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CERAMIC STYLE IN BRONZE AGE SOCIETIES IN GALICIA (NW IBERIAN PENINSULA). SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN PATTERNS OF FORMAL REGULARITY

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Résumé : Le style céramique des sociétés de l'Âge du Bronze à la Galice (Nord-ouest de la Péninsule Ibérique). Patrons de régularité formelle : similitudes et différences. On présente l'évolution du style céramique à l'Âge du Bronze galicien au travers des aspects formels en utilisant les chaînes opératoires comme outil méthodologique et l'archéologie du paysage comme cadre théorique. On utilise un enregistrement empirique tout au long de Galicia : les sites en plein air. On utilise une méthodologie qui nous permet d'étudier de manière systématique la portée apparente à différents moments et contextes du Néolithique. On cherche le patron de régularité formelle, c'est à dire, similitudes et différences stylistiques, et à cette fin, on réalise une comparaison à différents degrés de la chaîne opératoire : (a) céramique funéraire et domestique au Bronze Initial, (b) céramique funéraire et domestique au Bronze Final, (c) céramique tout au long de l'Âge du Bronze. On croit que la reconstruction de la technologie céramique c'est un autre aspect qui peut contribuer à savoir si les changements formels peuvent être en rapport avec l'évolution au sein de la diversité des sociétés néolithiques à Galicia.

Abstract: We present an evolution of ceramic style in the Galician Bronze Age by exploring its formal characteristics. We used the Operative Technological Chain (Chaîne Opératoire) as a methodological tool, and applied the theoretical premises of Landscape Archaeology. The archaeological record used is quite unique in Galicia: open-air pottery sites. This methodology enables us to systematically study pottery from different periods and contexts in the Bronze Age. Our purpose was to discover the pattern of formal regularity, stylistic similarities and differences; to do so, we made comparisons at several levels of the Technological Chain: (a) funeral and domestic pottery in the Early Bronze Age, (b) funeral and domestic pottery in the Late Bronze Age, and (c) all pottery throughout the Bronze Age. We believe that the reconstruction of pottery technology is an important factor which helps us to investigate formal and social changes, and their relationship with transformations encompassed by the rationality of Bronze Age societies.

Key Words: Operative Sequence, Operative Technological Chain (OTC), Ceramics, Formal Analysis, Style, Patterns of Formal Regularity, Landscape Archaeology, Later Bronze Age, Early Bronze Age, Galicia.

1. INTRODUCTION

Despite an abundance of information about the Bronze Age in the Iberian Peninsula, it is quite irregular, and this is partly the reason why there are no global studies, and only investigations at a regional level. We will be dealing with the situation in Galicia (situated in the northwestern corner of the peninsula). With regard to the Early Bronze Age (or EBA, from 2300-1600 BC), until the end of the 1980s, there was no systematic identification of open-air sites (Méndez 1991 and 1994). All of them have bell-beaker type pottery among other elements of material culture. In most of the peninsula this type of pottery belongs to the end of the Calcolithic period, and in fact the most recent studies in Galicia have applied this term to open-air sites in the region (Delibes 1989). Until the end of the 1990's, funerary material culture was the most widely known in Galicia (Criado and Vázquez 1982, Equiella 1987, Fabregas and Fuente 1988). The last investigation to make a global study for the region, analysing both domestic and funerary contexts, was at the end of the 1990's (Prieto 1998a and 1999). Finally, in the case of the Late Bronze Age (1400-800 BC) (LBA) we have to turn to studies of the north of Portugal (Jorge S.O. 1988) as this period is quite unknown in the Galician record, except for a few recent exceptions (Primo 2000) and excavations which are still being organised.

2. EMPIRICAL PREMISE

The empirical premise of this study is based on the study of ceramic materials recovered in a total of 92 sites (fig. 1) from both domestic and funerary contexts.

In the case of the domestic context, our documentary base embraces 52 sites, although we worked directly with 25 open-air sites which had been discovered in the process of major public works (oil and gas pipelines, motorways), and 16 in an area which was intensively studied (A Serra de O Bocelo) 2. The others are included in the bibliography. 3 The sites discovered in archaeological investigations alongside public works are as follows:

- Nineteen sites from the EBA: A Illalla (Z0940714M01), O Cepe (Y0650430R1), Cargadoiro (Y0730250L01), and Porta Branca (Y0730234L01), As Estavadas (Y0973010L01), and Cavadas (Y0612129L01), Chaxa (Y0191052F04), Tramborios

2 There is a relatively large number of sites, particularly domestic settlements, from the LBA which have been investigated since the end of the 1980's, in particular by the Buño-Penedos project (Méndez 1991) which established the guidelines for finding these types of sites. This ceramic material is included in the doctoral thesis of the author of this paper (1998).

3 Furthermore, a large number of EBA sites are known in the area of O Marrocos: O Pinxo (García 1985 and 1988, Soledad 1997), A Pedra (Y0650702O01), A Pedra (Y0710209O01), Porta Branca (Y0730234L01), and Estavadas (Y0973010L01), and Cavadas (Y0612129L01), Chaxa (Y09730250L01), Tramborios

1 We believe that pottery is an abundant feature of the material culture found in the record, then it can contribute to justifying the situation of bell-beaker sites in the EBA.
The archaeological drawings in these sites are many, and similar to those of early periods (Prieto 2000 and 2002). There are very few excavations in domestic contexts, and the information we do have about them is based on the results of prospecting work. In the case of funerary contexts, the existing excavations are quite old, and the little documentation which does exist is unreliable. Here it is important to underline the obvious imbalance between the number of sites known for the EBA and LBA. In our opinion, the only way of comparing pottery found in these contexts is by using a systematic formal study, which may then lay the foundations for the study of pottery in sites being investigated at present, or in the future.

3. FORMAL CHARACTERISATION OF POTTERY FROM THE GALICIAN BRONZE AGE: STUDY

We will not enter into the theoretical and methodological aspects which support our work, as these are detailed in another paper being presented at this same Congress.

Unlike the EBA, in the LBA no basins or bowls are recorded, as the simple shapes tend towards smaller pots (with short, gentle necks); there are more longbordos, they have practically no decorations on their base, and their bellies are not carinated.

There is a greater standardisation of sizes in pottery found from the EBA than in the LBA. There is a similar variety of size-shape in domestic contexts from the BA.

In the EBA, accessory elements were placed on the piece with a functional purpose. However, in the LBA they had a more decorative function (either they were reduced in size, or they were made much larger, and it is possible to see a major step forward in the development of decorative designs).

In the EBA there are very distinct morphological differences between decorated and undecorated pieces. However, in the LBA there was a return to similarities between these two different types.

In the case of the technical treatment, the pieces were made by hand, and in many cases using impressed strips. There are four different groups: (1) Undecorated pottery from the EBA, which is the most frequent, and has a rough, compact texture, with a visible quartz grain, and a predominance of rough finishes, light and gentle colours (oranges and browns), with a matt, "invisible" appearance. This type was predominant in domestic contexts. (2) Bellbeaker decorated pottery from the EBA, where the manufacture process was totally different, textures are compact, the grain is virtually invisible because of its small size, there is a predominance of very careful finishes and finely burnished, with yellow, cream and carinated underlines (less frequently found), or with markings on the neck like "longbordos"-pots with flared edges. (Either with or without decorations on these edges).

If we examine the different components of the piece, it is possible to see the same general tendencies in all of the sites: the edges are straight or enclosed in the case of simple shapes, and straight and open in more complex items. The rims are rounded, flat or pointed. The simpler shapes do not have necks; complex closed pieces have short necks, and the cut pieces on the open ends are short and abrupt; and in open, curved pieces they are much more graceful and gentle. The pottery has bellies which are convex and globular (in pieces with simple or curved open appearance, and longbordos), carinated (in pieces with rougher profiles), and straight and convex (in pieces with closed, finished profiles). The bottoms are convex in open trimmed shapes (rots and belliforms), and flat in other pieces. There are accessory elements in nearly all of the ceramic groups (in pieces which have not been recorded as having staraped or carved decorations.

At morphological level, the common features found throughout the Bronze Age are: the continued use of the same shapes and varieties, and the continued use of the same features in the different component elements of the pottery. However, it is important to consider the differences which we have observed between the different groups of materials studied, detailed as follows.

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- There is a greater standardisation of sizes in pottery found from the EBA than in the LBA. There is a similar variety of size-shape in domestic contexts from the BA.
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**Figure 1. Distribution of sites from the Bronze Age in Galicia (P.I. Span).**

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(YA93112SP05), Salcedas das Rozas (YA93112SP05), Penaiba (YA93112SP05), Monte Espínio de Abaixo (YA93112SP05), Coto Coel (YA93112SP05), Arxelio (YA93112SP05), Cartas de Vilari (3), Cartas de Vilari (3), Freixe Pina (YA94018G01), and Pedra da Cruz (YA97118K01).

- Eight from the LBA: As Cereiras (YA93112SP06), Silvotav (YA97120B01), As Moreiras (YA95010L01), Cartas de Vilari (2), Fraga do Zorro (YA99005L01), and Milás (YA97120B01).

For the funerary context, our investigative work concentrated on a total of 40 sites, although we were directly with six burials uncovered by different public works. The following are EBA burial sites: the tumulus of Fonte dos Mouru (Prieto 1998a) and San Cosme (Prieto 1998b) and the cast at A Forxa (Prieto 1998a); discoveries from the LBA include: some ceramics which despite having appeared in other open contexts, appear to belong to the funerary context, as is the case of Caneiras (Cabezas 1997), Milás (Cobais 1998) and Monte Buxel (Prieto 2000). However, the majority of the information we have obtained is supported by the existing bibliography.

- Burial sites from the EBA are the following: Veiga de Vilavelha 219, 245 and 322; Krope, Monz de Salo 1, Teodres; Monte Pires, Angulo, Abellones 1 and 3 (Corredor 1995), Abellones (Corredor 1995), Chao da Arcada (Pires and Rodríguez 1979), O Castro, Tazas, A lozas, Fuentes, Caras, Coiro, Rodeno and Atorne (Vázquez 1980), A Pedrana (Dorbe and Rodríguez 1978), Búron (González 1971), Chao (Pires 1982), O Castro, Noaloso (Marín 1988), Burial sites from the LBA include: Coto de Labrador (Corredor 1995 and Vázquez 1982), Penánsula (Muniz 1996), Monte Montero (González and Casado 1993).
In the EBA, the technical differences may be seen at three levels: decoration or lack of decoration, within and between contexts. In the LBA there is a suitable similarity between the three previously mentioned levels.

In the EBA a good appearance was required for funerary ceramics, and good quality for domestic pieces. In the LBA the appearance in both contexts, regardless of the quality of the pottery.

In the LBA there is no formal relationship between the colours used, the finish and the final appearance of the clay (light colours which were independent from the surface finish, usually matte). However, in the EBA there is a formal relationship, expressed as follows: (1) rough finishes with light, gentle colours with a matte appearance; (2) smooth-light, strong colours with a glossy appearance; (3) dark, burnished pieces with a glossy appearance; (4) smoothing and burnishing-light, strong colours - glossy appearance. The first three are found in domestic contexts, the fourth only in funerary contexts.

Technical variability in the EBA: simplification and limitation of technical formal resources in the LBA.

Finally, concerning the decorative treatment, it is important to underline that the differences found between EBA and LBA sites are quite significant, although there are commonly shared features within a pattern of formal regulation (Fig. 2). This combination of aspects related to the decorative scheme: the decoration is applied horizontally, it is "read" vertically, and its composition is in clearly defined horizontal bands. The decoration is applied to visible areas within the piece; the upper and lower limits of the scheme are clearly defined. Decorative motifs are situated in the same direction that avoids breaks in the design. This is difficult to break down the scheme into isolated motifs, precisely because this technique strengthens the continuity which exists between the many contexts within the decorative scheme. Both the elements and the cutting edges of the instruments used are small. The main differences between EBA and LBA pottery are the following:

In the EBA there was an abundance of decorative techniques and a wide range of implement and stamps in bell-beaker pottery. However, in the LBA the number of techniques and instruments used is quite limited.

In the EBA there is a predominance of stamping with multiple variations. In the LBA there is a predominance of incisions with few variations, as well as the appearance of accessory elements being applied as a decorative resource.

In the EBA, bell-beaker decoration appears in domestic and funerary contexts; non-bell-beaker decoration only appears in domestic contexts. In the LBA, incised decorated pottery pieces with accessory elements appear in both contexts.

In the EBA, there is variability within domestic contexts (four substyles) whereas there is homogeneity in the funerary contexts (with a nearly exclusive presence of substyle 1). In the LBA, there is decorative variability both within and between contexts (although decorated ceramics are only rarely found in this group).

In the EBA a technique is used in decoration which was not used either in previous or subsequent periods such as the LBA, that we refer to as the apparent visibility of the decorative element (in substyles 2 and 3, particularly in the latter), which was only used in domestic contexts.

In the EBA, decorative elements and motifs are much more varied and attractive than those from the LBA.

In the EBA there are two categories of decorated ceramics: bell-beaker pottery with a wide range of substyles, and non-bell-beaker type which has virtually no varieties (one substyle). In the LBA, all corresponds to one ceramic category, and the presence or absence of decoration only indicates substyles.

Diversification in the interplay of different visual elements in the EBA. In bell-beaker pottery it is highly conspicuous (monumental), whereas in non-bell-beaker decorations it is invisible. In the LBA it is restricted to a similarity in the visibility of the decoration, which is hidden (by the technical treatment used).

In the EBA bell-beaker designs applied to the whole piece, except to its edges and bottom. However, in non- bell-beaker pottery the tendency was to decorate the upper part of the piece, meaning that decoration is partial and localised. In the LBA, this total decorative object is still found, with several accessory elements, whereas most decoration is concentrated in the upper third of the piece.

In the final product we find the most clearly defined differences between the EBA and LBA, detailed below:

There are three formal categories in EBA pottery, with several tendencies within each category.

(1) Undecorated pottery, with two main tendencies affecting morphological aspects of the piece: Substyle 1, pottery with rough, invisible finishes, found in domestic contexts and rarely encountered in funerary contexts, and Substyle 2, more extended contexts, which are visible, rarely found in domestic contexts and mainly encountered in funerary contexts. Their morphology and technical aspects are closer to those of decorated bell-beaker pottery.

(2) Decorated bell-beaker pottery, with four tendencies, classified according to the different types of decoration and distribution of the decorative elements, of the morphological aspects. The morpho-technical treatment is similar for all the substyles, and contributes to 'monumentalising' the decoration:

Substyle 1: Simplicity of decoration, mainly with comb-marks, straight lines (horizontal, vertical, oblique, and zigzag), and smooth finishes in light colours. These are the most numerous sites, and is the most predominant substyle in funerary context.

Substyle 2: Balance of the decoration, with a predominance of comb-marks, although other instruments were used such as shells or engraved instruments. Its variety is based on elements which are basically the same as those in Substyle 1, although straight lines, zig zags and filled zig zags are more common, and there is a balance between the number of smoothly finished pieces with light colours, and finely burnished pieces with dark colours. This substyle appears in domestic contexts (only appearing once in a funerary context).

Substyle 3: Decorative monotony, with a predominance of printed elements, equally shared between comb and shell. Variety is expressed through the shapes of the cutting and the instruments, as well as the position of the motif and shape of the surface. In this substyle there is a transmission of the motif and technique of horizontal lines over less commonly used elements (vertical, oblique or zig zagged lines, with or without filling). The number of pieces are found with smooth finish-light colours and fine burnishing-dark colours. It only appears in domestic contexts.

Substyle 4: "Baroquin" of the decoration, with a predominance of channelled incisions. Variety is expressed through different types of decorative fills used in zig zag patterns, and their large size, combined with smooth polishing and dark colours. This corresponds to the smallest number of sites, and only appears in domestic contexts.

(3) The category of non-bell-beaker decorated pottery, only occurs in small quantities in a few sites. We have only classified one tendency, although slight differences may be found which would allow us to classify them in two. For the time being the number of elements is too small. However, we can classify between decorated bell beaker pottery (visible pieces) and undecorated pottery (invisible pieces), as at times it shares the shapes and clay use. In our case, although it incorporates decorative techniques which are different to those used in bell-beaker pottery - incisions and marks made by fingernails and fingers, similar to Neolithic techniques (Prieto Martinez 1995, 1999, 2001).

However, in the EBA, it is only possible to refer to one category, which contains three stylistic tendencies, in which both the morphological treatment and technique are similar. There may be variety in the frequency of rougher or smoother finishes, although the production process is essentially the same. These tendencies are found in the presence of some accessory elements, which may be considered as decorative, together with pieces decorated with a 'hidden' design, compared to pieces with no design of any kind. This is the following: Substyle 1: Undecorated pottery. Substyle 2: pottery with accessory elements (hulls and cords) as a decorative resource. Substyle 3: decorated pottery, using the decorative techniques of earlier periods, in this case the incision and stamping technique used.

4. FINAL EVALUATION

The features described above allow us to affirm that although there is a common formal model in Bronze Age pottery (seen in its distributional features), there are two well-differentiated styles in the group of elements, seen in the different formal relationships which exist between the different ceramic and the differential use of pottery according to the context.

It would appear that pottery in the EBA, particular bell- beaker pottery, mark a certain continuity in relation to the Neolithic period. Bell-beaker 'monumentality' underlines this inflection point as an element of material culture which was important in the context of these communities. The interrelation of the sites, together with their relationship with other social aspects (such as the emplacement of sites) implies a change in the formal conception of pottery, in the relationships which exist between the different ceramic products, and in the contexts within which they appeared. Their disappearance in the LBA would appear to indicate a change in the way ceramics were conceived and considered, as an element which was losing social importance. Here it is important to underline the fact that the Middle Bronze Age is not included in this study. We should clarify the point that for the time being both the features studied in pottery and in other areas of Bronze Age society (the situation of sites, types of burial, internal organisation of the settlements or even the few radioactive carbon used to date the different phases) are more or less in a stage or this period. Today, and with the data we possess, we are only able to identify two phases in the Bronze Age.

We end this text by proposing an interpretive hypothesis (already detailed in previous studies into the Early Bronze Age by the author, 1998a, 1999 and 2001). In it we consider that pottery, like any other element of material culture, is a social expression of the social relationships as well as the pattern of rationality that society. We base our hypothesis on the work of Clastres (1981), who characterised and compared primitive/undeveloped societies with state/divided societies. However, it is of equal importance to consider material culture as being a representation which expresses a social reality used as a means of expression of social relationships (Godelier 1989), and which may therefore be hiding, disguising or even revealing the conflicts which occurred within an unequal society.

As a result of this, material culture does not necessarily directly express a society, and so we may consider that this practice serves a discourse of resistance and legitimisation. We believe that Bronze Age pottery is expressing the characteristics of a society which was divided, a society which revealed itself to be a "divided body, a heterogeneous being" in itself, but which refers to...
a homogeneous between social groups which is above there, and is a characteristic of elaborate societies (Chagnon 1981: 112-205). Nevertheless, we found differences between the EBA and the LBA.

EBA pottery generally expresses this pattern, even representing the process of ceramic production (through the formal opposition in the TOC of three categories with their respective functions). It is notable that in the same way a separation/division within the social group, which may not be seen, at least as clearly, in Neolithic societies. And at the same time it is expressing a homogeneity which may be seen beyond any of the social groups, through the standardization of pottery in funerary contexts (seen in the existence of a single beaker pottery sub-style for the funerary workshops in the LBA). When decorations used in pottery started to perceive a degree of social division (Pietro 2002); the EBA, when pottery expressed a social division which was more probably exaggerated in relation to the funerary workshops in the LBA, when pottery 'covered up' this social division, despite it being expressed by other elements of material culture.

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