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Social change, Social resistance. A long-term approach to the processes of transformation of social landscapes in the NW Iberian Peninsula

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Social change: a long term perspective

As the title suggests, this contribution refers to social change in the long term. As we will see later on, a brief glance at the two extremes of the time period we will analyse (the Early Neolithic and Late Iron Age) reveals that the final balance of this change involved an increase in complexity. One possible and quite typical approach would be to characterise the different forms of social relations in this period (how complex they were at each given moment) and identify how this increasing social complexity emerged. Another equally typical approach would be to focus on the concepts of change and continuity in order to characterise this long process.

However, we have preferred to expressly use the concept of resistance as one of the central arguments. Unlike continuity, resistance is not an antagonist of change, but instead a different type of change. It is not the denial of the historical process, but instead an expression of it in different terms. To a large extent, our proposals are connected with the recent varying reactions to types of evolutionism that are more or less linear but always teleological, which tended to understand change or the development of complexity in positive terms (splendour, climax, classic period, etc.). Recent revisions have focused on other dimensions in studying the development of complexity. One effect of this has been to reclaim the role of the mechanisms of resistance to the institutionalised development of forms of power, as in the case of the work of J. Scott (e.g. 2010). Another is the role of collective action in the development or inhibition of complexity, as opposed to the “traditional” interest focused mainly or exclusively on the role of the rulers (for example Blanton and Fargher 2008).

In this general context, the approach we propose is connected with the “pioneering” work of P. Clastres. We have previously used his developments regarding the concept of “societies against the State” (Clastres 1974, 1980) as instruments for the archaeological analysis of forms of power (Criado-Boado 1989; Parcero-Oubiña 2003; González García *et al.* in press). However, it is surprising that this has rarely been used in prehistoric sociology (Barrett 1994; Vicent 1998). Some of the concepts developed by Clastres are central to our presentation.

We are not interested here in analysing “early social stratification and the State”. At least, not directly. Obviously this is the theme of this volume, and our paper is intended to contribute to it. Frequently, focusing on the origin of the state or other forms of power (chiefdoms, pristine states, etc.) has led to narratives on social dynamics which are essentially a story about chiefs

and elites (this point is discussed in detail in one of the first chapters of Blanton and Farger 2008). An obvious effect of this is that the role of the other social agents in these processes is overlooked; this is one of the essential points of the Collective Action Theory, as well as of a large number of materialist approaches.

However, there is another equally important question, in that complexity has generally been explored to understand the emergence of long-lasting and successful forms of power. Amongst these, the question of the origin of the state has been a central theme of archaeological research, not without reason, and also the origin of other complex forms of inequality such as chiefdoms. The quest for original (pristine) contexts and their analysis has been a central concern. The southern and eastern Iberian Peninsula has received special attention in this case, as a result of being the original contexts of the “endogenous” development of complex social forms (see for example the recent summary of Chapman 2008, or several of the contributions in this same volume). Meanwhile, in other places the study of the development of inequalities has received less attention for different reasons. Not least of these is the fact of assuming that they are places in which power and inequality are produced in a secondary manner, subsidiary to the original zones. Inequality arrives (or fails to arrive) from outside, it “knocks at the door” and settles in naturally. In some way this reproduces the same distortion referred to in the previous paragraph: once again these are top-down stories which do not concede an especially relevant role (either expressly or by omission) to the vast majority of the social agents involved in them.

Our focus in this paper is instead on a prior, complementary question to help understand all of this. What we are interested in is not so much the development of complexity, but instead understanding how and why the conditions emerge and are established that will permit the existence of the state, or of other consolidated contexts of social complexity. For this same reason, our approach could seem biased towards an exclusively “endogenous” perspective on social processes. However, that is not the point, since we are not dealing here with what triggers change, may they be “internal” or “external” factors, but with the development of the fundamental conditions that make complexity a viable pathway at some point.

Our argumentation will not be based on formalist concepts such as chiefdom, state, etc., but instead on two notions taken from the work of P. Clastres (1974, 1980): the undivided society and the divided society¹. We should make clear that we do not understand both concepts as phases, types or stages of social organisation, but instead in a theoretical sense, as the conceptualisation of social processes or tendencies that are intrinsic to all human society. We can conceive them in the same way that Stein proposes considering the extended concept of heterarchy, which “is not any single type of social structure but, rather, is a principle or even a perspective on social organization” (Stein 1998: 7). Its use is to define the two abstract extremities of the way in which a human group can function. In this sense, it is even preferable to speak of social division and indivision, to avoid the temptation of making them substantive.

Considered in the most genuinely Clastrian sense, an undivided society is one in which there is no one sphere of power that is divided (separate) from the social body itself. It is important to take into account that it is not the same as an egalitarian society (they at least contain the essential inequality of gender; although other types of inequality may exist that do not imply social division), and that it does not correspond to an original phase of society, but

¹ Clastres also refers to them as Primitive Society and State. However, we prefer to use these terms because ‘state’ is ambiguous (it is usually understood in another way), and because ‘primitive’ has both negative ethical implications and a sense of ‘the original’ that can also be confusing.

instead a theoretical stage. On the contrary, a divided society is one that is intersected by divisions that establish specialised spheres which are separate from the society itself.

From hereon in, what we will try to do is define which factors can deploy and extend division within a social body, or extend the indivision. The thesis we intend to develop is that all societies have structural impulses that tend towards indivision and division. The way in which these impulses are negotiated and balanced leads to specific forms of complexity and differentiated trajectories towards the divided society, and in some cases, the state, and even to different types of states. This wealth of phenomenologies leads to a variety of successive cyclic dynamics in which the tendency towards division unfolds into an increasing complexity which, at times, is alleviated by acts of resistance (a tendency towards indivision) that re-direct the society towards a level of lesser complexity.

This said, how can this problem be dealt with specifically through the archaeological record? Our proposal is to tackle the problem by taking the idea of social division itself almost literally: in order for it to exist within a group, other agents that are different from the group itself have to exist. In sociological terms, the question may be expressed as the dialectic between the community (the group as a whole) at one extreme, with the individual at the other, and between them the different possible ways in which the community can be fragmented or segmented, some of the most important of which are those based on kinship or households. The way in which the different agents are represented through the archaeological record will serve as the basis for our argumentation.

These agents participate in processes of division and processes of resistance. The first tend to extend the division within a society, finally causing the breakdown of the undivided society, while the processes of resistance are those that oppose the first and mitigate, inhibit or alleviate the division.

However, as we said at the beginning, resistance is not the antithesis of change; resistance also involves active processes. Everything that functions as a type of resistance can also function as a mechanism of disintegration (and vice-versa), because it triggers or stimulates a parallel mechanism of the recognition or extension of social division. For example, the consumption of surpluses in a festive or ceremonial setting entails the risk of division by impoverishing the most dynamic agents and sharing the surplus with everyone. But at the same time, it unleashes a process of social competition and emulation that encourages the production and accumulation of surpluses, which as such is an essential condition for the consolidation of relationships of inequality. Seen in this light, warfare, the potlatch, the consumption of luxury items, the assassination of the chief, etc. (i.e. all of the practices that make it possible to re-balance a society and introduce a certain sensation of equality) are examples of mechanisms of resistance aimed at preventing or limiting the generalisation, spread or extension of the division, even though it is already intrinsic to them.

We will apply these proposals and concepts to studying the social dynamics of a specific area over a long period of time. We will present the general features of the archaeological record of this study case, and will finally propose a narrative to interpret them. Logically, since this paper covers a very extensive temporal, spatial and social scale, it should be seen in this light, which implies a very schematic presentation of features and processes that could be seen in a much more detailed and complex way.

The case study: the NW Iberian Peninsula

Our case study area is the north west of the Iberian Peninsula. This essentially consists of modern-day Galicia, and to a lesser extent the extreme north of Portugal. This is a generally mountainous region, broken up into numerous river valleys. The geographical contrasts are sharp, with visible differences between the lowlands close to the coastline, interior valleys, large numbers of mountain ranges (frequently near the coast), and some small plateaus. The current landscape is typically Atlantic, favoured by a damp, temperate climate, although conditions in the interior are closer to some extent to a more Mediterranean climate. In many ways it represents the southern border of the Atlantic European world.

Current knowledge of its archaeological record is quite irregular. As anywhere else, it has benefited recently from a considerable increase in terms of its quantity and variety thanks to the rise of commercial archaeology. That has made it possible to fill in a number of gaps in our knowledge of the record, to modify certain preconceptions that were in place, or to reaffirm others. This region has traditionally been considered as poor or simple in archaeological terms, especially in comparison with the more complex and monumental development of other parts of Iberia, such as the Mediterranean region or the south. In comparison with an important and well-known development of elements such as megalithic architecture or rock art, the generalised absence of organic remains (due to the acidity of the soil) considerably limits our knowledge of an important part of the record.

In this region, an internal variability in the forms of the archaeological record is being characterised with increasing precision, and also in some cases the social processes associated with them. However, in this paper we consider it globally, because at the scale of our analysis there is an important feature shared by the whole region: a state-like level of complexity did not develop until a very late period, specifically until the time of the Roman conquest (completed shortly after the change of era). This means that it is an especially attractive region for analysing a process in which the social dynamics operated successfully in order to inhibit or limit the development of extremely complex forms of social organisation. Paradoxically, in this case this is a situation that is especially relevant to the subject matter of this volume.

These features are indicative of the interest in analysing these problems in a region of this kind, beyond the study case itself. On the one hand, this is a similar area to many other 'peripheral' regions of Western Europe. Its record is also similar, without the presence of any exceptional or hitherto unheard of material forms. In this sense, it is representative of 'the standard'. On the other hand, it is a frontier zone, simultaneously the 'south of the north' and the 'north of the south'. These factors mean it is interesting to consider it as a study case that is representative of something more than itself.

The NW Iberian Peninsula between ca. 4500 BC and the Roman conquest

In this section we will discuss some of the most characteristic features of the archaeological record in this region for a long period that began with the development of the first productive societies, and ended at the threshold of its inclusion into the structure of the Roman Empire. For reasons of space, this presentation will be brief and partial. We will focus on presenting the most relevant features of the record in relation to the subject matter of this paper. In doing so, we will refer to time periods which, logically, have to be understood from this same abridged and generic perspective. It is not our intention to offer a full or detailed description, or to refer to the relative differences between different parts of this region. For a more detailed description, publications in English may be consulted such as Criado-Boado and Fábregas 1989,

Fábregas and Ruíz-Gálvez 1998, Bettencourt 2008, Martins 1997, González-Ruibal 2004, Parcero-Oubiña and Cobas 2004, with abundant additional references (see also Prieto-Martínez *et al.* in press).

Before 4500 BC. The record available for contexts prior to the megalithic period is very limited, without any large or monumental remains of settlements or burial sites. Between 5000 and 4500 there is evidence of generalised forest fires of man-made origin (Kaal *et al.* 2011); as they occurred at a time before agriculture became widespread, they must be considered as activities aimed to clear the forest and make land available for rearing livestock and hunting, and eventually for complex hunting strategies (pre-pastoral), such as those documented amongst complex hunter-gatherer groups from the Mesolithic period. From 4500 onwards the first evidences of cereal pollen are documented.

4500-2700 BC. The development of megalithic architecture is the most characteristic feature of this period. As in other parts of Atlantic Europe, this is a monumental type of architecture that was used for collective burials. It was accompanied by an increasing human impact on the environment, with the expansion of agriculture, the start of large-scale deforestation, and soil erosion (Martínez-Cortizas *et al.* 2009). These indicators correspond to the extension of a productive economy, based on slash and burn agriculture concentrated in the uplands, zones with light soils easy to work with hoe technology. The generalisation of the productive economy (even when making use of wild resources was still dominant in all certainty) coincides with the start of megalithism, whose most ancient monuments date from around 4400. It is not possible to ascertain if both phenomena occurred at the same time, or if one came shortly before the other.

In contrast to the burials, there are only a small number of settlements, of which little is known. They are distributed amongst upland and lowland areas, which suggests that these communities were regularly in movement. No large settlements have been documented that would have been used by medium sized or large groups; the impression is that the settlements are limited to temporary camp sites used by family groups no bigger than a few dozens of people gathered in around half a dozen domestic units. Despite the growing pressure on the environment, indicative of increased production, there is no evidence of large storage structures.

The material culture basically consists of elements for domestic and productive use; they are not especially monumental or eye-catching. The most carefully produced objects, or the most scarce and valuable, are typically found in funerary contexts, out of circulation and often unused. However, by carrying out a more detailed analysis, specific dynamics could be identified within megalithism.

2700-2300 BC. During this period a series of changes occurred in a similar way to what is defined in other parts of the Peninsula as the Chalcolithic, although at a very different scale and significance: the sealing of the large burial chambers, the end of megalithism, the appearance of ceremonial areas, the rise of large settlements, and the appearance of new materials and styles.

The communities became more stable within the landscape, with the development of large villages, concentrations of population that were previously unknown. Although they are not comparable to the large sites found in other parts of the peninsula, settlements covering an area of one or two hectares would not be documented in this region until the centuries immediately

preceding the Roman conquest²; they are clearly spaces that were used for the settlement of groups that were larger than family units and that could have reached sizes of some hundreds. These settlements are often explicitly delimited by systems of ditches and/or ramparts. Inside they contain huts that were used for a wide range of purposes, but which are also large for the standards of the region. The discovery of excavated pits and large ceramic vessels is indicative of new forms of accumulation.

All of this coincides with a change of location, meaning that these villages were preferably situated close to lowlands which now, after the previously described erosion processes, included “areas of smooth relief (...) susceptible to human activities such as agriculture, due to their greater soil depth, and also nutrient and moisture availability” (Martínez-Cortizas *et al.* 2009: 85). This meant that the production system was much more intense. Also, the system was relatively complex, as it included a wider range of crops apart from cereals, and the rearing of livestock.

The variety and complexity of the cultural material also increased. It is especially interesting to note the appearance of non-local materials and certain ‘standard’ types distributed over a wide area, such as the Penha style pottery. There were also marked technological improvements in the production of stone items, especially arrowheads, which are found in large numbers. At the end of this period, bell-beaker pottery of the international style appeared.

Although it is possible that burials in tumuli continued, the large megalithic monuments were abandoned. The beginning of this period saw the sealing of the large chambers, blocking their entrances, at times using destructive methods involving fires and dismantling their outer shells. The main new feature was the appearance of individual burials with collections of ‘personalised’, relatively individual grave goods.

At the same time, a new type of monumentality appeared: small circular enclosures delimited by pits and protruding structures that would have served as ceremonial spaces.

2300-1200 BC. Some authors have described this period as a “dark age” (Peña and Bello 1996). Leaving to one side the interpretative implications of this idea, it is illustrative of the lesser visibility and variety of the archaeological record. Now the settlements were different in two ways, as a result of their form and their location. The preferred zones were now the uplands, spaces that often coincide with the earlier megalithic burial mounds. These are areas that were less suitable for extensive agriculture and as pasturelands, which is coherent with a productive system that would have placed less emphasis on livestock.

In these upland areas, the settlements adopted a recurrent pattern defined as “accumulation areas” (Méndez 1994): large groups of structures with a horizontal stratigraphy resulting from the regular re-occupation of the same site by small communities probably not much bigger than those of the Neolithic period. These consisted of structures made of perishable materials, which only lasted a short time and were quite invisible in the landscape. At this time we frequently find settlements associated with small marshy areas, locally known as ‘brañas’, which would have served as reserves of fresh fodder for the livestock. These basins are also the spaces where we find large concentrations of rock art, which amongst other functions may have served as a way of appropriating the territory (Bradley *et al.* 1995)³.

² Very few fortified sites or apparently strategic locations have also been documented, as in other parts of the peninsula, although here they are completely exceptional, and so we will not consider them in our presentation.

³ The chronology of Galician rock art has traditionally been attributed to this period. Other authors suggest an earlier chronology (Peña and Rey 2001). At present the matter is far from clear, as it seems that, as in other Atlantic and

All of the previous forms of monumental or ceremonial architecture disappeared at this time. Instead, new types of burials were developed, amongst which the most characteristic were cists. Generally or wholly lacking in monumentality, both in terms of their dimensions and their visibility in the landscape (simply buried or at most covered with a small mound), they are the first clear form of individual burial.

The material culture documented in the settlements is typically domestic, lacking in complexity and variety. Only bell-beaker pottery, which would last here for a long period of time, stands out for its conspicuous and painstaking materiality, which was mainly made to be seen. It is only in burials or deposits, out of circulation, where we find more singular or complex objects, such as bronze weapons, personal adornments or gold and silver jewellery.

1200-800 BC. A characteristic type of settlement sometimes described as “pit fields” emerges, open settlements located close to the valley bottoms. They consist of perishable structures (post holes and trenches), where the most remarkable features are large storage pits, linked to significant evidences of agricultural processes (mills) (a good example in Lima 2002). These pits (whose capacity can range up to 2 m³) are one of the most remarkable features of the period. In contrast, habitation structures are relatively unknown, due to their perishable nature and absence of monumentality. Although still not extensively known, those small villages would have allowed the settlement of between one and two hundred people.

Another remarkable characteristic of the period is the well-known spreading of metallic objects, common to the whole Atlantic area. They include especially palstave axes, but also weapons (swords), personal ornaments and objects related to feasting (Armada, this volume). It has been estimated (Comendador 1999) that the objects belonging to this time period represent up to 90% of the total production known for the whole Bronze Age to date. That study suggests that in the Late Bronze Age the amount of copper and tin used for metallic production increased up to 100 times in comparison to the earlier centuries of the Bronze Age. A large amount of this mineral came from direct exploitation, as revealed by the discovery of the first important event of environmental contamination as a result of the exploitation of heavy metals⁴.

800-400 BC. From 800 onwards, a series of highly visible new features in the material record became more generalised. Some of them would have appeared shortly beforehand, although it was in this period when they became generally extended and visible. The most apparent of these is the development of a completely new type of fortified settlement in this region. This was also the first type of permanent settlement in this region. The expansion of hillforts goes hand in hand with two other new elements: the disappearance of any other type of settlement site and of any form of recognizable burials. The settlement pattern in this period is characterized by fragmentation and isolation, with a large number of small hillforts, typically covering less than 1 Hectare and housing around 100-150 people, scattered throughout the landscape. This is emphasized by the selection of very prominent locations with difficult access, with a clear prevalence of defensive criteria. For the first time in this area, the selection of locations is underlined by the involvement of social labour in the construction of complementary

European regions, different horizons and styles of open air rock art could be identified from 4000 to 400 BC, a large part of which would correspond to this second millennium BC (see Santos, this volume).

⁴ As detailed in a forthcoming work: Pontevedra-Pombal, X.; Nóvoa-Muñoz, J. C.; García-Rodeja, E. and Martínez-Cortizas, A.: "Prehistoric and historic anthropogenic contributions to atmospheric heavy metal deposition recorded in ombrotrophic peatlands of the NW Iberian Peninsula". We thank X. Pontevedra for kindly allowing us to consult and refer to this paper before its publication.

defensive structures, which were highly effective but not necessarily monumental (ditches are very frequent, although walls and ramparts are less common).

As regards land use, the available evidence points towards a more diverse and potentially more fruitful productive system, which would allow permanent yields through the whole year. On the other hand, the landscape around the settlements was mainly occupied by light soils, subject to serious risks of erosion in the event of permanent use. This seems to coincide well with the disappearance of the large storage pits, pointing to a decrease in the amount of surplus available to be stored.

The settlements were organized internally into domestic units which, like the settlements themselves, were much more solid, fixed and stable (with an increasing use of stone). They were architecturally simple and highly uniform in every respect: single circular constructions, lacking internal divisions or any kind of complementary structures. The regular discovery of remnants of metallurgical production in houses (such as crucibles or slag) indicates that these goods were produced domestically. There are wide, open areas between huts and, in a number of cases, larger constructions have been documented in a central position, for which a collective use has been suggested (Villa 2003).

A number of significant changes also occurred in the material culture, with a significant decrease in the circulation of metallic objects, and the disappearance of the previously characteristic large bronze hoards. In exchange, small personal ornaments such as pendants or brooches are the most frequently found objects. It is equally significant to note the scarcity of objects made of gold, which nevertheless were quite characteristic of the region in the Late Iron Age (González-Ruibal 2004).

400-200 BC. Hillforts continued to be the sole form of settlement at this time, although they underwent a series of changes at many different levels. The occupied space expanded with the construction of hillforts in the lowlands and valley bottoms, in much more productive agricultural contexts, something that had not occurred until this time. The intensification of agriculture can be seen both in an increased pressure on the environment and in the development of highly durable and evident infrastructures for storage. Each household was constituted as a well-defined architectural unit within the settlements, consisting of several collective spaces that included distinct storage areas. All of these spaces were built using an emerging, durable architecture, with the generalised use of stone. Some productive functions became specialised, such as the production of metal implements, with specialised households.

The internal structure of the settlements was sharply fragmented between the different households: the privacy of each household was emphasised, and access zones or areas of visibility from the entrances were not shared. The open space between the houses was significantly reduced, and the collective structures used in the previous period disappeared. The houses themselves became more monumental and more permanent, as they were built entirely of stone. It has been suggested that an average hillfort of this period would house around 250 people.

The morphology of the settlements changed: the defensive conditions of the locations became less extreme, and instead artificial structures such as walls, ramparts and ditches were developed, structures that were much more complex, voluminous and visible.

The material culture is characterised by the development of a formal variability that includes elements of domestic use together with objects of special quality. This occurred with pottery production, where Punic items imported from the Mediterranean began to become widespread, and in locally produced items, with a considerable increase in their variety and the

development of certain shapes and decorations that were exceptionally ornate, complex and visible, in contrast with a majority of simpler vessels (González-Ruibal 2004). The same occurred with metallurgy, with a new, progressive development of items in precious metals, always in the form of objects for personal use (the most widespread and typical of which were torcs and pendants).

200 BC- 0. Several of the features from the previous record were preserved, although an important innovation appeared: the rise of large settlements which, despite being on a smaller scale than in other parts of Europe, correspond to the model of oppidum (González-Ruibal 2006). These coexisted with a pattern of population that mainly continued to be in small hillforts similar to the previous. Their appearance coincided with a documented rise in the effects of human action on the environment, specifically an important new event involving contamination by heavy metals, which would indicate the start of mining operations on a considerable scale (see note 4)⁵.

This increase in production did not only make the formation of these large concentrations of population feasible (up to some thousand in some cases), but also permitted an important development of monumentality. The settlements, and especially the oppida, developed more complex and scenographic defensive structures; but also a number of households stood apart from the rest with an ostentatious architecture that included the use of sculptural elements made of stone.

The flow of imported elements, now mainly from Italy, increased significantly. Amongst these, items for consumption were particularly important, especially wine.

The long and winding road away from social complexity

In line with the conceptual scheme presented in section 1, we can propose an interpretation of this sequence, determined by tension between processes of division and resistance that bring different social mechanisms and different actors into play. Everything that strengthens the community and community life works in favour of the pre-eminence of indivision within the social group, while the appearance of specific differential individuals and segments within it sows the seeds of division. In order to help one or the other to take root, different intermediary devices are brought into play which promote or deter complexity. However, and this is an important part of our point, in some cases this may indirectly or unintentionally bring about new conditions or contradictions that trigger the opposite, undesired effect. Specifically, social forms that make it possible to alleviate division (such as conflict, warfare or competition amongst individuals) can favour the establishment and expansion of social coercion and exploitation. The action of these mechanisms provokes material effects or forms through which it is possible to identify these processes and produce archaeological meaning.

Based on this approach, and specifically on the heuristic mechanism that structurally correlates the processes of division and indivision within social groups, we propose a narrative of the material sequence just presented in section 3 and summarized in Table 1 (evidently, different

⁵ This event became even more intense after the first century AD, after the Roman conquest.

or even contradictory interpretations are feasible, see for example Fábregas and Ruiz-Galvez 1997; Martins 1997; or Sastre 2008 amongst others).

Before 4500 BC, as occurs in all “meso-Neolithic” situations, the risk of division is controlled through a system of subsistence that is effective but which inhibits accumulation. The community is the only social actor that exists; the society is maintained in an undivided situation (befitting what Clastres called a “primitive society”), which does not give rise to differentiated individuals or social segments, nor a separation of power with respect to the group. The form of individuality that exists in these societies is wholly adapted to the definition of the group (as explored by Hernando 2002).

From 4500 the development of the agricultural and livestock based economy (an economy of “deferred outputs” (Vicent 1998) introduced one of the essential requirements for social division: dependence on the land (also, surpluses were produced). However, the risk of bringing about division was collectively absorbed through a series of mechanisms: the consumption of surpluses in the construction of monumental architecture, the ritualisation of the relationship with the land and temporality through ancestors enacted with a funerary ceremonialism, the dissolution of individual identities that gave rise to collective burials, and a pattern of subsistence that hindered the structuring of residential social units of a size larger than the local group.

As a result, the community continued to be the essential social actor, favored by a condition of social indivision facilitated by megalithism understood as a strategy of resistance. If we examine this phenomenon from within, we see situations in megalithism of an evolution towards complexity, facilitated by the intensification of technology and subsistence, but which are dissolved through these mechanisms of resistance. This is what could have led to megalithism happening as a series of cycles of several centuries of construction, re-use and abandonment, instead of being an event of continuous constructive activity.

From 2700, and for a short period, the record reveals how the community ceases to be represented through funerary architecture, which also ceases to be a means of consuming surpluses. On the contrary, considerably larger and more permanent settlements appear in the territory. The process of productive intensification made it possible to develop new types of materiality (metallurgy), associated with elements of individual use (jewellery and adornments). The vigour of the community was “threatened” by the development of new forms of identity and the availability of greater “wealth”. To mitigate these risks, less costly types of ceremonial monumentality were developed, but which involved a different type of sociability to the burials, and which undoubtedly reinforced the social unit beyond the family. Excepting the differences of scale, this funerary monumentalism could be interpreted according to that proposed by Díaz-del-Río (2004) for the multiple ringed ditched enclosures dating from the Chalcolithic in the peninsula, in which this author sees the short-lived success of extensive political groups. However, this “failure” reveals the success of the strategies of resistance that were implemented at this moment and in subsequent ones.

Indeed, from 2300 this upheaval was followed by a situation characterised by the dispersion of the population into smaller settlements, mainly situated in areas that were easy to work, but only with slash-and-burn agriculture and simple hoe or ard technology. This land had an important limitation: it does not support permanent cultivation, and became exhausted after 3 or 4 years, only recovering its capacity after lying fallow for 8-12 years, during which time it could be used for grazing or other extensive uses. This pattern of settlement and subsistence caused a breakdown of the larger communities from the previous period, now fragmented into

smaller local units, in all likelihood based on family groups. In this sense, the pattern of subsistence acted as a strategy of resistance to division, because it compelled the mobility of the settlement and the impossibility of maintaining large-sized groups, which in turn prevented the formation of large social groups. In Galicia, as in other European regions, the archaeological indicators reveal the appearance of warriors, the hegemony of a warlike ethos and the definitive rise of a new type of individual who was differentiated from the rest of the group. Although these indicators have been taken as proof of a process of aristocratisation and the establishment of social inequality, we better think that the promotion of conflict between groups and individuals could have initially had the opposite function, as these are ways of avoiding the consolidation of larger political units and permanent or virulent chiefdoms. The fact that social conditions did not change or any processes of greater complexity occurred for one millennium (ca. 2300-1200) precisely highlights the success of this strategy as a mechanism of resistance to maintain the emphasis of community values. It is important to note, for example, that during this long period the storage structures were limited to small pits and large vessels associated with each individual hut, revealing a limited capacity for the production of surpluses that would have been consumed as part of the techno-symbolic apparatus (weapons and jewellery) that accompanied the first warriors.

The situation changed clearly around 1200, especially in some areas within the region (mainly the coastal and southernmost ones). Actually, the identification of clearly divergent trajectories is one of the significant changes that happened in this moment. In those areas it is observed the appearance of large storage structures with an equally large capacity that were independent of the dwellings, as they are found in large groups. This implies a high capacity for the production and accumulation of surpluses, in all certainty derived from constant processes of agrarian intensification. However, on the contrary to the situation that had existed centuries before, now society had accepted the presence of singular identities within it, specifically the warrior. There was no funerary or domestic monumentality to consume this surplus, which was only used for conspicuous and competitive consumption, and which was therefore susceptible to being appropriated as material or symbolic capital by a specific segment of society. In this context, the consolidation of contact and trade on a regular basis introduced an additional factor of complexity within the political economies of those groups; one that became a new arena for the negotiation of power.

This new impulse towards social division, which could have set underway processes that established inequality and exploitation, broke down around 800 in a highly original and novel way. Again earlier and more clearly in the coastal and southern areas, the open sites with large accumulation structures were replaced by the first permanent, fortified settlements, characterised by the appearance of monumental stone walls, and the disappearance of the storage structures. At the same time, the communities became definitively settled on the land. The ways of exploiting the environment and the pattern of settlement were modified in order to diversify the model of subsistence, although the possibility of producing surpluses was diminished. Here, we once again find an example of how war and conflict came to the aid of community values, and served as a strategy to resist division. The generalisation of confrontation between groups led to a strengthening of their community identity, making it difficult the creation of more extensive structures of domination and power. As a result, the fortification was simultaneously a material device that reinforced community values against social division, and which highlighted the essential role of conflict between groups for the purpose of defining their identity.

Within each community, the domestic units are the same in architectural and functional terms (as dwellings, structures used for producing foodstuffs or for metalworking). This, together with the development of large community scenarios within the settlement, emphasised the predominance of the group over the families and individuals that comprised it. The balance between outsiders-community-individuals that was broken down in favour of each local community once again reveals the success of warfare and warriors as a strategy of resistance to the spread of division.

A part of this previous “solution” is the gradual visibility of identities within the communities, which slowly gathered strength – essentially the households. This became much more evident from 400, when the essential organisational form of habitational space began to take shape⁶. The mechanisms that had previously been used to inhibit social division now began to act in the opposite way, when the changes in the productive landscape indicate a new intensification that would once again make it possible to generate surpluses. Beyond the needs of protection of the inhabited space, the settlements were equipped with monumental defensive structures, which at the same time would have served as elements to control, limit and bind the population. However, the dedication of work to the construction of defences in settlements that did not occupy positions that were clearly defensible indicates a change in their function. The need to fortify communities whose interior was already fragmented has been interpreted (Parcero-Oubiña 2003) as having been promoted (and even created) by a social minority which in this way ideologically justified the need for its existence, controlled the units that upheld its position, and reinforced its *raison d’être*, which was nothing more than a real or fictitious state of threat. Therefore, these structures, which had previously served to mitigate the threat of division, now served as an instrument that made it possible to be consolidated.

It is from this moment on when all of the elements that are necessary to make the definitive social division acceptable become visible. From 200 onwards all of this took shape in a definitively complex social context. In it, the representations of dominant social segments took on the form and identity of the warrior, inverting the function of what had been a mechanism to inhibit division. This also quickly led to a greater and irreversible transformation following the inclusion of these territories within the structure of the Roman Empire.

This is a very long story marked by recurrent backward and forward leaps, and cyclic series. Therefore, “social evolution” has nothing to do with the linear approach that has fundamentally predominated in archaeology, anthropology or history. On occasions, society is forced to cross a point of no return, and which generates a socio-cultural moment with characteristics that are totally different to the previous moment but which, in its own way, will still represent a certain balance between tendencies towards division or indivision. It is important to identify this point or threshold that marks the difference between a novelty, despite which the general tendency is maintained, and a transformation, which means that things are completely different. We have not been concerned here with when the obvious forms of social change or exploitation are identified, but instead how and why the underlying conditions that make it possible are created. However, the whole process has a complexity and a quantity of bifurcations and double meanings that we cannot justify fully and coherently in this summary. In any event,

⁶ As had previously happened, the trajectories developed in this moment are increasingly diverse. In fact, from this moment onwards the existence of different pathways within the region is obvious and an issue in its own. A more detailed account of this question can be seen in the contribution by Sastre and Sánchez-Palencia, this volume.

we hope to have contributed towards demonstrating the use of our main thesis in order to understand the processes of change, and of resistance to change, in archaeological contexts.

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Figures

Ca. time period (cal BC)	Settlements			Monumentality		Burial practices		Production				Environmental impact	
	Location	Form	Mobility	Where	Degree	Form	Type	Main productive activities	Storage capacity	Metallurgy	Long distance trade	Degree	Trend
Before 4500	Uplands	Camps	Constant	Absent	Null	Unknown	Unknown	Hunting Gathering Horticulture	Null	Absent	Null	Null	-
4500 – 2700	Uplands and lowlands	Camps Small open villages	Important (Seasonal?)	Burials	Big extreme to	Megalithic mounds	Collective	Slash and burn agriculture	Very low	Absent	Increase	Low to moderate (deforestation, soil erosion)	Increases
2700 – 2300	Mainly lowlands	Big enclosed villages	Low	Ceremonial	Medium	Varied (mounds, cists, pits)	Individual	Fallow agriculture	Big	Emerging	Increase	Strong (+ soil acidification)	Increases
2300 – 1200	Uplands and lowlands	Small open villages	Important (periodic)	Burials	Very low	Varied (mounds, cists, pits)	Individual	Stockbreeding Fallow agriculture	Low	Modest	Decrease	Low to moderate	Decreases
1200 – 800	Lowlands	“Pit fields”	Low	Absent	Null	Varied	Individual	Fallow agriculture	Very big	Intense Specialized	Increase	Very strong (+metal pollution)	Increases
800 – 500	Upper limit of lowlands	Small hillforts	Null	Settlement	Big (widely based on natural features)	Unknown	Unknown	Fallow agriculture	Low	Modest Domestic	Decrease	Strong	Holds
500 – 200	Lowlands	Small to medium hillforts	Null	Settlement and household	Big	Unknown	Unknown	Intensive agriculture	Big	Intense Specialized	Increase	Strong	Increases
200 – 0	Lowlands	Small hillforts and Oppida	Null	Settlement and household	Extreme	Unknown	Unknown	Intensive agriculture	Very big	Very intense Specialized	Increase	Very strong (+metal pollution)	Increases

Table 1. Simplified summary of the prevailing characteristics of the archaeological record in the area and period under analysis