

Introduction

This volume is mostly constituted of articles based on the communications presented at Session B15, entitled “*Social complexity in a long-term perspective*”, in the framework of the XVII World UISPP Congress that took place in Burgos (Spain), in September 2014.

The main aspects that oriented the debate were summarized as follows:

i) Social complexity should be approached in a long-term perspective, giving meaning to the studies of social complexity in Mesolithic hunter-gatherer societies;

ii) Social complexity is in substance a multidimensional subject therefore the selection of a broad set of criteria such as economy, demography, territory, politics, location, religion, art and ideological behaviors is desirable for its study;

iii) Social complexity is perhaps one of the most recurrently discussed archaeological themes, often debated according to a strict evolutionist perspective. Without neglecting the importance of this approach, it can be very useful to cross several relational scales of analysis, searching for variability and unpredictability in contextual sphere and trying to find structural trends in the long run on a global scale.

iv) Complexity and social stratification, in other words, the emergence of the State as the most inflexible and coercive form of social organization had been underlying most of the discussions, even if the chronology of that emergence is not consensually accepted for our geography.

v) The main question put forward in the agenda of the debate is crucial for the contemporary world, and archaeological thinking must of course provide it with engaged contributions: can Humanity achieve equality in increasingly complex societies? In other words, is there any possibility for the separation of inequality and social complexity? I do not believe that a straightforward answer has been provided, but I hope this volume can contribute to open new avenues for thinking about social complexity. The shared research efforts of the authors of these studies leading to a better understanding of the process of rising social complexity were centred in the Iberian Peninsula.

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