

Social complexity in a long term perspective

Session B15

Edited by

Joaquina Soares



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Joaquina Soares

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Revision Misé Simas

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Information and exchange Museu de Arqueologia e Etnografia do Distrito de Setúbal
Avenida Luisa Todi, 162 - 2900-451 Setúbal (Portugal)
Tel.: +351 265 239 365/265 534 029
Fax: +351 265 527 678
E-mail: maeds@amrs.pt
Site: <http://maeds.amrs.pt/>
Blog: <http://maedseventosactividades.blogspot.pt/>

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Graphic Holocene expressions on the Atlantic European façade. Portugal

P. BUENO-RAMÍREZ*
R. DE BALBÍN-BEHRMANN*
R. BARROSO-BERMEJO*

Abstract

Engraved and painted symbols in rock-shelters and on rock outcrops, dolmens, menhir, statues and steles, are the most visible signs of human activity. In recent years, a large number of finds have been made in Portugal, where some graphic expressions (Palaeolithic or painted schematic art) were thought not to exist. The questions these latest discoveries pose can be extrapolated to the rest of the Iberian Peninsula and open new paths in a more archaeological panorama different from the Atlantic/Mediterranean dualism that has dominated the interpretation of recent prehistoric groups in the south-west of Europe.

Keywords

Prehistoric art; Style V; megalithic art; steles; menhir.

Introduction

Post-glacial graphic activity has tended to be left out of the integrality of the models reconstructing the behaviour of recent prehistoric groups in Iberia. However, the symbols and their ideological connotation are essential as another element of material culture if they are analysed with fully archaeological protocols, in addition to observing formal parallels of greater or lesser significance (Bueno & Balbín, 2000; Bueno *et al.*, 2014a).

Few subjects in the Iberian Peninsula were more important than this secondary position of the study of post-glacial symbology, in addition to discussions about the chronological and cultural posi-

tion of the techniques of paintings on one hand and engravings on the other hand (Bueno *et al.*, 2008a). Each one represented a contrasting cultural idiosyncrasy, as well as different chronologies: painting belonged to the Mediterranean Neolithic and engraving to Atlantic megalithism and its later development in the Bronze Age. A profound relationship between the theoretical position of researchers and the recognition of the symbolic world forced the weight of some of the assertions that still require further archaeological documentation (Bueno & Balbín, 2009).

It was at the end of last century when interpretations were more closely associated with the

* Area of Prehistory. University of Alcalá de Henares I - p.bueno@uah.es; 2 - r.balbin@uah.es; 3 - rosa.barroso@uah.es.

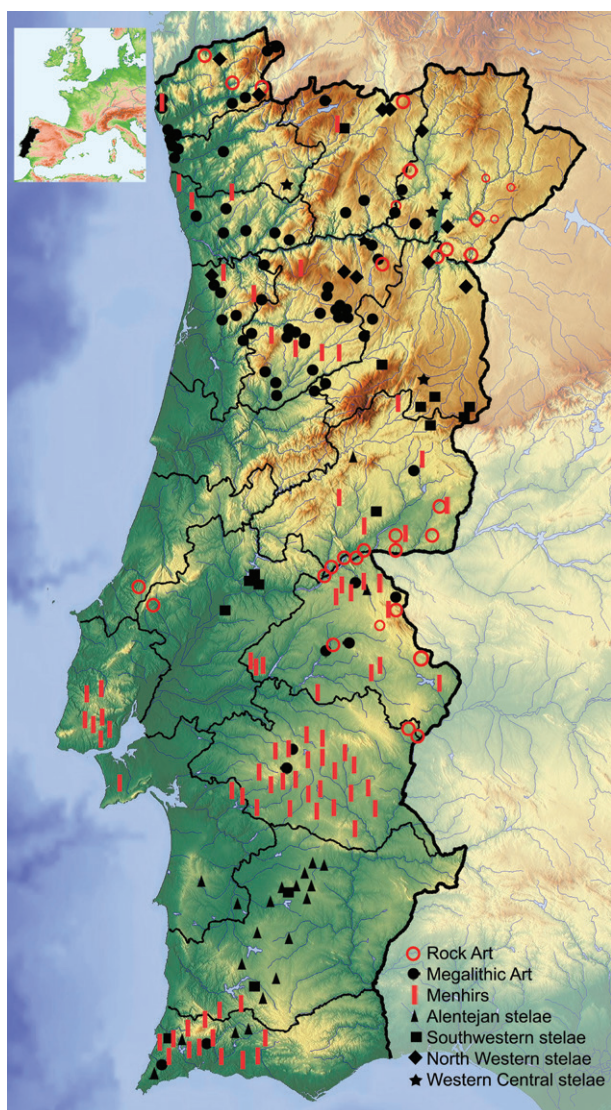


Fig. 1 - Position of Portuguese postpalaeolithic graphic expressions.

archaeological reality of the rock surfaces, portable artefacts and sculptured objects displaying the symbols discussed here. Two clear tendencies appeared. On one hand the assumption of a hiatus between Palaeolithic art and the later Neolithic art (Jordá 1966). On the other, marked differences between expressions in the rest of Europe and those in Mediterranean areas, such as the Iberian Peninsula, southern France, Italy and the islands (Baptista, 1986; Gomes, 2002; Jorge, 1983; Martínez, 2006; Santos Junior 1940; Valdez-Tullet, 2013). In these two cases,

closed compartments were created; in time (Palaeolithic/Neolithic) and in space (Mediterranean/Atlantic). These projected an unconvincing image of the development of engraved and painted symbols in European prehistory (Bueno *et al.*, 2012).

The study of inequality has hardly been attempted in connection with engraved, painted and sculpted expressions in the Neolithic, Chalcolithic and Bronze Age (Bueno & Balbín, 2006a). The exception is the analysis of armed figures and more precisely of later stelae, as the identification of inequality is found in the exhibition of prestigious objects, especially weapons (Harrison 2004). The fact is that this type of singular evidence, at times on a large scale, especially visible and exhibiting adornments, is rooted in the funerary world of the megalithic monuments. This suggests, like some of the motifs discussed here, a long period for the construction, development and persistence of the symbols of human groups in post-glacial Europe (Bueno *et al.*, 2005).

In the current state of our knowledge, some patterns can be established in the social value transmitted by the graphic representations. The ensembles in rock-shelters and engravings in the open-air have always suffered from the problem of the significantly low number of archaeological sites. However, their geographic position itself is indicative of their importance for the groups who created them, as they defined use, territories and, probably, identities (Bueno *et al.*, 2004, 2006) (Fig. 1).

Megalithic sites are an objectifiable source for an archaeological study of post-glacial graphisms. The technical complexity of such studies and the options of direct and indirect dating, as well as the variety of motifs and the evidence of their relationship with a specific *chaîne opératoire*, form a reasonable starting point (Bueno *et al.*, 2015a). Following the theoretical standpoint of archaeology of death, the comparison between funerary discourses and those observed in the territory of the megalith builders, are the basis of powerful arguments to establish parameters for the assessment of open-air art (Bueno & Balbín, 2000; Bueno *et al.*, 2004).

From a territorial point of view, in which the symbols are the most visible signs of human activi-

ty, it is possible to establish premises with which to understand their evolution and their role in the landscapes of western Iberian from the thirteenth to first millennia cal BC. It is precisely in this period of time, which coincides with the situation in Portugal, that most discoveries have been made in recent years, as certain graphic expressions (Palaeolithic art, painted schematic art) that seemed to be non-existent have been fully verified (Sanches ed., 2012). The challenges posed by some of these finds can be extrapolated to the rest of the Iberian Peninsula and southern Europe, opening new interpretations for a more archaeological and realistic sequence of the symbols used by Prehistoric groups.

Symbols of tradition: hunter-gatherers

Portugal and other parts of south-west Iberia were thought to uninhabited in the Palaeolithic, as a way to explain the arrival of colonists in unoccupied territory. A single decorated cave was known in the inventory of rock art sites (Lejeune, 1997). However, since the 1990s, a hypothesis unimaginable until then has gained strength in research: the presence of open-air Palaeolithic art as a form of archaeological documentation of the Upper Palaeolithic. If this is one of the most important new aspects of Iberian prehistory in the twenty-first century, the documentation of Holocene phases at these sites is equally significant as it lengthens the time in which Palaeolithic graphic systems persisted. A slow change in the classic Palaeolithic records between the thirteenth and eighth millennia cal BC is the basis for the formalisation of the contents that are well known in the representations of Neolithic groups (Bueno & Balbín, 2016a; 2016).

Two patterns break with the data provided by the decorated rocks and portable art in the Douro, Tagus and Guadiana valleys; the sudden disappearance of Palaeolithic parietal art in about 10.000 BC and that of the population, as the symbols were produced by human groups of which we are beginning to find highly interesting open-air deposits (Aubry *et al.*, 2014; Arias *et al.*, 2005; Baptista and Santos, 2013; Cacho *et al.*, 2014; Gomes, 2007; Figueiredo

et al., 2014; Fábregas *et al.*, 2015; Monteiro-Rodrigues, 2012).

As we have described elsewhere, animals elongated in shape, with their bodies filled with lines and small in size, are arranged in typically Palaeolithic patterns (one behind the other in profile, or one beneath the other). Mainly cervids and caprids, as well as horses and bovids, as well as some unusual animals, such as fish. Signs such as triangles and lines in *fil de fer* complete a range of representations in which figures in classical canons are still produced. Sites like Sabor and Côa will fix the chronological evolution of these patterns since the large number of plaques and their stratigraphic position will be fundamental for determining it, when their study is published (Baptista and Garcia 2002; Figueiredo *et al.*, 2014, 2015). The presence in these deposits of pebblestones decorated in the Azilian style adds another factor of cultural diversity to the range of late glacial symbols. Both at Côa and further inland in the Douro valley, at Peña de Estebanvela, the pebbles reproduce the classic forms in the south of France, demonstrating interactions with one of the most important sectors in southern Europe in the Palaeolithic (Bueno *et al.*, 2007a; Garcia and Cacho, 2015).

Another element indicates the level of these interactions. This is the possibility that at Côa and probably further inland, there is evidence of floors decorated with pebbles painted with anthropomorphic motifs, like those documented at Italian sites (Dalmeri *et al.*, 2011). We are currently studying one of the pebbles from Fariseu. This was published as a painted pebble whose motif has been identified as an anthropomorph in a study still in progress (Aubry and Sampaio, 2012). With the evidence of the large number of pebblestones in the tenth millennium cal BC. level at this site, many of them with remains of paint, together with T. Aubry, L. Luis and C. de Juana, we proposed a revision of all the stones to explore the possibility of a floor decorated with painted pebbles.

Since the 1980s it has been hypothesised that the “Azilian” decorated pebbles and the plaques with animal figures are totally contemporary (Lorblanchet, 1989). However, the novelty lies in the



Fig. 2 - Val de Jose Esteves, Coa. Left: detail of incised triangles with *fil de fer* (Museum of Coa). Right: Up, decorated plaquette of layer 4 from Fariseu site with schematic filled cutting upon back. Down, incised red deer of Jose Esteves site with the same convention. Photos by Rodrigo de Balbín.

documentation of identical motifs on rock outcrops at Côa, Siega Verde and in some caves, especially Ojo Guareña (Corchón *et al.*, 1996). This latter ensemble has been dated directly by radiocarbon, and demonstrates that Palaeolithic art did not disappear suddenly. This has encouraged a more detailed study of a period of time of great interest in southern regions of Europe (Bueno *et al.*, 2007a, 2009a).

The traditional name of Levantine Art masks a more varied reality in the geographic area of Spanish Levant, which certainly includes Palaeolithic Art as well as the Tardiglacial and Early Holocene phases of which increasing evidence is being found (Utrilla and Bea, 2015; Villaverde, 2015). Archaeological sites like Abrigo del Angel (Utrilla and Villa-

verde, 2004) contain identical graphisms to those on the Tardiglacial plaques and rock outcrops at Côa. Recent dating of oxalates has shown that “Levantine Art” or rather some of the graphisms that are included within it, were completed by the sixth millennium cal BC (Ruiz *et al.*, 2006; Viñas *et al.*, 2016). Scenes like the one in Val de Jose Esteves rock-shelter, associated with triangular signs with *fil de fer*, are an example of a time of formulas that conserve certain naturalism together with schematic depictions, much more widespread than the classical category names were able to conceive (Bueno and Balbín, 2012). Fraga d’Aia rock-shelter in northern Portugal with two very different panels, one of them showing an archer chasing a cervid (Jorge *et al.*,

1988; Sanches, 1997), acquire meaning in a context of symbolic expressions of hunter-gatherers not limited exclusively to the Spanish Levant. (Figueiredo *et al.*, 2014,2015; Gomes, 2007; Sanches and Teixeira, 2014) (Fig. 2).

The most interesting aspect of this new research line is that the Iberian Peninsula possesses a large number of sites that can help to improve our knowledge of this period and they form a necessary point of reference. Work carried out in Portugal in recent years combine archaeological and graphic sites, while direct dates obtained at Cova Eirós in Galicia have been published (Aubry *et al.*, 2014; Bueno and Balbín 2016a; Fábregas *et al.*, 2015; Santos *et al.* 2015).

From the Neolithic to the Bronze Age. Constructing recent Prehistoric symbols

The relationship between neolithisation and Mediterranean ideologies has been very successful in the Iberian Peninsula and other parts of southern Europe, where schematic paintings play an important role (Maclure *et al.*, 2008). However, this hypothesis did not take into account that all these areas were also occupied in the Upper Palaeolithic and we now know that they were rich in symbolic expressions that did not disappear.

This is the case of the motifs on pottery whose antecedents are the geometric lattices seen on Tardiglacial plaques. As we have recently explained, geometric patterns always resemble one another, but if we compare them with those in older decorations, the possibility that at least a part of them was based on these repertoires is plausible (Mateiciucová, 2004). This is more easily seen in the case of anthropomorphic motifs on Neolithic pottery and the representations documented on late Palaeolithic pebblestones (Bueno and Balbín, 2016a).

The fact of the prolonged use of some types of objects, such as the pebbles is an argument in favour of the interpretation being proposed. The sixth millennium cal BC date for the decorated pebble at Casa Montero in Madrid refers to an anthropomorph associated with a large axe and a bow, and

at the ends, a series of triangles that resemble those dated in Ojo Guareña cave to about the eleventh millennium cal BC (Bueno and Balbín, 2012). A cluster of symbols is evidently associated with neolithisation, especially the objects used to work the land and to control animals. Yet these are associated, once again, as in the case in decoration on pottery, with an ancient symbol, a triangle, that evokes female vulvae and with a technique, pecked engraving, that is commonly documented in Palaeolithic art (Bueno, 2009, 2016).

The concept of the Mediterranean ambit of schematic paintings left the western part of Iberia empty of such representations, as it was thought that this area received the Atlantic influences that led to megalithism and the most abundant symbolic expression in these monuments: engravings. This absence of the Mediterranean influence was also an absence of the first farmers, and this has been shown to be untrue along the whole Atlantic seaboard of Europe (Joussaume *et al.*, 1979). The Neolithic existed before the building of the monuments in all the megalithic zones of the Iberian Peninsula, and Portugal is no exception (Neves *et al.*, 2008).

In a quite contradictory way, paintings on northern megaliths were only supposed to exist in the area of Viseu, where the presence of rock-shelters with painted schematic art was not accepted (Shee-Twohig, 1981; Pinto, 1929). However, the work of several research teams has revealed a very different situation (Albuquerque e Castro and Veiga Ferreira 1961; Alves, 2009; Figueiredo and Baptista, 2013; Gomes, 1989; Martins, 2013, 2015; Martins *et al.*, 2004; Sanches, 1990; Sousa, 1989): painted schematic art is found abundantly on rock outcrops in a very similar way to the open-air engravings. Surfaces with small panels were chosen, not only inside rock-shelters or even beneath an overhang. Motifs totally comparable with classic schematic art are found. The possibilities for dating these graphisms directly have led to studies at sites like Buraco da Pala and Fraga d'Aia, which are points of reference that agree with the dates recently obtained in rock-shelters and caves with schematic art in Andalusia (Carrasco *et al.*, 2006; Sanches *et al.*, 1993).



Fig. 3 - Images of painted rock-shelters from South of Portugal. Left. White reticulate design from Igreja dos Mouros. Right: Up: Scene of anthropomorph from Lapa de Gaviões. Down. Dots nad lines from Lapa de Gaivões. Photos by Rodrigo de Balbín.

The latest research at rock-shelters with schematic art in the south of Portugal has provided very old dates that indicate the close relationship between Style V and the first phases of schematic art (Oliveira *et al.*, 2014). At the same time, these representations are found throughout Portugal, even in the absence of continuity in research in many areas. The same is true of the Spanish area, as the use of surveying in search of paintings, applying tested location models, has produced positive results (Bueno *et al.*, 2004, 2006; Caninas *et al.*, 2016) (Fig. 3).

Associations with other archaeological sites are evident. This is the case of rock-shelters in the

surroundings of Neolithic or Chalcolithic settlements, where they exercised the role of the symbolic definition of dwelling areas. Another relationship is easily established with the highest geographic features in the areas used by the artists, especially if these hills are connected with springs. In sum, territory (in its subsistence aspect) and identity (culture and uses) seem to be the main factors in these representations.

The capability of megalithic art to determine chronologies and analyse diverse techniques is exceptional. The polychrome paintings show that this technique was known to the same groups who usually painted on other surfaces in a simpler way. There-

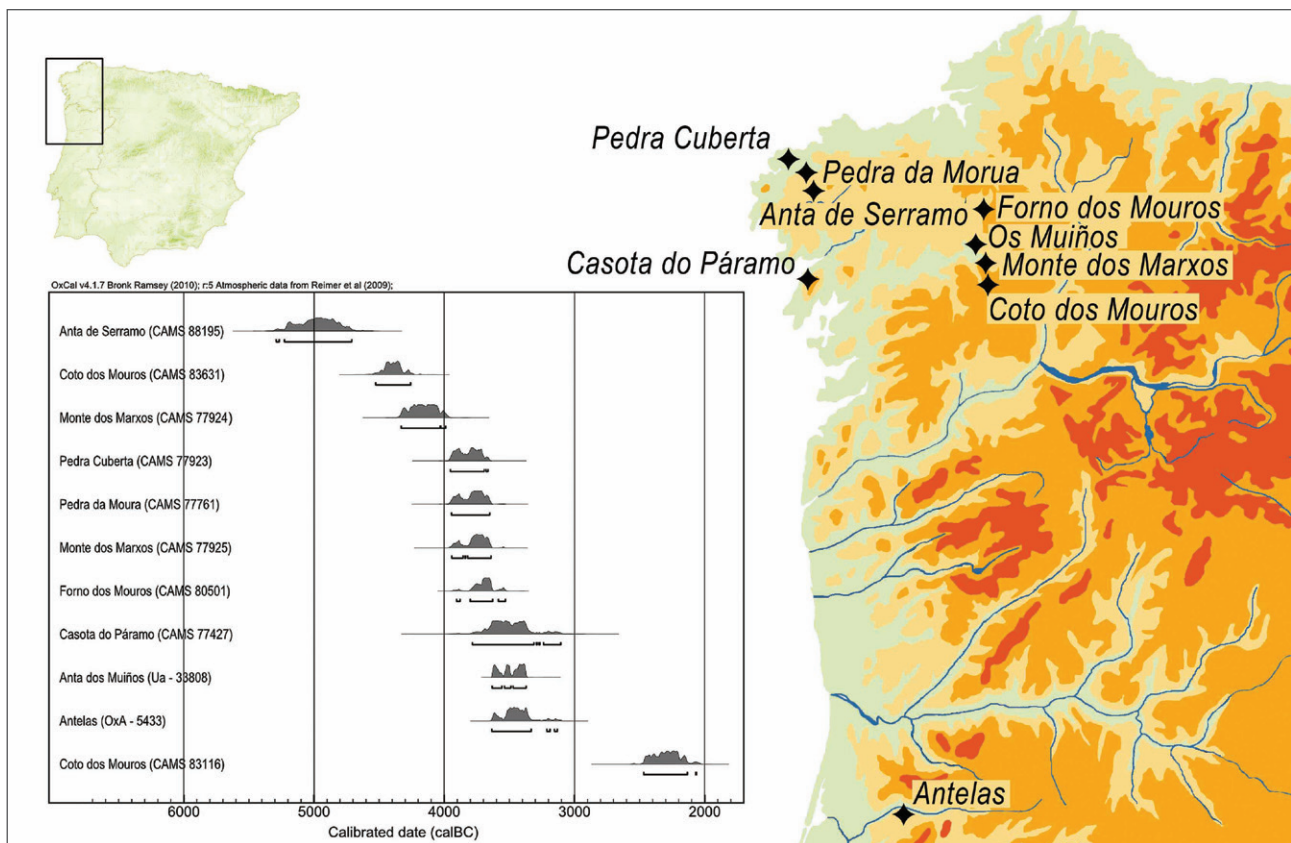


Fig. 4 - C14 dates in painted western Iberian megaliths, from Carrera and Fábregas 2002, adding C14 of Os Muiños megalith.

fore, this technique was displayed in the framework of actions intended to underscore the importance of the funerary discourse. The same is true of engravings. Megalithic art reveals the coetaneity of paintings and engravings and thus disproves the general greater age of the former technique than the latter, despite specific sequences in each monument (Bueno *et al.*, 2015b; Bueno and Balbín, 2016b). The possibility of dating paintings directly offers a new way to determine the age of open-air art, in addition to proposing more precise dates for the megalithic monuments themselves (Bueno *et al.*, 2007b; da Cruz, 1995; Carrera and Fábregas, 2002) (Fig. 4).

We now know that the paintings in the Viséu dolmens are not unique. They are comparable with motifs in other parts of Iberia and Europe and suggest closer connections than traditionally supposed

for these representations in all Europe (Bueno *et al.*, 2015a; Bueno and Balbín, 2016b).

As well as an elaborate geometric design in red, black and white, supported by engravings of various kinds which have been associated with representations of clothing in the style of those on decorated plaques, the orthostats exhibit scenes, especially in the frontal part of the chamber (Bueno and Balbín, 1992, 1994). Some of them are hunting scenes, perhaps commemorating hunting as the activity of ancestors. Anthropomorphs unusual in schematic art are the most commonly represented type in megalithic art. The close relationship between some of their formulas, especially among the types in the form of “skeuomorph” (Shee, 1981) in the north-west, can be used to establish identity styles, as Leroi-Gourhan noted for the specialisa-

tion of symbols in Palaeolithic art (Bueno and Balbín, 2000, 2006b; Bueno *et al.*, 2014b; Jorge, 1997; Sanches, 2006, 2010) (Fig. 5).

Some classically schematic motifs have not only been confirmed in northern Portugal, as we know from the rock-shelters mentioned above, but their chronology has been situated in the early fourth millennium cal BC, which is currently the best-established age for schematic paintings in Iberia (Bueno *et al.*, 2007b; Carrera and Fábregas, 2002; Cruz and Santos, 2013).

The use of white as a foundation for the application of red and black is widespread in the best preserved dolmens in the Viseu area, as in Galicia and other parts of the Iberian Peninsula. However, Portugal possesses the clearest examples of the pictorial use of white; i.e. motifs in white in the dolmens. This is the case of Mámoa da Cimo da Vila (Carrera, 2011, p. 213) reminiscent of similar cases both in rock-shelters in Serra de São Mamede (Oliveira, 2016), and in some open-air ensembles in the south-west of Spain.

Another craft specialisation is clearly found in these funerary sites. The decorated plaques in the south, with a few examples further north, stand out as an identity expression in the deposits. The existence of workshops and regionalisation in decorations was proposed some time ago, and one classic type, consisting of horizontal bands full of compartmentalised triangles, was noted as the most widespread geographically and chronologically. Thus, the painted plaque in the dolmen of Madorras (Gonçalves and da Cruz, 1994, p. 207), and in dolmen of Mamaltar de Vale das Fachas (Coelho, 1931) and the one engraved plaque from dolmen of Areita (Gomes *et al.*, 1998) belong to this classic type which reaches the north of the Iberian Peninsula in open-air representations, which we have called the Peña Tú-type of “panel-steles”. These hypotheses are increasingly convincing and support the idea of ancient crafts connected with symbolic production that, according to the dates of some painted orthostats, might be fixed in at least the late fifth millennium cal BC. The persistence of this type of product coincides with the persistence of megalithic art itself, generating powerful symbolic processes in Iberia, as at European sites



Fig. 5 - Decorated megalithic sites: Up: Antelas; Down, Antelas and Arquinha da Moura. Photos by F. Carrera.

(Bueno, 1992, 2010; Bueno *et al.*, 1985; Bueno *et al.*, 2010a; Lillios, 2004; Thomas *et al.*, 2009).

However, if there is an aspect that singularises Neolithic graphic expressions in Portugal it is undoubtedly the concentration of large stones, many of them decorated. Menhir, cromlechs, steles and alignments signify that the west of the Iberian Peninsula is identical, graphically speaking, to Brittany, acknowledged as the original core area of Atlantic megalithism. These large stones were raised in the same period of time as schematic paintings and engravings were produced in the open-air, emphasising the variability of expressions of post-glacial art and, above all, the little importance of the frontiers drawn by classical historiography. The Atlantic and Mediterranean



Fig. 6 - Sites with reutilised stele and menhir in Iberian Peninsula from Bueno *et al.*, 2014b. Reutilised slabs from Anta Grande de Zambujeiro. Photos by Rodrigo de Balbín.



worlds are found together in many of the Iberian symbolic ensembles dated in the Holocene, suggesting the possibility of similar situations in other parts of Europe.

Their chronology in the early Neolithic is an argument in favour of an Atlantic ideology, similar to that documented in northern Europe in the raising of decorated timbers in Mesolithic settlements or later also in the early Neolithic (Bueno *et al.*, 2007b; Calado, 2000; Calado and Rocha, 2010; Gomes, 1994; Gonçalves *et al.*, 1997; Jones, 2013; Oliveira, 1997, 2016; Rust, 1943). Staffs, axes, snakes and suns were engraved in low relief on anthropomorphic figures tending towards phallic forms which reproduce similar formulas to those in Brittany. The presence of paintings is more than likely and in fact they are still preserved in a few cases (Gomes, 1997).

Advances in the study of Iberian megalithic art have revealed another situation. Not only were menhirs and open-air stelae used to build monuments in the first stages of the development of megalithism but this menhir-orthostat process was

a constant throughout the time of dolmen-building. Some monuments and some necropolises were signalled by one or several menhirs, and an increasing number of examples in which menhir were used to seal the use of monuments are being documented: Palacio III, Peña de la Abuela, Anta de Soalheira, Anta Grande de Zambujeiro...etc (Bueno *et al.*, 2004, p. 688; Bueno *et al.* 2010b; Soares and Tavares, 2010). In other cases, the menhirs were raised at exactly the same time as the monuments were built (Moreno and Delibes, 2007) (Fig. 6).

There was a quantitative leap in the use of menhirs in Chalcolithic constructions (Bueno *et al.*, 2014b; Bueno *et al.*, 2015c; Gomes, 1994). Therefore menhir and dolmens were linked more closely than would be imagined in an “antecedent-derived” sequence. Long use-cycles are beginning to be identified in which menhir persisted until late times in recent prehistory (Rocha, 2003). This diachronic interpretation of menhir and dolmens attests the close symbolic connection between the first farmers and the megalith builders, as the massive stones, their human images and the attributes accompanying



Fig. 7 - Menhir upon tumulus of the megaliths: Granja de São Pedro (Idanha a Velha), Anta de Soalheira, Evora. Photos by Rodrigo de Balbín.



Fig. 8 - Foundation Stele of dolmen from Telhal, Arraiolos, from Bueno *et al.*, 2015b.

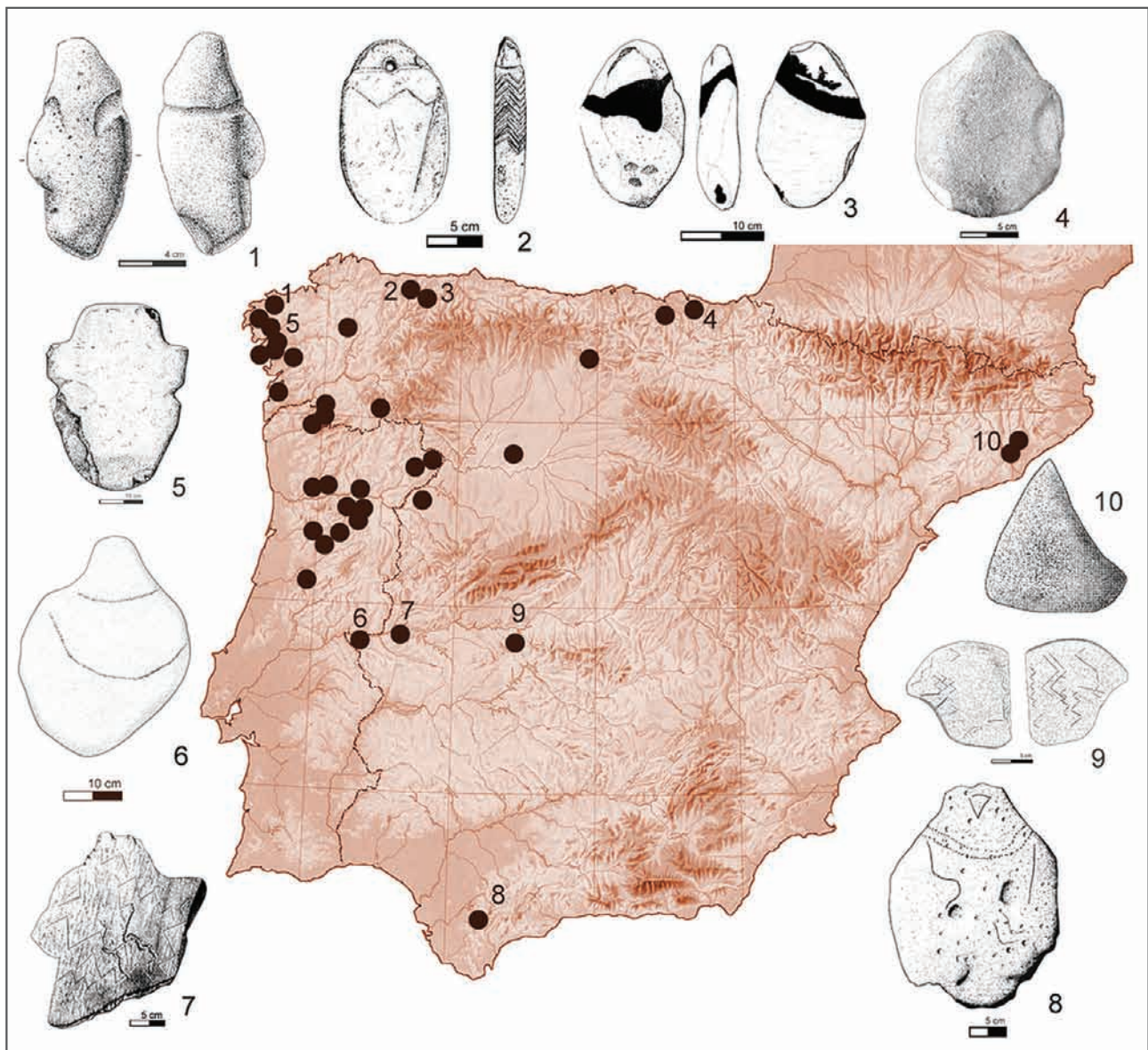


Fig. 9 - Antropomorphic figurines on open air areas of Iberian megaliths, from Bueno *et al.*, 2005.

them form part of the collective imaginary world in the full course of megalithism (Fig. 7).

Protocols applied to the study of orthostats, of their shaping, engravings and paintings have succeeded in reconstructing the biography of some monuments through the sum of the biographies of their orthostats, stones with their own significance and previous experiences (other dolmens, steles or menhirs). Many of these restorations are really

reconstructions of monuments upon monuments, either because they were enlarged or because they were completely rebuilt. The evidence of repainting that has been dated (Carrera, 2008) and of engravings moved to positions in the monuments where they are not visible proves that the rebuilding was much more common, quantitatively speaking, than previously thought. The maintenance of these burial sites is another aspect that can be approached

through meticulous analysis of their decoration Bueno *et al.*, 2007, 2014b, 2015b, 2015c; Bueno *et al.*, 2015d, 2016b) (Fig 8).

If the walls reflect graphic discourses of great chronological significance, some portable anthropomorphic objects, mainly small figurines made from pebblestones of different forms, indicate possible mobility of some items from the visible areas. The external position of these statuettes, of which the most-studied example is Dombate, suggests their role in the exhibition of ancestors, as they may have been gathered together and placed in the most important monuments (Bueno *et al.*, 2008b). Portela do Pau, Lameira da Cima and Madorras are some of the best-known examples in the north of Portugal, while others may be found in the south of the country, as has occurred in Spanish areas (Baptista, 1997; Bueno *et al.*, 1999; Gonçalves and Cruz, 1994; Gomes, 1996) (Fig. 9).

Economic intensification versus symbolic intensification. Past as exhibition

The demographic and economic intensification observable in the late fourth and whole third millennia cal BC was characterised in specific symbolic factors that can be summarised as: long phase of paintings and engravings in the open air, reconstruction of monuments using old monuments, steles and menhirs, and raising armed steles. On one hand intensification in traditional symbolic production and on the other intensification in singular human images with their origins in megalithic mortuary structures. From the thematic point of view, the Chalcolithic has been interpreted as a time of ideological transition. Once again, the arrival of Eastern colonists has been used to explain the major role of depictions of the Goddess (representations with eyes) in connection with symbolic pottery and the imaginary realm associated with bell beakers (Gonçalves, 2016, p.157).

Several factors have now come together to propose a very different view. Megalithic decoration, rock-shelters with schematic paintings engravings in the open air, (Baptista, 1981; Bettancourt *et al.*, 2012; Cardoso *et al.*, 2015; Gomes, 2000; Gomes *et al.*,

1994; Jorge, 1983; Santos, 2008), steles, statues and menhir (Bueno *et al.*, 2005; Jorge and Jorge, 1993; Vilaça, 2011), and symbolic pottery (Carrasco *et al.*, 2006; Garrido and Muñoz, 2000; Martin and Camalich, 1982), repeat a spectrum that is clearly documented from the early Holocene onwards, in associations of anthropomorph/sun and quadruped/sun. Some realities, such as the fact that Iberian bell beakers are the only ones with figurative motifs, should make us reflect on the capacity of the Iberian Peninsula to generate schematic codes that are widespread in Europe.

The noticeable increase in Chalcolithic sites with schematic paintings in the Almeria area is a reality in many less-studied parts of the peninsula (Martínez, 2006). A good example is the spectacular ensemble of oculate figures at Serra dos Passos in the north of Portugal (Sanches, 2016). The recent dating of calcite covering similar figures in the interior of the Iberia situates these ensembles in similar chronologies to the classic sites (Ruiz *et al.*, 2012), as S. Jorge (2000) demonstrated some time ago for the Chalcolithic settlements and manufactured products in northern Portugal. Is the same from the South (Valera, 2015).

However, the increasing evidence of statues in Portugal is unquestionable proof of two factors that help to define Chalcolithic social organisation: the capacity of exchange for the purpose of exhibition, especially in connection with bell beakers; and the intensification in singular representations. Statues with clear Mediterranean roots, together with others rooted in megalithism (central-western statues) reflect with their third millennium weaponry a chronology that is quite contemporary with the development of bell-beaker pottery (Balbín and Bueno, 2016; Bueno *et al.*, 2010a, 2011; Cruz and Santos, 2011).

Both aspects reiterate the ideological weight of mortuary sites, where the symbolic arguments of cohesion and power are concentrated. The construction of new pasts is placed within previous pasts. Megaliths upon megaliths, statues and ancient menhir added in later times, as well as the same signs on walls and rocks, reflect a systematic action of re-working the past in favour of specific social groups.

The role of human images in post-glacial gra-

phism finds in the representations on Late Bronze Age and Iron Ages steles the most advanced stage of a long process. The formulas engraved on free-standing objects associated with funerary sites are the best known, with the added interest that in Portugal their antecedents are very clear. The Alentejana steles (Gomes and Monteiro, 1977) reproduce the exhibition of weaponry like those that were being produced at a similar time on the *massi incisi* in the Alps or in some panels in Galicia. The difference lies in the apprehension of common symbols by social groups that connects them with their singular burials, indicating events of individualisation of great interest for an understanding of the late Bronze Age steles. A similar time for these steles and some of the statues described above is more than plausible, as we have argued (Bueno *et al.*, 2005, 2011).

The hypothesis that Bronze Age steles are a response to eastern influences has many nuances today. Especially as we learn more about previous examples that acted as a strong local foundation on which objects of display are added, from both the western Mediterranean and the Atlantic. A systematic situation that we can easily recognise in the movement of prestigious objects associated with megalithic mortuary displays, above all after the second half of the fourth millennium and particularly in the third millennium cal BC.

Perhaps what now remains to be determined is the territory over which these kinds of displays extended, as it has increased noticeably in the west (Alves and Reis, 2011; Vilaça *et al.*, 2011), including Galicia (Reboreda and Nieto, 2012), some inland areas (Chapa and Pereira, 2016) and as far as southern France (Bueno *et al.*, 2009b). This area cannot be separated from the one reconstructed from the mobility of such important objects in the European Chalcolithic as the decorated plaques (Bueno, 2010). These are common in the south-west, with evidence in the north-west including Galicia and part of the northern coast, and also in inland areas reaching the south of France.

Some other new aspects include the continuity of schematic paintings that we can still find on Iron Age pottery. Another is the diversity of Iron Age engravings that the meticulous research in the Cõa area

has brought to light and is being corroborated in the Sabor area (Luis, 2009; Neves and Figueiredo, 2015). Warriors on horseback, domestic scenes and a wide range of geometric symbols reminiscent of some European ensembles; a new facet still being studied that underscores the transcendence of the use of engraved and painted symbols in the open air and particular contexts, as one of the basic systems for materialising the ideology of the groups who created them.

Future lines of research for an interpretation of recent Prehistoric symbols

Prehistoric art has usually been looked on as a series of symbols mainly with religious significance. From the Palaeolithic “shrines” in caves to the Levantine sanctuaries, the images of human and animal figures and geometric forms were religious rather than a language or markers of territory. Of the intangible world rather than the quotidian archaeological context.

Only compact social and cultural fabrics can sustain well-structured codes that reveal common ideologies, the organised transmission of contents and methods of production, as one of the best tools for cohesion. The symbols shared by hunter-gatherer groups, like those in the Upper Palaeolithic, show their capacity to construct, exchange and enhance complex messages. The symbols formed part of their way of understanding the territory and the group, and codes were developed that stayed useful for nearly 40.000 years (Bueno and Bahn, 2015; Bueno *et al.* 2016c). An acknowledgement of the persistence and transformation of these systems in the course of recent prehistory appears reasonable with data currently available. No human group abandoned their symbolic references with the disappearance of the ice, and instead they probably intensified them, creating them on very different surfaces and in different circumstances, due to long previous experience both on the social and cultural level of their use and on the purely technical level (Bueno, 2016).

One fundamental aspect of the evidence of graphic activity is connected with the location of the groups, as it suggests a much larger territory that was

traditionally believed for the Holocene occupation of the Iberian Peninsula. Engravings and paintings as another form of evidence of occupation constitute an interesting support for a more integral archaeology, as shown by the documentation in Côa, on the Spanish Plateaus and in Spanish Levant.

Even in the absence of necessary nuances and observations, the hypothesis of a Style V as the continuity of Palaeolithic graphic expression and its gradual transformation, is now an increasingly forceful line of research. It is very likely that documentation in Italy, together with the Iberian and French research, will be able to propose more precise sequences with which to establish how long the classic canons of Palaeolithic art continued in use, the role of elongated animals filled with lines, together with smaller deconstructed modules, how the series of anthropomorphic motifs became increasingly important, and when the first evidence of schematic art appeared. In the current state of our knowledge, schematic art seems to convince as a transformation of contents after the Upper Palaeolithic, with the period of time of Style V the most coherent to establish some of its oldest formulas, especially the anthropomorphs (Bueno and Balbín, 2016a).

The wide range of surfaces used for Neolithic graphisms is a reality that implies different scales and techniques, as well as a diversity of contexts: quotidian, extractive, storage and mortuary. Paintings and engravings provide a full repertoire in which anthropomorphs, suns, quadrupeds and such geometric forms as lines and circles are repeated in multiple combinations. Their locations are connected with the positions of other forms of evidence (habitat, burials and extractive areas), creating networks of graphic markers that probably helped organise movements, uses and ownership of these areas. We now know of a large number of sites in the western area, and the supposed differences of megalithic territories, as areas with few painted symbols, can no longer be sustained.

The great representativeness of menhir, steles and statues opens an encouraging panorama to integrate these symbolic products in the general European framework, bearing in mind the significant role of the Iberian Peninsula in the development of some graphic models. The exchanges that characterise megalithic funerary displays increase in the third mil-

lennium cal BC, especially during the time of greatest use of bell-beaker pottery. The Iberian Peninsula must have played a fundamental role in the interactions of materials, ideas and even people, between the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. The position of Andalusia and western regions made them unavoidable areas for maritime transport. Similarly, the inland plateaus, easily accessible along the Douro, Tagus and Guadiana valleys, were terrestrial routes for the movement of products and ideas towards the plains of central Europe.

The large symbolic ensemble dated in more recent periods, the late Bronze Age and the Iron Age, well-documented in Portugal, reveals the long duration of execution of the community's symbols, both in the most visible locations in everyday activity and in the most hidden mortuary places. The Iberian Peninsula and especially the western regions, together with other rock art ensembles in Europe, confirm that late Prehistoric groups continued to employ graphic systems until the arrival of the Romans.

The technical, thematic, territorial and cultural connections we can establish for a diachronic analysis of these sequences in southern Europe constitute a rich source of studies on the identity, social and economic contents which remained to be explored more fully.

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