

Community, Identity, and Conflict

Iron Age Warfare in the Iberian Northwest

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This paper proposes a new view of conflict in European Iron Age societies: considering isolationism as an alternative to warfare. Study of the *castros* (fortified settlements) of the Iberian Northwest suggests the organization of production as a main explanatory element in the emergence of identities based on exclusion and the imposition of communal structures of power. The relationship between these communities must have been one of conflict, and the unequal productive success of domestic units and the requirement of external marriage interchanges created realms of interaction in which internal conflict surely arose. These tendencies were kept in check by controlling settlement growth. Although a conflict-prone situation is documented in the archaeological record, there is no evidence that warfare as an endemic reality created groups of warriors. Warfare-related activity in these Iron Age societies was neither heroic nor hierarchical. Warfare did not determine the form of society but rather was related to the productive and reproductive organization of the societies that engaged in it.

The idea that warfare is an essential component of society has been a constant in studies of protohistoric European societies. Researchers have studied possible connections between the development of strongly hierarchical societies (chiefdoms or states) during the Bronze and Iron Ages in many European regions and warfare as an element of social control and an expression of domination. Late Iron Age contacts between these societies and those of the Mediterranean region produced an ethnocentric ideological construction reflected in Greek and Latin literary references to the “barbarian West” or the “Celts.” These societies were depicted as essentially aggressive, in part as a result of the migrations and invasions that had affected the Mediterranean region for centuries.

It has often been assumed that in the Iron Age Iberian Northwest, the so-called Castro Culture (named for its characteristic fortified settlements), warfare was an essential factor in the social and ideological construction of communities. Until the early 1990s the main academic paradigm, based on evolution, classified the protohistoric peoples of Iberia by their level of cultural development. Mediterranean societies and the climax of urbanism that they embodied were considered examples of a high level of development, while the peoples of the Northwest were considered primitive and poorly insti-

tutionalized, with weakly developed agriculture and a warlike mentality:

The socio-cultural structures of *Astures* and *Galaici* were as primitive as those of the *Lusitani*, typical of the Bronze Age, based on communities organised into small fortified villages or “castros.” . . . The castro society was organised in age groups. . . . The women worked in the fields and at home, while the men engaged in stockraising and pillage. . . . Their primitive character explains their resistance to assimilation into the then civilised world and their late conquest by Rome, only achieved with difficulty in the time of Augustus. But in rural areas their culture survived into the later days of the Roman Empire, and some ways of life continued into the middle ages and even the present. (Almagro Gorbea and Ruiz Zapatero 1992, 515)

This idea of an underdeveloped Northwest, inherited from Strabo’s *Geography* (book III), was, fortunately, no longer widely held when Almagro Gorbea and Ruiz Zapatero’s book was published, and it is odd that they included it, because the chapter dedicated to the Castro Culture in the same volume reflected more current theories about the archaeological record and its possible interpretations (Peña 1992).

The “Castro Culture” is the name given to the peoples of the Iron Age (approximately from the seventh century BC to the Roman conquest at the end of the first century BC) in the northwestern part of the Iberian Peninsula (Galicia, Portugal north of the Duero, and the western parts of Zamora,

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León, and Asturias; [fig. 1]). An increase in high-quality archaeological research has led to a new interpretation of this culture and has helped rescue it from the category of atavistic underdevelopment to which it historiographic tradition had relegated it. Contrary to the Strabo-influenced view that the Castro Culture was underdeveloped, current social interpretations generally describe it as a complex agrarian society in tune with its European historical context, within which warfare was a decisive element (Peña and Vázquez Varela 1996; Parcero Oubiña 2003). These positions have been modified considerably in recent years, with the accumulation of evidence from an archaeological record that cannot be easily subjected to a hierarchical interpretation. Scholars have replaced the powerful warrior aristocracies postulated for the Castro Culture with more diffuse and less powerful dominant groups that nevertheless shared a predilection for war.¹

These studies have subtly altered the meaning of social inequality, but they have not abandoned the warrior-hierarchy model. Other models are being developed that emphasize the nonhierarchical aspects of the available archaeological data (Fernández-Posse and Sánchez-Palencia 1998; Sastre 2002). My approach is based on the concept of segmentary agrarian societies, which requires alternatives to hierarchy as the basis for social structure and unequal relations.

These changes in the interpretation of the Castro world break away from monolithic Celticism (although they still depend on it in many ways) and parallel recent changes in the European study of the Iron Age. Progress in archaeological research has freed researchers from the domination of philology-based views and allowed them to describe and interpret the diversity of European social formations. The availability of various anthropological models, along with the development of regionally based archaeological studies, has shed light on the differing kinds of historical processes experienced by European societies (Arnold and Gibson 1995). Some scholars (e.g., Megaw and Megaw 1996, 2004) continue to adopt "Celtic" approaches to archaeological data, while others (e.g., Collis 1997, 2003) argue that such approaches are of little utility in explaining the variety of Iron Age social institutions. In the Iberian context, many researchers no longer refer to Celtic influence; others have used the term to locate Iron Age archaeology in the broad context of Atlantic Europe while also challenging the nationalism of the nineteenth century, which emphasized Celtic influences, particularly in Galicia (Fernández-Posse 1998; Ruiz Zapatero 2005).

My approach to the Castro Culture makes use of recent studies that develop alternative models of social inequality. Collis (1994, 32), for example, argues that terms such as

"chiefdom," "complex chiefdom," or "state" are "useful for at least signaling the complexity of the social configurations that are under study" but that "we must be aware of other sorts of configurations—are there any European equivalents, for instance, of the segmentary societies found in Africa?" Indeed, it would seem that various Iron Ages have been described in studies of Iron Age Europe (Hill and Cumberpatch 1995), including nonhierarchical models such as Hill's (2006) "non-triangular societies." The study of territory and production systems has been particularly fruitful. Crumley (1995a, 1995b) has employed the notion of heterarchy to describe power relations in unequal societies and has examined the relationship between society and environment. At the same time, a review of central-place models has led researchers to rethink the forms of inequality that these models entail. This has happened with regard to the very heart of British Celticism, the hillforts of the Early and Middle Iron Ages in Wessex (Hill 1996), and the characterization of the Late Iron Age Central European *oppida*, another old paradigm of Celtic hierarchization (Woolf 1993). Other regions, such as the Iberian Northwest, have also been found to have developed territorial and production organization forms that are not adequately explained by warrior-hierarchy models (Cumberpatch 1995; Ferrell 1995).

Given this new evidence, we must examine the role of warfare in these "alternative" European societies as a social factor fundamental to characterizing them at all levels, particularly the political and the ideological. The objective of this paper is to reexamine the apparent propensity for warfare in light of the forms of territorial and productive organization that are now apparent in the pre-Roman society of the region. Using the Castro Culture as a case study, I try to develop some keys to understanding how these "non-triangular" social formations may have worked. Conflict and warfare are thus set within the general framework provided by an accurate definition of social formations and related forms of social inequality. War "is never autonomous and self-regulating. War always forms part of something else" (Otto, Thrane, and Vandkilde 2006, 9). My starting point is the idea that although the consolidation of agrarian societies involved conflict based on the configuration of communal identities, this did not necessarily mean either generalized warfare or social hierarchization. "We therefore need to turn to historical factors and considerations of the specific societies concerned" (Thorpe 2003, 159) to avoid "over-generalized historical models" (p. 149).

Before proceeding, however, we must understand some facts that affect temporal and spatial frameworks. The model of the segmentary agrarian society has been developed from studies in León Province, mainly in the Bierzo region (El Castrelín de San Juan de Paluezas and Borrenes) and the Cabrera River basin (La Corona de Corporales; see CA+ online supplement A), but the evidence gathered there is similar to that found elsewhere. The model seems to be applicable to northern and western León, Trás-os-Montes, and western

1. The two main archaeo-anthropological interpretations are (1) one centered on the "Germanic production system" (Parcero Oubiña 2003) and based on progressive development of productive forces, which I consider incompatible with the organization of production attested to in the archaeological data, and (2) another proposing the notion of "house societies" (González-Ruibal 2006) applicable to the more southerly *castros* in the Northwest and at later dates.



Figure 1. *Top*, some representative preprovincial castros of the zones mentioned in text. The shaded areas indicate the zones of late development and larger fortified settlements. *Bottom*, current administrative divisions in northwestern Spain and Portugal.

Zamora (Esparza 1986; Sande Lemos 1993; Orejas 1996), Asturias (Villa Valdés 2002; Camino 2002), and the interior and north of Galicia (Carballo 1990; Parcero Oubiña 2000, 2002; Fábrega 2005). From the end of the third to the beginning of the second century BC, there was a clear change in the more southern and coastal areas, especially between the Miño and Douro rivers (Minho and Douro in Portugal), and on the plains of León in the interior (Martins 1990; Silva 1995; Orejas 1996; Queiroga 2003), areas that had been more open to contact and trade with the southern Iberian Peninsula since the Bronze Age (Orejas and Sánchez-Palencia 1999; Naveiro and Pérez Losada 1992; González-Ruibal 2004b). This change was due mainly to population concentration in larger settlements (see figs. B1, B2 in CA+ online supplement B). By the end of this period, these settlements, which had strong contacts with the Roman world, demonstrated centralized planning of their internal structure, and they may meet the criteria for central places.² Furthermore, at the end of the Iron Age, some elements appeared that are considered paradigmatic of the Castro Culture in general (e.g., architectural decoration, “saunas” [see fig. B3 in supplement B], and warrior statues). These changes indicate a very clear regional difference between the area of the large *castros* and the area of segmentary societies (Sastre 2004). This paper refers mainly to the latter but advances a broad interregional point of view as well.

Violence in Stateless Societies

One issue that often surprises anthropologists is the rarity of societies for which there is evidence of long periods without armed conflict and of the development of social and ideological forms that reject confrontation and encourage peaceful attitudes. On occasion, such societies may display high levels of internal conflict in forms such as witchcraft.³ While being peaceful is unusual and therefore noteworthy, being frequently at war is normal and not a distinctive characteristic

of any particular social formation.⁴ Whatever the validity of the interpretations currently proposed, violence as a daily reality in prehistoric and protohistoric societies has been more than sufficiently demonstrated. It is necessary, therefore, to place this violence in the general context of each social formation in order to understand and interpret it. The questions are how violence is articulated within the social formation and when it can be defined as warfare.⁵

Analysis of the forms of social inequality has yielded two main approaches to the study of warfare. The traditional approach focuses on the role of warfare in the process of social stratification. These studies reflect the view that war is not a cause of stratification or the appearance of ranked societies but an unavoidable by-product of these processes (Fried 1961; Haas 2001, 340). This interpretation is the basis for the theory that warfare was an intrinsic aspect of the emergence of agrarian societies because of the assumption that the control of territory and the appearance of surpluses implied competition for resources (Gellner 1995) and hence hierarchical power. This theory has been especially important in the definition of chiefdom societies, for which violence is assumed to be an essential method of reaffirming inequality (Carneiro 1970). At the same time, this kind of explanation is usually part of a cultural materialist framework in which pressure on resources, through either overpopulation or periodic scarcity due to natural factors, provokes conflicts that become the fundamental context for understanding the development of social hierarchies. These approaches tend to minimize the importance of warfare in societies described as “tribal,” the supposed forerunners of chiefdoms.

Another group of studies proposes, in contrast, that the role of warfare is to disperse the population and prevent the development of centralized and stratified forms of social organization. This approach is linked to the reassertion of the idea that violence is more frequent and lethally effective in primitive societies than in state societies (Keeley 1996) and to the growing interest in analyzing warfare in prehistoric societies through archaeological studies (Vencel 1984; Carman and Harding 1999; Haas 2001; Otto, Thrane, and Vandkilde 2006). Particularly relevant and paradigmatic in Europe are the studies by Clastres (1999, 2001). I examine these in some depth here both because they have largely served as the basis

2. The Ave Valley Survey (Entre-Douro-e-Minho region, northern Portugal) seems to have located non*castro* settlements—undefended and in flatlands—dating to the preconquest Late Iron Age (Millett et al. 2000; Millett 2001). This would entail a settlement hierarchy, but the researchers involved insist that there is continuity in material culture into Roman times and that these preconquest settlements “are in the same types of locations as the Roman sites” (Millett et al. 2000, 11). My area of study in the Northwest shows no signs of secondary settlements such as these until later dates.

3. The “peaceful society” has received considerable attention in recent years in the general framework of the sociological and anthropological study of war and violence (see Fabbro 1978; Gregor 1990; Bonta 1996; Sponsel and Gregor 1994). Especially interesting is Kelly’s (2000) study on hunter-gatherers, based on a clear distinction of “warfare” from other forms of violence and on the concepts of “unsegmented society” and “social substitutability.”

4. Even today, the debate between the two views of the primitive world—peaceful versus warring, Hobbesian versus Rousseauian—continues (Otterbein 1999). Warfare is often accepted as normal, although it is argued whether it is inherent in social formations (Keeley 1996; Guislaine and Zammit 2001) or a phenomenon that arose with the expansion of more complex societies, giving rise to so-called tribal zones (Ferguson and Whitehead 1991). The opposite approach, often defended from a pacifist position (Jiménez 2003), emphasizes the importance of nonviolent responses to conflict as a factor of historical dynamization (Sponsel and Gregor 1994).

5. I accept the definition of warfare proposed by Ferguson (1984, 5): “organized, purposeful group action, directed against another group that may or may not be organized for similar action, involving the actual or potential application of lethal force.”

of the recent interpretations of the Castro Culture and because they provide the framework for the alternative interpretation of the social role of warfare that is elaborated below.

Clastres's works are notable for having invalidated what could be called the "seeds of hierarchization" theory of primitive society. His celebrated *Société contre l'état* (*Society against the State*; Clastres 1974) radically opposes the functionalist image of the natural and inevitable growth of inequality in primitive societies. He defends the view that the very structure of primitive societies militates against the development of social hierarchization. These are "undivided" societies in which power is held by the social group itself and the development of inequality and the division of society are actively prevented: "There is a radical dichotomy separating primitive societies, in which the chiefs lack power, from societies in which power relationships develop: essential discontinuity between societies without a State and societies with a State" (Clastres 2001, 147). In this account, the undivided society is the opposite of the divided society, and it is impossible to consider the existence of realities intermediate between the two.⁶

In this context, warfare is a structural element: "If war ended, the heart of primitive society would stop beating. War is its foundation, the essence of its being, its purpose: primitive society is society for war, it is essentially a warrior society" (Clastres 1999, 82). This statement is based on the idea that warfare serves the purpose of guaranteeing the atomization of groups and is essential because primitive communities are characterized by their self-sufficiency and independence: "The logic of primitive society is the logic of the centrifugal, of the multiple" (Clastres 1999, 84), because primitive society is antidivision (internally) and antiunification (externally).

But Clastres differentiates primitive societies "with warriors" from those he calls "warrior societies." In primitive societies, all the men are warriors who go to war when the community is in danger. In warrior societies, a minority of the men continually go to war, and prestige is their ultimate objective. Society has mechanisms for neutralizing the centrifugal tendencies that are inherent in these situations: the warrior is constantly competing with himself and others, which necessarily leads to his death. In fact, in many cases the warrior mentality may even destroy the unity of the society.

A key point in Clastres's work is that some social and cultural mechanisms favor communitarianism, which tends to control social inequality, to the detriment of hierarchization, which sometimes controls and at other times is at odds with communitarian values. The Castro Culture societies may also be considered "antistate societies," small communities

stoutly resistant to hierarchization. The issue is therefore to determine whether the fragmentation and dispersion of the *castros* is due to warfare as a primary historical factor or warfare (understood in this case as generalized conflict) is the result of the *castros*' production organization. Warfare has been considered a causal factor in the atomization of the *castros* (Parcero Oubiña 2003), but their scattered nature, small size, and settlement grouping can easily be explained in terms of the ways in which production was organized. A different interpretation is possible if elements that indicate the pursuit of social isolation are taken into account.

Clastres (2001, 176) argues that Marxism⁷ cannot understand primitive societies because such societies are "anti-production machines" in which the political determines the economic: "to reflect on the origin of inequality, social division, classes, domination, implies going deeper into the field of politics, power, the State, and not into that of the economy, production, etc. The economy is engendered from the political, the relations of production come from the relations of power, the State gives rise to classes." However, primitive societies are "societies against the state" precisely because of the way they organize production. From entirely different and clearly historical materialist assumptions, writers such as Vincent (1998, 831) have reached very similar conclusions in relation to agrarian societies: "In most cases the establishment of the Neolithic Revolution did not lead to the Urban Revolution but to the formation of segmentary agrarian societies that were very stable in the long term."⁸ The belief that all post-Neolithic agrarian societies are subject to or tend to be subject to class exploitation is the reason for the lack of research, until recently, on alternative forms of inequality. Vincent rejects the formalism associated with the cultural ecological approaches of the New Archaeology, and his development of the notion of the peasantry converges with Clastres's definition of primitive societies as antiproduction machines: the amounts produced are culturally predetermined in accordance with an economic mentality completely divorced from the idea of continuous intensification. As Sahlins (1972, 41) has put it, "Underproduction is in the nature of the economies at issue."⁹

Bowman (2001, 33) in a study of the relationship between violence and identity, says in reference to Clastres's theories, "If violence against others is a structural principle of community, how could community exist before others were encountered? Yet, how could there be others to encounter if there wasn't already a community existing in terms of which

6. The existence of the so-called intermediate societies, which may in fact be very "divided," does not contradict this assertion. The radical historical rupture was the appearance of class societies, that is, the appearance of groups that do not engage in the productive process but rather control it. The importance of studies of intermediate societies lies in the possibility of explaining nonclass inequalities.

7. Clastres conceives of Marxism as a universalist straitjacket based on economic determinism devoted to the Stalinist scientific tradition.

8. "En la mayor parte de los casos nos encontramos con que la implantación de la Revolución Neolítica no desemboca en la Revolución Urbana, sino en la formación de sociedades agrarias segmentarias, muy estables a largo plazo."

9. Clastres is the author of the preface (Clastres 1976) to the French edition of Sahlins's *Stone Age Economics*.

to think otherness?" This is precisely the problem: warfare has wrongly been considered a structural element.

Identity and Opposition in Segmentary Agrarian Societies: The Origins of the Iron Age

The appearance of the Castro world can be dated to the transition from extensive and shifting cultivation to sedentary intensive agriculture, which tied communities to their territory (Peña 1992; Peña and Vázquez Varela 1996; Parcero Oubiña 2002; Fernández-Posse and Sastre, forthcoming). This shift brought about a radical change in the organization of both society and territory (Fábregas 1998; Méndez 1994). Drawing on the work of Bouhier (1979), Criado (1989a, 1989b; cf. Méndez 1998) distinguishes between a "prehistoric" and a "plow" agriculture. The prehistoric model, which dates to the Middle Neolithic, involves slash-and-burn farming on light, easily worked soils in highland areas. In modern times, these areas are devoted to winter cereals and legumes cropped in alternating years. Light-plow agriculture developed in the Bronze Age on the same soils, with cattle providing traction power and manure (Méndez 1994). This permitted more continuous cultivation and higher levels of production, but fallowing continued to be necessary every three or four years. A shifting settlement pattern has been documented. Méndez's work suggests that settlements occupied large areas (some sites cover more than 8 ha) with temporary, nonsimultaneous dwellings. These were open settlements, situated in the highlands on low slopes near humid zones (called *brañas*) that would provide fresh pasture in summer. At some sites, mainly in southern Galicia and northern Portugal, storage pits are documented.

The development of Bronze Age agriculture signaled important changes in social and productive organization. Surplus production was possible, and perhaps one could own cattle, for example, as wealth. Funerary records document prestige goods (gold, weapons) in individual graves. These graves, however, are almost hidden in the landscape, sharply contrasting with the preceding megalithism (Fábregas 1998). Are these features signs of incipient hierarchization? It is not possible to explore this question deeply here, but it is apparent that the necessary conditions for social exploitation existed. What is not clear is whether these features were sufficient for such exploitation. It is also apparent that the Iron Age heralded a great change in agricultural systems, one that brought about intensive cultivation and settlement stability. The development of a heavier plow capable of working the alluvial soils of the lowlands made it possible to grow legumes, wheat or barley (winter), and millet (summer). This change must be considered a turning point in the history of production systems in northwestern Iberia. Given the contrast between the discontinuous Bronze Age settlements and the fixed, fortified Iron Age structures, the implied social changes are con-

sistent with Meillassoux's (1991) "domestic community." The development of intensive agriculture based on cereal crops implies a particular relationship between the people and the environment based on their labor, and this generates new social relations. The producer is tied to the land by a system of deferred returns imposed by the agrarian cycle and the need for storage. This links various families and different generations of families very closely to each other, as Meillassoux (1991) has pointed out. Workers depend on the surpluses stored by their predecessors, and they in turn guarantee the continuity of their descendants. This gives rise to the primacy of precedence: it is the elders to whom subsistence and seeds are owed, and they become the axis of the redistributive circuit on which the continuity of production depends. Technically, the nuclear family is sufficient for agriculture, but there are risks (illness, accidents) that can compromise the efficiency of the family group, hence its need to be part of a cycle that ensures its reproduction (Meillassoux 1991, 68–71). This need leads to mechanisms that clearly define inclusion in or exclusion from the community and the productive cycle of deferred returns. Part of this process is the consolidation of restrictive kinship relations consistent with the system of deferred returns: genealogical kinship, as opposed to classificatory kinship (Vicent 1998, 830). This can open the way for the definitive domination of the male values that are the usual generators of the symbolism of violence.¹⁰ The result is a very clear demarcation of the community and its productive territory. Thus, the cohesion of the community is the result of the ways in which it organizes production.

As Gilman (1991, 1997) has argued, this situation implies a significant labor investment for the production of food. Such investment is necessary but not sufficient for the emergence of social exploitation. Agriculture makes social exploitation possible not only because of the existence of a territory producing a surplus that can be stored and is subject to rights of access but primarily because maintenance of the productive cycle is so labor intensive that abandoning it is difficult. Confronted with exploitive demands by a group that is generally violent in nature, the farmer can choose to submit to extortion or to resist. Moving beyond the reach of the exploiter may be a successful strategy, depending on many cultural and environmental factors; doing so is undoubtedly easier for those who do not need to make very large investments to reproduce their (cultural) conditions of existence and who have access to unoccupied land of similar quality and physical characteristics. When these conditions are absent—for example, in territories in which farmers' investment very notably accentuates the productive contrasts between areas (e.g., in arid

10. I am not going to examine this question here, but it must not be forgotten that the change in kinship relations that Meillassoux referred to may imply the definitive imposition of male values, which are often expressed in violent activities (Guilaine and Zammit 2001, 177). The existence of "warrior" (virtually synonymous with "male") values in many agrarian societies is therefore hardly surprising (see also Sarauw 2007).

regions) or in other conditions of “circumscription” (Carneiro 1970)—the chances of exploitation multiply.

The development of nonshifting cereal agriculture encourages the formation of communities that define themselves and their territories by comparison with other such communities. In this way an “us”-versus-“them” opposition arises. Exclusive access to the exploited territory undoubtedly implies an intrinsic conflict in the definition of the community, its kinship relations, and its relations with other communities. It is generally assumed that this process generates violent competition between communities.¹¹ In reality, the intensification of this conflict depends on the historical confluence of various additional factors, such as the degree of intensification of production and, in relation to this, the possibility of splitting or segmenting a community. Generalized armed confrontation occurs mainly in situations in which it is difficult to find free ecological niches to reproduce the culturally established conditions of production. As pointed out above, these are situations that cannot be reduced to the traditional definition of “demographic pressure.”

In contrast to these situations, which have been generalized to the whole of the primitive agrarian world and to the complex agrarian societies of Iron Age Europe, isolationism has received little attention as a strategy for staving off both the conflict intrinsic to agrarian development and the possible emergence of inequality as a result of this conflict. The isolationist tendency of the Castro world may be the result of the transition from the Late Bronze Age and a reaction to the unequal conditions that developed in the context of Bronze Age shifting cultivation and, possibly, Atlantic trade (Parcero Oubiña 2002; Fernández-Posse and Sastre, forthcoming). This reaction brought about production intensification that reinforced communal organization but not individualized inequality.

Parcero Oubiña has shown that early *castros* had access to a range of resources similar to those of Final Bronze Age settlements, with two important differences: (1) an increase in crop varieties, resulting in lower risk, and (2) a preference for inaccessible locations. The potential for agrarian production was better, but no surplus was produced. Moreover, the big storage pits documented in some Bronze Age settlements disappear in the Iron Age (Parcero Oubiña 2002, 231). Parcero Oubiña (2002, 232) considers this Early Iron Age “the final attempt to slow the gradual and inevitable process of structural consolidation of inequality”¹² and the Late Iron Age the result of the failure of this resistance. I defend exactly the

opposite interpretation: the Iron Age demonstrates the success of the “undivided society.”

In this interpretation, isolationism during the Early Iron Age is a historical product inherent in these agrarian communities, an inheritance from a historical process that can be traced to the Late Bronze Age, and a form of resistance to inequality that breaks down only with the Roman conquest. The isolationist tendencies imposed during the Late Iron Age may, however, have been reinforced by other factors. The segmentary communities were part of an interregional historical process marked by more or less violent contacts with the southern and western areas of the Iberian Peninsula, mainly during the Roman expansion but also earlier, under Carthaginian military dominion.

In the third and second centuries BC, there were important changes in the eastern and southern parts of Galicia, northwestern Portugal, and the plains of León. Long-distance trade has been documented, as well as the emergence of larger settlements that implied a concentration of population and perhaps a settlement hierarchy. Some metal artifacts may indicate the existence of contacts between these areas and the segmentary communities. In reaction to these changes, some segmentary communities may have strengthened their anti-hierarchical tendencies and reinforced their isolationism, and this may have meant the consolidation of stable agrarian societies. From this point of view, both the process of segmentation and the development of hierarchies or ranked societies may be results of intercultural contact, a reaction to Roman pressure on peripheral territories beyond direct control.¹³ These segmentary communities are not examples of historical passivity but entities directly involved in historical processes. The Roman tributary system imposed different forms of territorial organization and social relationships based on social classes, creating a new historical process (Orejas and Sastre 1999; Sastre 2001). The Roman conquest under Augustus must be seen as the end of the old historical processes and the beginning of new realities of social hierarchization.

The antihierarchical tendencies of this particular form of isolationism make fortifications one of the central elements of the Castro Culture. The phenomenon of agrarian-settlement fortification has been analyzed from two main perspectives: as a symptom of the endemic warfare that is considered inherent in the development of agriculture and, in the case of the large central places, as symbolic of prestige (Chapman 1999, 107). However, it is not yet generally accepted that, without precluding a defensive use, in certain historical contexts the physical demarcation of the group may be the clearest material reflection of the construction of an exclusive com-

11. But other opinions must be taken into account, such as that of Haas (2001, 340) concerning Neolithic societies: “The number of well-documented cases of endemic, intense warfare at the regional level are few and far between. In contrast, extensive regional surveys and excavations have exposed long sequences in virtually every corner of the globe where material manifestations of war are absent or highly localized and episodic. War was more the exception, not the rule, during the Neolithic.”

12. “el ultimo intento de inhibir el progresivo e inevitable proceso de consolidación estructural de la desigualdad.”

13. Isolationist trends have been studied in the context of world-system theory as the reaction of peripheral communities to expansionist tendencies (imperialist or colonialist), a reaction to assimilation in a dependent status (Ferguson and Whitehead 1991; Kardulias 1999; Hall 2000b; Stein 2003). The Castro Culture suggests a different view: isolationism may be a form of resistance to inequality and a reaction to social-control mechanisms encouraged by intercultural contact.



Figure 2. The wall of the Borrenes *castro* (León).

munity identity defined by agricultural production. Fortifications are an obvious reflection of the tendency toward isolationism: “the erection of fortifications is, in fact, the antithesis of communication and tends to impose limitations on social activities” (Rowlands 1972, 459). This strategy of isolation is part of a general environment marked by two essential elements. First, the maintenance of social indivisibility requires that the population be kept below a critical threshold inside each settlement (Fletcher 1995, 89; Bintliff 1999, 533). Second, these communities display a collective productive discipline; usually technologically capable of producing more and better, they choose not to do so (Vicent 1991; Sahlins 1972).

Production, Demography, and Conflict: *Castros* during the Second Iron Age

The archaeological record of the *castros* may be analyzed in terms of the segmentary-*castro* model.¹⁴ The fortified *castro* is the only settlement type attributed to the Iron Age,¹⁵ and because all these settlements are small no ranking by size can

be established. The *castros* did not, until late in their history, have populations of more than 200 (Fernández-Posse and Sánchez-Palencia 1998; Carballo 1990; Camino 2002). The first element that was constructed in a settlement was the surrounding wall (fig. 2). It has been estimated that a community of 35–40 able-bodied persons could build such a wall in 2.2–3.3 months.¹⁶ The usable space was clearly defined from the beginning, and the labor invested in the wall did not require any hierarchical mobilization of work (see CA+ online supplement C). This boundary was respected throughout the settlement’s occupation; there are no cases of the perimeter wall’s being breached by the growth of the settlement in the pre-Roman period. In addition, many settlements were not completely occupied. This implies that the community set demographic limits to its growth.

Diachronic studies of site typology evolution, primarily those of Carballo (1990) and Parcero Oubiña (2002), make possible the identification of two general patterns of settlement belonging to different periods.¹⁷ In the Ulla River region (Carballo 1990), the earliest settlements (eighth to fifth centuries BC), which were also generally the smallest, already displayed diversified agriculture. They were situated on steep but not particularly high hilltops with good long-distance

14. It is impossible to provide a detailed description here of the archaeological record of the segmentary *castros* (see Fernández-Posse and Sánchez-Palencia 1998; Fernández-Posse 2000; Sastre 2002; Sastre and Fernández-Posse 2005). One fundamental reality is the complete lack of a funerary record datable to the pre-Roman period.

15. Several studies based on field surveys in various regions support this conclusion. A notable example is the archaeological monitoring of the Galicia gas network and the Vigo-Santiago de Compostela pipeline by the Landscape Archaeology Laboratory (Universidad de Santiago de Compostela), which has studied some 750 km of work trenches (http://www-gtarpa.usc.es/Publicaciones/titulos_tapa.htm). This has helped locate structures around some *castros* that in some cases may be interpreted as the remains of agricultural activity, but there have been no finds of fortified or secondary settlements. The continuing absence of funerary remains is also notable.

16. The excavation and reconstruction of the wall of Borrenes (Fernández-Posse 2000) has permitted a good estimate of the amount of work invested. The wall has a perimeter of 600 m, a width of 3–4 m, and a height of 2.5 m (for a total of about 5,250 m³). It consists of two facings of stone blocks filled with rubble. The stone was extracted from the ditch surrounding the wall and consists of easily quarried tabular quartzite. One person can extract and construct about 1.75 m² per day.

17. The main problem raised by these studies is that they do not distinguish between pre-Roman and Roman-era *castros*. The latter are found in a very different social context and therefore represent forms of occupation of the territory marked by the imposition of a tributary system (Fernández-Posse 2002).

visibility but little cultivable land within a 1-km radius. From the fourth century BC on, new types of sites appeared on less rugged terrain, where artificial fortifications were necessary. These sites were characterized by greater visual control over the surrounding cultivated land and were larger than the earlier settlements. Parceró Oubiña (2002) analyzed the distribution of *castros* along the middle and lower reaches of the Lézé River and, with Carballo, distinguished two main settlement phases, Early and later Iron Age. All this demonstrates that, far from increasing the need for easily defensible locations, the investment in improved defensive architecture lessened that need. The locations chosen were more accessible but still isolated, with direct visual control of the surrounding cropland, and could accommodate larger settlements (but never more than 200 inhabitants). These changes in settlement strategy may be evidence of a gradual extension of the sedentary agrarian model perfectly suited to intensive plow agriculture (Criado 1989a, 1989b), which was clearly present during the Early Iron Age (see CA+ online supplement D).

Many researchers argue, however, that this shift occurred not during the Bronze-to-Iron Age transition but in the fifth century BC, when communities really became sedentary (Peña 1992, 378). This argument largely depends on the diffusion of the use of iron in the production process, which coincides approximately with this date (Parceró Oubiña 2000, 88). The spread of iron was not, however, the trigger for a historical process but a result of one. The development of these agrarian communities would have stimulated the adoption of tools that were useful for intensifying production. Iron was introduced as a major factor of production because it contributed to the collective strategies of the communities that adopted it. Though not the cause of change, it did facilitate the development and consolidation of the agrarian system. Something similar may have happened with the generalization of millet cultivation, which enormously improved communities' productive possibilities by making a second annual harvest possible; it was also perfectly adapted to plow cultivation (Criado 1989a, 1989b; Vázquez Varela 1993–94; see fig. E1 in CA+ online supplement E).

The settlement of Castrelín de San Juan de Paluezas (León; hereafter El Castrelín) has been both particularly well studied (fig. 3; Fernández-Posse 2000) and compared with other local pre-Roman *castros*, such as Borrenes and La Corona de Corporales. This research has enabled us to understand the exploitation of resources in the area in the Late Iron Age (ca. fourth to first centuries BC). The territory was well suited to the diversification of production to minimize risk. Within it the community could obtain for itself the resources necessary for making tools (clay, stone, and copper, tin, and iron ores). Agricultural land was available nearby for intensive and extensive cultivation, along with ample woodland and pastures. Households raised their own livestock for meat and, even more important, for their secondary products. The most abundant species of livestock was sheep, followed by cattle and pigs. Horses and game are only occasionally present in

faunal collections. This distribution can be considered typical of Castro Culture communities (Ramil-Rego and Fernández 1999; see fig. E2 in supplement E).

Where storage systems have been clearly documented, principally in León (fig. 4), it is apparent that each family had its own food store. It was usually well built, adjoining the family dwelling, and it held, besides grain, all types of storable food (e.g., cured meat, cheese). It was the place for preserving domestic surpluses, designed to ensure supplies for subsequent years and guarantee the survival and social life of the family unit in accordance with culturally determined living standards. Diachronic analysis shows that food stores did not increase in size over the course of time. This may be interpreted as an indication that, once the intensified agrarian system had been consolidated, there was no tendency toward further intensification of production.

Since storehouses were related to family units, families seem to have been the basic units of production and consumption, as is typical in the so-called domestic mode of production (Sahlins 1972). Access to land, as Meillassoux has pointed out, depended on membership in the community. All the farming households that made up the community appear to have had equal access to and correspondingly equal control over the means of agricultural production. Every household seems to have been completely self-sufficient from an economic point of view, implying a level of independence that is reflected in the forms of spatial organization within the *castro* (fig. 5). Dwellings consisted of functionally specialized spaces (hearth, storage, courtyard) that filled the open spaces within the wall; the wall was always a point of reference in the settlement. The result was usually an elongated dwelling that gave the settlement an illusory "urban" appearance (see CA+ online supplement F). Each dwelling had its own private outdoor area, so that access was completely independent of and invisible to other households. There was no communal articulation of the space inside the settlement (for instance, no "streets"). Furthermore, dwellings never shared walls; each house was built independently, and there were only narrow spaces between them.

The centrifugal forces defined by Sahlins are thus visible in the archaeological record. A tension must be supposed between families and the community in which possible inequalities could take root. Depending on such diverse factors as workforce size and annual climatic variability, some families may at some point have produced more than others, but collective social control was never abandoned. Whereas Parceró Oubiña (2003) argues that the potential for differential production between households eventually gave rise to conflict and consolidated social inequalities, the long-term stability of housing arrangements, storage areas, and so on, suggests that communities had social mechanisms that checked this potential. Domestic intensification during the Late Iron Age has not been demonstrated. As Sahlins (1972, 101–48) shows in his discussion of Chayanov's rule, some families in

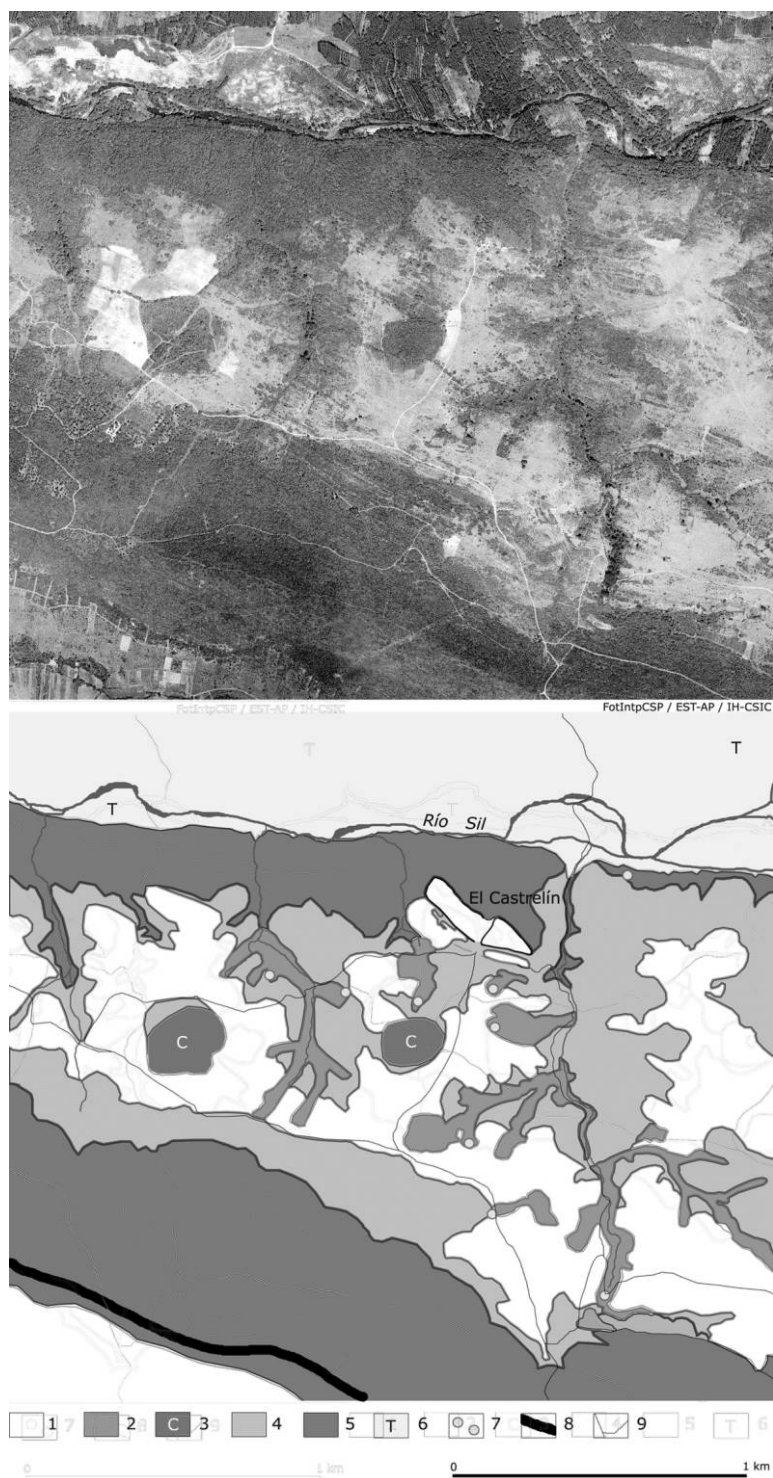


Figure 3. Aerial photograph and photointerpretation of the exploitation territory of El Castrelin (León). 1, Nonirrigated land; 2, irrigated land; 3, conglomerate (boulders and clay); 4, scrublands; 5, woodlands; 6, flood plains; 7, water sources; 8, mineralization (Pb, Zn, Cu, complex ores); 9, tracks.

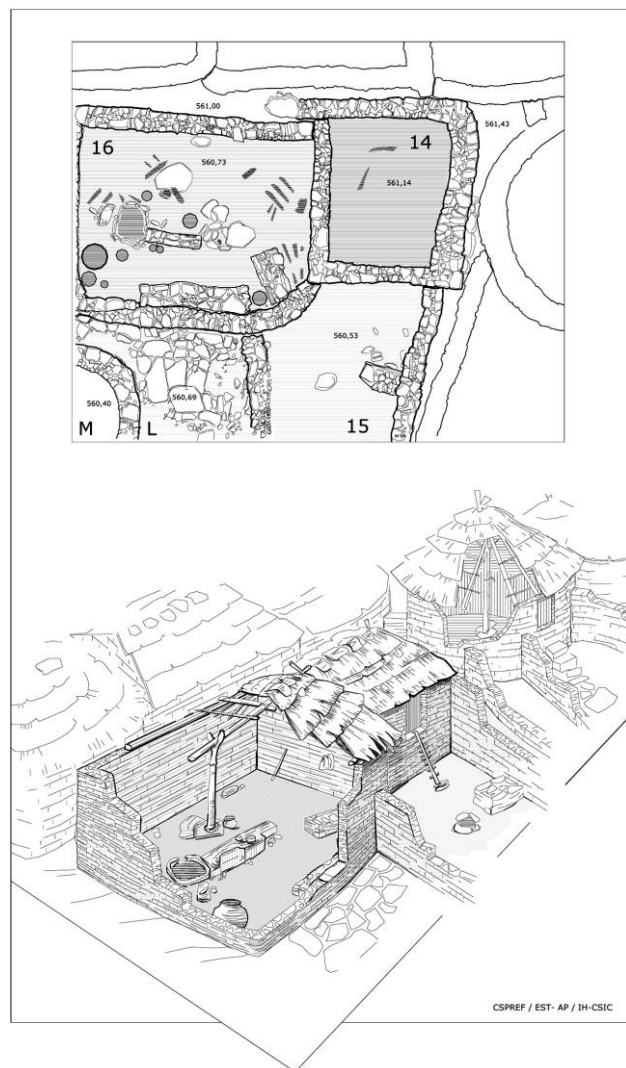


Figure 4. Two examples of food stores in El Castreón (León).

a nonhierarchical social system may work “at surplus intensities” with negligible results for the community.

Regarding technological development in these communities, it must be emphasized that metallurgy was in the hands of specialists: in León each *castro* had a metallurgical unit consisting of one family whose house lacked a food store (fig. 6). This family may have made the iron tools needed for the daily life of the settlement in exchange for subsistence products. The interdependence of farm families and metalworkers demonstrates another element of community cohesion.

The demographic and production strategies analyzed above suggest that segmentation was an option for Castro Culture communities in the event of internal conflict and/or when the growth of the population threatened the community’s egalitarian status quo, its indivisibility. The fact that the *castros* did not grow and that they had an intensified production system that could easily be reproduced on similar lands suggests that demographic growth and conflict may have been

managed by founding new settlements. The evidence that the first element built in a settlement was the wall points to a basic need for defense not only against other people but also against wild animals, but it also means something more: a fixed limit to population growth and the materialization of settlement-size limits, as well as the importance of the community as a reference on the landscape. The labor invested in building the wall, though less than some researchers have believed, does represent an important collective effort. Hypothetically, this effort may have entailed the participation of

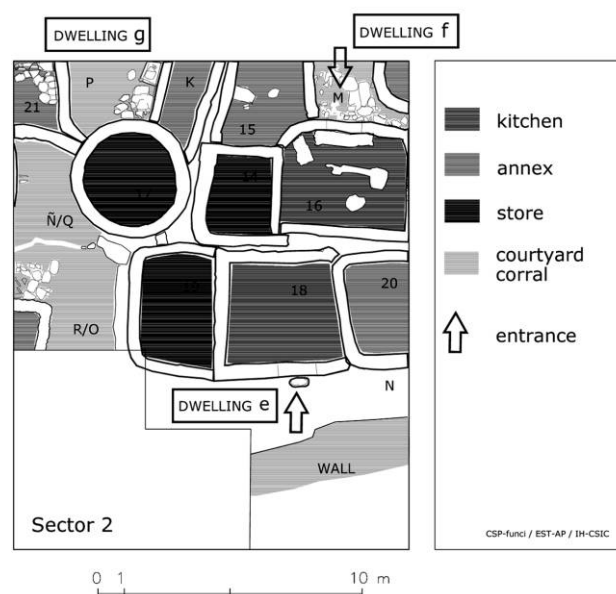
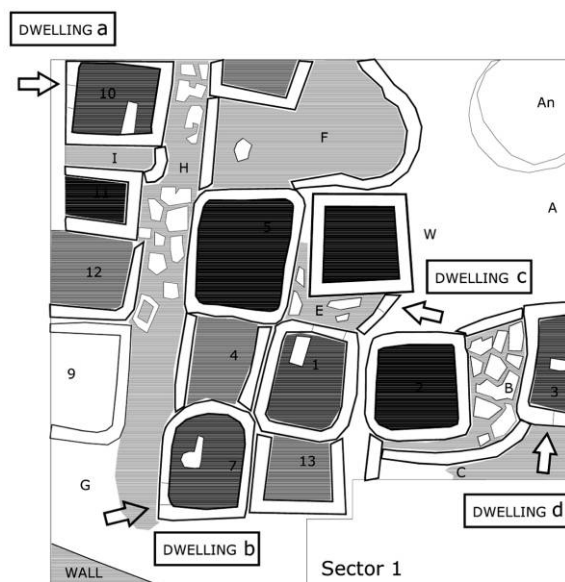


Figure 5. Map of the family dwellings of two excavated sectors in El Castreón (León).

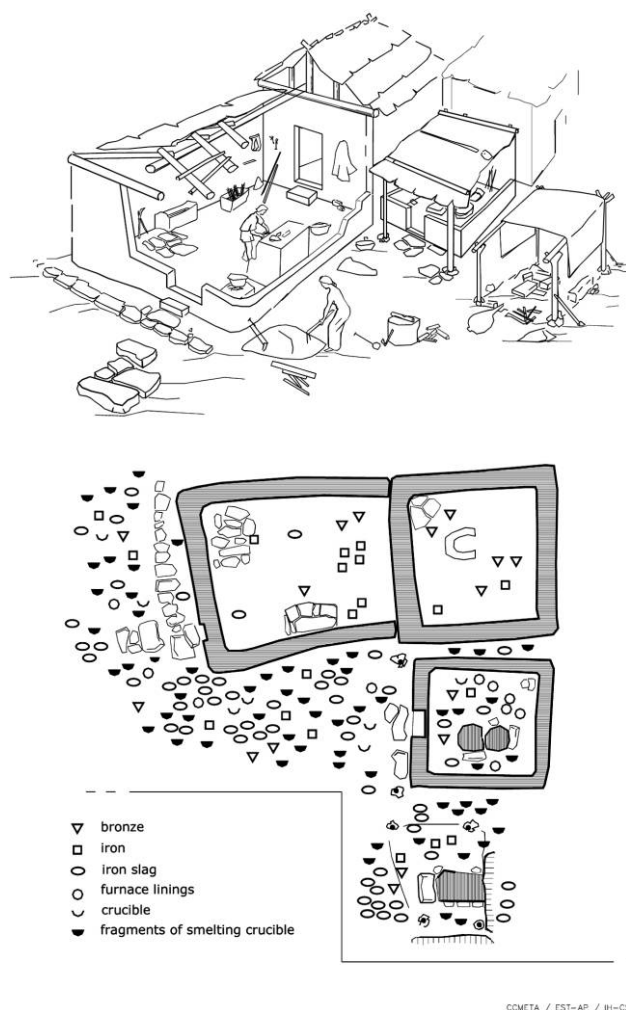


Figure 6. Reconstruction of the metallurgist's dwelling from La Corona de Corporales (León).

several communities, which might thus—with only minor costs—have solved their demographic problems and strengthened intercommunity relations.

This leads to an apparent paradox: although the production system encouraged strong opposition to outsiders, demographic needs required a framework of collaboration beyond the community. Such small communities are inevitably exogamous (Bintliff 1999, 532; Meillassoux 1991, 29).¹⁸ This collaboration does not entail the creation of supraregional hierarchical, institutionalized, and well-defined polities and was probably not restricted to marriage interchanges, although these must have been important. Naturally, these relations need not always have been peaceful. They could have

18. If we assume that these communities tended toward isolation by definition, they probably tried to avoid exogamy as far as possible. It is interesting that communities that, for demographic reasons, are forced to be exogamous show some resistance to this need. Thus, for example, among the Xinguanos, whose communities have an average of some 120 inhabitants, only 30% of the marriages are exogamous (Gregor 1990).

developed similarly to “interaction spheres” (Yoffee 2005, 204–5), which included supralocal cultural entities through marriage exchanges and exchanges of goods with ideological value. In addition, the occasional presence of certain standardized artifacts (e.g., wheel-turned pottery and molds for casting metal vessels) is evidence of active long-distance relations between *castros*. In this way, spheres of interaction and conflict were created that may eventually have led to the appearance of inequality.

Weapons and Jewelry in the *Castros*

Certain items in the material evidence are usually assumed to imply the presence of warfare: fortification, site location, weapons, bodily wounds, iconography, etc. (Vencel 1984, 1999; Haas 2001). Fortifications and site location have been discussed above, and there is no funerary record. Therefore, the evidence left to us is weapons and gold and silver artifacts, elements traditionally identified in Iron Age contexts with the existence of warrior hierarchies.

Weapons documented in a clearly pre-Roman context are scarce and mostly of a late date. Indeed, iron artifacts of any kind, including agricultural implements, are scarce. Many of the few Iron Age weapons known are actually what Chapman (1999) called “tool-weapons,” tools that could have been used as weapons but were mainly intended for purely utilitarian purposes unrelated to warfare. Some tool-weapons of Late Bronze Age type continued to be made—in either bronze or iron—into the Iron Age (and, indeed, after the Roman conquest). Given the lack of research devoted to distinguishing between periods before and after the conquest, this often poses problems of dating. The clearest case is that of the antenna-type daggers (Ruiz Gálvez 1980), that are scattered over the Northwest with some notable gaps, such as the Portuguese region of Entre-Douro-e-Minho (Queiroga 2003, 88). These pieces are characterized by their small size, and their closest parallels are Celtiberian. They display very ancient typological features, but when an archaeological context exists it is always late and almost always Roman. As noted by Peña (1992, 382) and Quesada (2003, 93), the daggers cannot be dated earlier than the second century BC. Similar problems are presented by palstaves, which also originated in the Late Bronze Age (Baiões group) and continued to be used into the Roman era. Some of the bronze pieces might have been used in votive or ritual contexts at fairly late dates. In any case, axes have generally been considered utilitarian tools, used for agriculture or for other productive purposes, such as carpentry and gold-work (Silva 1986, 171; Teira 2003). In the absence of use-wear analysis, it is difficult to be more precise on this matter. In northern Portugal, a different type of dagger has been documented. It is short, has a curved blade, and seems to be of local origin. Its characterization as a utilitarian tool is fairly clear, since it could have been used for clearing vegetation, pruning, reaping, etc. (Queiroga 2003, 87; Quesada 2003, 93). Spears and the occasional isolated remains of arrowheads can

also be included in the category of tool-weapons. They may have been used for hunting, although, as we have seen, hunting was of limited importance.

Regarding defensive weapons, remains of small, round shields and, in particular, helmets of the Montefortino type have been documented. Five examples in bronze (two of them mere fragments) have been found in the southern sector. One of them was dredged up from the Miño River in Caldelas de Tuy and has been dated to the Iron Age, and the others have been dated to late periods (Silva 1986, 181–82).

The available evidence makes it clear that weapons of the heroic type are scarce in the Castro Culture, and the chronologies identified for defensive armor are fairly late. Lack of evidence is of course an unsatisfactory argument; agricultural tools are also missing from the record, and yet they were necessarily present. The potential weapons that we know of would have been ideal for pillaging/raiding types of fighting rather than dueling or infantry charges. Defensive weaponry, however, does correspond better to actual military confrontation, perhaps related to Roman domination and the establishment of conscription.

Stone statues of warriors (standing armed men; fig. 7) are documented mainly in the region between the Duero and the Miño (see the acts of the 2002 Lisbon Symposium [Schattner 2003]). According to Quesada (2003, 104), the weapons depicted suggest a date between the mid-first century BC and the beginning of the first century AD. This means that the statues date to the period in which provincial society was being formed, during and after the conquest, when the segmentary model was breaking down, and were in a region where the hierarchical process had a long trajectory. The most notable feature of the weapons carried by the warrior statues is that, where they can be identified typologically, they represent peninsular variants of Roman types. Another very important detail is that they are not similar in any way to the remains of weapons documented archaeologically (Quesada 2003, 93). These statues deserve detailed study, but it is safe to say that any interpretation should start by placing them in the context of changes brought about by the preprovincial Roman presence and subsequent Roman rule.

Castro goldwork has been studied extensively (Sánchez-Palencia and Fernández-Posse 1998; Fernández-Posse, Sastre, and Sánchez-Palencia 2004). The mere existence of these pieces and of some types in particular—torques, for example—has been considered a clear indication of social hierarchization (fig. 8). Analysis of these pieces must begin at the level of the production process so that their social value may be assessed. Dating is very problematic, since most of the pieces lack well-defined archaeological contexts. In the few cases in which the context is known, the hoards date to the Late Iron Age and are usually associated collectively with certain settlements or have been found at the boundaries between the territories of *castros* (Perea and Sánchez-Palencia 1995; González Ruibal 2007, 310). However, there is no question



Figure 7. Fragment of a warrior sculpture from Armeá (Orense). Photo courtesy of Archivo de Monumentos y Arqueología, Instituto del Patrimonio Cultural Español, Ministerio de Cultura.

that a significant amount of Castro goldwork dates from the pre-Roman era.

In the Northwest, access to gold was not restricted. Before the Roman protoindustrial mining of primary and secondary deposits, and in recent times, gold was obtained by individuals or families by panning in riverbeds. This method could also have been used for tin, an element necessary for the production of bronze. In modern times, the panning has usually been done by women,¹⁹ and the gold has been used almost exclusively for producing jewelry for trousseaus. It is possible to say that gold (and tin) were simply two more of the resources exploited in a settlement's territory. Only a few large pieces may have required the collaboration of several domestic units to provide a sufficient quantity of gold (fig. 9), and this does not contradict the eminently domestic nature of gold panning.

Working the gold was a different matter. We have little

19. Strabo (III, 3, 2) describes the panning methods of the women of the Artabri community.

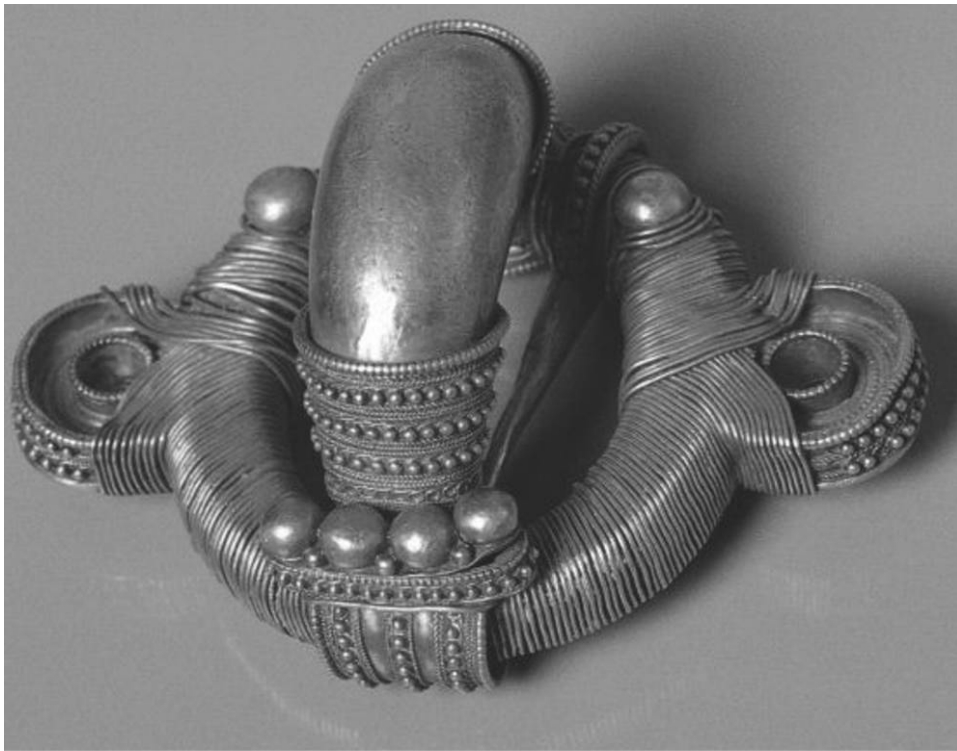


Figure 8. *Top*, brooch from the Arrabalde treasure (Zamora). Silver and gold coating, 268 gr. Photo courtesy of Museo de Zamora. *Bottom*, brooch from the Arrabalde treasure (Zamora) detail. Silver and gold coating, 268 gr. Photo courtesy of Archivo Au. Alicia Perea.

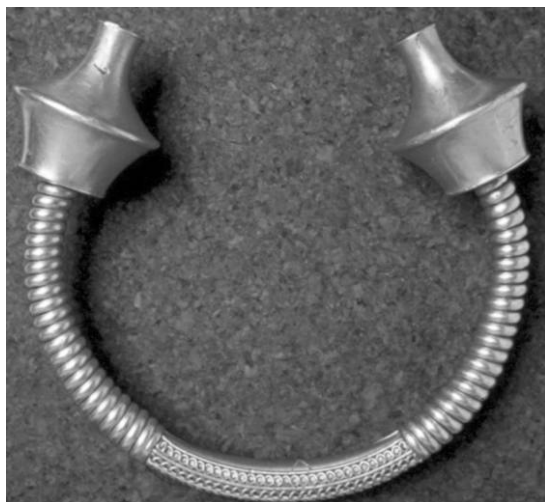


Figure 9. Torque from Burela (Lugo), Second Iron Age. At 1.806,71 gr. (Ladra 1999, 148), it is the heaviest piece of goldwork from northwestern Iberia. Photo courtesy of Archivo de Monumentos y Arqueología, Instituto del Patrimonio Histórico Español, Ministerio de Cultura.

evidence concerning goldsmiths (Villa Valdés 2004) but iron and bronze metallurgical production is well documented. The information recovered from El Castrelin and La Corona de Corporales points to the existence of one metallurgical workshop in each *castro*. The smiths were specialists (Fernández-Posse et al. 1993). The workshop at El Castrelin produced iron, bronze, and, possibly, silver objects. Forge-related materials were found in some of the rooms: fragments of vessels used as smelting crucibles (see fig. G1 in CA+ online supplement G), nozzles, defective objects to be recycled (fig. G2 in supplement G), crucibles, ingots, and a large amount (up to 100 kg; fig. G3 in supplement G) of slag. Smithing was a functional specialization that does not seem to have entailed any sort of social or political inequality. On the contrary, it guaranteed the settlement's self-sufficiency, in this case metallurgically, thus reinforcing the communitarian tendency in production.

Production techniques clearly show specialization in metalworking. There are two very different types of production, yielding items of differing quality, particularly with respect to bronze (Fernández-Posse et al. 1993, 210–11). Some pieces are rather rudimentary, made in smelting crucibles and used for personal adornment. Others, such as the mold-cast *fibulae* and *situlae* (profusely decorated vessels made of riveted thin, die-cast metal sheets), required more complex methods (Carballo 1983; see CA+ online supplement H). These vessels can be identified by the casting molds found at many sites throughout the Northwest. The common typology of these items suggests interregional relations, but chemical analysis of the ceramic molds found at El Castrelin proves that they were made in the community where they were used (Fernández-Posse et al. 1993, 213; Galván et al. 1993).

The technological skills required to make even the more complex pre-Roman gold and bronze pieces (Armbruster and Perea 2000) were entirely within the capacity of the metallurgical units found in each settlement (Fernández-Posse and Sastre, forthcoming). In addition, the number of gold pieces found in the Northwest is relatively small compared with those from other European regions. Specialized local workers could have met all the needs of the community, considering that the majority of their work involved the production of iron tools rather than bronze or gold.²⁰ Analyses of the ores found near some of the *castros* reveals that the procurement of metals may well have been local, including panning for gold and tin and mining for iron, copper, and silver (Fernández-Posse et al. 1993, 214–15).

Thus, it can be said that gold had a domestic use. As a hypothesis, we can also suppose that gold may have had symbolic significance in interfamily relations and perhaps also in relations between communities in the “interaction spheres” mentioned above. Within this relational context, the largest pieces of goldwork, such as torques, have been interpreted as belonging to important families or community representatives (Hill 2006, 176). However, given the productive process described above and the contexts from which the pieces derive, one must be cautious about assuming that they were prestige goods in hierarchical terms.

Final Remarks

The establishment of fortified agrarian settlements with intensive production systems during the Early Iron Age and their consolidation in the Late Iron Age led to the appearance of exclusive communal identities. The relationship between these communities must have been one of conflict, insofar as it was based on opposition, and, given the high degree of internal competition, conflict was also present within their walls. The unequal productive success of domestic units and the requirement of external marriage exchanges created realms of interaction in which forms of inequality among family units and open conflict surely arose. These tendencies were kept in check, however, by control over community size and by the tendency of communities to split when they approached a demographic threshold (200 persons, more or less). The small size of the settlements and their isolationist tendencies permitted communities to exercise control over their constituent households.

A distinction should be made between “conflict” or “generic violence” and “warfare.” Warfare implies violent confrontation between groups. It is a form of conflict that gives rise to physical aggression and, when it becomes chronic, has major repercussions on social relations. It is an immediate political reality that becomes chronic only in certain cultural contexts. That the intensified agrarian community arose in

20. It is therefore unnecessary to suppose the existence of traveling goldsmiths (Armbruster and Perea 2000; Wells 1984).

opposition to other identical communities, which were identified as “them” in contrast to “us,” implies not open warfare but generalized conflict that occasionally progressed to direct confrontation.

The Castro Culture communities, as segmentary societies, were thus marked by conflict, opposition, and contradictory trends. On the one hand, isolationism would have mitigated armed conflict by reducing potentially violent types of interaction (nonreciprocal trade of goods or women, pillaging, etc.), but on the other hand, it would have kept conflict alive. This characteristically conflict-prone situation can be documented from the archaeological record, but what is not documented is that warfare as an endemic reality created groups of warriors. Castro society does not fit Clastres’s notion of a “society with warriors,” much less the heroic Indo-European model so common in Celticist interpretations.

Two historical factors relating to isolationism may be highlighted as very important not only for the Castro Culture but also in a European context. First, the beginning of the Iron Age can be considered a reaction to the excessive inequality of the Final Bronze Age, driving communities to seek isolationism as a form of resistance. The stable agrarian economic system that characterized the Iron Age was forged in that context. Second, intercultural contact with the Romans and other Mediterranean societies in the Iberian Peninsula, direct or through other, more hierarchical communities, may have reinforced the isolationist/antihierarchical tendencies of these segmentary communities before the conquest.

I have tried to show not that conflict is irrelevant but that it has its roots in the production system. The Castro Culture’s social formations cannot be understood otherwise. These communities’ ambivalent relationships with their neighbors gave rise, possibly frequently, to violent confrontations in which all the community’s men of fighting age participated: “In these worlds of farmers who were warriors and warriors who were farmers, the social institution of ‘the warrior’ was part of being an adult man and active member of the corporate community” (Hill 2006, 178). Vandkilde (2006) and Sarauw (2007) have identified three types of warrior societies: those in which warriorhood includes all men, those in which it includes all men but some or all are organized into prestigious war institutions or male clubs, and those in which it includes only certain men organized into institutions of war. In the first case, “access to warriorhood was usually given by sex or age and warriorhood was not institutionalized but typically characterized by *ad hoc* parties” (Sarauw 2007, 78). In these cases, male identities are also frequently ascribed to warriorhood. The second type implies a warrior group usually ranked by age and/or by bravery in combat, and in the third “only males of the elite gain access to warrior class” (Sarauw 2007, 78). The first model may best fit the Castro Culture. Contrary to prevailing interpretations, we must view warfare-related activity in these Iron Age European societies as neither heroic nor hierarchical. Warfare is not in itself socially caus-

ative but is related to the productive and reproductive organization of the societies that engage in it.

The identification of the sources of conflict in segmentary societies opens to debate the processes of change in classless societies and in those in which the tendency toward stratification is not the initiating historical factor. Hill (2006) has asked whether we are any closer to understanding how later Iron Age societies worked (or did not work). I think that the segmentary/isolationist model of the Castro Culture may help us to respond. A new field of Iron Age social research, that of “non-triangular societies,” has recently emerged. Understanding of the slow development and stability typical of these societies still requires considerable research, and we must avoid idyllic characterizations of “peaceful peasants” if we are to understand warfare as a historical and social factor. The task before us is to characterize the different forms of social inequality that we have just begun to recognize in the European panorama.

Acknowledgments

This paper is dedicated to the memory of Maria Dolores Fernández-Posse, whose work made possible the development of the segmentation-based theories that have renewed the study of the Iron Age in the northwestern Iberian Peninsula. It is part of the research project “Rural Settlement Patterns in the Western Iberian Peninsula: Processes of Change and Transition in Antiquity” (Ministerio de Cultura project HUM 2004-04010-C02-01/HIST developed in the CCHS [CSIC] in Madrid). I am indebted to Antonio Gilman and Juan Vicent for their inspiration of my particular perceptions of the forms of inequality in ancient societies and especially to Antonio Gilman for his comments on the paper. I am also indebted to Guillermo Reher for his kind help with the English translation.

Comments

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Sastre belongs to a “new wave” of young Iberian scholars whose papers delight anyone interested in the pre- and protohistory of Spain and Portugal. She not only has a mastery of archaeological theory but deploys it critically on the evidence from the Iberian Iron Age. Her paper deepens earlier insightful work on *castros*, or fortified, nucleated settlements (Sastre 2002).

Despite a fashionable rejection of “social evolution” as neocolonialist, the fact remains that, in Europe, the trend in the archaeological and textual evidence argues for increasing so-

cial and political complexity during the Iron Age, in contrast to the preceding Bronze Age. Debates still focus (whether we turn to Greece, Italy, or Iberia) on whether internal developments, external factors (“core-periphery”), or a combination are responsible. On the other hand, increasingly detailed regional projects have made clear that within any modern European country, districts can follow divergent trajectories. These contrasts bring us closer to teasing apart the elements that contributed to the form a local society took at each major phase of the Iron Age (Bintliff 1997).

Sastre’s study represents that nuanced regional perspective, through contrasting areas where the supposedly uniform Castro Culture is associated with a trend toward social and associated settlement hierarchies (Alvarez-Sanchís 1994; Ruiz Zapatero and Alvarez-Sanchís 1995) and those where a more communitarian form of fortified settlement remained dominant (as Sastre argues). The comparison underlines key reasons for regional divergences in socioeconomic organization. For example, local availability of metal sources for functional tools and display removes one of the main elements argued elsewhere in the rise of elites and central places, whereby control over long-distance trade and prestige goods represents the basis for social stratification. The self-sufficiency of the communitarian *castros* and their balanced agropastoral economy likewise limited the role of food surplus exchanges, also a potential source of “social power.” Beyond these explanations, Sastre emphasizes self-conscious limitations set by the members of the communitarian *castros* on tendencies toward elite formation.

The size of these settlements is a critical parameter. It has been argued independently from physical and social anthropological studies that a community remaining within upper population limits of 150–200 people is optimally scaled to promote a “face-to-face” society where relatively egalitarian relationships can dominate (Bintliff 1999). Their maintenance involves periodic budding off to daughter settlements if population strains these limits, promoting colonization of the surrounding landscape. Perlès (2001) provides a scenario similar to that of Sastre for the exceedingly long-lived Early Neolithic era of Greece, with hundreds of egalitarian tell-villages infilling fertile plains but remaining, through regular fission, at face-to-face sizes. It is likely that these upper demographic levels were known to contemporaries, since recent traditional communities have operated under formal rules for when a new settlement should be created from a swollen village. Remarkably, recent research suggests that even the great “town” of Chatal Huyuk in Early Neolithic Anatolia was probably a series of agglomerated neighborhoods, each consisting of an internally focused community of around 150 people (Düring and Marciniak 2006).

Two elements meriting further attention in Sastre’s paper are exogamy and reasons for fortification. Although Sastre favors a low rate of exogamy, the ethnohistoric record indicates that villages of 150–200 or fewer occupants benefit in terms of health and physical fitness by marrying out into a

larger gene pool, preferably some 500–600 people. This requires that a *castro* interchange partners with four or five other settlements. Given the regular patterning at no great distance of Sastre’s *castros*, this would not have been difficult, and we should bear in mind that regular village fission, typically practiced by face-to-face settlements, creates a series of nearby villages that already have kinship ties to each other.

Why are villages defended? If we find the idea of a symbolic barrier inadequate (for comparison, the Neolithic tells cited above are rarely bordered with ditches or other barriers), then wild animals and bandits are alternative possible threats. Yet with some 30 or more adult males per settlement, one thinks more of danger from other, similarly sized or larger groups of human enemies. But why would one or more *castros* attack another? If access to crops and metals are comparable throughout the region and the implication of the fission model and the need for exogamy provide mechanisms for a constant flow of marriageable women through the settlement system, then what basis is there for the small-scale skirmishing postulated by Sastre that may have led to such defenseworks?

The ethnohistory of rural village systems repeatedly shows intersettlement raids, chiefly over land boundaries, or small-scale cattle theft even when neighboring communities are also linked through intermarriage (e.g., Tak 1990). To achieve protection from such attacks or ensure their success, a village may combine with one or more villages of equal size, hence conforming to Sastre’s model of segmentary societies that occasionally form larger cooperating formations.

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World prehistory has received an important new case, worked with sophisticated understanding of prehistoric political economies. Few anthropological archaeologists working outside of Europe know of the small, fortified settlements of the Castro Culture, tucked away in northwestern Spain. Sastre masterfully analyzes their Iron Age culture. Her work focuses on why a particular form of society developed there while others in Europe built more complex proto-urban centers. Her focus on variation attends to the linkages between society and politics, warfare, and economy within the broad contexts of Iron Age societies. This article illustrates an important direction within Iberian archaeology, whose younger scholars increasingly engage anthropological concepts to make sense of a rich and varied archaeological record.

Castro Culture had considerable conflict, leading Sastre to consider warfare carefully. Warfare has long been recognized as pivotal in models of social change, but simplistic views of warfare have often stultified understanding. Instead, grounded on Clastres’ (1999) distinction between societies with warriors and warrior societies, Sastre suggests that the nature of warfare

differed significantly across places with contrasting economic bases. Tribal societies are organized against the state (or chiefdoms), which try to dominate them. The local groups of the Castro Culture guaranteed local subsistence independence by incorporating low-risk, intensive agriculture, and warfare successfully resisted outside domination.

The broad spectrum of warfare in tribal societies can be characterized according to three ideal types based on differing objectives and warfare's place in power strategies. The first is "village warfare," in which most males of a local group are armed to fight for their group's land and honor against neighbors and unneighborly chiefdoms and states. Local groups defend their independence and local self-sufficiency. The *castro* fits well into this type of "society with warriors."

To support complex societies, however, a ruling sector must exert effective control over surplus extraction, and warriors guarantee this coercively (Earle 1997). Warrior specialists, supported by surplus flows, are trained to protect and extend elite interests in two distinctive ways based on the nature of surplus extraction. The second type is "territorial warfare," in which warriors seize and hold territory, its population, and the staple finance systems on which they depend. Intensive agriculture is the subsistence base for such systems, which tend to be fairly stable. They have small, specialized warrior groups that are transformed into armies as conquest expands territories. Warfare in the Polynesian chiefdoms of Hawaii typifies this process. The third type is "wealth warfare," in which warriors seize plunder and dominate bottlenecks in luxury trade along caravan routes, rivers, and open straits. Such warfare is more entrepreneurial, often involving small groups of warriors freelancing or only weakly coordinated by an overlord. It requires extensive ownership and movement of luxury goods to prey on, and such warfare probably characterized many areas in Bronze Age Europe. The Viking war parties setting out annually from Iceland typify this type. These can be called warrior societies. The important point is that each type of warfare plays a distinct role in the broader society as it articulates to a particular political economy.

The prehistoric Wanka people of highland Peru (D'Altroy and Hastorf 2001) provide a useful comparison and help us understand certain tipping points at which tribal organization against the state fails. For nearly 500 years before the expansion of the Inka empire, the mountain valleys of the Andes contained thousands of small, independent polities that were centered on fortified central sites and able to resist external domination. These polities were often quite small (a few hundred people), while others, such as the Wanka polities, expanded to scales in the thousands. I have called the Wanka polities "hillfort chiefdoms"; the size of local polities was set by the local agricultural productivity. Each local polity with a small settlement cluster defended its own territory, and other polities were unable to amass sufficient warrior might to break down the defenses of its hillforts. Thus, the relatively egalitarian quality of the Castro Culture may reflect the relatively low and evenly spread agricultural productivity, such that no

local community could gain a size advantage to dominate neighbors. In the highland Andes, for the expansion of the state, an initial impetus appears to have been an exceptionally productive core area, where the Inka Empire developed a highly productive staple base to finance an army of conquest that rolled over political opposition. Alternatively, as perhaps seen in the European case, Rome was able to dominate luxury trade to create a highly productive, mixed political economy that supported a specialized army for expansion and conquest of the independent *castro* communities.

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While war can contribute to developing hierarchy and social incorporation, tribal warfare is typically carried out by relatively nonhierarchical, autonomous groups. In some situations, such as the Late Intermediate period in the Andean highlands, war even leads to fragmentation of militaristic states (Arkush 2006). Contemplating a structural alternative to warrior aristocracies in Iron Age northwestern Iberia that actively resists hierarchical incorporation is certainly in order.

Sastre follows in the Marxian tradition of prioritizing relations of production in the Castro world, and—contrary to Clastres—minimizing the causal role of war. War is seen as a dependent variable, its significance determined by the productive context in which it occurs. While it is true that all war is an expression of a total social formation and that this larger system structures the causes and consequences of war, it may be unwise to discount the causal force of war, often the most serious existential threat a people face. In the long debate over whether different kinds of war lead to particular social structural patterns, such as postmartial residence, or vice versa, Amazonian cases (Ferguson 1988) indicate that production and war exert separate pressures on social forms as well as reciprocally conditioning each other.

Castro evidence (as presented here; I do not otherwise know this literature) indicates economic self-sufficiency down to the household level, and Sastre infers political autonomy and communal control of settlements. The combination of risk-minimizing crops, varied livestock, locally available and workable metal ores, and constructed defendability of roughly equivalent communities does suggest self-contained communities. "Isolation" may be too strong a word, because much passes across walls. Clearly, there was intermarriage, and it would be unusual from an ethnographic perspective if these settlements were not also connected in exchange, ritual, and alliance. The communal construction of settlement walls, walls that are never expanded, does imply collective control of settlement life, and we know many kinds of leveling mechanisms to keep someone from usurping such control. Yet there are many combinations of local egalitarianism and some form

of status differentiation, so the clues that others see as indicating hierarchical relations are not necessarily contradictory.

Sastre sees conflict up to war as a normal outgrowth of the “us” and “them” opposition, as defined by settlement walls, although she adds the welcome caveat that frequent occurrence of war should not be assumed. Actual warfare, rather than its potential, “depends.” In this case, the possibility of exit, establishing new communities on open land, may be an alternative that reduces warfare. In Amazonia, that is so. Although those settlements are much less fixed than those of the Castro Culture, there are many examples of “almost wars,” tensions that stop short of killing because one group can and does move away from trouble (Ferguson 1989, 196–7). The existence of well-built forts with good command of surrounding land may also deter attackers. A generalized “us” versus “them” is a weak explanation for the existence of war, however, even though the way of combat had become quite general across Europe three or four millennia before this time; by contrast, earlier remains lack signs of war (Ferguson 2006). (That earlier time is another reason for questioning war as a natural outgrowth of the interaction of groups.) Can we infer a reason for war in the Castro Culture?

Because agricultural land, trade control, and political subjugation seem unlikely objectives, the obvious candidate is raiding to capture sheep, cattle, or pigs. These represent crystallized human effort. They are things of value, easy to grab and move. It is much more difficult to think of animal raisers who do not raid than to think of those who do: for horses on the Great Plains, pigs in New Guinea, cattle in eastern Africa, etc. (Fadiman’s [1982] study of Meru cattle raiders comes to mind as a source of useful ideas for considering the Castro world.) In the Castro context, raiding might be especially attractive for juniors setting out to establish a new settlement. It is not clear whether livestock can be taken within the walls when raiders are anticipated, but walls could make sense anyway because raiders may target a settlement to prevent pursuit, and raiding can make enemies who seek to eliminate their adversaries.

Finally, iron should not be dismissed as a factor of change because it merely contributed to an already existing collective strategy of intensification. If iron opened new possibilities of heavy plowing in lowland soils, it could have been critical to the shift in later Iron Age settlements. Yanomami once made small gardens without steel tools, but the introduction of axes and machetes led to a major transformation of their subsistence orientation toward more sedentary villages and larger gardens (Ferguson 1998). Steel tools became critical means of production, and differential access to sources of steel is the crucial variable for explaining village movements, alliances, and war (Ferguson 1995). That would not apply to Castro Culture, where different settlements made their own tools, but it does suggest that metal implements can play a more important role in historical change than mere facilitating factors.

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The concept of isolation—as compared to its opposite, interaction—is undertheorized and underutilized in current anthropological and archaeological research. Sastre’s article is about isolation, and in writing it, she has made a major contribution to anthropological and archaeological theory and method. As she describes, the people of the Iron Age *castros* of northwestern Iberia employed isolation as a means of managing conflict, war in particular. Using Castro Culture as an example, Sastre extends her model to the rest of Iron Age Europe. My goal in this brief comment is to expand Sastre’s discussion of the concept of isolation.

In recent decades cultural isolation has been largely ignored by anthropologists and archaeologists in favor of cultural interaction, perhaps as a reaction to our increasingly globalized and interconnected world. The idea of uncontacted groups of people living in “splendid isolation,” insulated from all others, has rightly been rejected. Extreme isolation was, it seems, exceedingly rare, even in cases where small groups of people lived in very remote places. Consequently, it makes more sense to talk about *isolationism* than it does isolation per se. It is very likely the case that when groups of people were isolated to any degree and for any length of time, it was as a matter of choice, a strategy engaged in rather than a condition endured. Furthermore, being spatially remote is often considered a necessary, if not sufficient, causal factor leading to isolation. This is an incorrect assumption. A group may be remote from other, surrounding groups and yet interact with them on a regular basis, thereby avoiding isolation. Conversely, a group can live in close proximity to other groups and nevertheless be socially, politically, and economically cut off. Such is the case with most inner-city ghettos, which are isolated but not remote (e.g., Bourgois 2003). It makes theoretical and methodological sense, therefore, to operationalize a concept of isolationism, as opposed to isolation, and to decouple isolationism from absolute measures of distance. Doing this makes Sastre’s arguments and approach that much more compelling.

Anthropologists, and with them archaeologists, abandoned the idea of pristine isolation in the late 1960s, primarily at the urging of Morton Fried (1968), who argued that most, if not all, small-scale societies had been contacted and strongly influenced by modern colonial states and empires. For Fried (and, following him, Ferguson and Whitehead 1991), tribalism, conflict, and war were results of contact and incorporation, and isolation was a very rare and rarely successful avoidance strategy (exceptional examples, such as the “peaceful” Semai, proved the general rule). Also in the late 1960s, Netting began to develop a cultural-ecological model, applied to Swiss mountain villages, that described “homeostatic” cul-

tural adaptations by “closed corporate communities” (Netting 1981). Netting’s work challenged Fried’s position by demonstrating that certain societies could, in fact, maintain a degree of isolation from the outside, impinging world over very long periods of time, primarily through the application of complicated, carefully balanced systems of social organization. The Iberian *castros* are, it seems, analogous to Netting’s closed corporate communities. Additional anthropological work on isolation focused on so-called refuge societies, groups that were isolated because of geographical or historical circumstances (e.g., Aguirre Beltrán 1979; Boehm 1984). The concept of refuge societies combined Fried’s concerns about cultural contact and isolation as countervailing forces with Netting’s appreciation for isolationism as a viable ecological and socio-organizational strategy.

Most of the recent social-scientific work on isolation and isolationism has been done by nonanthropologists, primarily sociologists and economists with an interest in the appearance and evolution of world systems and, therefore, archaeology (e.g., Christopher Chase-Dunn, Wilma Dunaway, and Andre Gunder Frank). Foremost among them is Thomas Hall. Hall has written extensively on the incorporation of peripheral societies by expanding core states and argues that world-systems theorists, including archaeologists, have oversimplified the process of incorporation (Hall 1986, 1998, 2000a, 2001, 2006). According to Hall, incorporation of peripheral peoples is not an all-or-nothing event; instead, the degree of incorporation exists along a continuum stretching from non-existent or partial (i.e., “informal” or “contact”) to full (i.e., “formal” or “effective”), depending on a multitude of factors, including geographic setting and historical trajectory. Finally, archaeologist Nick Kardulias (2007) has introduced the concept of “negotiated peripherality,” the idea that peripheral groups may actively negotiate the terms of their own incorporation. They do this primarily by exploiting the conditions of their peripheral or “frontier” position, that is, their potential for isolation. I have found negotiated peripherality to be very applicable to my own research in the high-mountain, tribal zones of northern Albania, where isolationism was the weapon of choice in Albanian efforts to resist conquest by the Ottoman Empire (see bibliography and reports at <http://www.millsaps.edu/svp>).

Sastre’s research deftly pulls all of the above theoretical and methodological parts together into a functioning whole, thereby explaining both how the relatively egalitarian Castro Culture of northwestern Iberia emerged from the preceding Bronze Age “warrior” society and how it resisted incorporation by an expanding Rome. It also helps to explain how, through interaction, *castros* farther to the south and closer to Roman Iberia became larger and more hierarchical than those in the Northwest. In short, a general understanding of Castro Culture is possible only when interaction[ism] and isolation[ism], as defined above, are entered into the equation. As Sastre concludes, this is most likely true for all of prehistoric Europe and the rest of the world as well.

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This paper brings to a wider English-speaking audience further evidence of the distinct directions Spanish later-prehistoric archaeology has been traveling in the last decades. To an outside, non-Spanish-speaking observer, Spanish approaches to later prehistory in recent years have been challenging, exciting, and distinctively different from other European archaeological traditions. While being well aware of trends in both North American and British archaeological interpretation, Spanish archaeologies have explored similar themes but usually with a different take, often drawing on Marxist/Marxian and related social theory but on strands not drawn on by North American and Northern European archaeologists. This paper exemplifies this distinctive Spanish approach.

Explicit studies of social organization are surprisingly rare in Later Bronze Age and Iron Age archaeology in Western Europe (c. 1000 BC to AD 1). One explanation for this lack of explicit attention is the continuing strength of archaeological traditions that see this period as protohistorical and hence “known” from limited historical sources. It is against this context that this and other explicit studies, such as those on the British Iron Age in the past 20 years, are set. The two approaches share four similar elements, despite developing in the context of internal debates of different national archaeologies of the same archaeological period. The first is the questioning of the idea that all later prehistoric European societies have to have been distinctly ranked or hierarchical, that they have to have been “social triangles.” This is accompanied by an explicit questioning of the traditional protohistorical approach to the period; a strong commitment to using the actual data from specific societies as the primary basis for reconstructing the past, not always a feature of the traditional protohistorical approaches in later European prehistory; and, finally, the use of interpretative approaches that draw on different forms of Marxist/Marxian and related social or anthropological theory.

These similarities are both welcome and worrying. They are welcome in that there would appear to have been broadly similar social forms in different parts of Iron Age Western Europe not easily characterized as hierarchical or as classical “chiefdoms” in the processual-archaeological sense. It is these similarities that have made Sastre’s and her Spanish colleagues’ approach an increasingly rich source of inspiration and comparison for some British archaeologists and vice versa. They are worrying in that they raise questions about the strong persistence of interpretations—or more commonly, uncritically assessed assumptions—that see essentially “classic” chiefdoms and hierarchy in other parts of Europe. Are distinct national traditions of archaeology really so strong that

they can, and must, determine how past societies are interpreted? Or were there really classic chiefdoms across much of Iron Age France and Germany while the type of segmentary social systems this paper analyzes were typical of a “periphery” to the north and west of this band of societies, with all the accompanying implications for core-periphery/world-systems approaches to the study of later European Prehistory?

I suspect that for most readers of the paper the analysis of segmentary prehistoric societies will be of greatest impact, along with the important way Sastre’s approach links warfare to the constitution of society. The paper presents another in a growing number of case studies that show that not all agricultural societies with relatively high population densities but lacking clear evidence for state-type institutions have to have been chiefdoms. The archaeological evidence that Sastre presents makes a compelling case for this interpretation, and she explores how these segmentary or heterarchical forms of constituting society worked. The explicit use of the work of Clastres provides a very distinctive approach that combines production and consumption to give an understanding of these societies’ political economies. It is an approach that I have found very inspirational, although I look forward to future work more closely linking the theoretical approaches with detailed evidence of agricultural and other production. Integrating warfare into this interpretation of social reproduction is also a distinct new contribution in a European context. Warlike Celts, Iberians, and Germans have caused problems for those seeking new approaches to this period. Other attempts to offer new views of European Iron Age societies have often downplayed or ignored warfare. This is largely because they lacked a language that could discuss the social context of violence, within and without the community, in ways that did not sound like a rehashing of the traditional view of mythic warrior Celtic elites. Here is one of the first detailed interpretations of an Iron Age society that clearly links the role of violence to the constitution of society, and it does so in ways that do not assume that the warriors had to be “elites.”

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The paper from Sastre is a very suggestive contribution to the revision of the sociological models used to understand the European Iron Age. I am deeply persuaded that the idea of social resistance to division is a powerful tool for understanding the process of emergence of what we call the Early Iron Age (EIA; Parcero Oubiña 2003). Similarly, recognizing tensions between community and domestic units is critical for an understanding of the subsequent historical processes. However, I think that there is an aspect that Sastre’s proposal

does not consider enough: that the very process that leads to the emergence of EIA communities brings into play new elements that, in turn, condition later trajectories. Fortification, specifically, is a major issue.

The key points of Sastre’s analysis concern the organization of production and the way in which it shapes the presence or absence of formal social exploitation (social classes). On that foundation she sets a progressive sequence of concepts in the configuration of segmentary communities (identity, opposition, conflict, fortification) that I do not see as completely evident. Whereas the development of processes of identity and opposition is well argued, it is less evident that opposition necessarily proceeds to conflict, especially “violent competition.” However, my main concern is with the emergence of fortification, which Sastre presents as a logical development of conflict based on the isolation of local communities and also as part of the process of identity in segmentary societies. Fortification is both a means of settlement control and a concrete materialization of that control. It means not only building an enclosing wall but also developing more or less complex systems of artificial structures and making locational decisions that privilege prominent placement. Fortification is not an intrinsic part of “primitive societies” (as identity, opposition, or even conflict is) but the materialization of specific, historical forms of social relations in which internal control and/or isolation are only part of the picture (Arkush and Stanish 2005).

In addition, to my view Sastre’s proposal makes a relative undervaluation of the changes documented in the archaeological record through the Iron Age. I would largely agree with her picture of the EIA, but I find that a number of significant changes in the Late Iron Age (LIA) point toward a different social context. I am arguing not for the development of class societies but for the progressive incorporation of the conditions under which their emergence would happen (for instance, a settlement model that would last under the new social conditions after the Roman conquest). Here I find that the very new material conditions developed in the EIA are key to understanding how subsequent social changes would happen. My point is that social values that emerge in the EIA determine later social developments and that those of warfare are at the core.

There are some fields in which the LIA record suggests that the predominant role of community is vanishing. A good example is the “costs of evasion” that allow segmentation, which increase significantly in the LIA *castros*. Sastre is right that this is a matter not simply of environmental availability but of the reconstruction of the “cultural conditions of existence,” and here is where they become significant: the labor required for the construction of a *castro* wall is not trivial (2–3 months of full-time labor of a whole community, note 16). Furthermore, a significantly higher figure should be expected for the greatest part of the Iberian Northwest, where the bedrock is mainly composed of harder materials, such as granite.

Other examples are weapons and goldwork. It should be noted that gold objects are very scarce before the LIA but then become a key part of the record. Their classification as “communal goods” conflicts with the available evidence: although not much is known about their circulation and use, it must be remembered that nearly every gold object we know of is a personal ornament (torques, earrings, so-called diadem-belts), pointing clearly to an individual use (furthermore, stone statues of warriors often show them wearing torques).

As for weapons, it is good to consider, especially from a materialist point of view, their “economic importance,” that is, the amount of raw material they represent, since metalwork consists mainly of brooches, pendants, and the like, which require very little raw material. The distinction between weapons and tool-weapons, although interesting, could reveal a counterargument: Is not the very existence of “pure” weapons an indicator of the social relevance of the activity they represent?

All in all, the text remains a major effort at original thinking about the relations among community, politics, and warfare, valuable for raising a good number of ideas within a field (Iron Age) often approached in too-simplistic ways.

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Developing ways of understanding Iron Age societies is probably the most important task in European Iron Age archaeology. In this sense, the southern periphery of the central European “core” has received less attention and has remained somewhat separate from the general research agenda. Sastre makes a welcome contribution by trying to reintegrate the northwestern Iberian Iron Age into the Atlantic Iron Age—as others have recently attempted (González García 2007; González Ruibal 2008, 13–14; Henderson 2007, 290)—stressing the pivotal position of northwestern Iberia between the Mediterranean world and the Atlantic.

Sastre’s analysis has strong anthropological support and a European scope. However, there are some problems with the chronology and spatial analysis of her main approach. Sastre considers the Iron Age a nearly unique period with features that remain fairly constant throughout the period. The significant break occurs just at the end of the period, with the Roman conquest of the Northwest. In terms of regional analysis, Sastre recognizes just two main areas: (1) the León Mountains, Trás-os-Montes in Portugal, Asturias, and the interior and north of Galicia; and (2) southwestern Galicia. Her view is conditioned by the fact that her team’s fieldwork has been conducted in the León Mountains, that is, the oriental periphery of the Castro Culture (see note 14 for references). I think that this is a biased perspective and, to some extent,

a result of the traditional homogeneous view of the northwestern Iron Age caused by weak regional settlement knowledge (but see Parcero Oubiña 2003).

The impressive study of González Ruibal (2006–7) has changed understandings of both the regions in the Northwest and the nature of societies within each region. I agree with the concept of different *castrexa* (in Galician) societies. There is no one model of Iron Age society. The archaeological record for the earlier Iron Age (700–400 BC) is relatively poor and ambiguous, although there is a clear tendency toward more egalitarian communities than in the Late Bronze Age. In the Late Iron Age, hierarchies and conflicts are much more evident. Sastre prefers the term “segmentary societies” for the communities found in most of the regions in the Northwest, with the exception of southwestern Galicia, an area with “big castros.” For this region she admits the possibility of a more hierarchical society, but only at the beginning of the Roman conquest. I think that the picture is more complex. The variability of societies in the Late Iron Age seems quite clear, despite the difficulties of drawing social profiles from the often poor archaeological record. Perhaps identifying three models of society would be useful (González Ruibal 2006–7, 2008, 18–19): (1) the developed societies of southwestern Galicia and northwestern Portugal, characterized as “*sociétés à maison*” (González Ruibal 2006), occupying the highest level of hierarchy, with decorated houses and strong evidence of social differentiation; (2) the segmentary societies of Sastre’s analysis, also called “deep rural” societies (González Ruibal 2008, 19), possibly found in the León Mountains and interior lands of Galicia and characterized by small settlements, a homogeneous material culture, and little social distinction; and (3) “heroic” societies, sometimes identified as “Celtic kingdoms” (García Quintela 2007; García Quintela and Santos Estévez 2008), situated in the northern areas of Galicia (A Coruña and Lugo), with poor housing but very rich golden jewelry and probably rich livestock and warfare. The “Castro Culture” was not uniform, and the diversity of societies is a key point to be developed. Sastre’s stimulating paper is a firm step in that direction. In some ways there is a New Northwestern Iberian Iron Age that deserves the research, discussion, and knowledge of a growing European Iron Age academic community.

The other controversial topic is the nature of warfare in these societies. Sastre recognizes violence and conflict but is much more cautious on the question of war, or at least “warrior societies.” I agree with much of her argument but believe that she tries to diminish support for war’s status as a “normal state” by leaving out relevant papers defending the importance of war (Almagro Gorbea 1997, 2002; Peralta 1991; Almagro Gorbea and Lorrio 2004). The claim against a “bloodless Iron Age” has been convincing (James 2007; González García 2006; González Ruibal 2006–7, 433–41), and research on Iron Age war is extending the analysis to other archaeological and ethnographical contexts (González Ruibal 2006–7, 447; Armit 2007) and to osteological analysis, which even suggests female

combatants (Redfern 2008). Obviously, war was an intrinsic component of small, autonomous communities. The goal of research, once again, is a contextualized approach to war that considers regional and chronological variations (González Ruibal 2006–7, 433). The general impression is that war was basically a collective task in defense of the social group. The absence of tombs and the acid component of Galician soils help to explain the relatively small number of weapons in the Iberian Northwest. But archaeological finds, iconography, and, to a lesser extent, written texts draw a consistent picture of a large variety of weaponry and forms of combat, most of which were based on ambushes and *guerrilla* tactics.

It is time for a nontriangular, generalized European Iron Age (Hill 2006), but beyond this what we really need is to provide contextualized analysis for recognizing different Iron Age societies, with different forms of triangular and nontriangular societies. If we now look only for nontriangular societies, we will be on the opposite side of the research pendulum and will perhaps be throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

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Sastre's article is a welcome addition to recent commentaries on warfare in the Iberian Iron Age (e.g., Parcero Oubiña 2003; Almagro-Gorbea and Lorrio 2004; Freire 2005; Sánchez-Moreno 2005). It is also good to see alternative, less hierarchical or nonhierarchical, models for Iron Age societies being explored as part of a reconsideration of traditional models of conflict and hierarchy, as has happened concerning hillforts (e.g., Bowden and McOmish 1987), nonmilitary aspects of fortification more generally (e.g., Ralston 1995), and "Celtic" society (Collis 2003). The traditional models outlined are unilinear, although evidence elsewhere—for example, in Neolithic and Bronze Age Britain (Thorpe 2006)—implies cycles of major horizons of violence.

The complete dominance of *castros* as a form of settlement is remarkable. In other areas, even where fortified settlements dominate the archaeological record, they are only one element in a broader settlement pattern; for example, in Atlantic Scotland, the stone towers known as brochs are not alone (Armit 1990). This in itself suggests that regional factors should be at the heart of any interpretation.

There are, however, three areas worth exploring further: the agricultural economy and *castro* architecture; the role of imports; and the role of artistic representation. These all relate to the suggested increasing divergence between the segmentary *Castro* heartland and the more southerly and more coastal areas and the edge of the plains of León in the interior.

Rather than warfare as the main factor promoting the *Castro* landscape (e.g., Parcero Oubiña 2003), Sastre argues that production based on intensive cultivation of cereal crops tied

people to land, with isolation in *castros* creating exclusive communities. The interpretation of the Iron Age as a period of intensive agriculture contrasts with that of archaeologists who, from animal bone data, argue that societies in western Iberia were primarily dependent on sheep, goats, and cattle (e.g., Lenerz-de Wilde 1995; Sánchez-Moreno 2005). *Castros* are generally located not in the vicinity of good-quality land (Parcero Oubiña 2003; Parcero Oubiña and Cobas Fernández 2004) but on soils unsuitable for intensification. Location was more concerned with the visibility of ground in the middle distance, which could be interpreted in defensive terms. A role for enclosure walls as stock enclosures (relating to internal structures interpreted as animal shelters; Ayán Vila 2008) could fit with a society in which raiding was significant. We might also note that there are examples of *chevaux-de-frise* (defensive stone settings) at *castro* sites (Lenerz-de Wilde 1995), suggesting a need for greater fortification.

Sastre implies that imports are limited largely to the fringes of the segmentary-*castro* region. While early (sixth and fifth centuries BC) Carthaginian imports are indeed mostly found on and near the coast, there are exceptions, such as the early Punic bowl from Castrovite 45 km inland (González-Ruibal 2004b). It is always difficult to gauge the importance of relatively small numbers of imports, and similar issues of interpretation arise concerning claims of a prestige-goods economy based on Mediterranean imports in the Early Iron Age of Central Europe (Frankenstein and Rowlands 1978 against Bintliff 1984) and the significance of Roman imports into southern England (Cunliffe 1987; Fitzpatrick 1994). However, imports do increase from the fourth century BC onward, with Punic pottery, glass beads, and coins all found inland (González-Ruibal 2004b). Yet, given the geographical distinction made by Sastre, if external contact was so significant, then would the resistant area not reject imports? There was rejection in the attitude toward wine, which was apparently not exchanged inland (González-Ruibal 2004b). Thus, rather than the segmentary-*castro* area being resistant to contact per se, perhaps certain imports were acceptable and others were not.

The relevance of artistic representations of warriors seems to be underplayed by Sastre. While Quesada (2003) dates the widespread monumental *guerrero galaico* sculptures of warriors to a late period, this is not uncontested. González-Ruibal (2004a) concludes from their presence in *castros* without evidence of late settlement, their reuse in Roman contexts, and the possible Montefortino-type helmet on the Sanfino statue that they date to the late second and first centuries BC. He also notes the difficulty of their being produced on any scale within the Roman period, given their dissimilarity to Roman provincial art styles. In some cases these monumental warriors were placed at *castro* entrances (González-Ruibal 2004a; Freire 2005) and are reasonably interpreted as warrior-hero guardians. Artistic representations of severed heads (González-Ruibal 2004a) may also be relevant, given their association elsewhere in the Mediterranean with head-taking by heroes. Finally, the great caution expressed regarding gold torques

(more than 100 of which are known, according to González-Ruibal 2004a, a respectable total compared with that for Britain) being a prestige good, based on the level of skill required, seems rather excessive. Torques were a well-established but restricted symbol of authority within Iron Age Europe, worn by the *guerreros galaicos* (Lenerz-de Wilde 1995) and possible goddesses (González-Ruibal 2004a). The most straightforward interpretation would be that here, as elsewhere, gods and heroes wore torques.

These questions raise the issue of whether the distinction between the segmentary-*castro* area and border areas more influenced by outside contacts is so clear-cut. Might not the segmentary *castros* too have been influenced, leading to conflicts between those seeking to establish a hierarchy and those actively resisting such claims, as seen across Iron Age Europe?

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This paper is a welcome contribution to discussion of the European Iron Age, especially because it deals with a part of the continent not well known to many specialists. It not only provides an informative introduction to the Iron Age of northwestern Iberia but also raises important issues that bear on our understanding of other parts of the continent.

I think that Sastre overstates the extent to which “warfare as an essential component of society has been a constant in studies” of Iron Age societies. There is a great deal of recent work in many European countries that does not posit warfare as an essential component. Extensive work on settlement systems, economies, and, most recently, ritual often has little to say about warfare, and warfare does not necessarily lie behind all of the interpretations.

Sastre’s advocacy for broader thinking about how Iron Age societies were organized, away from traditional models that have been based largely on interpretations of Roman texts, is very welcome. Her application of the notion of “segmentary society” seems to fit the *castro* phenomenon of northwestern Iberia, and it could also be profitably applied to other Iron Age phenomena. As far as evidence for social stratification and for warfare is concerned, it is unfortunate that burials are rare in *castro* contexts, as are objects that can be confidently identified as interpersonal weapons, especially in the earlier phases.

The situation of relatively small, nonurban, largely self-sufficient farming communities without signs of either status hierarchies or warfare is also to be found in other parts of Europe during the Iron Age. For example, in southern Germany and neighboring regions in the period between about 900 and 600 BC, the settlement landscape is characterized by communities of a few tens of people living in settlements enclosed by ditches and palisades (Kas and Schussmann

1998). More than 200 such enclosed settlements have been identified, and they share many important features with the *castros*. There is very little indication of status differentiation within these settlements, nor is there much evidence for differentiation between communities. All seem to have been roughly the same size, to have had the same economies, and to have been in more or less regular contact with one another. As Sastre suggests for the *castros*, each settlement community seems to have had a specialist to process metals, but otherwise all families were involved in the same productive activities. As with the *castros*, although the boundary ditches and palisades indicate both group construction activity and at least a minimal concern with defense, there is rarely any direct evidence of warfare, such as burned horizons on the settlements or substantial numbers of associated weapons.

In contrast to the situation of the *castros*, the early Iron Age settlements of Central Europe are accompanied by large numbers of cemeteries, many of which have been well excavated and well documented. Like the evidence from the settlements, they show relatively little social differentiation in the grave-good assemblages and little evidence that armed conflict played an important role in how people were identified (e.g., Müller-Karpe 1952; Schopper 1995).

After a couple of centuries, roughly 600–400 BC, during which heavily fortified centers developed in much of Central Europe and representation of high status included weaponry, in the period 400–200 BC the settlement and burial evidence again suggests a kind of organization like the segmentary societies Sastre posits for northwestern Iberia. After 200 BC, with increasing contact with the Roman world, the urban-style *oppida* appear and with them indications of more serious warfare (Wells 1999, 38–63).

During both of these “segmentary” periods in Central Europe, exceptionally rich burials are rare, and so too are clear signs of warfare. A useful way to think about how the social and political systems within these and *castro* societies worked might be through the now much-discussed “swarm theory” (Rheingold 2003). This set of ideas, derived from investigations of animal behavior, examines how groups of individuals, including humans, are often able to coordinate their activities with remarkable agreement and synchronism in the absence of clearly defined leaders. Much could be gained by applying models developed from swarm theory to the workings of segmentary Iron Age societies, including the *castros* of Iberia and comparable phenomena elsewhere in Europe.

Reply

The comments made about my paper are acute and suggestive. They come from varied points of view: those interested in the Iron Age (both in the Northwest and in other parts of Europe) and those more concerned with war as manifested

in the Northwest. This feedback is in itself a success, for it has achieved one of the original intentions of the article: to put the Castro Culture under international light and stimulate debate among high-level researchers.

Wells, offering the comparison of southern Germany, is concerned that I overstate the extent to which warfare is a constant in interpretations of Iron Age societies. Given that nonhierarchical models of Iron Age societies are usually treated with skepticism and normally—lacking a warrior elite—are actively dissociated from warfare, Wells's words are themselves a scientific pat on the back. Nonhierarchical models are increasing in the scientific bibliography, particularly in British literature, inside an academic framework well defined by Hill's and Bintliff's comments. As Hill proposes, it is not necessary to eliminate warrior elites altogether from the European Iron Age but only to limit them to well-documented cases. It is also important to study them through regional analyses rather than historiographically created models like Celticism. In this sense, I believe that Ruiz Zapatero need not worry about the baby in the bathwater; the models contested here are not strictly opposites.

But Hill's comments also imply a critical issue: alternatives to hierarchization are usually accepted only for the backwaters of the Iron Age away from the evolutionist hierarchization that was supposedly leading the historical dynamics. This is already happening in literature on the Northwest, as Ruiz Zapatero shows: the segmentary *castros* are not only the periphery of the general Mediterranean world system but also the periphery of the "Castro Culture"; segmentary *castros* are the lowest level of a pyramid crowned by the leaders of historical development, which are the societies of the large *castros* in the southerly coastal region of the Northwest. But this pyramid has blurry edges. What is the geographical definition of this historiographical construct called the "Castro Culture" whose eastern edge is so perfectly characterized by the *castros* of León? How is *castroness* evaluated? Why are there so many differences with the more developed southwesterly big *castros*, which seem to flourish in contact with Rome both before and after the conquest?

Segmentary societies should be studied not through marginalization within a macrohistorical process but as independent entities within specific historical factors. This is why the isolationism process is relevant. Galaty's characterization of isolationism as a social strategy has enabled my study to sharpen its focus on this issue, particularly his distinction between "isolation" and "isolationism." Segmentary societies are not segmentary because they are passive, traditionalist, or marginal—common traits in a "period with features that remain fairly constant," in Ruiz Zapatero's words. On the contrary, they are actively participating in a process, conditioned by certain historical realities, that led to the consolidation of certain forms of social relationships. They are not the backwaters of history; instead, they offer different responses to the changes occurring during the later Iron Age. Hierarchical societies have been the main subject of study for archaeologists

and anthropologists for more than a century, while nonhierarchical models have been developed and applied recently, but protohistorical European studies have not taken the latter into account. As Thorpe points out, the isolationism of the segmentary *castros* is not strict, and some contact does permeate. *Castros* are not isolated. This is exemplified by the homogeneity of the *situlae* molds and some of the long-distance imports, which show that intercommunitarian contacts were strong. The isolationism hypothesis, in fact, implies an external influence of border processes in segmentary *castros*, and this is a key in the reevaluation of their historical process.

The future study of antihierarchization social strategies must take into account much of what has been said both in the paper and in many of the comments. These ideas require further development and pose several problems that have been left unsolved. One of these problems, mentioned by Bintliff, is related to the size of the settlements and the necessary existence of larger cooperating formations. It is true that the interaction among settlements has not been adequately studied and defined in the context of isolationism. In this sense, more can be done to follow the steps of Hill (2006), Moore (2007), and Bintliff (1999). In addition, the question of tribalism in Iron Age societies should be approached from this point of view.

My construction of *castro* identity, of the "us" and "them" in relation to fortification and war, has been subject to criticism by Ferguson and Parcero Oubiña. I grant them that my paper may have given an overly mechanistic impression, but that is far from my intention. With respect to Parcero Oubiña's comments, I think that the emergence of fortification is not a logical development of conflict but something (historically contingent, of course) related to forms of identity and exclusion that, moreover, develops within a context marked by antihierarchical tendencies. Segmentary *castros* not only are independent but also jealously guard their nonhierarchical society and population stability behind a wall. In this sense, I agree that fortification is not intrinsic to primitive societies but is a response to a specific historical reality that is not evidently war related.

The type of war that these societies might have fought is an issue brought up by Earle, Ferguson, and Bintliff. The existence of the parallels cited in many of the comments undoubtedly enriches my study centered on the Hispanic Northwest. The Wanka case, though not cited specifically in my text, has contributed to the construction of my model of the Castro society, as have some other types of chiefdoms studied by Earle. Undoubtedly, a *castro's* war would be "village warfare," implying a "society with warriors," as defined by Clastres, if this term is satisfactory in describing a society where all men are, or can be, warriors. Intersettlements raids or small-scale cattle theft probably occurred, implying a conflict reality that probably required intercommunitarian negotiation channels to minimize such situations. Given the evidence, however, there is no need to assume structural raiding as a form of "coup-gathering" for juniors. This has already

been suggested for the Northwest and Lusitania, supposedly reinforced by a heroic ideology that, for the reasons mentioned above, is out of place.

The interpretation of gold jewelry as communal goods seems to be one of the most controversial points in the paper. Commenters have asserted that the number of valuable items increases in the late Iron Age, that they are personal ornaments pointing clearly to individual use, and that “the most straightforward interpretation would be that here, as elsewhere, gods and heroes wore torques.” My work, based on that of Sánchez-Palencia and Fernández-Posse, studies the full process of producing gold objects from extraction on. This process was organized through households and community. The lack of archaeological evidence that may shed light on their use and significance, together with the attested existence of collective deposits within settlements or their presence outside settlements in possible border areas between *castros*, tells a story different from that of the commenters. They all probably were personal adornments—although there are iconographic examples with the torques in hands, not around the neck—distinguishing individuals from the rest of the community. However, this does not mean that social distinction showed social hierarchization, although it quite possibly does point to other forms of social inequality that did not break communal power relations.

Finally, I would like to point out that this paper has been done in the research group “Social Structure and Territory: Landscape Archaeology” of the CCHS (CSIC) and is based on the work of María Dolores Fernández-Posse. The strong points in the paper are surely hers, while the weaker ones are all mine.

—Inés Sastre

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