

THE SYMBOLIC APPROPRIATION OF LANDSCAPE IN THE MIDDLE TAGUS VALLEY DURING THE SECOND IRON AGE (IV-I CENT. BC)



Cristina Charro Lobato

LANDSCAPE
ARCHAEOLOGY
PERSPECTIVE



Cattle husbandry
Iconography
Social Ideology

1.



The Second Iron Age in the Iberian Peninsula

witnessed an important change in the way the land was exploited. This involved the introduction of new agrarian techniques which led to the intensification of crop production. As a result, there was an increasing deforestation accompanied by a massive use of the available space as pasture land and crop fields.

1. Agricultural iron tools
2. Circular millstone
3. Barley field with holm oak



4. The region was characterized

by a cool and dry environment which could have favoured cattle husbandry instead of agriculture. This economic specialization seems to be somehow reinforced by the extraordinary development of a stone iconography represented by large sized sculptures of bulls and pigs (verracos in the local terminology).

9. Summer landscape
10. Cattle of the area
11. Verraco (bull)
12. Verraco (pig)



4. Vetton with verraco

The middle Tagus Valley

(province of Toledo) is a geographic unit which constituted a natural frontier for the Vettons in the past. The Vettons were one of the pre-roman groups that inhabited the interior of the Iberian Peninsula.

2.

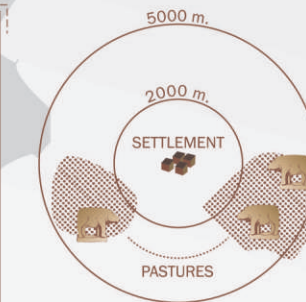


5. Land management strategy

We believe that this sculptural development is just an example of the land management strategy of the Vettons which was in close relationship to cattle raising.

In fact, research carried out in nearby areas shows that a high number of these verracos appears in areas which could be potentially exploited for pastures, situated not far from the settlements and easy to control from them.

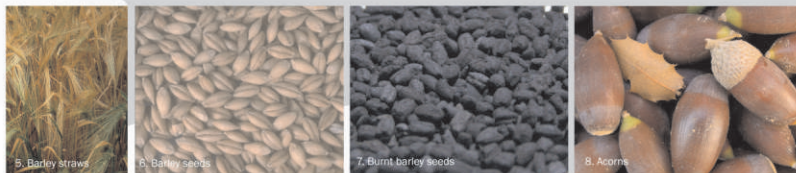
The location of these verracos is clearly related to areas strategic for the development of an economy based on cattle raising, e.g. areas of water sources, fords and transhumant paths.



6. Landscape markers

The main role played by cattle husbandry in this area suggests that these animal sculptures were used as landscape markers. They not only marked an economic space dominated by a social group but they were also property landmarks which signaled the critical resources of the economic system.

3.



Although the archaeobotanical evidence

is still very little, it has been assumed that the territory occupied by the Vettons was not particularly favourable for agriculture. The scarce botanical remains show the presence of wheat, barley, broad beans and lentils together with forest products such as corns and fruits.

