

Settlement in the north-west Iberian peninsula in the 3rd and 2nd millennia BC

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From the Chalcolithic to the start of the Middle Bronze Age important changes took place in this region with increasing social division and complexity, transformations in pottery production, new artefacts and objects testifying to a social hierarchy and complex exchange systems. These changes are wide-ranging and can also be seen in the settlement record, the use of natural resources, the sepulchro-ritual record and even palaeo-environmentally. In this study we will focus on how these changes occurred, exploring the differences between the cultures of a region that includes Asturias, Galicia, and northern Portugal as far south as the northern bank of the River Duero over a period of nearly 1500 years. Our knowledge is variable since the available information is fragmented, partial, widely dispersed, and little published. Nevertheless, this region can no longer be regarded as marginal, as we now have more than 200 sites, although the record for Bell Beakers is unevenly distributed (Table 2.1, Fig. 2.1a–c).

The current status

Bell Beaker pottery has long been seen as a significant material element, considered to have appeared around 2800/2600 cal BC (Prieto

2011a; Sanches *et al.* 2017) while the date of its disappearance varies more widely from region to region.

In the north of Portugal, Bell Beaker sites are only considered such if they actually produced Beaker pottery. The Bell Beaker culture is considered to be a continuation of the previous tradition, dating from the latter stage of the Chalcolithic, clearly separated from contemporary non-Bell Beaker producing sites that date to the Bronze Age, from 2300–2200 BC onwards (Bettencourt 2011). The pottery studies are typological, something that is a limiting factor when attempting to compare pottery that was contemporary with the Bell Beaker style. Recent summaries have placed more emphasis on providing an inventory of Bell Beaker sites (Bettencourt 2011; Sanches *et al.* 2017) and Bettencourt highlights projects that focus on the Bronze Age in the coastal region, compared to a growing number of projects concentrating on Chalcolithic sites in the interior.

In Galicia, Bell Beaker studies currently focus on the study of the *chaîne opératoire*, in which typology is only a complementary element. The pottery is considered as simply one of many elements of a more complex assemblage and which was deposited selectively

Table 2.1: List of known contexts in the NW Iberian Peninsula and types of pottery that have been found in each of them, by periods

		Pottery types	Settlements	Fortified sites	Rural sites	Caves/ Shelter	Barrrows	Pits	Cists	Production places
Late Neolithic	Early & Middle	Undecorated pot	G P	P	G P	–	–	–	–	–
	Chalcolithic	Penha type	G P	P	–	P	G P	–	–	–
		Bell Beaker imitation	G	P	–	P	G	–	–	–
Early & Middle Bronze Age	Late Chalcolithic	International Bell Beaker	G	P	G	–	G P	–	–	A
		Geometric Bell Beaker	G	P	G P	–	G P	–	–	–
		Incised Bell Beaker	G	P	–	–	–	–	–	–
		Regional Bell Beaker	G	–	G	–	–	–	–	–
		Palmela/Ciempozuelos Bell Beaker	–	P	P	–	P	–	–	–
		Brittany style Bell Beaker	G P	–	G	–	G P	–	–	–
		Epicampaniforme*	G	–	–	–	–	–	P	–
Galicia	Portugal Asturias	Undecorated pot	G	–	G	–	–	G P	G P	–
		Decorated non-Bell Beaker	–	–	G	–	–	–	–	–

* = Later Bell Beaker with grooved decoration, G: Galicia; P: Portugal, A: Asturias

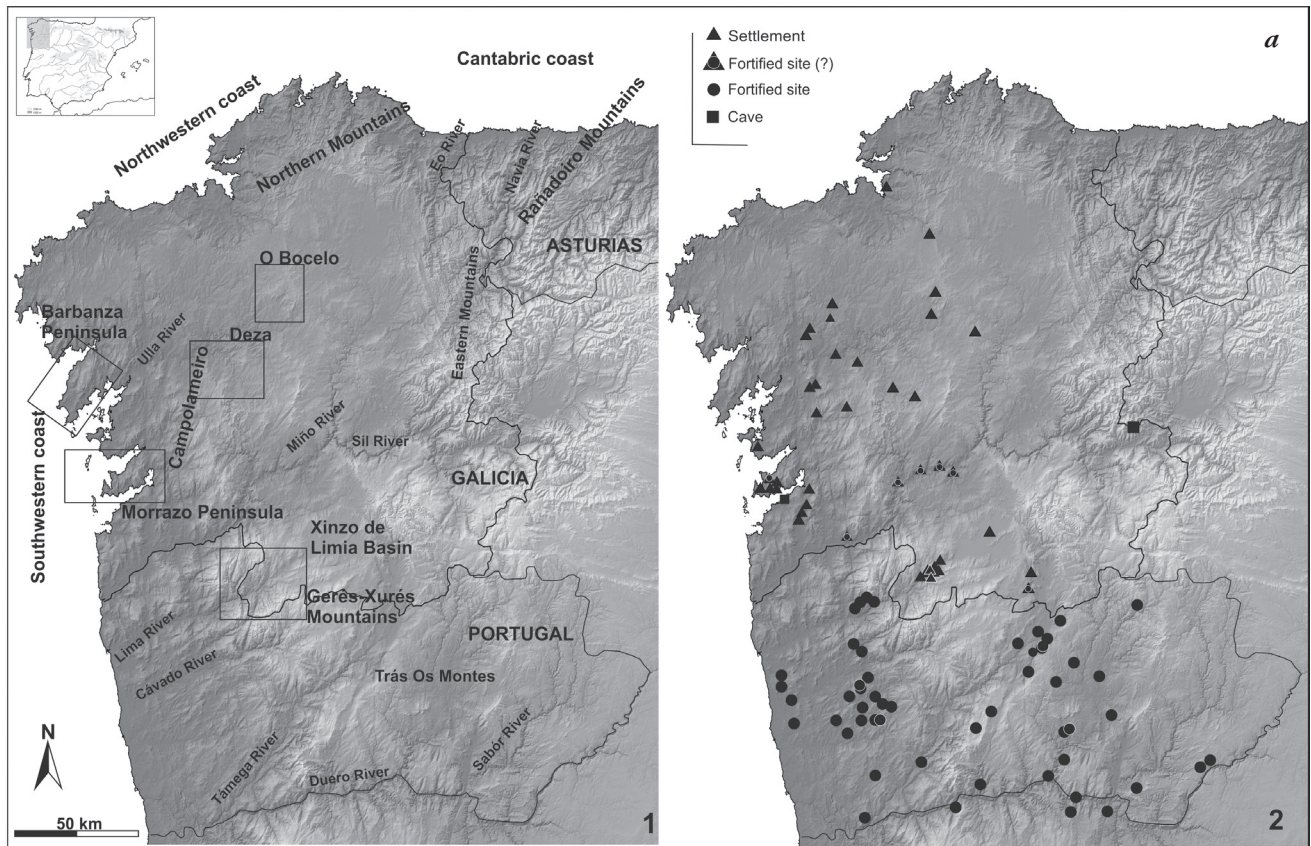
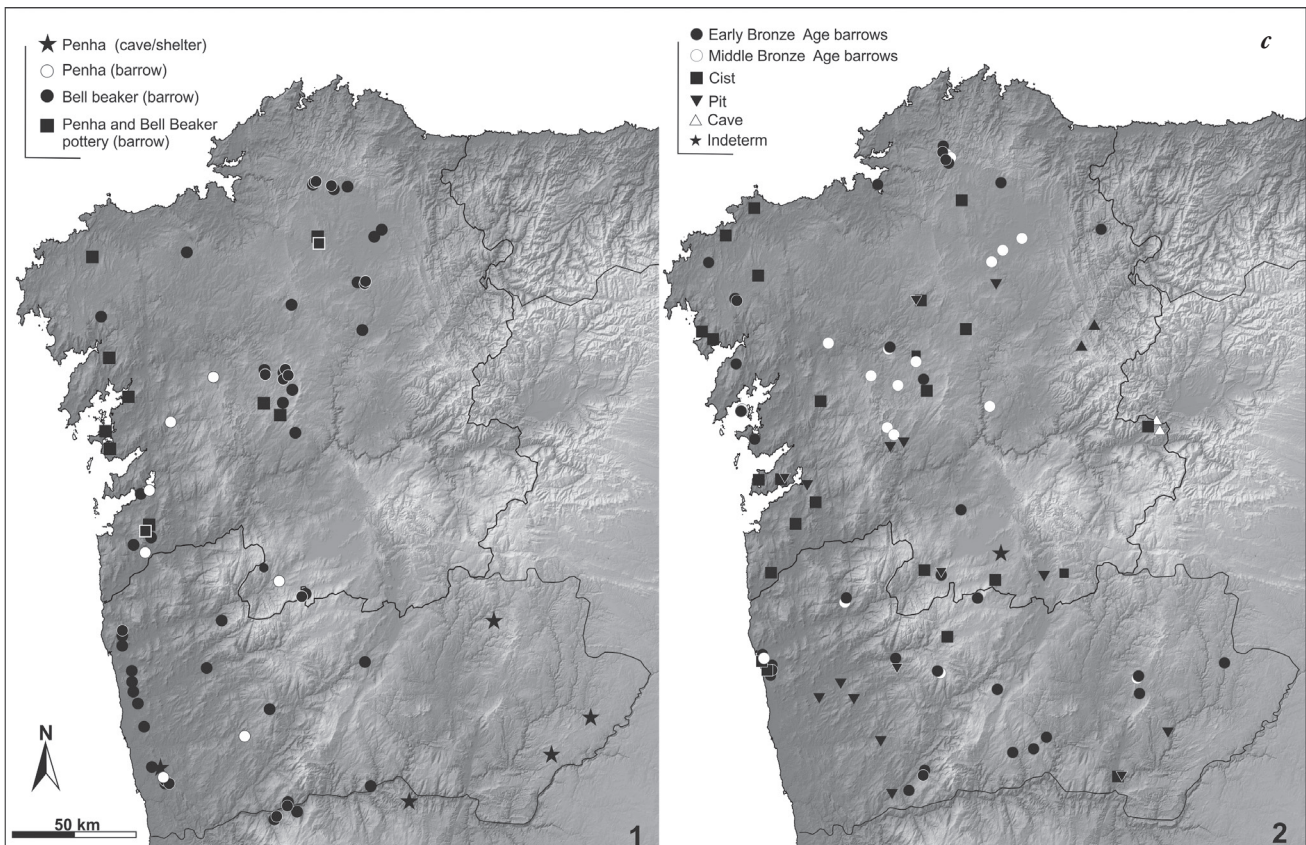
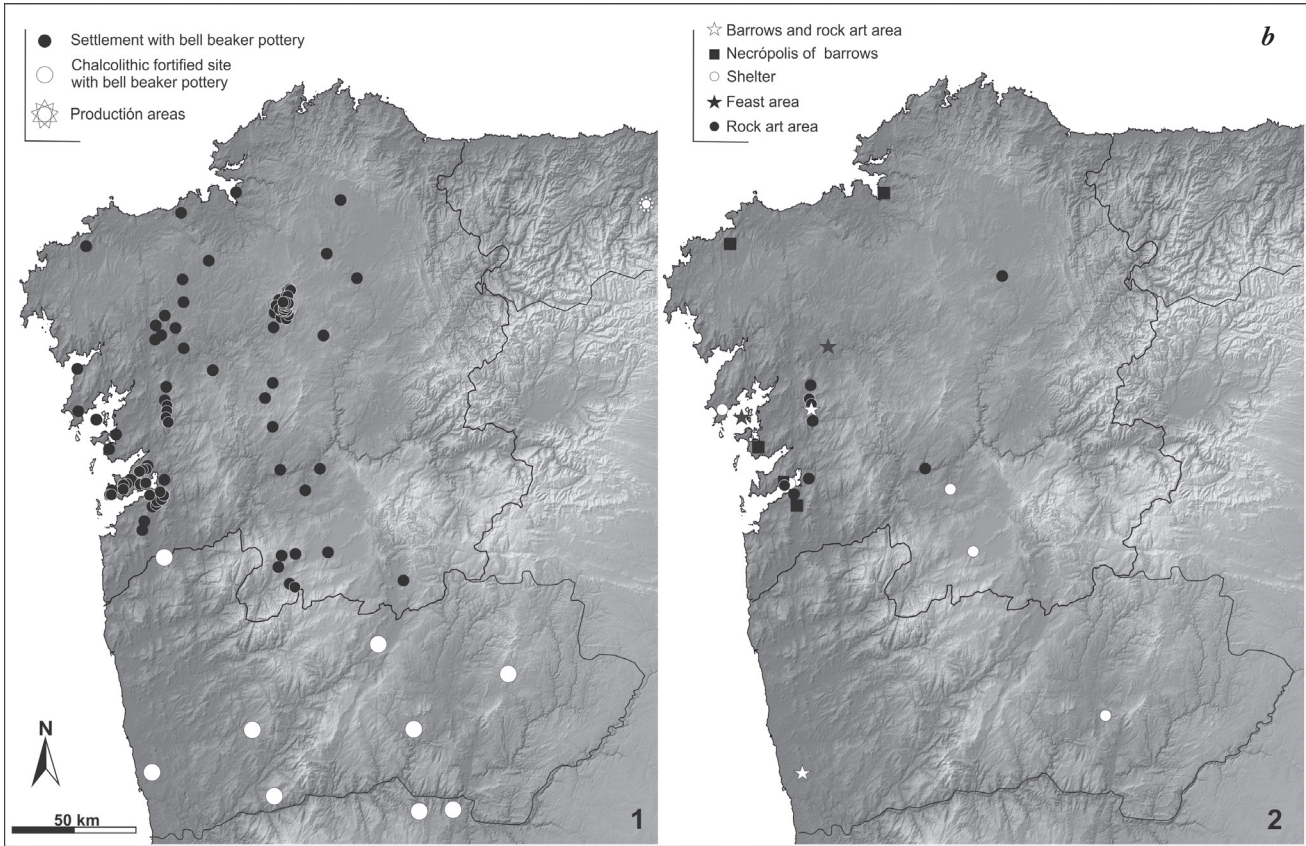


Figure 2.1: Distribution maps. a) 1: Areas mentioned in the text; 2: Sites with Penha-type pottery (pre-Bell Beaker) (Prieto 2009; Jorge 1986). b) 1: Open air sites with Bell Beaker pottery (Prieto 2011a; 2013a); 2: Sites probably used for ritual activities with Bell Beaker pottery (Seoane et al. 2013. c) 1: Burials with Penha-type and Bell Beaker pottery (Prieto 2009; Jorge 1989); 2: Burials from the 3rd and 2nd millennia BC excavated without Penha-type or Bell Beaker pottery (Nonat 2017)



depending on the contexts of use and the function. Consequently, it is logical that some sites without Bell Beaker pottery still form a part of a Bell Beaker *savoir faire*. As a whole, the Bell Beaker phenomenon is considered as representing a break in the archaeological record, lasting perhaps as late as 1600 BC and heralding the Bronze Age (Prieto 2011a).

Only a few summary articles have been published for this region. As well as for the north of Portugal generally (Criado & Vázquez 1982; Prieto 2011a; Prieto & Salanova 2011) there are four local syntheses that deal with areas producing large Bell Beaker sites namely the Morrazo Peninsula (Criado & Cabreras 2005), the Baixa Limia (Eguileta 1999), Bocelo (Criado *et al.* 1991) and Deza (Prieto & Criado 2010). Unfortunately, there are no current research programmes aimed at understanding the archaeological problems affecting the sites from this period. In Asturias, the first and only discovery of Bell Beaker pottery was made quite recently, it was interpreted as an import and was dated to the last third of the 3rd millennium BC (Blas & Rodríguez 2015).

Proposals and objectives

The notion of continuity between the pre-Bell Beaker and Bell Beaker Chalcolithic has hampered research from data collection to publication. Assemblages have been dealt with as uniform collections resulting from the same historical and physical process, making it impossible to distinguish between phases. This means that there is a lack of good contextual information from the most important sites and few sites can be used as references to help interpret future discoveries. As recording systems become more refined, we can see differences between the Bell Beaker and pre-Bell Beaker elements and some sites were occupied and re-occupied, as is the case with A Romea (Prieto 2007), and Zarra de Xoacín (Aboal *et al.* 2004–5) in Galicia, and Crasto de Palherios (Sanches 2008), and Castelo Velho in Portugal (Jorge 2004).

In this study we see the Bell Beaker culture, and all of the processes associated with it, as embodying a change that was probably on a greater scale than we can identify through the archaeological record (Prieto 2008). Chronological complexity has been verified

in all of the recently excavated sites and it has been shown that the material changes that took place in all of the different spheres of evidence (settlements, structures, tombs, pottery, metals, stone tools, etc.) did not occur at the same rate. We see Bell Beaker pottery as a physical element reflecting a profound change and a break with Chalcolithic societies. As a result, we believe that the society in which the Bell Beaker was used did not form a part of the Late Chalcolithic, but instead marked the start and development of another type of socio-cultural phenomenon which had its own characteristics and was the prelude to the Bronze Age (Prieto 2008; 2011a).

In order to be able to understand the settlement sites of this period, we first offer a general summary of the contexts that have been identified, and we then explore the pre-Bell Beaker sites in order to identify instances of continuity and dramatic change.

Paleoenvironmental information

In terms of climate, the 3rd and 2nd millennia BC correspond to the second half of the Neoglaciacion, one of the coldest parts of the Holocene. However, around 3100 cal BC there may have been a warmer phase, with temperatures possibly 2° higher than the current average, which would correspond to the time when part of the sedimentary zones of the south-western coast of Galicia were disturbed, possibly due to a momentary rise in sea levels. Around 2800–2700 cal BC the climate rapidly cooled (Martínez Cortizas *et al.* 1999) and this phase continued until the temperature finally recovered around 1300–1200 cal BC. During this period, however, there were two phases of more intense cold, between 2800–2200 cal BC (with temperatures 2° lower than at present), and between 1600–1400 cal BC (with temperatures around 1.5° lower than present). Between 2000–1600 cal BC (López *et al.* 2011) there was a phase of relative recovery which coincided with the time from which the largest number of sites have been recorded. This colder phase was combined with a damp environment with precipitation values that were substantially higher than in the preceding periods, and slightly higher than today, with two slightly higher peaks at the start and end of the Bell Beaker period (López *et al.* 2011). This period

was also marked by strong winds that lasted until 2200 cal BC after which windspeeds dropped significantly (Fábregas *et al.* 2003).

Coinciding with this sudden cooler and wetter climate, between 4000–3000 cal BC the sea level rose, altering the shape of the coastline in an alternating process in which sediments were deposited and removed. Around 2500 cal BC, we find evidence of hill-slope erosion associated with anthropogenic activity, which led to the formation of alluvial deposits of considerable thickness and accumulated layers of stone especially at the mouths of rivers. Between 2500–1330 cal BC, the rising sea level caused cliffs to crumble resulting in continental sedimentary events (Blanco Chao *et al.* 2002).

There was also a general change in forestry dynamics as a result of anthropogenic activities in the 3rd millennium BC with evidence for increased human impact on the landscape represented by concentrations of charcoal in paleosoils resulting from the cutting and burning of woodland to create new opportunities for agriculture. This is particularly noticeable between 2500–1200 cal BC and coincides with the arrival of the first Bell Beaker communities (López *et al.* 2011). Although the erosion caused by deforestation began in the Neolithic (Martínez Cortizas *et al.* 2009a), there is accelerated change at this time to the point where saprolites and unaltered rock surfaces were becoming exposed (López *et al.* 2011). This can be seen very clearly in the area of Campo Lameiro, where three phases of increased erosion can be identified, the most intense of which was between 2400–2150 cal BC (Martínez Cortizas *et al.* 2009b). This led to a redistribution and reduction of soil resources and there was probably a greater demand for their control. This intensification of agriculture resulted in a landscape of cleared woodlands dominated by extensive stretches of pasture and arable fields throughout the entire region (López *et al.* 2011). Despite this, palynology confirms that there was still a presence of oak-dominated forests, particularly near the coast, and woodland and shrub species were exploited on settlements (Martín *et al.* 2017). Finally, the first signs of heavy metal contamination have been detected from around 1500 cal BC in Galicia (López *et al.* 2011) and late Bell Beaker pottery has been found on some of those sites.

Pottery styles, *chaînes opératoires*, contexts, chronology

Pre-Bell Beaker and native pottery in Galicia and North Portugal

Around 3100–3000 cal BC a type of pottery was manufactured in north-west Iberia with its own unique features that would last for some 600–700 years, to around 2500–2400 cal BC. Known as Penha-type pottery, this was named after Monte da Penha in Portugal (Jorge 1986; Sanches 1997) and went on to characterise the pottery style that extended throughout the western half of the Peninsula (Prieto 2009) (Fig 2.2). It mainly consists of undecorated pottery and is found in funerary and domestic contexts and caves. It is a uniform type of pottery, with simple forms in a wide variety of sizes. The vessels have rough or medium finishes and have dull reddish or black surfaces. Both the undecorated and decorated pottery used the same manufacturing process, following on from earlier traditions, which means it is difficult to differentiate the undecorated pottery from the different phases of the Neolithic.

There are different variations in the designs, although they follow a well-defined scheme. The decoration covers the outer top third of the vessel, incision is more common than impression, the designs are large and clumsy and geometric motifs feature straight horizontal lines, zig-zags or herringbone patterns, grids, and in exceptional cases, symbolic or eye motifs. In Galicia, the decorated pottery varies according to the context. For example, metope designs appear in both settlements and tombs, although pottery with complex metopes is more often found in sepulchral contexts. The designs with friezes are less common and are only found on settlements (Prieto 2009). In Portugal, there seems to be a geographical distinction because pottery with metope designs predominates in the western zone, while designs with friezes or comb incisions are predominant in the east (Bettencourt 2011).

Finally, a new and different *chaîne opératoire* has been recently defined for a small group of pottery, which due to its rarity and anomalous appearance has been interpreted as imitation Bell Beaker pottery. These imitations combine the features of Penha-type and Bell Beaker pottery (Prieto & Vázquez-Collazo 2011; Prieto & Lantes 2017) and were identified for the first time in Buraco da Pala (Sanches

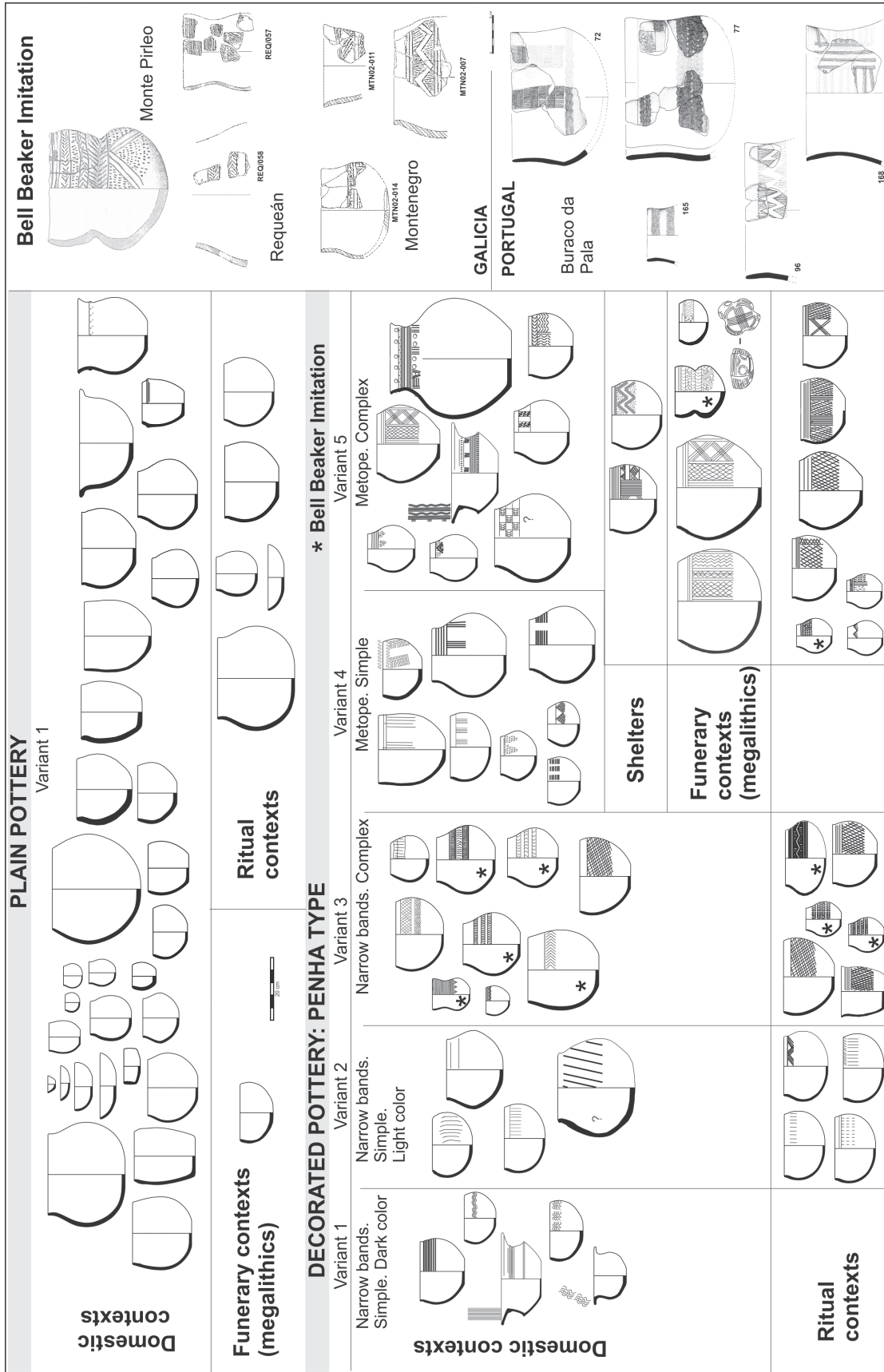
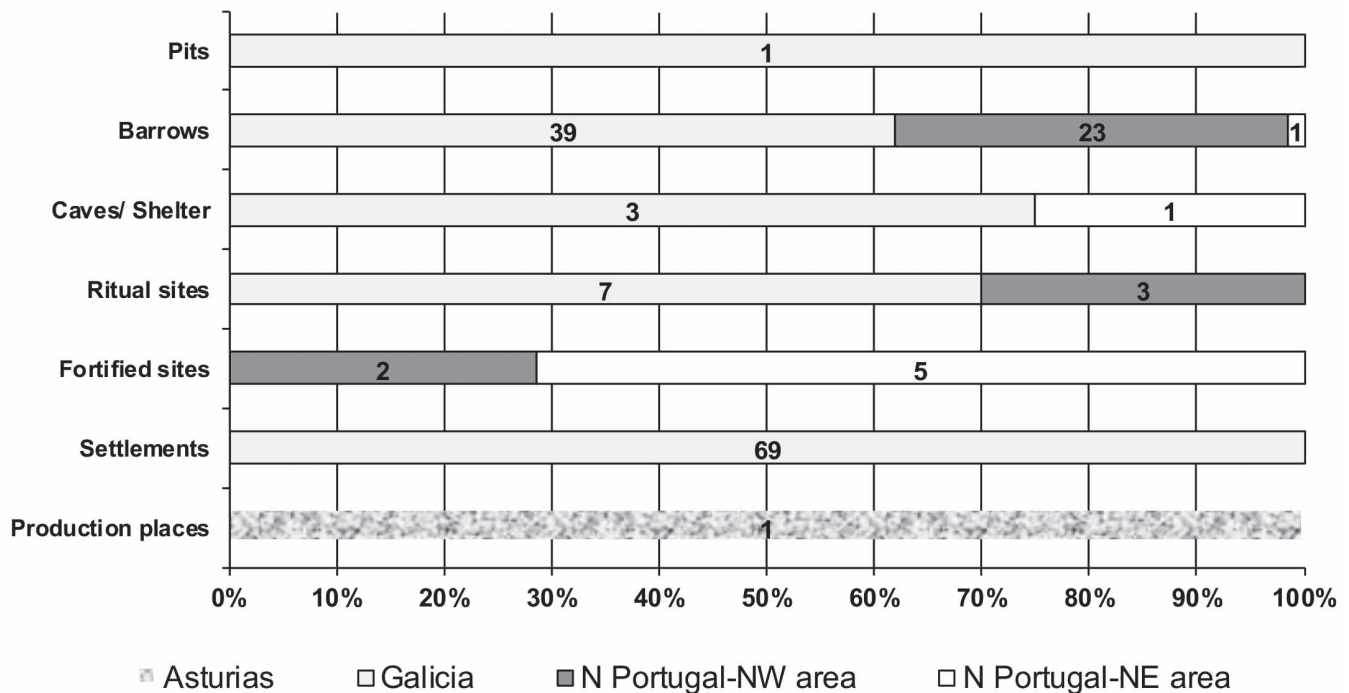


Figure 2.2: Penha-type pottery grouped by contexts. Example of the Galician zone from Prieto 2009. On the right, illustrations of some of the imitation Bell Beaker vessels (based on Prieto & Vázquez Collazo 2011)



1997). More sites with this pottery have been identified in Galicia (Prieto & Vázquez-Collazo 2011) and in the north of Portugal (Sanches *et al.* 2017).

Bell Beaker pottery in Galicia and the north of Portugal

The earliest Bell Beaker pottery from the region has been found in tombs, with the earliest dates (2800–2500 BC) coming from the re-use of the Neolithic dolmen of Dombate (Bello *et al.* 2013). The Beaker types that have been recorded are the international (Maritime) style, the herringbone variety, corded and geometric types, and in exceptional cases undecorated Bell Beakers have also been found. Beakers also come from the fortified sites of northern Portugal, associated with early dates as, for example, from A Forca (Bettencourt 2011), and Crasto de Palheiros (Sanches 2008).

In Galicia, regional variations have been found in a variety of different contexts, and dated to later periods. These regional styles are predominant in the settlements, and it has still not been possible to accurately define their chronology (Prieto 2011a). In Portugal, regional Bell Beaker pottery has still not been classified, and although a study of the Bell Beaker phenomenon in the region is still pending, Ciempozuelos or Palmela-type Bell

Beakers have been found (Sanches *et al.* 2017; Valera *et al.* this volume), indicative of long-distance exchanges in Iberia.

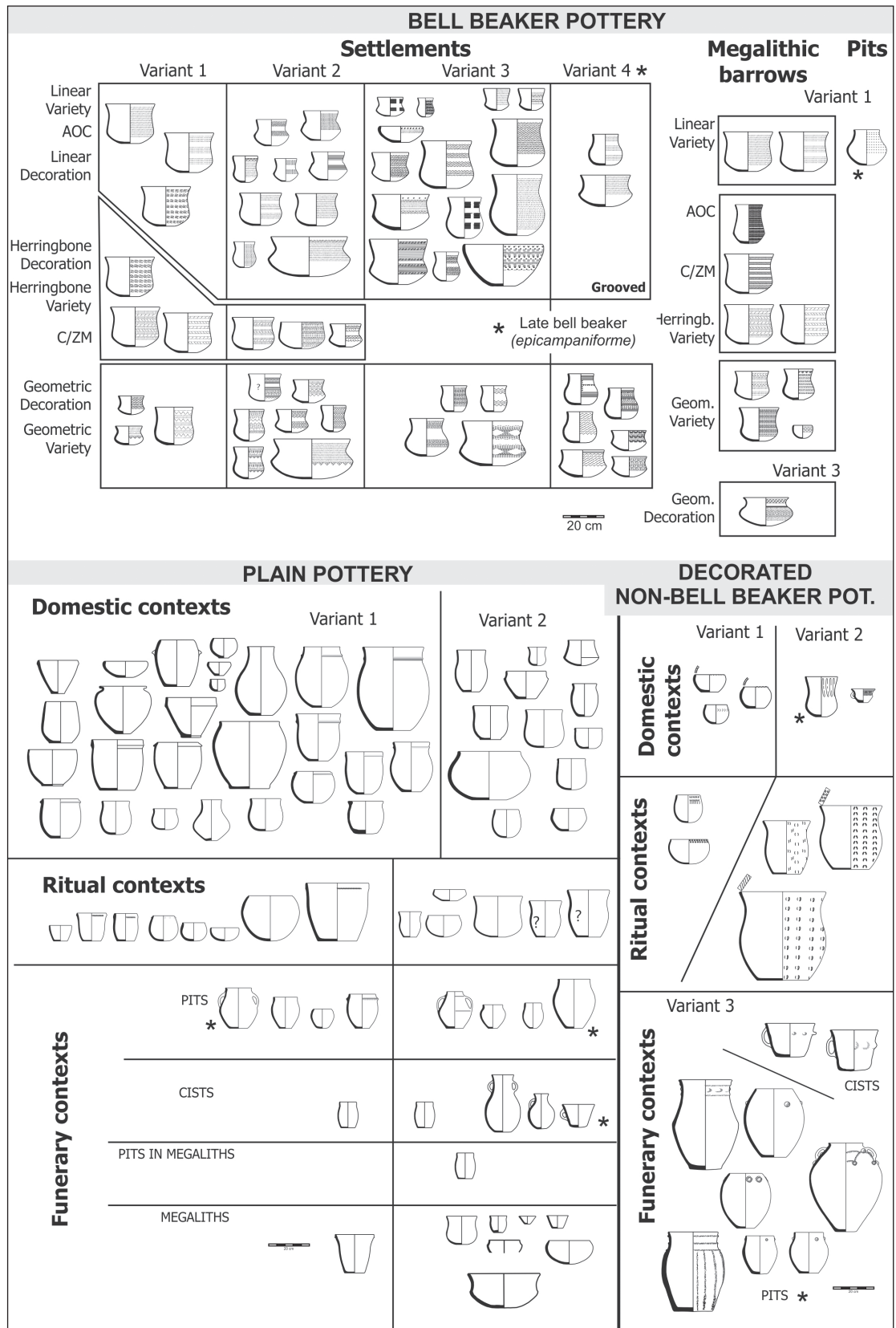
Finally, a grooved type of late Bell Beaker (*epicampaniforme*) has also been found in Galicia, and there are rare cases of Bell Beakers decorated with fish bone impressions, a technique common in Atlantic France, indirectly associated with dates from the middle of the 2nd millennium BC. There is no late Bell Beaker pottery as such in Portugal (Figs 2.3 & 2.4).

Recent studies have shown that the most frequent decorative technique used for Bell Beaker pottery is a shell impression which is a technique found extensively throughout Galicia (Prieto & Salanova 2009; 2011) and which would seem to be of Atlantic inspiration (Salanova 2000). No specific identification studies have been carried out in Asturias and northern Portugal, although this technique has been found on some sites, such as in association with the corded Bell Beaker pottery from A Forca. Bell Beaker and Penha-type pottery were contemporary for two centuries or more but were used by different communities and this suggests that Bell Beaker pottery marks a social break in Neolithic and Chalcolithic societies.

There are three pottery categories, with different degrees of internal variation, which can

Figure 2.3: Sites and contexts with Bell Beaker pottery: graph showing distribution according to regions

Figure 2.4: Bell Beaker pottery grouped by contexts. Example of the Galician zone (based on Prieto 2011a; 2013a)



be identified in all of the manufacturing stages (morphological, technical, and decorative). These comprise a decorated Bell Beaker type, a widespread type of undecorated pottery (incorrectly known as ‘accompanying’ pottery), and another decorated, non-Bell Beaker type. The increased variability in the production of this pottery is an important change, but even more important is the selective contextual use of each category and variant. Regional Bell Beaker pottery was deposited at settlements, the international versions at the re-used megaliths, and late Bell Beakers in exceptional cases in pits (Prieto 2011a).

In the north of Portugal, very few assemblages have been documented, there are no references to undecorated pottery, and the Bell Beaker pottery mainly belongs to the international varieties. It is most commonly found in re-used tumuli, rock shelters, and on some fortified settlements and is associated with periods of reconstruction or destruction, such as at Pastoría or Crasto de Palheiros (Sanches *et al.* 2017). These activities were probably associated with the secondary use of these sites, after they had been abandoned by the original Chalcolithic population.

The analyses carried out on this pottery show that it was manufactured locally from materials occurring within a radius of 7 km from the find spots. If we consider the contexts, the pottery that has been analysed from tombs and ceremonial sites tends to have a greater lithological variety, indicating that the materials may have come from distances of up to 30 km away (Martínez-Cortizas *et al.* 2011). These studies allow us to identify with greater certainty the connections between Galicia and northern Portugal (Prieto & Salanova 2009; Prieto & Lantes 2017) or Asturias and other more distant regions.

Post-Bell Beaker pottery in Galicia and northern Portugal

From 2300/2200 cal BC onwards, the appearance of Bronze Age pottery coincided with the decline and disappearance of Bell Beaker pottery in northern Portugal (Bettencourt 2011), although in recent studies this chronology has been extended a little further to 1900/1800 cal BC (Sanches *et al.* 2017). In Galicia, it is thought that the pottery that was produced at this time overlapped for possibly more than 600 years with Bell Beakers (Prieto 2011a). The majority

of vessels are undecorated and of a form and manufacture inherited from and shared with the undecorated wares that ‘accompanied’ the Bell Beaker pottery.

Asturias and the northern Iberian Peninsula

Asturian ceramics are different to Galicia and the north of Portugal. Here we find what is known as Trespando-type pottery, which is also found in Cantabria (Los Avellanos) and the Basque Country (Santimamiñe). This was initially thought to date from the end of the Chalcolithic period and Early Bronze Age, although it has also been documented in Cantabria in the Mid-Late Bronze Age (Toledo 1999). This pottery has simple profiles, well-finished clays, metope decoration made using incisions and impressions, and designs based on dots and lines (Vega 2011). This pottery has only been found in caves (Ontañón & Armendáriz 2005).

As previously stated, we only know of one site with Bell Beaker pottery in Asturias (Blas & Rodríguez 2015) which has very similar features to the regional Galician pottery, although only a few fragmented pieces have been found. In the east of Cantabria corded Bell Beaker pottery is associated with settlements, while the cord-impressed ware is associated with tombs. The incised Bell Beaker pottery extends towards the west in funerary contexts yet is absent in the central and virtually absent in the western zones. A duality has been recently observed in the distribution of this pottery, with Bell Beaker pottery being concentrated in the eastern zone and ending at Santander, with Trespando-type pottery (and Palmela points) in the western zone, reaching as far as Guernica (Vega 2011).

Stone tools

Stone tools have not been studied in any real detail in the region, probably because the most abundant raw material used for chipped stone tools was quartz and it is difficult to define any typologies in this medium. Also, until the 1980s, quartz was not collected from excavations as it was not considered anthropogenic. The studies that have been carried out are mainly typological rarely including microspatial and contextual analyses. This means that it is currently impossible to identify the existence of diachronic morpho-typological and technological changes from the 4th to 2nd

millennium BC. Despite this, the elements that were used in pre-Bell Beaker and Bell Beaker sites can be defined in general terms.

As well as quartz, quartzite, slate, or schist, rock crystal, tourmaline and flint were utilised. The latter is very rare and is normally considered to have been imported. They constitute artefact types that are long-lived and so far unsuited to typo-chronology (Rodríguez & Fábregas 2011). Re-worked artefacts, such as knives, scrapers, and microliths are rare. Arrowheads are also found in the settlements mainly from the middle of the 3rd millennium BC, made of quartz, quartzite, or slate. The most representative types have a straight or concave base, with rarer convex or triangular based types. These are closely associated with funerary contexts and are rarely found in Galicia (Rodríguez & Fábregas 2011). A few technological studies have identified bipolar knapping from the Early Neolithic in Regueiriño (Prieto *et al.* 2005b), although it has also been identified in pre-Bell Beaker sites such as Montenegro (Tabares & Baqueiro 2005) and Bell Beaker sites such as A Devesa de Abaixo-Os Torradoiros (Prieto *et al.* 2005a) and Zarra de Xoacín, which was occupied in both the pre-Bell Beaker and Bell Beaker periods (Aboal *et al.* 2004–5).

There is greater variety amongst polished stone tools (Fig. 2.5), although these are generally fewer in number. The main raw materials are granite, schist, and amphibolite, with a predominance of tools such as axes, maceheads, adzes and hoes, which were associated with individual burials prior to the arrival of Bell Beaker pottery (Rodríguez & Fábregas 2011; Bettencourt 2011). The Marabiu macehead found in Asturias is interesting as its raw material originates in Galicia (Blas & Corretgé 2001).

Artefacts associated with processing foodstuffs such as grinding stones are common on settlements but are also found in cist tombs mixed with the rubble fill. Other artefacts such as abrasive wood-working tools, adornments, or small stelae are also found deposited in tombs, together with artefacts of unknown purpose such as stone balls.

In the tombs, unlike in the domestic sites, artefacts seem to be more opulent, often imported, with fewer chipped elements (except arrowheads), and a preference for polished tools such as axes or hammers (Fábregas

1991–2; Rodríguez & Fábregas 2011; Sanches *et al.* 2017). During the 2nd millennium BC, the number of stone artefacts found in funerary contexts drastically decreased, with grave goods now being limited to certain types of ornaments or polished artefacts, such as bracers (Rodríguez & Fábregas 2011).

Models of occupation of inhabited spaces. The early phases of monumentality of the habitat and its diversity

The 3rd millennium BC in this region is characterised by three domestic models, although to a different degree in different areas. Caves and rock shelters continued to be occupied. Unenclosed settlements continued to be built, and, as a new element of the Chalcolithic period, two new types of fortified settlement appear: some walled and built of stone, and others comprising palisades and ditches (Fig. 2.6). Studies have mainly focused on the environmental setting of the settlement and on a description of the structures found (pits, hearths, trenches, houses, storage areas) but no information is available on the internal organisation of these sites, as few large-scale excavations have been carried out, there are few publications, and access to the data is limited.

‘Walled’ fortified settlements

From the Chalcolithic period, settlements became more important and grew significantly in size (Jorge 1986) resulting in the fortified settlements that are known throughout much of the Iberian Peninsula. It is inevitable that attention continues to be focused on these iconic sites that made it possible to identify territories, with the paradigmatic examples of Los Millares, Vila Nova de São Pedro and Zambujal (Jorge 1994). The fortified settlements, also known as ‘walled areas’ in Portugal, appeared in the first half of the 3rd millennium BC, and comprise monumental settlements with fortifications of varying size and complexity. They are also known as hill forts, as they are located on hilltops that command spectacular views. They are the prototype of the settlements that characterises the Chalcolithic period, and the only known settlement model for the north of Portugal, especially the north-east (Bettencourt 2011). This is the area where the first examples were discovered and excavated, and some

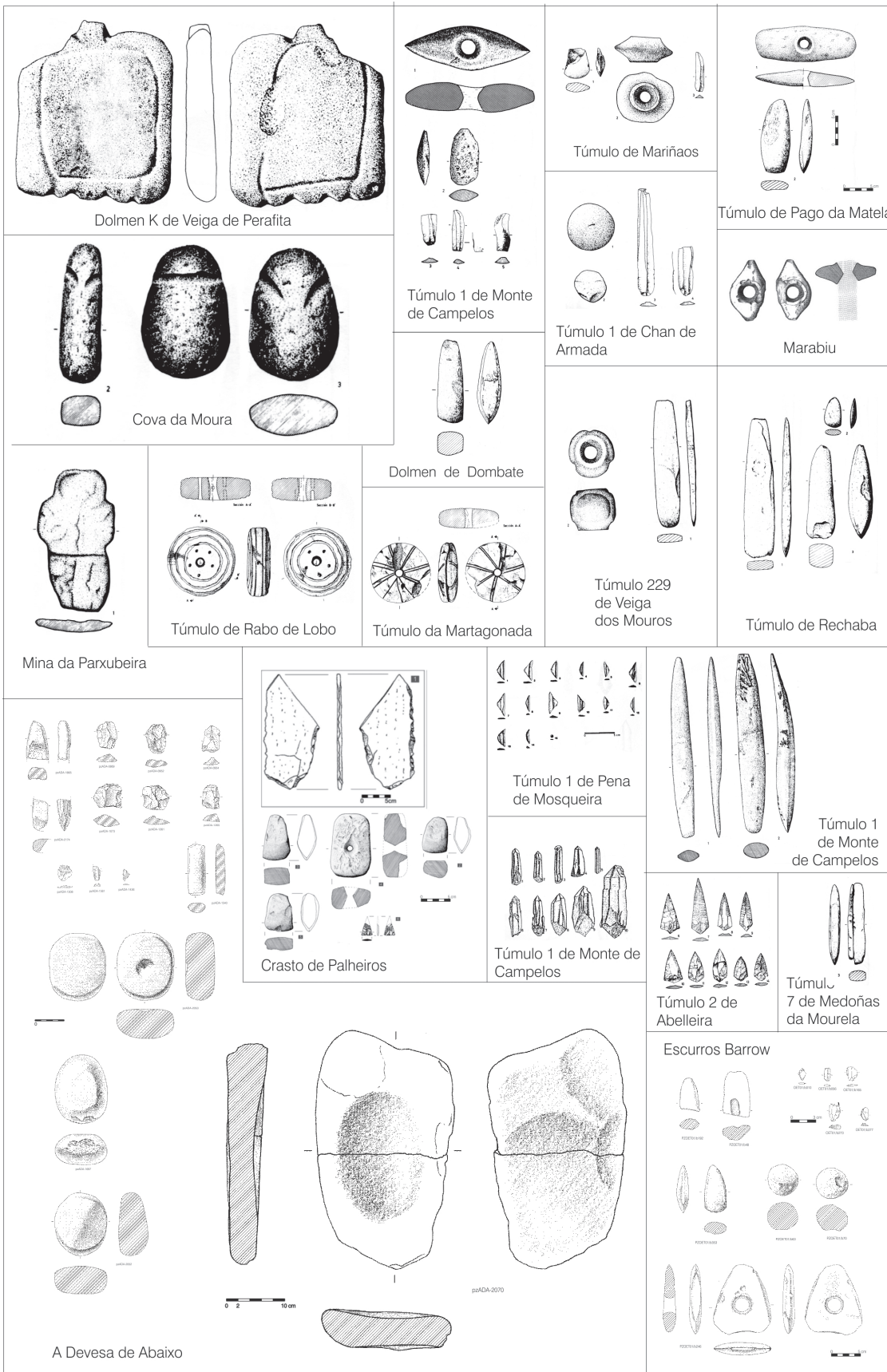
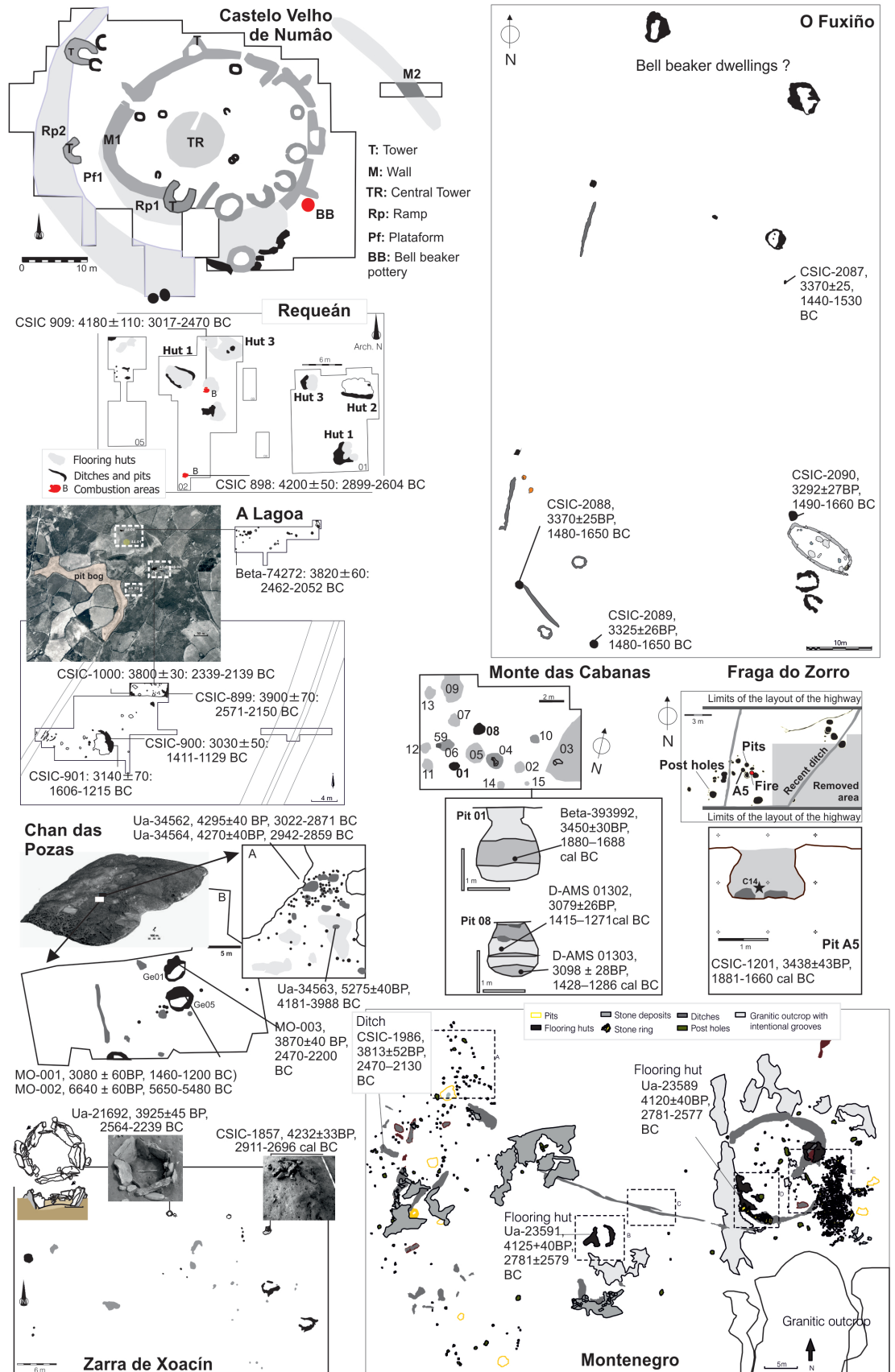


Figure 2.5: Selection of stone items from north-west Iberia. Devesa de Abaixo (Prieto et al. 2005a); Escursos (based on Parga & Prieto 2010); Crasto de Palheiros (based on Sanches et al. 2017); Marabiu (based on Blas & Corretgé 2001); and the remaining elements (based on Fábregas 1991–2)

Figure 2.6: Plans showing settlements in the north-western Iberian Peninsula. Castelo Velho (based on Jorge 2004); Galician sites (based on different studies by Prieto 2011a; 2013a; Gianotti et al. 2011, Vidal 2011)



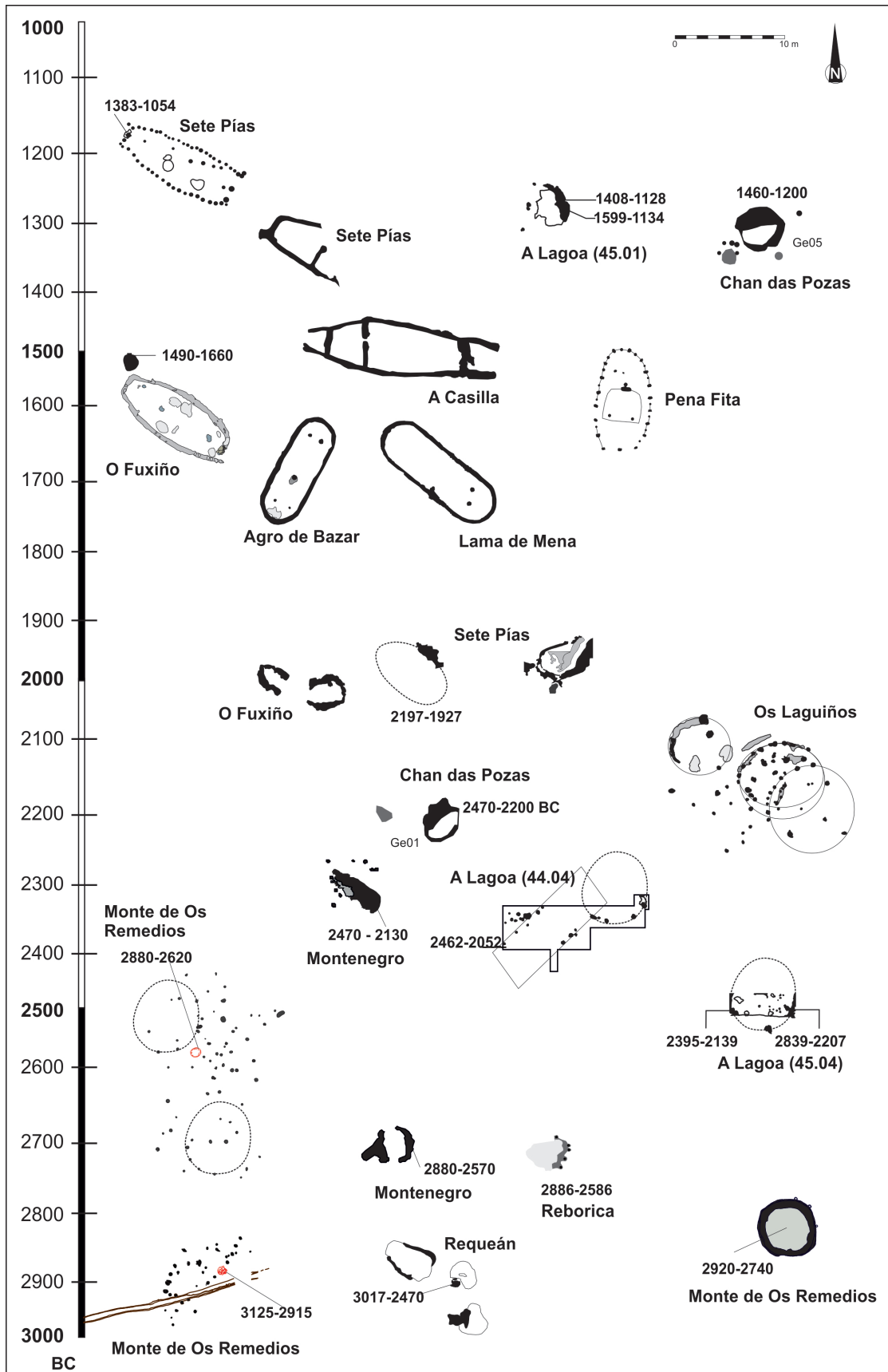


Figure 2.7: Evolutionary sequence of the ground plan of dwellings from Late Neolithic to Late Bronze Age

produced Bell Beaker pottery from their construction phases such as Castelo Velho de Freixo de Numão, or Crasto de Palheiros. The earliest dates from the upper platform of the enclosure of Crasto de Palheiros, with 18 Bell Beaker vessels of different kinds fall between 2800–2400 cal BC (Sanches 2008). The houses were made of stone, like the rest of the settlement, although they have not been described in reports.

In Galicia, similar sites have begun to be identified. They are found on the banks of the River Miño, close to the Portuguese border, and possibly in the Morrazo Peninsula (the site of Mesa de Montes). Only trial trenching has been carried out, and none of them have yet been excavated on a large scale.

Ditched settlements

These well-known megasites are becoming increasingly common in the centre and south of the Iberian Peninsula (see Garrido-Pena, and Valera *et al.* this volume). They first appear in the first half of the 3rd millennium BC, with several palisades that enclose and protect large, collective buildings, tombs, and areas used for different purposes. They date from the pre-Bell Beaker Chalcolithic in the central Duero valley (Delibes *et al.* 2014), the Central Plateau (Díaz del Río 2006) and south-western Iberia. In north-west Iberia, only one Chalcolithic context is known from the area of Forca, where a fragment of Bell Beaker pottery was found in pit 46, and which was dated to between 2630–2330 cal BC (3980±50 BP, Beta-258088, 2580–2460 cal BC 68.3%, 2630–2300 cal BC 95.4%) (Bettencourt 2011).

A Galician site that might be included in this group is Montenegro, in the Morrazo Peninsula. This is a site that has been interpreted as a ceremonial enclosure dating from the first half of the 3rd millennium (Gianotti *et al.* 2011), as it seems to have been inspired by tumulus architecture. It also has a substantial ditch. Foundations of timber buildings have been found both within and outside the enclosure and they are similar to those described below at Requeán. Sites are being found in Galicia with palisades that enclosed habitation areas, and although the only one that has been dated so far is from the Middle Neolithic, it is most likely that this type of settlement continued in use, as is the case in other areas. This site contains large amounts of Penha-type pottery,

together with a large amount of imitation Bell Beaker (Prieto & Lantes 2017), which suggests contacts between the groups.

Caves and rock shelters

In Portugal, the most important cave is in Buraco da Pala (Sanches 1997), where activity has been recorded since the Neolithic, although the most important discovery is associated with Penha-type pottery and imitation Bell Beaker (Prieto & Vazquez 2011). In Galicia, there is still no published Bell Beaker pottery from caves, although some has been found in rock shelters, such as Os Pericos (Vilaseco & Fábregas 2008) or O Cepo (Parga *et al.* 2017). In both cases, only 3–4 fragments have been found, and most of the occupation evidence dated to the Iron Age. Other important sites are Arca dos Penedos (Criado & Vázquez 1982) and O Regueiriño (Prieto 2010) where large numbers of fragments were recovered from two very unusual Bell Beakers. Production areas might also be associated with these sites. In Asturias basins and hearths used for copper extraction have been found in the vicinity of caves as well as more conventional settlements (Blas & Rodríguez 2015).

Unenclosed settlements

In Galicia these sites date from the start of the 3rd millennium BC. Around 30 are known and they are located in rich agricultural valleys. They are almost unknown in Portugal, with the exception of Crasto de Palheiros and Pastoria (Jorge 1986), where fragments of Bell Beaker were found in a destroyed part of the site. These settlements have a certain degree of complexity, and this is the first time that we can refer to organised settlements and house-like structures. We find settlements with groups of two or three houses clustered around a central hearth, such as at Requeán, and the methods of construction that would persist throughout the millennium were introduced at this time (Fig. 2.7). Small spaces with different levels were enclosed using posts or bedding trenches (Figs 2.7 & 2.8). There also appears to be a shape-size ratio, as the smallest structures are circular in shape (4 m²), the medium sized are oval (between 8–15 m²), and other boat-shaped structures have started to come to light, for example in Os Remedios, and these represent the largest structures (c. 32 m²) (Fig. 2.8). The chronology of these houses still

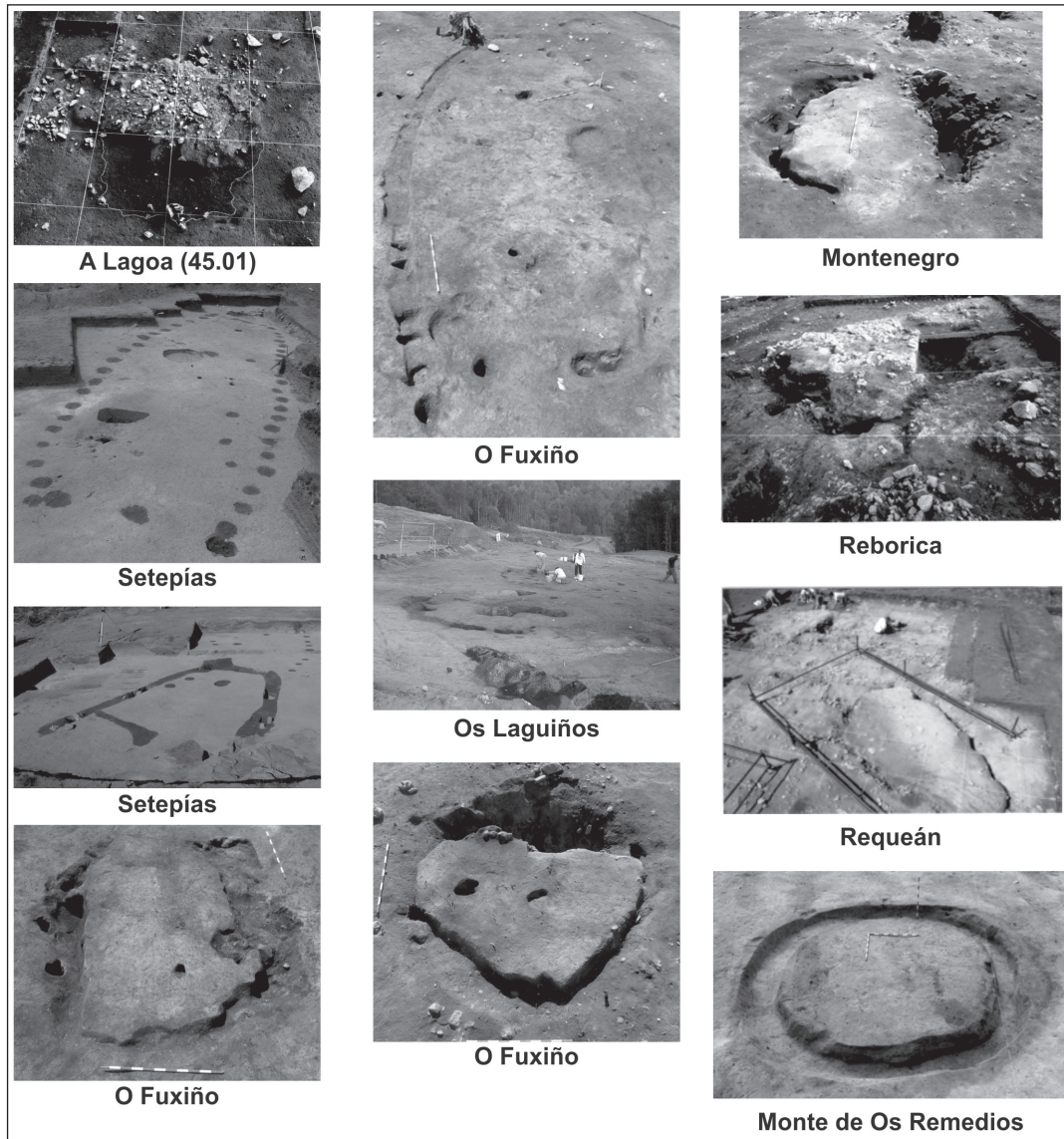


Figure 2.8: Photographs of examples of dwellings from 3rd and 2nd millennia BC in Galicia

has to be refined and they are normally not found together in the same site. There are at least 86 such sites associated with Beaker pottery, although only 17 have been dated by a total of 23 radiocarbon dates. Once again, the majority are in Galicia, and they are quite rare in Portugal.

The settlements that we know from this period comprise small hamlets, which were occupied over long periods of time although we do not know if they were occupied on a seasonal basis, cyclically, or simply sporadically. These numerous but small-sized sites may be the result of a mobile lifestyle (Prieto 2008). They are located in mountainous areas and around wetlands and were involved in the

control of livestock. The most typical site in the region is A Lagoa.

Despite a change in the layout, post-hole and bedding trench houses continued to be built although we find a greater variety of shapes and sizes and the size of the houses tends to increase slightly. The circular structures had an area of 7 m², while the oval buildings were the same standard size as the Late Neolithic examples, between 8 and 16 m² (Figs 2.7 & 2.8).

As previously stated, these sites are difficult to interpret or define precisely as we have hardly any dates, or any clear understanding of their stratification or sequence, however, towards the end of the period, with the late Bell Beaker culture, we have started to identify

larger settlements, suggesting greater stability. The houses were larger and more complex and had separate storage spaces, as is the case of Monte das Cabanas in Galicia (Martín *et al.* 2017) and possibly Tapado da Caldeira in Portugal (Jorge 1980).

Apart from the obvious settlements, some similar sites do not seem to have had a strictly domestic function, despite the discovery of apparently domestic assemblages and these are new types of site to the region. Their common denominator is the presence of Bell Beaker pottery that acts as a relative chronological indicator within a site that has produced evidence for repeated human activity over hundreds of years. In the Bell Beaker phase there seems to have been less intense activity at these sites, as structures are absent or limited or highly dispersed, meaning it is impossible to estimate their chronological relationship with the Bell Beaker culture in the absence of absolute dates. Some of these settlements seem to have been locations where festivals or banquets were held, such as at A Devesa do Rei (Vedra, A Coruña) (Aboal *et al.* 2005; Prieto 2011b; Prieto 2011c), or the rubbish dump found in the cemetery of Guidoiro Areoso (Vilagarcía de Arousa) (Rey & Vilaseco 2012), or possibly in the cemetery of A Devesa de Abaixo – Os Torradoiros (Vázquez & Prieto 2015).

Others seem to comprise or incorporate funerary locations that were significant for the Neolithic or Chalcolithic societies. By carrying out activities in these locations, Bell Beaker communities may have helped to strengthen the new social order and they comprise complex archaeological sites. They include As Mamelas (Cano *et al.* 2017), a site with a tumulus that was built in the 4th millennium BC, re-used during the Bell Beaker period, and surrounded by two areas of occupation that were used to different degrees. In both areas, Bell Beaker and Penha-type pottery from the Late Neolithic has been found, and there are numerous associated structures that form a complex palimpsest (hut floors, pits with pottery deposits, hearths, post holes, and bedding trenches). The funerary complex of the dolmen of Dombate is another example (Bello *et al.* 2013; Cebrián *et al.* 2011). This comprised two funerary structures of the 4th millennium BC that were re-used at least twice by Beaker users in the second half of

the 3rd millennium. In the surrounding area there are numerous hearth-type structures and other activity areas associated with Bell Beakers, dated to around the end of the 3rd millennium (Pérez *et al.* 2016). This may be associated with a possible settlement enclosed by a substantial ditch which though undated was probably constructed around the start or middle of the 2nd millennium BC (Cebrián *et al.* 2011).

Another type of archaeological complex consists of barrow cemeteries where, at a later stage, the rocks were carved with different types of designs, creating genuinely ritual landscapes. Materials associated with the Bell Beaker period have been found scattered around the vicinity of these monuments. These sites are better known in Galicia and were probably established after the Bell Beaker activity (Seoane *et al.* 2013), although Bouça da Cova da Moura is a recently discovered site in Portugal (Bettencourt *et al.* 2012). Finally, at Saídos das Rozas, tumuli and rock art are arranged within the same area, and Bell Beaker pottery has been found on the surface. It seems that human activity in these locations was short-lived, sporadic, and of varying intensity, with only a very small number of artefacts being found. The archaeological site at Pena Fita (in Lugo) is exceptional, as here Bell Beaker pottery and pottery from later periods has been recovered close to a single petroglyph depicting the ground plan of a longhouse (Vázquez *et al.* 2015).

Finally, there are locations with rock art from the Bell Beaker period, but without any associated artefacts or dates. There are rock carvings with images of weapons (daggers, halberds, and swords), or sites with anthropomorphic stelae or representations of human figures, such as at the site of Peñatú in Asturias. These are probably related to the anthropomorphic stelae that have been documented elsewhere in Europe (Prieto 2013b).

Conclusions

On the basis of this summary, we can no longer accept that Bell Beaker pottery represents an element of continuity that added to the spread of the Chalcolithic in the region, or of the associated processes in economy and social organisation. It is important to understand this in order to prevent the deductive presumption of continuity affecting the way in which the data

are recorded because, by considering a uniform whole as being pre-Bell Beaker or Bell Beaker in nature, the studies fail to identify the existence of changes in the archaeological record.

The domestic and funerary spheres changed throughout the 3rd millennium BC, combining a re-interpretation of old formulas with very different new ones. It seems that different types of settlement were preferred in different areas. In Galicia, unenclosed settlements were preferred but the location of these varied between the pre-Bell Beaker and Bell Beaker periods. Northern Portugal is almost exclusively predominated by fortified settlements, although any Bell Beaker settlements *per se* have yet to be discovered. The houses and domestic structures changed little during the whole of the millennium, although some new designs appeared and with a more marked period of change around the middle of the 2nd millennium when longhouses and late Bell Beaker pottery appear. There are also regional differences in construction techniques, as wood was preferred in Galicia, while in Portugal the preferred material was stone.

This change can also be seen in the pottery, where there were not only major differences in the manufacture of Penha-type and Bell Beaker vessels, but also their use seems to have been based on opposing strategies. Even ceremonial sites, which are rare in the first half of the 3rd millennium, multiplied with the arrival of Bell Beaker communities. These changes were also accompanied by significant and powerful environmental transformations that may have brought about a change in the location and internal organisation of the settlements. These now became more oriented towards livestock farming, became smaller than they were in the Late Neolithic, and populations seem to have become more mobile within the territory that they controlled. A change in economic strategies has been tenuously identified one or possibly two centuries prior to the introduction of Bell Beakers in other parts of Europe, though the related settlement changes appear to become more accelerated with the arrival of Bell Beaker communities in this and other regions (Prieto 2008).

One of the key elements that helped support the Bell Beaker socio-political system in time and space must have been based on social, economic, political, and symbolic strategies

that gave meaning to this way of life. In the end, the key lay in controlling the mechanisms of power that linked these strategies and made them interdependent, and by developing and reinforcing these mechanisms through the creation of new ways of appropriating space at all levels of social life.

Despite only dealing with a limited number of topics, this study has made it clear that the social processes that developed in the north-west Iberian Peninsula may seem to have been quite different between Asturias, Galicia, and northern Portugal, although as we have discovered more sites these regional differences have become less evident, especially in the latter two regions.

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