

The impact of the Évora Archaeological Survey (EAS) project in Portuguese archaeology

Virgílio Hipólito Correia

When the project led by Colin Burgess and David Coombs was first proposed to Portuguese authorities, in 1985 (the first campaign took place in 1986), it came at a time of renewed and intensified Anglo-Portuguese cultural and diplomatic relations in the concurrent contexts of the seven-hundredth centenary of the diplomatic treaties establishing the Ancient Alliance and the final stages of Portugal joining the European Economic Community. In fact, Anne, the Princess Royal visited Portugal in 1979, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth made a state visit to the country in 1985, followed by the Prince and Princess of Wales, Charles and Diana, in 1987. The Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher visited in 1984. From Portugal, the President of the Republic visited the United Kingdom in 1978 and Prime Ministers visited in 1980 and 1986.

The context was not lost on the project proposal, and indeed the integration into Europe and the consequent development, a perspective that Portugal both half-sought and half-feared (especially from the archaeological site conservation point-of-view), was one of the main points argued on the project's behalf.

The Portuguese authorities, which were then young themselves (the national institute responsible for cultural heritage and its regional service for archaeology had been established in 1980/1981) welcomed it, amongst other reasons, for the very novelty of the proposal: a project aimed at surveying, not at digging any specific site. This was important because there was a major project in the planning stage, the dam at Alqueva – which was to eventually create the largest artificial lake in Europe – and any contribution, on the methodology of fieldwork in particular, was deemed relevant.

Portugal however was accustomed to receiving foreign teams working in archaeology, and the results of those experiences were generally positive. Germans, following the pioneering work of Vera and Georg Leisner (Leisner & Leisner, 1956), had worked at various sites (the German Archaeological Institute had a delegation in Lisbon), and then concentrated on Zambujal (Sangmeister & Schubart, 1972). The French had worked in Conimbriga and were then working in S. Cucufate (Alarcão et al., 1990). Other British teams had worked in Vila Nova de São Pedro (H. N. Savory, 1970) and, briefly, at Segovia (John Evans). Under the auspices of Caetano de Mello Beirão (then the director of the regional service) an American team had been invited to work at Mirobriga (Biers, 1988).

The project proposed work in an area where there were major sites known, like the cromlech of Almendres (Pina, 1976), the chamber tomb of Zambujeiro (the largest in Portugal, Gonçalves 1975), the cave of Escoural (then the only attested instance of Paleolithic art in the country, Santos, 1964) and the prehistoric sites of Castelo do Giraldo (Paço & Ventura, 1961) and Corôa do Frade (Arnaud, 1979). Scientific publications to modern standards on these sites, though, were near to non-existent.

Projects were being developed or prepared: in Almendres (by Mário Varela Gomes, 2011), Escoural (with the collaboration of a Belgian team. Araújo & Lejeune, 1995) and Vale de Rodrigo (by the German team of Philine Kalb and Martin Höck, 1995, 1997).

The Portuguese counterparts of the project, apart from Isabel Lisboa (then studying at Cambridge and the person who made the first contacts with Portuguese authorities in 1985) were, first and foremost Jorge Oliveira, who recently had become professor of archaeology at the University of Évora; and also the present author, appointed by the regional service of archaeology. Manuel Calado, later to become a professor at the University of Lisbon, joined as a volunteer.

This was the context in which the project started, explicitly aiming in a first phase at applying locally the method of exploratory survey devised by Roger Mercer (1980) in Scotland; and then in a later phase to focus on specific sites for planning and selective excavation.

The first phase of the project (Burgess, 1990) developed between 1986 and 1989. This included some excavations on sites that were proven to be of pre-modern agricultural nature, a conclusion that was equally enlightening to Northern-English and Portuguese archaeologists alike and the survey of chamber tombs which finished in 1990, (Lynch, 1992; see also this volume). Also in 1990 excavations at the Chalcolithic Enclosure of Monte do Casão and the Late Bronze Age Hillfort of Alto do Castelinho da Serra began, and these yielded more far-reaching findings.

In retrospect, what was the impact of this project and its results?

From the heritage management point of view, the EAS project played a relevant role in the knowledge of the archaeological sites in Évora's municipality (Calado et al., 2008, 49). This impact was significantly amplified by the organization and offer to the public of touristic circuits in the area, largely based on the surveys carried out within the project's framework by Frances Lynch (Silva et al., 1992; Sarantopoulos, 1997).

Perhaps it was by the dissemination of a methodological approach, through the works of those involved, that the project's impact resonated the most. Jorge Oliveira (1997) studied extensively the megalithic landscape of the area of the river Sever (a tributary of the Tejo in north-east Alentejo) and similar methodologies were applied in a project in the area of Crato by Rui Parreira (1996), with the collaboration of this writer in tomb-plan drawing. And the survey approach as delineated in Scotland by R. Mercer and applied around Évora by C. Burgess has, still today, its importance in some areas in Portugal, like in Algarve (Moran 2001, 2014), both on the scientific and the heritage management fronts (like at Aljezur and areas of the Lagos municipality; E. Moran pers. comm.).

But the contribution of Manuel Calado is of outstanding importance. First, there were the surveys motivated by the construction of the A6 motorway (Calado *et al.* 2004), partially covering the area that had been surveyed by the EAS, which were greatly enhanced by the privileged knowledge M. Calado had gained of the terrain as an EAS volunteer (these were not without controversy with the heritage management authorities, who would have settled for less). That researcher made extensive survey projects in the south of Portugal (Calado et al., 1999; Calado, 2000, 2006), most relevantly in the area of the Serra de Ossa, east of Évora, (Calado, 2001) and eventually was responsible for an entire section of the project on the Iron Age in the Alqueva dam

catchment area (with controversies with authorities mounting; Raposo 2001, 87; Calado 2002; Mataloto 2004, 21-25).

Regarding excavations, the geophysical surveys and excavations that Anthony Harding and Melanie Pomeroy directed for the project at Monte do Casão (and the identification of a similar site at Valeira) were unfortunately left unpublished (but see elsewhere in this volume) and could not contribute, as they should have, to the remarkable development of the knowledge of prehistoric enclosures that some years later happened in the Southwest of the Iberian Peninsula (Valera 2014).

No such thing happened with the excavations at Alto do Castelinho da Serra and the archaeology of the Iron Age in the EAS area. The remarkably rich stratigraphy (Gibson, 1992), although only published in summary (Gibson *et al.*, 1998) is a land mark for studies in the area and period concerned (but see note below on finds). The survey results (Correia 1995; Correia & Burgess, 2004) remain relevant to discussions going on in the archaeology of the entire region.

Outside its core area, the project looked at significant sites in the broader region and from this activity emanated one major find the EAS can claim as its own: the first definite identification of a vitrified hillfort in the Iberian Peninsula (Burgess *et al.*, 1999). Today an established, even if under-researched, fact, (Jiménez, 2012), the identification of the long vitrified rampart at Castelos de Monte Novo (due to Colin Burgess and Keith Blood on a site first visited by the present writer) was surprising, revolutionary even, and received not without a fair portion of scepticism by the scientific community.

However, it must be said that the assessment of the impact of a project will always be elusive, especially if attempted by those involved in it, and it really must be carried out at various different intervals in time.

For instance, the survey of Roman sites and the analysis Steven Willis (1990) made on them could not, when it was published, be correctly understood. It took a decade for ethno-archaeology (Pinto, 1997), first, and the study of finds elsewhere over another 20 years (Correia *et al.*, 2015a; and 2015b, 234-235), to arrive at the true understanding of the brick-and-*dolia* sherds, and the small sites from which they came, as part of a revenue agriculture landscape based on wine. At the time of the survey this could be suspected (Correia, 1993), but not demonstrated in the Roman archaeology of the region.

A personal comment with the verses of W. Wordsworth:

Bliss it was in that dawn to be alive/But to be young was very heaven.

FINDS

A note on the finds: unfortunately, the finds from the project, excavations included, were subject to the haphazard destiny most Portuguese archaeological materials suffer. Having been destined for a Regional Museum of Archaeology (it also related to the Alqueva project) that was eventually ditched, they are now in the custody of the municipality of Reguengos de Monsaraz. The survey finds of the years 1986-1988 can no longer be located in Évora (P. Sarantopoulos, pers. comm.). Work reports have been

divided between Évora and Lisbon (the archives of the Direção Regional da Cultura do Alentejo and the Direção Geral do Património Cultural, respectively).

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