

SITUATING GENDER IN EUROPEAN ARCHAEOLOGIES

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Front Cover Illustration

Gold foil from Rogaland in western Norway showing a man and a woman,
often interpreted as the Nordic Vanir god Freyr and his wife Gerd
from the family of Giants. 7th–8th century AD.

(Photo: Svein Skare. © Bergen Museum, University of Bergen, Norway.)

Back Cover Illustration

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Maintenance Activities as a Category for Analysing Prehistoric Societies

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A prehistoric settlement does not simply consist of abstract spaces that may be understood according to general patterns applied to a given archaeological group. It also consists of active places and settings comprising behaviours, decisions, and lifestyles of a given society, and the social and logical dimensions of the settlement are constructed by men, women, children, and the elderly (GONZÁLEZ MARCÉN – PICAZO 2005, 143).

This paper analyses spaces and their connection with material culture found in the Argaric settlement of Peñalosa (Baños de la Encina, Jaén, Spain) (*Fig. 1*). The Argaric societies in south-east Iberia (corresponding to the Bronze Age in southeastern Spain and spanning from c. 2250 to 1450 cal BC) have traditionally been defined by a specific settlement pattern, the presence of certain kinds of metal tools and ceramic vessels, and a characteristic burial rite. As a general rule, Argaric sites tend to be strategically located in mountains and hills with natural defensive features and an impressive view of the surrounding area. In addition, some of these sites were also fortified by the construction of complex defence structures such as stone walls, towers, bastions, forts, and stone enclosures protecting the higher areas of the settlements as well as those with easier access (ARANDA *et al.* 2009, 138–140).

The purpose of this paper is to reconstruct the everyday life of a particular family unit. Past technologies may be understood through the study of material culture (HENDON 1996) since it constitutes the material and tangible sample of social practices developed by each individual (CONKEY – GERO 1991, 15–16). Individuals gave technologies meaning through their manufacture and use of them. Therefore, the distribution and organization of space in one of the households at Peñalosa, which we called Xa (10a), will be analysed and interrelated with the set of activities in which these individuals probably participated (HASTORF 1991). In this way we will learn about the everyday life of this particular family group, using the time scale of the everyday (PICAZO 1997).

We consider the scale of “everydayness” as the framework in which the set of maintenance relationships and activities ruling daily life of a social group takes place. For this reason, a historical interpretation of different moments in the lives of individuals in a given society may be conducted from this viewpoint



Fig. 1: General overview of the Agaric settlement of Peñalosa (Baños de la Encina, Jaén, Spain).

(GONZÁLEZ – PICAZO 2005, 148–149). Furthermore, domestic settings are the physical settings where daily activity occurs – the places where relationships and interpersonal cooperation develop. They allow us to approach the lives of those who are rarely included in historical interpretations – women and children – and their respective productions.

Maintenance activities: a category of analysis for the study of past societies

Every society creates its own system of practices which identifies and defines each society as a social group. Many behaviour systems can be understood through maintenance activities (ALARCÓN GARCÍA 2005, 2006; COLOMER *et al.* 1998; MONTÓN 2002; PICAZO 1997; SÁNCHEZ ROMERO 2002, 2008a). These activities are intended to address basic needs such as food, clothing, care, welfare, hygiene, networking, and social stability. They require the use of new technologies and the application of transferred or acquired knowledge, which leave traces in an endless repertoire of material experiences (BRAY 1997, 2) and result in most

archaeological discoveries that define a past society (GONZÁLEZ MARCÉN – PICAZO 2005, 143; GONZÁLEZ MARCÉN 2006, 22; SÁNCHEZ ROMERO – ARANDA JIMENEZ 2006, 74).

Maintenance activities configure social space of a domestic group in the framework of everyday life (GONZÁLEZ MARCÉN – PICAZO 2005, 144). Domestic contexts belong to the physical realm where maintenance activities take place. Therefore, these activities generate social behaviours and create a set of political, economic, and social behaviours that are vital to study the past (HENDON 1996, 47; ALARCÓN GARCÍA 2006). These contexts act as the framework where a wide range of personal relationships develop. These works are characterized by cooperation, interaction, and living together; thus these activities become the main aspects in the construction of social relationships (PICAZO 1997, 60). In addition, maintenance activities become frameworks where social identities are reproduced and manipulated (ALARCÓN GARCÍA 2005; 2006, 90). These works are relevant because through their occurrence, related decisions, and relationships, society managed to define itself in social terms (CURÍA – MASVIDAL 1998; SØRENSEN 2000).

Among existing studies of gender and women in prehistory, the study of women's work stands out (GONZÁLEZ MARCÉN 2006). Work has been considered ahistorical, immobile, and linear, unchanging and non-temporal, placed outside social and historical dynamics; thus in historical interpretation it is forgotten that these activities are crucial for a society to develop and survive (GONZÁLEZ MARCÉN *et al.* 2007, 17). In short, these activities have been underestimated by social research studies and interpretations of past societies, their technological contributions having been ignored as well as their value in terms of knowledge and expertise (SÁNCHEZ ROMERO 2008b).

Maintenance activities as a whole have normally been connected with women's production in ethnographic, ethno-historical, and contemporary societies. This has not been beneficial for women or for the way activities are regarded, since hiding, marginalizing, and undervaluing both these activities and women's knowledge have occurred.

Maintenance activities as a category of social analysis

From our viewpoint, we understand and ratify the historical and social value of maintenance activities for the maintenance of social groups. This is why the study is intended to deepen the knowledge of a social group through the study

of maintenance activities by considering them as a category of social analysis. We regard this category as one that allows us to find out more about the type of relationships existing in the framework of everyday space. These relationships supposedly affected every aspect of the lives of the social group that inhabited this archaeological site. In our study, we use the information obtained through the study of archaeological data found in household Xa, a particular house in the settlement of Peñalosa. Household Xa dates from c. 1800 to 1500 BC. As was mentioned previously, maintenance activities are the set of tasks taking place in the everyday life of any social group. They refer to the set of activities connected with the maintenance and care of every single member of a social group and include those practices related to generational replacement, production, and the different relationships that exist (SÁNCHEZ ROMERO 2008a, 96).

Preparing food, culinary practices, and diet

Food-related practices are precisely the maintenance activities best represented in the archaeological catalogue of every site. Cooking and transforming raw materials into food ready for consumption (MONTÓN 2002; 2005, 162; ALARCÓN GARCÍA 2005; 2006, 94) are clear and explicit examples of maintenance activities that have been catalogued as female productive activities and that also have left the best physical traces among the material culture left by former peoples (HASTORF, 1991, 133; BRUMFIEL 1991; HENDON 1997; MEYERS 2003; MONTÓN 2005, 162).

Preparing food comprises a series of basic procedures among which personal and gender networks are established (MONTÓN 2005, 164) and which are marked by learning and knowledge (DELGADO 2008). They are vital and crucial, and feature two fundamental aspects for the development of societies: first, they are vital for human nutrition (CARRASCO 2003; COLOMER *et al.* 1998; CURÍA – MASVIDAL 1998; HASTORF 1991; MONTÓN 2000, 2005; SÁNCHEZ ROMERO 2008b), and supply biochemical substances and energy necessary to survive (CONTRERAS – GARCÍA 2005, 36), and secondly, they are important for the maintenance of an economic and cultural balance within a human group (HASTORF 1991, 134).

Food-related practices are considered a set of activities involving networks of social and symbolic practices linked to food production, distribution, and consumption (MONTÓN 2005, 164–165). Thus they are considered practical variables that mark and structure social and cultural relationships as well as time since they are the basis for the creation and reproduction of individual and group

identities, the creation of power relationships, the negotiation of gender and age, and the creation of intricate symbols and metaphors within the society (SHERRATT 1996).

Food preparation implies a technological process that requires knowledge of the properties of resources used (COLOMER 1996, 47; DELGADO 2008, 166; HENDON 1996, 50; MONTÓN 2005, 165), including knowledge of what are the most available raw materials for cooking, of different cooking techniques depending on the culinary system in question – boiling, grilling, stewing, etc. – and of which food is most appropriate for each process. As a consequence, food-related practices require a deep knowledge of individual and group decision-making, and of the technical applications of facilities and tools (MONTÓN 2005).

The foods we consume have left – and still leave – traces at two levels. First, the human body (and in the past, the remains of bones) is a tangible trace of food systems. We can learn about food habits of our ancestors by analysing stable isotopes. In addition, every food-related practice is documented by ecofactual and artefactual remains in archaeological records. This is demonstrated by the large amount of fauna and flora remains, as well as pottery and other objects found in archaeological sites (SÁNCHEZ ROMERO 2008b). In this paper only the latter are mentioned, since the analysis of stable isotopes has not been conducted for Peñalosa at the time of this study.

Cereals are essential components that give evidence of the practices of ancient groups. They represent the most abundant food plant in any archaeological site. They are easy to preserve and have a very high nutritional value, especially as a source of protein and carbohydrates. For these reasons, they are one of the main elements in the diet of any human group (BUXÓ 2008). It is hardly surprising that evidence of cereal processing and storing activities are present in the whole area of Peñalosa (ALARCÓN GARCÍA 2005; 2006). This evidence supports the importance of food-related activities both at a family and a group level (ALARCÓN GARCÍA 2006, 97), and stresses the prominence of cereals in the diet. Cereals are mainly glucidic nutrients, with a high energetic value and very rich in phosphorus. A high proportion of cereals may satisfy the protein needs of humans to a large extent (BUXÓ 2008). Nevertheless, they cannot be consumed without undergoing processing; they must be treated and processed in order to be suitable for consumption. The process necessary to transform cereals is milling, that is, grinding cereal grains in order to release the nutritional part (WATTS 2002, 11). Material remains evidencing this process were found in household Xa. In particular, a large grinding structure consisting of a raised bench supporting a



Fig. 2. View of house Xa at the Bronze Age site of Peñalosa.

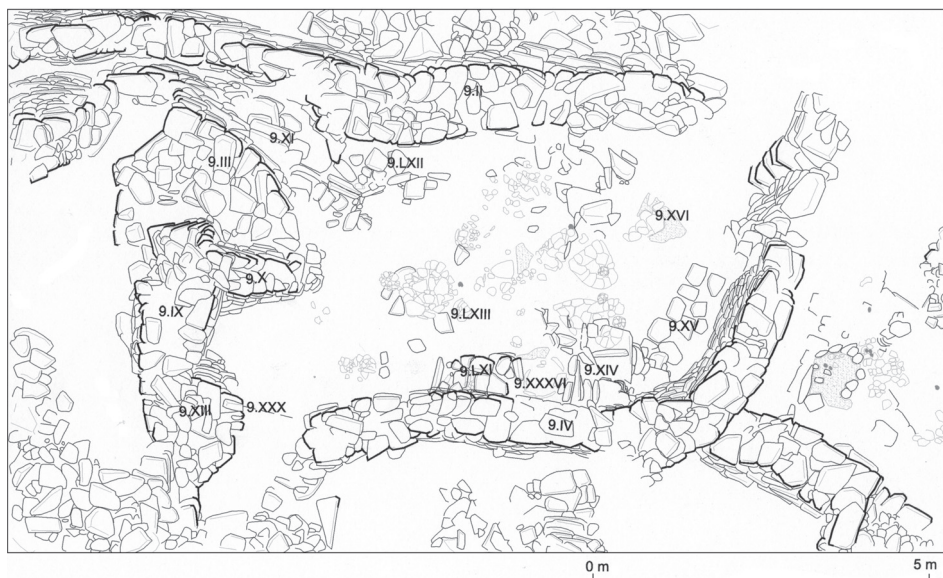


Fig. 3. Plan of house Xa at Peñalosa.

large millstone was found in the southwest end of the house. The millstone is thought to have served as the place where large amounts of grain were processed. Once the grain had been ground through friction, it was stored in the slab-made structure found next to the bench (*Figs 2–3*).

Grinding is incessant, exhausting, slow, demanding, and mechanical work (BRUMFIEL 1991; MEYERS, 2006, 28). The nutritional needs of an adult man require around one kilogram of flour. One hour of grinding results in approximately 0.8 kg of flour; thus a six-member family dedicated at least two to three hours to obtain sufficient flour (BROSHI, 2001, 125). Therefore, we could estimate how much time people presumably spent processing the necessary amount of grain to feed their families.

As already mentioned, storing cereals was a frequent and everyday practice in Peñalosa. Regarding household Xa, this activity probably took place in the southwest and central areas where numerous vessels for storage were found (*Fig. 4:3*). These shapes shelter content properly, especially considering that slate lids were normally used to close vessels that contained mainly non-processed – thus not suitable for consumption – wheat and barley seeds. That most vessels supposedly were used to store non-processed seeds leads us to the assumption that the grinding process was carried out on a daily basis to satisfy the basic needs of the family since only one storage structure (9.XXXVI) for processed cereal was found (*Fig. 3*). As a result, it is thought that the people in charge of grinding would also have been responsible for distributing, organizing, and managing daily consumption of cereals.

A direct relationship between the house and the storing, processing, cooking, and consuming processes is established. It is notable that the most productive area for these activities is located in the south-southwest end of the house, where a higher concentration of ceramic remains was found. These are not only related to storage but also to cooking, as demonstrated by the large number of remains of large and medium-sized pots with marked-necks and of pots with inward-sloping sides placed next to the hearth structure.

These elements as a whole allow consideration of the subsistence basis of the members who lived in this house. First, they help us understand that their diet was mainly based on wheat, especially on naked species of wheat. Secondly, barley had a very important role in their diet. Contrary to the evidence found in other houses in the settlement, barley was a secondary nutrient in this house. On the basis of the high percentage of carpological remains found inside pieces of pottery containers and the grinding structure in this house, plant materials are thought

to have been connected with flour production (PEÑA 1995, 162). However, the plant-based diet was complemented by fruits or plants considered wild (*Sorbus/Pyrus*, *Quercus*, *Vitis* sp., *Olea* seeds) and by roots and rhizomes (CONTRERAS *et al.* 2000, 338).

Faunal remains are also crucial ecofactual elements for human nutrition. Differences between consumption of faunal remains left by the family in household Xa and other family units in the settlement have also been found (CONTRERAS *et al.* 1995), including larger amounts than those found in other houses (house 1 or house 3 in Peñalosa) and also a high percentage of equid remains recovered in this house. They represent 78% of the total animal bones found in this site, followed by sheep and goat remains, then bovine, and finally deer and pork in the smallest quantities. This animal spectrum is unusual in an Iberian site of these characteristics (CONTRERAS *et al.* 1995).

Likewise, the percentage of horse bones stands out, in particular from horses that have undergone anthropic manipulation. Traces of dismembering and intentional manipulation have been found in 44% of 178 samples, traces of cuts in 63%, and evidence of fire exposure in 7.5% cases. This is indicated by animal remains found among ashes in the hearth located in the south end of the house and inside the ovate pot found in the hearth located next to structure 9.II, placed in the northwest end. Axial bones (ribs and vertebrae) are the anatomical parts of horses that were most affected by anthropic processes, although some examples of parts belonging to the appendicular skeleton (i.e., legs) have been found (SANZ BRETÓN – MORALES 2000, 223–233).

Most of this evidence corresponds to tasks that were carried out prior to cutting meat into pieces for consumption and probably also prior to preparing bones for cooking. Consequently, it is believed that these remains were prepared for human consumption and are part of cooking waste or remains (SANZ BRETÓN – MORALES 2000, 223–233).

To sum up, these elements confirm the hypothesis that everyday consumption of horse took place in this house, at least during the occupation phase on which we are focusing, and in an even higher proportion than the consumption of sheep and goat. First of all, domestic livestock – representing 70% of remains – prevails against wild livestock (deer and wild boar), representing 30% of the record. These data provide information about cattle and the economic system of this social group. Secondly, they ate those parts of the body that had been least affected by aging-related processes. Thus, axial parts were eaten instead of limbs. Third, people in charge of cutting meat were expert butchers who had a thorough

knowledge of cutting techniques, since most of the cuts are clean and direct. Fourth, these individuals used every resource available. They ate grilled steaks, while bones were prepared for cooking in more elaborate boiled stews. Numerous animal remains found among the ashes of the southern hearth and inside the ovate pot found in the northern hearth provide evidence of these practices.

Therefore, the data available today indicate that two cooking techniques were used, at least by this family unit: grilling or direct exposure of food to fire, and boiling. Plant elements might have been eaten in the form of flat round loaves of bread since wheat is the most suitable cereal from which to prepare bread, although other cereals may be used (BUXÓ 2008). They might also have been used to prepare porridge as a semi-solid food. Likewise, evidence of both cooking techniques was demonstrated in animal remains. Large amounts of animal remains with traces of direct fire exposure were found. In addition, the parts of the body that were used provide evidence of having been cut into steaks, and some animal remains were also found inside the pot, as mentioned previously.

Ceramic technology: cooking and eating practices

Every nutritional element and cooking technique mentioned requires a set of vessels to be turned into food suitable for consumption. Pottery containers are directly related to these processes. In our study, two types of large pots have been documented (*Fig. 4.1–2*), associated with slate lids. These were found next to hearths, and one additional pot lid was found and identified as belonging to a large vessel found at the centre of the room. These ceramic pots also show evidence of food preparation and processing, and demonstrate that solid or semi-solid and fluid foods were present in the diet of this family unit (ALARCÓN GARCÍA 2006, 98).

Nevertheless, the morphological and functional study of the pottery found in this house does not only show technological processes connected with food preparation and diet (COLOMER 1996, 50) but also hallmarks of political, social, and cultural indicators (SÁNCHEZ ROMERO – ARANDA JIMENEZ 2006, 81). The choice of a given dinner set may be understood as a hallmark of a family unit or a group (GOLDSTEIN 2003), as well as a visible and obvious way of exclusion (DELGADO 2008) if eating is considered an act comprising numerous normative meanings rather than a mere biological act (SÁNCHEZ ROMERO – ARANDA JIMENEZ 2006, 81; GONZÁLEZ MARCÉN – PICAZO 2005, 142). Food and drinks are substances that may be shared with others and supplied to others, and serving

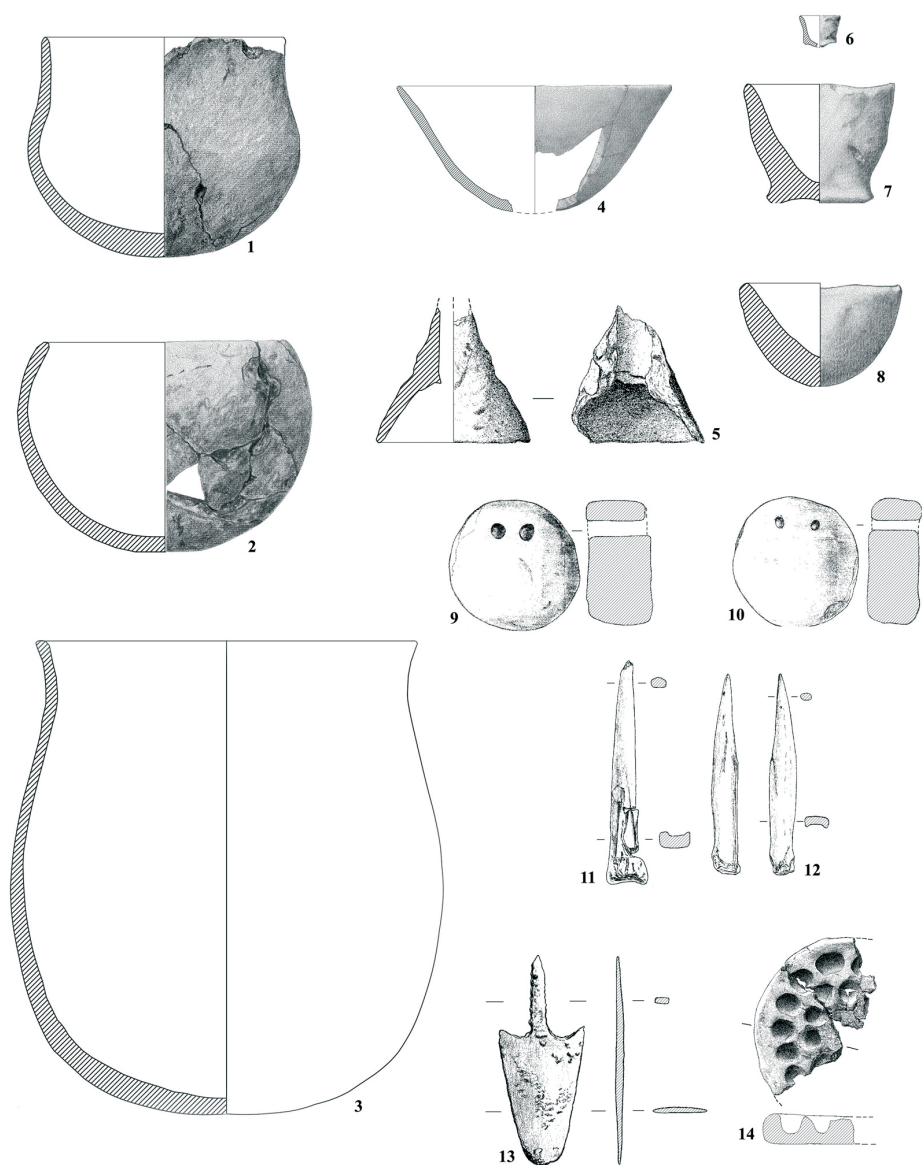


Fig. 4. Material culture recovered on the occupation floor of house Xa: 1–2. pots; 3. crock (1:6); 4–5. bowl and cup (1:2); 6–8. smalls bowls (1:1); 9–10. loom weights; 11–12. bone awls; 13. arrowhead; 14. rounded piece of pottery.
At scale of 1:3 unless indicated otherwise.

food creates strong material links between the person who supplies food and the person who receives it, whether a mother, a leader, or a rival (DELGADO 2008).

The dinner set used to present and consume food in this house includes semi-spherical bowls and cups (*Fig. 4:4–5*). These bowls and other vessels were of varying sizes, ranging from medium-sized to small-sized ones, without internal or external ornamental elements. They are highly polished, acquiring an almost metallic look, and distinguish the technology used for their manufacture from that used in the manufacture of large processing, cooking, and storage containers.

The morphological characteristics of ceramic containers give evidence that the family that lived in this house tended to eat semi-solid and fluid food. These nutrients promote a lower degree of mobility among people at the table, thus turning this domestic space into a place for family gathering and social interaction. The size of the pieces of pottery found makes us think that the family members ate individually, although some examples of containers for group consumption were found. Meanwhile, evidence of the social position of the members of this family unit has been found by studying the surface treatment and morphology of the dinner set. That the base of a stemmed vessel is included in the dinner set of this family suggests that their identity differed from the rest of the inhabitants in the settlement since bases of cups were associated with grave goods in Argaric societies (ARANDA JIMENEZ 2001; 2004). These characteristics reveal that those who were in charge of preparing and serving food were interested in showing it in public. Therefore, the moment of serving and food itself acquired special relevance.

The eating-related practices discussed so far apparently took place close to the two hearths found in the south-southwest and northwest areas of the house. It is assumed that two large benches (9.XV and 9.LXI in *Fig. 3*) were used to hold food until it was ready to be consumed, since remains of bowls and vessels were found at both benches. For this reason, we believe that socio-economic or ecological patterns can be determined and that food-related elements, spaces, practices, and material culture serve as a network of social relationships where power and supportive relationships are made up, thus promoting the construction of social identities.

Using space: textile production

As we mentioned above, the inner space of this house was home to a set of activities interrelated in space and time. Textile production is one of these

activities normally catalogued as an “indoors task”, directly related to domestic contexts and “female” activities (BRUMFIELD 1991; MIRÓN 2007, 112–113).

Archaeological remains of textile production (*Figs 2–3*) were found in the northeast end of the house, next to the inner side of wall E 9.II. Numerous loom weights with two holes each were found on a bench (E 9.LXII in *Fig. 4.9–10*). Many of these weights were not properly preserved, probably because this area was not only used as a base for a loom but also as a place where weights were dried once they had been manufactured. This could explain the large number of weights recorded, as well as the varying degree of preservation. However, textile production uses specific tools, in particular punches and stitching awls, which were made of bone (*Fig. 4.11–12*) and metal, and tools made of both materials have been found in this house. These elements were concentrated in the southwest very near the hearth so we assume that this area was also a space for maintaining and fixing different objects such as punches and arrowheads. That these activities are related to the hearth structure that was found turns this area into a place where social relationships were generated and which was the main area where the everyday life of this family took place.

Therefore, it can be shown archaeologically that not only textile activity but also loom weight production and punch and awl maintenance took place in this domestic area. In addition, these activities were combined and interrelated with other maintenance activities. Textile production was a part of everyday life, fully integrated within domestic and maintenance activities in this house. Manufacture of clothes and mats, among other items, would probably satisfy some of the basic maintenance needs. The technological process of textile production could be interrupted, resumed, and combined with other productive activities such as preparing food, childcare, and helping children socialize (DOMMASNES 2005; MIRÓN 2007).

Children: games, learning and socializing

Childcare and socialization of children have been widely ignored in studies conducted both in the past and in the present. However, both age and gender categories are made up socially (LUCY 2005), so they are equally relevant in the social organization of a human group (PROUT 1999; SÁNCHEZ ROMERO 2007, 26; SOFAER DEREVENSKI 1997, 2000). Thus it is useful to analyse age-related aspects when studying the past (CHAPA 2003; LILLEHAMMER 1989; SÁNCHEZ ROMERO 2007, 26; 2008c). Children have an economic and social role within

the group, just like adults; therefore, we also address children's activities and attitudes (SÁNCHEZ ROMERO 2004; 2007, 26; 2008c). In Argaric societies, and in particular among Peñalosa inhabitants, it is possible to observe behaviours and activities through the study of burial evidence. Children are represented to almost the same degree as adults, representing 40% of the people buried in the settlement (ALARCÓN GARCÍA 2006, 108).

Children become involved in societies through mechanisms such as learning (NÁJERA *et al.* 2006), and they learn by using toys and interacting with objects. They learn how to produce by means of games (SOFAER DEREVENSKI 2000, 7), as well as to belong to the economic sphere by promoting their becoming members of a community in which social categories (gender, sex, age, status, or social class) must be reproduced (LILLEHAMMER 1989, 94; SÁNCHEZ ROMERO 2004, 2008c).

In the case of Peñalosa, compartmentalization, complementarity, and interaction of activities carried out within domestic contexts, such as those observed in household Xa, recreate highly valuable spaces where children can learn. They use toys and games to make up their world, repeating adults' actions and imitating them. By recreating norms, duties, obligations, and activities that they are expected to comply with when they grow into adults, children learn on a continuous basis. Therefore, harmony between children, domestic contexts, and material culture determine their identity as members of the family unit.

As individuals, children belonged to the communities studied and left evidence that has been recovered as part of the archaeological record (SÁNCHEZ ROMERO 2006; 2007, 26; 2008c). Different elements of material culture that might have been used by children in this house were found which apparently were used for playing and thus learning. We refer to small pottery vessels that were crudely and irregularly made without surface treatment (*Fig. 4.6–8*). These vessels might have been made by adults with the intention to contribute to children's games, or by children themselves to learn and socialize by imitating both activities that adults carried out and artefacts they used and created (POLITIS 1998, 10; SÁNCHEZ ROMERO 2004, 2008c). The production process of pottery is laborious and requires a long learning process and a great deal of practice to obtain the intended outcomes (RICE 1999). These asymmetric pieces of pottery, which differ from Argaric norms, could correspond to pieces made in the framework of the learning process of children belonging to Argaric settlements located in southeast Iberia in Bronze Age (ARANDA JIMENEZ 2001, 2004).

Some psychological studies focused on the development of learning and motor skills have demonstrated that children go through different phases during the learning process. They are able to develop and learn a series of techniques related to each technological process. According to Elizabeth Bagwell, it is unlikely that a child under four is able to make pieces of pottery with specific shapes. In fact, she explains that they start creating shapes that are distinguishable when they become five and that they do not consolidate this skill until they are nine years old (BAGWELL 2002, 91). Therefore, bearing in mind the high degree of standardization in the production of pottery, as is the case in Argaric societies, the presence of very small and asymmetric vessels without surface treatment, both in burial (SÁNCHEZ ROMERO 2004; 2007) and domestic (ALARCÓN GARCÍA 2005; 2006) contexts, seems to indicate that they provide evidence of the pottery-learning process and skill-acquisition process of individual children. Thus, it is likely that children at a very early age were trained in this technology by adults and specialists, through imitation, observation, oral teaching, and practical demonstration (CROWN 2002, 108–109; SÁNCHEZ ROMERO 2008c).

In fact, evidence shows that children belonging to the population in this settlement were involved in a series of activities, such as physical and emotional care, food, socialization, and learning activities. These activities were probably carried out together with other maintenance activities inside this house. Different tasks apparently were carried out by members of the social group of different gender and ages. However, child-related activities have been related to women, both ethnographically and ethno-historically (MIRÓN 2005; WALLACE-HADRILL 1996). Furthermore, data indicate that children receive information and knowledge about production and technology through socialization and learning processes in such a way that they are able to join the production sphere within societies and build up their identity within the group to which they belong (SÁNCHEZ ROMERO 2006, 132–135).

Final remarks

The purpose of this study is to show the need for analysing everyday life activities and the relevance of conducting archaeological research on the scale of everyday activities. Historical experience acquired throughout the life cycle is accumulated and expressed through “everydayness”. Memories, experiences, knowledge, works, and creations accumulate and leave traces that are recovered in archaeological studies. They belong to material remains found in any past or

present site (GONZÁLEZ MARCÉN – PICAZO 2005, 148). Consequently, they are necessary to understand social dynamics within a human group that existed in the past. According to Agner Heller (1972), everyday life is not separate from history but the core of historical events. Great non-everyday achievements are based on everyday life and have an effect on it. Every historical achievement becomes a particular and historical achievement precisely due to its subsequent effect on everyday life (HELLER 1972). Thus any social, political, and economic machinery must be operative in everyday life, since “everydayness” is the context where interpersonal networks develop. These, in turn, are the portrait of continuity or change, which is expressed by means of the creation, recreation, or extinction of relationships (GONZÁLEZ MARCÉN – PICAZO 2005, 147–148).

The similar character of maintenance activities throughout time and space has been widely cited to avoid considering these activities from the viewpoint of social interpretations. However, we consider that the cross-directional character of maintenance activities makes them valuable. These are the only activities that are maintained throughout time and space, thus showing their prominence and consideration within social groups, both past and present. Nevertheless, it does not mean they do not go through changes or do not show changes that occurred within a human group. On the contrary, these activities influenced and were influenced by the rest of the changes that occurred within a given society (SÁNCHEZ ROMERO – ARANDA JIMINEZ 2006).

In this study, different maintenance activities have been identified as having occurred in the framework of household Xa. These activities have been identified on the basis of household organization and the cultural remains that were found. In particular, we refer to social practices such as storing, preparing, and cooking food; textile production; fixing and maintaining tools and utensils; and children’s socialization and learning practices. These activities are not only interrelated within the same space – household Xa in this Bronze Age settlement – but also within time since they have persisted and been present in every culture known so far. This fact is only possible if interrelation and interaction exist, since they imply that societies were able to perpetuate themselves through processes existing in the framework of everyday life.

For all the reasons mentioned above, we claim the need to give importance to, consider, and reflect on the value of domestic contexts as a source of information. These spaces produce and reproduce social relationships and practices (BOURDIEU 1985); they are the places where essential habits are structured and reproduced (RICHARDS 1990, 113), where gender, sex, age, and status differences become

evident and where the linkage between different generations and the network of social and gender relationships are built up (GILCHRIST 1999, 100). Because maintenance activities are most clearly visualized in these spaces (SØRENSEN 2000, 158), the presence of women and their production could be observed. (TRINGHAM 1991, 101).

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