in certain explanatory narratives of the “walled enclosures”. The thesis also concludes that “the explanation of fortified settlements was (and is) constructed by male voices” [10], in which women are either invisible or referred to in vague association with passive activities.

Finally, the most recent doctoral thesis breaks with previous theses developed within the same institution (Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Porto) since it was defended at the University of Santiago de Compostela. This difference is evident both in the scope and the research area.

The PhD thesis of Goretí Sousa, “The Tumular and Megalithic Phenomenon in the Galaico-Portuguese Region of Minho” [12], takes on a cross-border research area to address the supposed cultural identity of the tumular and megalithic phenomenon of the Northwest Iberian Peninsula. This would be the first significant contribution of this thesis, which is divided into two very distinct parts. First, the author makes a historiographical analysis of the archaeological research on the megalithic phenomenon of the two regions (Northern Portugal and Galicia) in search of an explanation of a well-rooted tradition of investigating with “turned backs” to this phenomenon. At the same time, everyone agrees on its cultural identity.

Goretí Sousa stresses that different factors (administrative, contextual, and methodological) can explain the difficulty of carrying out an integrated study. Among the methodological aspects, she highlights the consolidation of two distinct methodological traditions in the last decades of the 20th century. In Galicia, there has been a more significant investment in archaeological prospection and territorial analysis projects, while in Portugal, somewhat similar to what we have seen from the previous theses, research interests are mainly focused on excavation projects, whether in burial sites or settlements. This raises the hypothesis that a different academic framework of undergraduate courses in archaeology can explain these different traditions.

In the second part of her thesis, Goretí Sousa proposes a joint study of a cross-border area that covers the district of Viana do Castelo to the south. The north encompasses the border areas of the Galician provinces of Pontevedra and Ourense—carrying out an inventory and a catalogue of 476 burial mounds, which she studies from three different perspectives of analysis: the relations between the tombs and the natural environment, the architectural characteristics of these monuments (namely in what concerns the relation between internal structures and tumulus) and finally their conservation status.

In the beginning, we stressed the main differences between this thesis and the previous ones; it also shows some similarities, sharing Maria de Jesus Sanches' interest in territorial and spatial issues and Ana Vale's post-processual attitude of questioning traditional interpretations. Even if the first focused on a microanalysis in a methodological attitude of immersion, Goreti Sousa, on the contrary, chose a macroscale of analysis. Nevertheless, they explore identical concepts such as movement, paths, audiences, chaining practices, etc. Finally, this doctoral thesis was the first developed by a woman focussing on the prehistory of Northern Portugal to take advantage of new technologies.

The two most recent doctoral theses were dedicated to studying rock art, essentially case studies in different geographical areas, one in Minho and the other in Trás-os-Montes. These include Sofia Figueiredo's study, "The schematic art of Northeastern Trás-os-Montes: contexts and languages", and Daniela Cardoso's "The Atlantic art of the Monte de S. Romão (Guimarães) in the context of the post-Palaeolithic rock art of the Ave Basin—Northwestern Portugal".

Sofia Figueiredo conducted fieldwork of prospecting and archaeological surveys, building a methodological model of an explanatory approach to schematic painting, seeking its various meanings and designs. This model was based on different theoretical currents and later translated into a statistical analysis grid that sought to trace the different correlations between the variables printed on the schematic painting, defining their constant characteristics and their irregularities.

Daniela Cardoso's dissertation contributes to increasing knowledge about post-Paleolithic rupestrian art outdoors in the Ave basin. She identified two significant stylistic cycles, the "Schematic" and Atlantic Arts, both from Prehistory; a third cycle with footprints and palettes from Final Bronze/Initial Iron; a fourth cycle with new circular motifs from Recent Iron/Romanization; and a fifth cycle with crosses and pentagrams from the Middle or Modern Ages. She also approached the hypothesis of the existence of a Paleolithic cycle.

3. The Contribution of Women Archaeologists to the Knowledge of the Occupation of the Territory in Proto-History

Our analysis of the protohistory of Northern Portugal is based on three doctoral theses, respectively, by Manuela Martins, Ana Bettencourt and Fátima Matos Silva. All of them essentially comprehend the chronological time attributed to the Bronze Age and Iron Age and, in the case of the latter two, the phenomenon of Romanization.

We will also slightly approach four other doctoral theses, focused on more specific themes, by Olga Pinto de Matos, Dulcineia Bernardo Pinto, Marta Sofia Alves de Miranda Marques and Elsa Verónica Penas Luís.

The first synthesis related to the Bronze Age in Portugal was proposed by Mendes Corrêa, who elaborated on the chronological systematisation of the metallic findings of the Portuguese territory. In turn, in 1946, Santa-Olalla introduced the concepts and chronologies related to the Mediterranean Bronze I (2000–1700 BC) and II (1500–1200 BC), and the Atlantic Bronze III (1200–900 BC) and IV (900–650 BC). This new periodisation marked archaeological research until the 1980s and even later, and the name "Atlantic Bronze" was used, for example, in the works of Susana Oliveira Jorge [13] and Ana Bettencourt [14].

In her doctoral thesis, "Landscape and Man in the Cávado Basin during the second and first millennia BC" [15], Ana Bettencourt studied the Bronze Age of the Cávado River basin, supporting her research in radiocarbon dating and paleoenvironmental data. Her studies were based on data acquired in the reanalysis of previous studies and small excavations carried out in the Cávado river basin, such as Alto da Cidade, Cabanas, Alto de S. Bento, Granjinhos and Monte de Vasconcelos, in Braga, S. João de Rei/Monte do Castro, in Póvoa de Lanhoso (published in 2000) and in the hillforts of S. Julião, Vila Verde, Santinha, in Amares and Sola, in Braga, published in monographic editions [16–19].

Their investigations allowed the tuning of chronologies related to the Bronze Age and the early stages of the Iron Age. Concerning the Bronze Age, they distinguish three phases: the Initial and the Middle Bronze (transition from the third and second millennium

BC to the last quarter of the second millennium BC); the Final Bronze Age (late second millennium BC to the sixth century BC); and the transition period between the Final Bronze Age and the Iron Age (sixth century BC to the beginning of the 4th century BC). In her most recent approaches to the Bronze Age of the *Minho* region [20], based on settlement patterns, funeral practices, and metallurgy, she refined the chronologies concerning the Initial, Medium, and Final Bronze.

In terms of habitat types distributed throughout the territory, chronologically attributed to the Final Bronze, Ana Bettencourt considers that there would be long-term fixed settlements situated in the valley areas and occupied until the Iron Age, along with settlements of short/medium duration, which would occupy hills, or peaks adjacent to agricultural land, and which would be abandoned in the Iron Age. They would have a kind of seasonal settlement—that part of the population would move from fixed villages to open villages. The stability of subsistence activities will provide a feeding and demographic balance and a real sedentary regime. The transition period from the Final Bronze Age to the Iron Age will maintain the same settlement standards associated with increased agricultural practices and exchanges with other communities.

Ana Bettencourt considered that the growth of supra-regional contacts and exchanges was due to the intensification of metallurgical activity. The ritual practices of deposition of metallic objects would reveal new ideological conceptions that were present during the Bronze Age. The binary alloys would have lasted in the Northwest, Central and Southwestpeninsular until the 10th–9th centuries BC. In the second quarter of the first millennium BC, ternary alloys would have also appeared in the Northwest [14].

She also considers the existence of “a growing agro-silvo-pastoral dynamic that, although at different paces, from region to region, will have focused the entire northwest of Portugal” [16] (pp. 44–45) and of the Iberian Peninsula. The same author also proves the inaccuracy concerning the weakening of supra-regional exchange. In addition to its maintenance, she defends its growth at present and later times, both in the Coura River basin, as in the Minho River basin, and throughout the coastal area of northwest Iberia, where several authors are registering more and more artefacts that are considered imports. This is the case of ceramics with stamped motifs, Punic ceramics, attics, glasses, and fibulas designated as being of Santa Luzia type and Hispanic annular, as well as objects and techniques of iron metallurgy and raw materials such as flint and lead.

Studies of the Northwest Peninsular’s Iron Age are intertwined with investigations of fortified settlements, usually called *castros*, *citânias*, or *cidades*.

In several authors of classical antiquity, in both Greek and Latin, we find references to the communities of the northwest peninsular.

On the *Cultura Castreja* historiography of the late 19th, the 20th, and the beginning of the 21st centuries, we have a vast Portuguese and Spanish bibliography; there is, however, no synthesis work. Of course, women also have no role in the evolution of knowledge of one of Iron Age’s most studied and better-known cultures in the Northwest of the Iberian Peninsula—the *Cultura Castreja*. Many authors in Portugal contributed to this knowledge: Martins Sarmiento, F. A. Pereira and Abel Viana, who devoted themselves, above all, to the study of Alto Minho hillforts, such as, in their follow-up, Mário Cardoso, Afonso do Paço and, in several hillforts from Trás-os-Montes, Joaquim dos Santos Júnior.

However, significant progress was made in studying the *Cultura Castreja* of the Iberian Northwest in the last twenty years of the 20th century.

It was only in the 1980s and later decades that different researchers began to understand the emergence of hillforts due to the development of bronze metallurgy, evidently framed in the geomorphological characteristics of the Iberian Northwest. This new theory gains strength with the first C14 dates that anticipate the first half of the first millennium BC and the chronology of some settlements such as Côto da Pena [21], S. Julião and Barbudo [22].

Manuela Martins, in her doctoral thesis [22], “The proto-historical Settlement and the Romanization of the Basin of the middle course of Cávado”, developed a line of research

with anthropological and economic character based on the excavations carried out in the fortified settlements of S. Julião [23] and Barbudo [24], both in Vila Verde and Lago [25], in Amares. The contributions of her research helped define the typologies of settlements and the chronology of the territory's occupation.

Concerning the final Bronze Age of Northern Portugal, the communities would have a socio-economic organisation focused on the supra-regional exchange of metal or other artefacts. They would be organised into hierarchical socio-political units, even if subjected to phenomena of economic interdependence.

In terms of settlement patterns, Manuela Martins pointed to the existence, between the final Bronze and the Romanization, of four types of villages distributed throughout the territory that were topographically implanted in many other types of settlement, with distinct geomorphological characteristics: peaks, hills of varying altitude, small low-lying hills and those she considers indeterminate that occupy locations near the valley, without walls. Distributed throughout the territory under analysis, there would be open villages, mainly dedicated to agricultural activity, and fortified villages (hillforts), typical of the Iron Age, which controlled the roads of circulation and metallurgical activities. These have developed from the first millennium BC due to endogenous factors, including social instability, control of mining holdings, contact routes, and possession of territories.

In historical-evolutionary terms, she is increasingly committed to explaining the emergence of fortified settlements at the beginning of the first millennium BC as a result of several geomorphological backgrounds in the context of agropastoral and metallurgical economic development and the widespread social complexification at this time.

The prestigious goods she describes do not seem to be only material objects but also, as from other times to the present, the possession of the land—a preponderant factor in the sense of the *monumentalization* of the villages, as an element of ostentation of power and control of territorial demarcation of visibility that was developed.

Although many authors have presented several chronologies and evolution options about the Iron Age, this is one of the problems that remain open since there is no consensus over the chronological evolution of the *Cultura Castreja* on the Northwest of the Iberian Peninsula.

Most Portuguese authors divide this culture into three or five chronological *stages*. Manuela Martins [22] indicates four stages, considering the transition between the sixth century/5th BC period that characterises the beginning of the *Cultura Castreja*. However, the chronology of Armando C. Silva [21] suggests three periods for the Iron Age, each of which is subdivided into two phases, which remain the most used.

If the chronological-cultural stages suggest different interpretations from the various authors, the theoretical model of the settlement—particularly regarding the economic and social level—also differs. Manuela Martins [22,26] considers that the relative poverty of the early Iron Age archaeological record stems from a recession—and even a setback—concerning the Final Bronze societies relating to bronze metallurgy, agriculture, and supra-regional exchange.

The doctoral thesis of Fátima Matos Silva, presented at the University of Granada in 2008, entitled “The Proto-Historical Settlement and the Romanization of the Coura River Upper Basin: Study, Musealization and Dissemination” [27], is the result of extensive work of inventory, study, valorisation/enhancement and dissemination, carried out over almost two decades. It was published partially in two books: one referring to the archaeological inventory of the upper basin of the Coura River [28] and its study and analysis, and the other a compilation of the general results of prospecting and excavation interventions [29].

The upper valley of the Coura River was the geographical area where she centred her research. It was a place of choice for pre- and proto-history study, given the absence of previous studies, the abundance of archaeological sites, and the very satisfactory state of conservation they presented. Also, it is genuinely a Galician-Portuguese problem since the settlement of the territory and the process of appropriation of the environment

that has taken place in the Iberian Northwest since recent prehistory created numerous concomitances between both banks of the Minho River.

Chronologically marked between the transition phases of Bronze Age/Iron Age and Iron Age and subsequent Romanization, the research project that supported the doctoral thesis would eventually pay particular attention to the study of the Iron Age, not only because of the number of settlements inventoried, but also of their dispersion in the territory, of the typological diversity of the villages, of the forms of construction evidenced, of the organisation of their internal spaces, among many other unique elements and of relevant importance for a more sustained knowledge of the occupation of the Coura valley and, more comprehensively, of the Iron Age of the Northwest Iberia.

The author also elaborated a regional archaeological inventory (like most of the theses analysed), making known numerous archaeological stations that revealed a landscape laboriously constructed since the first agropastoral societies, in Neolithic contexts, to the expressive forms of occupation and organisation of the territory with a systematic and intensive exploration of the soil that, since antiquity, have decisively shaped its demographic profile and the spectrum of a large-scale economic social system, surviving until contemporaneity.

The archaeological excavations focused on the hillforts of Cossourado, Romarigães, and Cristelo allowed, in the light of a qualified theory and practice of prospecting and excavation, to know the strategy of proto-historical occupation. According to a methodology proper to spatial archaeology, it was possible to make a breakthrough in the functioning of the Castro settlement network as a matrix substrate of the village and regional traditions.

Fátima Matos Silva counted, for the first time, a diversity of laboratory services within the scope of Nature Sciences and Exact Sciences. It is worth emphasising that the inter- and transdisciplinary processing of her detailed analyses in the study of materials were supportive of technological, sociological, and symbolic propositions, which mainly refer to the evolution of the defensive system and the uniqueness of domestic spaces and their ergological sets (lytics, ceramic, and metallic), sequenced over a millennium, in an indigenous environment and of acculturation to the Roman world.

The study resulting from the surveys of the archaeological chart allowed the articulation of a scheme of evolution of the occupation of the territory between the Paleolithic Age and Romanization. The partial excavation of the three fortified villages of the Iron Age provided more detailed knowledge of the real experience of their communities, tracing an evolutionary model of what was the occupation of this area with a chronology organised in three evolutionary stages based on radiocarbon dates and typologies of ceramic containers, motifs and decorative techniques used that obey to the same tripartite scheme.

The research work in this valley allowed the archaeologist to develop the first structured and integrated archaeological project in Portugal. Thus, the fortified village of Cossourado was subject to the implementation of a vast excavation, study, restoration, consolidation, reconstruction works, and actions of living history. In a single work, she undertook all phases of the interpretive chain of heritage: location, cataloguing, excavation, research, conservation, valorisation, dissemination, and dynamization. She combined modern spatial archaeology with public archaeology and community archaeology. This whole process culminated in classifying the unique hillfort of Cossourado as a National Monument on 7 June 2021.

It is a work of a time that has disappeared forever, in which doctoral theses could be combined with a life project and last for decades.

Cuts to public research and new ways of training specialists and generating knowledge make it necessary to frame these in projects of three or four years of dedication. Thus, we are gaining productivity and efficiency but losing the soul, identity, sense of place, and union with what we do, which are the bonds that the author's work shows [29].

Olga Maria Pinto de Matos's doctoral thesis, entitled "Subsidies for the History of the Valorisation of Archaeological Heritage in Portugal" [30], strays from the scheme we have been following in that it is not dedicated to the knowledge and study of archaeological

realities of Northern Portugal, but rather to its valorisation process, even if not only to projects developed in this geographical area. It analyses all valorisation projects of archaeological sites carried out until the year 2000.

She evaluates the prospects of the valorisation of heritage, divided by chronological periods, including its evolution from antiquity to the 20th century; analyses the theories that involved the problem of the valorisation of archaeological heritage, the criteria that were the basis of the decision of its realisation and evaluated critically sixty Portuguese archaeological sites. This assessment considered the strengths and weaknesses, the real situation of the respective recovery projects, and the measures to be taken to improve the conditions of visitation and comprehension.

It also proposes valorising the rock engraving complex of Bouça do Colado in Ponte da Barca. She concludes by referring to the small amount of attention paid to the valorisation projects of archaeological stations, but that the panorama was encouraging given the evidence of progress.

Dulcineia Cândida Bernardo Pinto's doctoral thesis, "Crasto de Palheiros in the Iron Age. Contribution of the application of a new methodology in the study of ceramics" [31], reported to the study of the ceramic sets from occupations in Crasto de Palheiros (Murça, Northern Portugal) during the Bronze Age and the Iron Age, i.e., between the 10th/9th centuries BC and the second century BC. A ceramic set comprising about 35,000 fragments from two hundred stratigraphic layers distributed over six housing areas was studied.

In this study, the author applied a new methodology that focused on understanding the formation of the site as an "archaeological deposit", carried out through the characterisation of the complexes/archaeological layers, in conjunction with the full description of the ceramic sets of each and the complexes presented in the various housing areas.

Its main objective was to understand the dynamics between the archaeological site and the communities that built it, thus allowing the understanding of the "modes of habitability" created in this territory by the communities of the Iron Age and some of their collective behaviours.

This research also allowed us to observe the continuity in the traditions of manufacturing from prehistory (Chalcolithic and final Bronze Age) to the end of the Iron Age and to conclude that the communities of the Iron Age are the culmination of a way of life developed regionally throughout late Prehistory, a way of life that includes social and genealogical conceptions, and which will only have changed with the Roman presence.

Access was restricted to Marta Sofia Alves de Miranda Marques's doctoral thesis, presented in 2013, entitled "Coastal Settlement between Cávado and Lima: From the Origins to the Arab Invasions [32]", and we have not been able to contact her to request the document. Since we do not know of any publication by this author, we cannot evaluate its contribution to the knowledge of the evolution of the settlements under analysis in the geographical area.

The latest PhD thesis from Elsa Verónica Penas Luís, from 2016, is also based on the study of ceramics and the geographical area of Trás-os-Montes, entitled, "*Change and transformation. Chalcolithic, Early and Middle Bronze in Eastern Trás-os-Montes: Reflections from Ceramic Containers*". The main objective was to analyse the transformations between the Chalcolithic and Early and Middle Bronze communities in Eastern Trás-os-Montes that materialised in the ceramic containers. In this sense, its theoretical premise is that the maintenance and transformation of social structures affect the elaboration of the material culture that represents them. She also reviewed the known archaeological sites in this territory, summarising the archaeological work and their informative potential.

4. Conclusions and Prospects

The embryonic stage of archaeological research in Portugal is located between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, and it consists of collecting descriptive reports and fieldwork without resorting to scientific methodologies [29].

From the 1980s onwards, the first archaeological works based on interpretive models of New Archaeology and Processual Archaeology were developed, with works, for example, by Maria de Jesus Sanches or Manuela Martins.

They were based on new theoretical and interdisciplinary conceptualisations. Culture began to be studied as a system constantly adapting to the environment. New analysis methodologies were developed, such as landscape archaeology, open area excavations with a detailed contextualisation of the archaeological findings, the three-dimensional record concerning the square implanted in the terrain and with the topographic record, the screening of sediments, and the collection of samples for various types of analysis. These studies were framed in local, regional, and even cross-border research projects.

Subsequently, the archaeological remains were studied using post-processualism as a basis for designing explanatory models. This approach did not assume universal, homogeneous, and deterministic explanations but instead gave way to heterogeneous regionalisms inserted in the general context.

The doctoral theses of the female archaeologists studied here contributed profoundly to this evolution, tracing the history of Portuguese archaeology and much of the North of the Iberian Peninsula—and, naturally, to the knowledge of the human past of this vast region.

Several research projects regarding late prehistory have been developed for decades in Northern Portugal. The first ones, from the late 19th century to the 1970s, centred on the megalithic funerary phenomenon and, from the 1980s onward, with a particular interest in walled enclosures, and more recently, almost exclusively in the latter. Therefore, as detailed above, we have a first period comprehending the Middle and Late Neolithic, where the funerary practices surrounded themselves with great monumentality, and a second period on the Chalcolithic where that interest in monumentality seems to shift from burial mounds to walled enclosures. Of particular interest, knowledge related to the occupation of the territory relies on periods where the two archaeological records seem to overlap.

Moreover, in terms of analysis of the geographic area in question and concerning the period between the third and second millennia BC, Ana Bettencourt concludes in a recent publication: “The Northwest Iberian Peninsula is, therefore, a region of profound heterogeneities and cultural asymmetries, with sub-areas guided by abrupt changes and others by changes in continuities, during the second half of the third millennium BC, which results from several different factors of change and different response phenomena to common factors, and where, at least, climatic change represents one major event that is associated with more or less specific events, providing a different sequence of cultural transformations” [33] (p. 44).

Some of the female archaeologists we studied continued to contribute to the evolution of what we know of the occupation of the territory of Northern Portugal in prehistory.

Susana Oliveira Jorge is a retired full professor of archaeology at the University of Porto (Portugal), where she taught from 1975 to 2013. Now, she is a researcher at CEAACP—University of Coimbra (Portugal). Her research, focusing on the late Prehistory of the Iberian Peninsula, has explored Northern Portugal’s archaeological sites by integrating various theoretical orientations. Now, she uses this plurality to promote and discuss different perspectives on prehistory. She continues to publish several articles under the name Susana Soares Lopes, mainly relating to the settlement of the third and second millenniums BC.

Maria de Jesus Sanches continues to develop her activity at FLUP, where she is a Department of Heritage Sciences and Techniques professor. Her more recent research interests are still in prehistoric archaeology. However, her publications cover various subjects, from rock art to under-rock shelters, walled enclosures, burial mounds, etc. She recently developed an interest in rescue archaeology concerning multidisciplinary landscape studies.

Ana Vale is a researcher at the Transdisciplinary Research Centre «Culture, Space and Memory» (CITCEM) at FLUP. Her research interests are still late prehistoric architecture

and other ways of spatial organisation, but she has also shown interest in Archaeological Theory, Archaeology, and Gender. Currently, she is developing a post-doctoral research project titled “Detail in Architecture: Design, housing, and “ways of using” space”.

Goreti Sousa is a professor at Portucalense University, teaching architectural history. She is also a member of the Architecture, Urbanism, and Design Research Centre (CIAUD-UPT). Throughout her academic career, she has participated in projects concerning heritage and, more recently, the importance of new technologies in the study, dissemination, and valorisation of World Heritage Sites. She is also developing research on gender and architecture.

Sofia Figueiredo has published several articles on rock art, her doctoral thesis [34], and heritage management, working as a researcher at the University of Minho and later at the New University of Lisbon Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities.

Daniela Cardoso has published several articles and worked in several places, developing some research activity in research centres of the Universities of Coimbra and Minho. Regarding Elsa Penas Luís, there are no known publications or professional careers.

Taking stock of the studies of proto-history, we can mention the investigations carried out by female archaeologists. However, their interests have diversified in recent years and were of extraordinary importance for the knowledge of the population at this time and in this geographical area. There were, of course, significant contributions from archaeologists that complemented each other, and without the work of these female archaeologists, there would be many more gaps in the knowledge of the past.

Their contributions allow us to state that during the last millennium BC, the Northwest of the Iberian Peninsula (a region in the extreme Northwest of Europe, including Northern Portugal and Galicia, in Spain) had its unit. This cultural identity of the Northwest of the Iberic Peninsula during the Iron Age is manifested in the similarity of cultural attributes, whether we are talking about material culture (metallurgy, jewellery, ceramics), the organisation of space, the way to establish villages in the territory, or, even, of the social organisation. The proof of this is that, at the time of the Roman conquest, Greek-Latin historians and geographers recorded the identity of the Galician communities in the last years of the millennium. Still, the same situation was not verified concerning other neighbouring communities. In other words, seen from the outside, the peoples of the Northwest of the Iberian Peninsula formed a unity, although we do not know if they were aware of this identity.

However, to speak of unity does not presume to admit uniformity. By stating that there is cultural unity in the Northwest concerning other territories, it is important to nuance this statement since there is also internal diversity. A marked regional fragmentation is witnessed by everyday objects (ceramics, metal objects) and specific economic and social indicators (villages, distribution of prestigious goods). On the other hand, such fragmentation is common both in Galicia, in Northern Spain, and Northern Portugal, without it being possible to differentiate between these two areas since there are regional units, or sub-units, that affect both sides of the current political/administrative border.

In short, the northwestern region of the Iberian Peninsula constituted a mosaic of peoples who occupied more or less extensive areas with their idiosyncrasy during the last millennium BC, which manifests itself in segments of material culture and other aspects, being, however, inserted as a whole in a cultural reality that brings together social models and behaviours.

Regarding the female archaeologists who contributed to the knowledge of these times, Ana Bettencourt continues to develop her teaching activity in the world of archaeology as a full professor at the University of Minho, diversifying her interests into different areas, including Iberian Peninsula Prehistoric and Protohistoric Archaeology, settlement and paleoenvironmental, funerary context and practices, rock art, metallurgy and metal hoards, archaeology, and tourism.

Maria Manuela dos Reis Martins is a full professor at the University of Minho and vice-dean for Culture and Society. Her main scientific area of interest is archaeology, and

she has worked on landscape and settlement archaeology and urban archaeology. Within the scope of Urban Archaeology, she has been dedicated, since 1988, to the study and rescue of the Roman city of *Bracara Augusta*, which has been her chosen area of research after her PhD. She has developed several research projects on enhancing archaeological heritage and applying new technologies to the study, manage and disseminate archaeology results.

Fátima Matos Silva currently continues to develop her teaching and research activity at the Portucalense University in Porto, and she is also a member of one of the School Research Centres (REMIT—Research on Economics, Management and Information Technologies) and CITCEM (FLUP, Porto University). Now, she is diversifying her research areas, dedicating less to archaeological investigation. She has directed and collaborated on research projects in archaeology and cultural heritage, as well as its dissemination and enhancement, giving special attention to universal accessibility in several areas of archaeology, cultural heritage, and tourism.

Over the last few years, archaeological research has suffered a significant slowdown. As far as we know, no research project with a territorial base of any significance is underway, but rather, detailed studies. This fact will eventually result from an incorrect cultural and budgetary policy in which funding for research projects is very low or null.

After the analysis of the PhD theses published and unpublished, as well as parallel research for other publications from the female archaeologists under study, we realise that female archaeologists who are not associated with research centres under the purview of higher education institutions find it difficult to publish the results of their investigations. Their studies remain unknown, without disseminating results like the respective archaeologists who produce them. Even if they are developing their studies in higher education or are associated with a research centre, the same difficulties can occur for various reasons, which are often personal rather than institutional.

In Portugal, research archaeology has given way to emergency excavations, impact studies, and management archaeology, which, although necessary, have hindered the evolution of investigations, research projects, and systematic excavations. This uninspiring picture is further aggravated by the decrease in publications or, in the case of management archaeology interventions, due to their absence, resulting in a lack of knowledge on the part of researchers of what is happening in terms of discoveries. The continuity of purely scientific research is, without a doubt, of great importance for the knowledge of the past. However, it will be necessary to remember the projects used to valorise, disseminate, and dynamise archaeological sites. Without these initiatives and the commitment of archaeologists, institutions, and other bodies—namely the Municipal Councils—the purpose of archaeological investigations will undoubtedly have a minimal scope.

Archaeology is a reconstruction of the past intended to be experienced by as many citizens as possible. If it does not continue, it may become an ethereal science that generates disheartenment. Thus, it is essential to continue the path trodden so far with tenacity and determination and, if necessary, trace new paths that will foster responsible and dynamic heritage awareness.

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