

Castros with «pedras fincadas» in Trás-os-Montes

Stones placed upright in the ground outside the walls of prehistoric castros in North-Eastern Portugal were used to prevent an enemy approaching the castro either too easily or too quickly. The best known example of the use of «pedras fincadas» in Portugal is the castro of Carvalhelhos, but as this castro has been so thoroughly excavated, and so fully published in this Journal by its distinguished excavator, Professor dos Santos Junior, there is no necessity to discuss it further here. In his publication of Carvalhelhos (1) Professor dos Santos Junior mentions some other castros with «pedras fincadas» which had been listed by the Abade de Baçal (2), and some of these are published below.

Parada (Fig. 1)

The castro called «Cidadelhe» is situated on the summit of a hill, 902 m. high, just to the east of the EN 217 between Braganza and Izeda, about 3 kms to the south of the village of Paredes. It is approximately octagonal in shape and is about 115 m. wide. Except on the south side (where the ground falls steeply), the castro is surrounded by a bank, under which lies a stone wall. A ditch is visible outside the bank on the south-eastern and western side, while a modern wall seems to hide a second wall on the north-east. Outside the north-western wall there is a curving ditch, 2,30-2,60 m. wide, which was cut out of the stone, and which surrounds a half-moon-shaped enclosure. As an extension of the north-western end of the ditch there is a talude rampa bank. Inside the half-moon-shaped enclosure there is a belt of «pedras fincadas» 2 m. wide, and the stones are about 30 cm. high.

Further pedras fincadas can be seen outside the ditch on the south-eastern side, where the stones reach a height of 1 m.

(1) *Trabalhos de Antropologia e Etnologia* 16, Fasc. 1-2, 1957, 25 ff., particularly page 45 f., footnote; 19, Fasc. 2, 1963, 187 ff. and 360 ff.; 20, Fasc. 1-2, 1965-66, 181 ff. (with excellent plan).

(2) *Memórias Arqueológico-Históricas do Distrito de Bragança* 9, 1934, 107. 108. 513.

There were originally many more, but the stones have been thrown in the ditch in modern times.

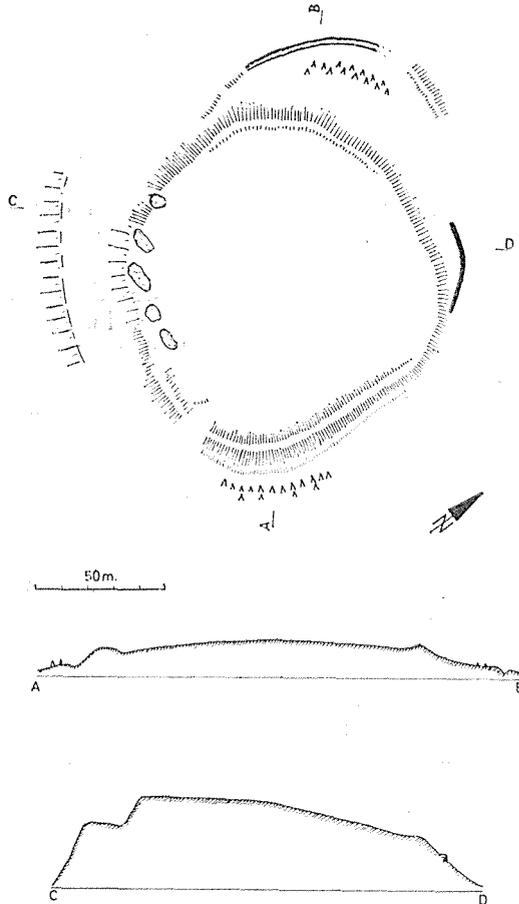


Fig. 1 — Plan and sections of the castro of Parada (Trás-os-Montes)
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Algosinho (Fig. 2)

The castro, known as «Palas dos Mouros», is situated on a tongue of land about 400 m. east of the village of Algosinho, near Bemposta. Three sides of this promontory fall steeply to a valley below, and are not fortified except for a small wall on the eastern side. However, the modern terraces on the point may hide an ancient wall. The promontory is cut off on the south side from the

adjoining high ground by a great bank of earth and stones which is about 10 m high. This bank is about 15 m wide, but much of this is due to the collapse of the original wall, which must have been even higher than the bank is now. A recent hole dug into this bank shows that the front of the wall was sloped. Outside the

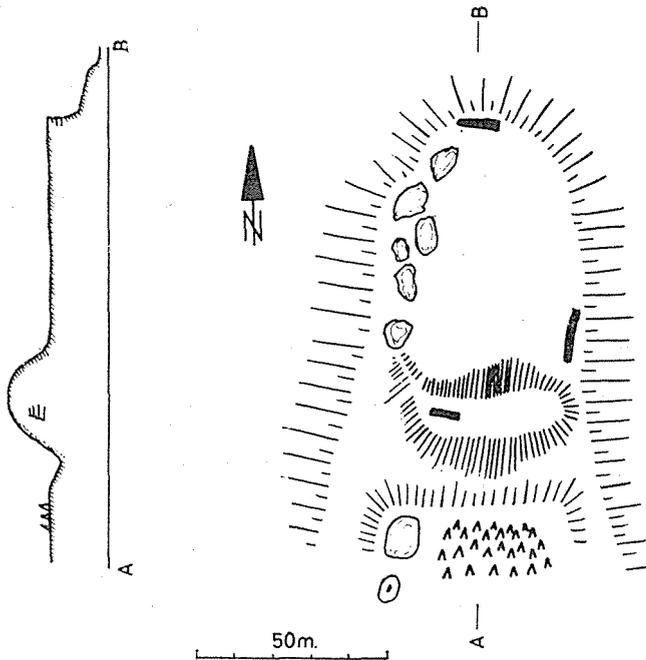


Fig. 2 — Plan and section of the castro of Algosinho (Trás-os-Montes).

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bank is a ditch, now used as a path, and further south is a belt of «pedras fincadas» about 9,50 m wide. The stones, which are of granite, are about 70 cms high.

Calvelhe

In his great work *Memórias Arqueológico-Históricas do Distrito de Bragança* ⁽³⁾, the Abade de Baçal has this to say of the castro of Calvelhe:

⁽³⁾ Vol. 9, 1934, 180.

«Num, veem-se restos de muros e fossos e, na rocha viva, os guiceiros, onde giravam as portas de acesso à fortaleza, a qual era defendida na esplanada por pedras espetadas na terra com a ponta aguda para cima, como na Cidadela de Paredes, em Algosinho, Penhas Juntas e Picote.»

I know nothing about the castros of Penhas Justas and Picote, but they presumably have «pedras fincadas» too.

The castro of Parada is unusual because it is situated on top of a hill. The only other castros with «pedras fincadas» situated on hill-tops are the Spanish castros of Las Cogotas (Avila) ⁽⁴⁾ and Gallinero (Soria) ⁽⁵⁾. The other castros are all situated on an inland promontory which are surrounded on three sides by a steep valley, and are defended on the fourth side by a wall. Other similar examples may be found at Las Merchanas (Salamanca) ⁽⁶⁾ and Miranda (Avila) ⁽⁷⁾.

Some of the round houses with porch (vestíbulo) at Carvalhelhos are similar to those found in other Portuguese castros further west, such as Citânia de Briteiros and Sabroso ⁽⁸⁾, but this is not surprising because of their geographical proximity. But otherwise there are few contacts between our castros with «pedras fincadas» and the castros of north-western Portugal and Galicia. «Pedras fincadas» are unknown west of Carvalhelhos, nor are they known in Galicia. They are, however, common in castros on the edge of the Plain of Leon and Castile, where they belong to the Cultura de los Verracos (See map Fig. 3). Our castros in Trás-os-Montes also belong to the Cultura de los Verracos.

The only castro with «pedras fincadas» in Portugal which has been extensively excavated is that at Carvalhelhos. Here the careful excavations of Professor dos Santos Junior have uncovered a wealth of material. The great majority of the finds are of the finds are of the Roman period, showing that there was a strong occupation in Roman times. Roman material has also been found at Spanish castros with pedras fincadas, such as at Miranda ⁽⁹⁾,

⁽⁴⁾ Juan Cabré Aguiló, Excavaciones de Las Cogotas (Avila) I. El Castro, Junta Superior de Excavaciones y Antigüedades, Memória N.º 110 (1929).

⁽⁵⁾ B. Taracena Aguirre, Carta Arqueológica de España, Soria (1941) 66 f.

⁽⁶⁾ Maluquer de Motes, Carta Arqueológica de España, Salamanca (1956) 73 ff.

⁽⁷⁾ Juan Cabré Aguiló, Encarnación Cabré de Morán, Antonio Molinero Perez, El Castro y la Necropolis del Hierro Celtico de Chamartin de la Sierra (Avila), Acta Arqueologica Hispanica 5 (1950).

⁽⁸⁾ Mario Cardozo, Citânia de Briteiros e Castro de Sabroso, Quinta edição 1965.

⁽⁹⁾ See note 7.

but other finds from these castros indicated that the walls and the «pedras fincadas» had been constructed before the Roman period⁽¹⁰⁾. Although no pre-Roman material has been discovered or identified at Carvalhelhos, it is quite possible that the walls of the castro of Carvalhelhos were built before the Roman period. From the evidence of the Spanish castros with «pedras fincadas,» it is likely that the Portuguese castros with «pedras fincadas» were constructed



Fig. 3 — Distribution map of castros with pedras fincadas in Portugal and Spain
(Reproduced by kind permission of the German Archaeological Institute, Madrid.)

sometime during the last four pre-Christian centuries. Some of these castros, however, continued to be inhabited into the Roman period, and this explains the wealth of Roman material which has been found at Carvalhelhos.

In conclusion, I should like to thank Professor dos Santos Junior, and the Director of the Empresa das Aguas de Carvalhelhos, Don Francisco Gonzalez, for their kindness and hospitality during my visit to the castro of Carvalhelhos.

PETER HARBISON
(Dublin — IRLANDA)

⁽¹⁰⁾ For further details of the chronology of these castros see Harbison, Castros with *Chevaux-de-Frise* in Spain and Portugal, *Madrider Mitteilungen* 9, 1968.