Chapter 10

THE MEGALITHIC TOMBS OF SOUTHERN BEIRA INTERIOR, PORTUGAL: RECENT CONTRIBUTIONS

João Luís CARDOSO
Universidade Aberta, Lisboa

Abstract: In this study, we present the main results obtained during the archaeological survey of a vast area south of Beira Interior, in the region of International river Tagus, followed by the excavation of the more representative and best preserved funerary megalithic monuments. In this way, it was possible to identify several types of monuments and to relate these with the artefact findings, and to develop a model to explain the architectonic succession of funerary megalithic monuments in the region. It was also possible to observe some constructive particularities in some of these monuments, and aspects related to the ritual deposition of remains, herein summarized.

Key words: International river Tagus; megalithic tombs; chronosequence

Resumo: Neste trabalho apresentam-se os principais resultados obtidos no âmbito da prospecção sistemática de uma vasta região do sul da Beira Interior, região do Tejo Internacional, seguida da escavação dos monumentos megalíticos funerários mais representativos e em melhor estado de conservação. Desta forma, foi possível identificar diversos tipos arquitectónicos, relacionando-os com os respectivos conteúdos artefactuais, que suportaram uma proposta de modelo para a sucessão arquitectónica regional do megalitismo funerário. Foi igualmente possível a observação de particularidades arquitectónicas ou estruturais em alguns destes monumentos, para além de aspectos relacionados com a deposição ritual dos espólios, os quais serão também sumariamente apresentados.

Palavras chave: Tejo internacional; megálitos funerários; cronosequência

10.1. GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH

The south of Beira Interior, the region of the International river Tagus, has remained until recently almost unknown in terms of its rich megalithic archaeological heritage. Francisco Tavares de Proença Junior’s pioneering research at Urgueira (Vila Velha de Ródão), and at other megalithic monuments whose existence he merely mentioned (Proença Júnior, 1910), did not receive the attention it deserved. Félix Alves Pereira took only a brief interest in the subject: to him we owe the excavation of the Anta Grande de Medelim (Pereira, 1934). Georg and Vera Leisner, in their inventory of Portuguese dolmens (Leisner & Leisner, 1956), mentioned vaguely only three, to the west of Rosmaninhal, and another near the deserted village of Alares, and no further details were given in Vera Leisner’s more recent publication (Leisner, 1998).

In the second half of the century only three further monuments were excavated, by O. da Veiga Ferreira and Fernando de Almeida, particularly the important dolmen of Granja de São Pedro (Idanha-a-Velha) (Almeida & Ferreira, 1958, 1959, 1971).

However, there were probably a large number of dolmens in the region which had still not been identified, as suggested by the approximately 90 dolmens listed by the Leisans in the region of Proença-a-Nova, immediately to the west (Kalb, 1990); there seemed no reason why there should not be a similar situation here.

Systematic prospecting of the territory, begun in 1970 and still in progress, has amply confirmed this supposition. In the area bounded naturally by three rivers – to the south by the Tagus, to the east by the Erges and to the west by the Aravil – about 90 dolmens have so far been identified, all hitherto unpublished: about 65 in the region of Rosmaninhal and about 25 around Malpica de Tejo/Monforte da Beira. Most of them are in a good state of conservation, which must be due in part to the low population density, as well as to the utilisation of the soil: ancient holm-oak woods predominate here, and although wheat was extensively grown in the 1960s, traditional, unmechanised methods were still used.

Systematic archaeological cartography of the region, which is still in progress – for it is rare to venture out without discovering a new monument – needs to be followed up by excavations, planned in the medium and long term. These would define the nature of the most important tombs, and be accompanied by research into the dwellings of those who built them. The present paper will only deal with the funerary monuments, which are still the better known: we shall not touch on non-funerary megalithic remains, which include the several known menhirs and cromlechs of the region, nor the artistic component, represented by carved stone panels, often found near the megalithic monuments; all these evidently formed part of a single, indivisible reality, and will be dealt with as a whole in a monograph presently being prepared.

The archaeological prospecting and excavation have been carried out under the auspices of the Associação de
Fig. 10.1. Region of the Tagus near the Spanish border showing the monuments and sites: circles, megalithic tombs and tumuli; squares, remains of scattered settlements; triangles, megalithic precincts, menhirs and carved rocks. The closed lines indicate the location of the megalithic nucleus of Amieiro (I), the megalithic nucleus of Couto da Espanhola (II), Cabeço da Forca grave (III) and Poço do Bicho grave (IV).

Estudos do Alto Tejo/Núcleo Regional de Investigação Arqueológica, and have received logistic and financial support from several bodies: IPPAR, IPA, IPAMB, and the Castelo Branco and Idanha-a-Nova city councils. Special thanks is due to João Carlos Caninas and to Francisco Henriques, my closest companions in this work, without whom the results presented here would not have been possible. Thanks should also be extended to a vast team of fellow-workers and university students, some of them from the Portuguese Open University, who have actively participated since 1993 in the various excavations which I have directed, in conditions which have never been easy or comfortable.

10.2. GEO-ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS; SITUATION OF THE MONUMENTS

The area of distribution of this remarkable set of megalithic monuments (Fig. 10.1), as it has gradually been defined, corresponds geologically to a substrate consisting of outcrops of schist and pre-Ordovician greywackes, part of the Rosmaninhale Formation, with turbidite-conglomerate characteristics. These rocks, in their turn, are covered by detrital deposits, essentially arcosic sands, coarse-grained and reddish in colour depending on the degree of oxidation, preserved on top of the plateaux formed by erosion; they date from the Eocene or Oligocene (Oliveira, 1992). Finally, particularly on hillsides and neighbouring low ground, there are covering deposits of quartz and quartzite; these, the result of the decay of paleozoic reliefs, and dating from the transition of the Pliocene to the Quaternary, are characteristic of a semi-arid climate, formed by torrential downpours which occasionally affected the region in this period.

The dolmens are distributed according to two main patterns:

– In some cases, they are concentrated at the top of the plateaux which form the major axes of the landscape, from which they dominate wide areas, dozens of kilometres around, and constitute real megalithic necropolises. Some of the monuments on two of these plateaux have been excavated. On the plateau of Couta da Espanhola, at an altitude of about 300 metres and generally oriented NE-SW, seven dolmens have been mapped, two of which have been excavated, while at the plateau of Amieiro, slightly higher (360-370 metres) and also oriented NE-SW, nine dolmens have been identified and six of them excavated. In some cases, the distance between the monuments is less than 200 metres, so that they are easily visible from one to the other, forming funerary nuclei within the larger necropolis. More often, however, they are between 200 and 500 metres apart, although the nearest monument can still usually be seen from each one.

– In other cases, they are more or less isolated in the landscape, seeming to be submerged in it. An example is the dolmen of Poço do Chibo, situated on low ground in regular, almost monotonous terrain.
10.3. SIGNIFICANT ARCHITECTURAL ASPECTS; FUNERARY RITES

On the funerary component of the finds from the annual excavations conducted since 1993 until 2000 in the megalithic region of Rosmaninhel, the following summary includes data from all the monuments excavated up to now. Some observations on these have already been published (Cardoso et al. 1995, 1997a, 1997b, 2000, 2003; Cardoso, 2001, 2004).

1. The inhabited zone would have been dotted with prominent megalithic tombs. These were made even more prominent by their mounds, which were always covered by blocks of milky quartz, a characteristic which even today help us to identify them in the landscape. In most cases this was not a simple coating: the revetment of quartz blocks, fitted one into the other, went deep, making the mounds practically cairns. There was, therefore, a clear intention to make all these burials visible, rather than to hide them (Fig. 10.2, 10.3, 10.4, 10.5); even monuments on low-lying ground, like the anta of Poço do Chibo, where the presence of dolmens would not have been suspected, had a mound with this type of cladding (Fig. 10.6).

Fig. 10.2. Couto de Espanhola 6 after the scraping of the vegetation. It can be seen the sub-circular location of the orthostats, defining a closed chamber, surrounded by a tumulus made essentially of blocks of milky quartz

2. The relatively large number of dolmens on the two plateaux so far studied in detail, imply that these were genuine necropolises, used over many centuries. However, the construction of tombs would have been an exceptional occurrence in the lives of the agro-pastoral communities who settled here in the 4th and 3rd millennia a.C. If the number of tombs seems excessive to us now, this is because we underestimate the time factor, as well as the large population who probably lived here over the centuries. This is the conclusion we can draw from the differences in structure and artefacts seen in monuments sometimes only a few hundred metres apart, as at Couto de Espanhola 2 and 6, both thoroughly excavated. Furthermore, there are no dominant monuments: the diameters of the mounds, which are always small, vary between 18 metres (Amieiro 5) and 10 metres (Poço do Chibo). The construction of any monument would have been followed gradually by another, punctuating the landscape as though it was a palimpsest.

Fig. 10.3. Location of Amieiro 3 in the platform constituted by tertiary deposits. One can note the abundance of blocks of milky quartz around the megalithic structure as a result of the destruction of the tumulus

Fig. 10.4. Amieiro 8. One can observe the well preserved tumulus, made of milky quartz blocks, of local origin

Fig. 10.5. General overview of the excavation of Cabeço da Forca, in the middle of the tumulus made essentially of milky quartz blocks
3. Regardless of their type, the dolmens are always built using materials from the site, or at most a few hundred metres away. The schist or grauvaque slabs are always small, rarely larger than 1 metre in length. With sizes like these it would have been impossible to build large monuments, like those in the granite regions of Beira Alta and the Alto Alentejo. This limitation explains why not only the chambers but especially the corridors are so low. In most cases, these could have had only a ritual function; crawling through these long narrow spaces – sometimes more than 8 metres long, as at Couto da Espanhola 2 (Fig. 10.7), Amieiro 2 (Fig. 10.8) or Anta do Poço do Chibo (Fig. 10.9) – whenever there was a new burial in the chamber, especially with the added difficulty of having to carry the bodies to be buried, would have been impractical. This last monument presents small dimensions, with just 3.6 m length, exceptionally including some blocks of milky quartz in their structure. In spite of its small dimensions, the presence of a sub-circular chamber, preceded by a long corridor and a vestibule, setting the entrance, corresponds to an evolved architecture. Such as in Amieiro 2, it is a replicate at a small scale of a larger monument from the granitic regions, which indicates that the geological resources limited the size but not the architectonic characteristics of the monuments.

Direct access to the burial chambers, by partially removing the covering, was therefore necessary whenever a new burial was to be made. This operation was made much easier since no large covering slabs had been used in the construction, due to the lack of such material in the region. The chambers would therefore have been covered with timber and branches, on which were set the blocks of the mound, which were easy to remove. This is not to deny, however, that in some cases the corridor was functional. In Amieiro 3, one of the largest monuments of the region, there are two large overlapping slabs (Fig. 10.10) which seal it off, separating it from the exterior of the monument, where there is a small vestibule, laterally defined by orthostats of decreasing size.
4. The orientation of the five passage graves so far excavated (Couto da Espanhola 2, Amieiro 2, Amieiro 3, Poço do Chibo and Cabeço da Forca) varies between 100° and 110°; the exception is anta 2 at Couto da Espanhola, oriented south-east (135°). Considering the monuments were devoid of corridor, the orientation was 90° in Amieiro 8 and 110° in Amieiro 5. This pattern coincides perfectly with that observed by the Leisners in the dolmens of Reguengos de Monsaraz. The results were listed by V. GONÇALVES (1992: 40): of the 69 dolmens recorded, 35 had the same orientation, followed by those oriented south-east (10 examples). The predominant orientation of the corridors to this quadrant relates to the azimuths of the sunrise, the source of Light and Life, daily renewed. To quote Gonçalves (1992: 51), “Death and birth, shadow and light. Did the orientation of the tombs of Reguengos de Monsaraz, like hundred of others, deal with these oppositions? A hope of return, or simply turning one’s back on light/life in the inevitable journey to death and shadow?” We believe that the choice should be the former, since the presence of offerings suggests that in the late 4th/early 3rd millennium, these agro-pastoral peoples had a belief in an after-life.

5. Two schist slabs, one in the chamber of Couto da Espanhola 2 (Fig. 10.11), the other in the corridor of Amieiro 3, were used for placing bodies, probably lying on one side with arms and legs bent. This possibility, which has parallels in other similar monuments in the region, is reinforced at Couto da Espanhola by the large number of offerings and personal effects found on the slab.

6. Traces of rituals involving fire are seen at Amieiro 3. There is a small elliptical fire structure at the far end of the chamber of the monument, which served as the base of a hearth (Fig. 10.12). Santos Rocha, in his study of dolmens near Figueira da Foz, noted signs of fire inside, and there are many other examples. Fire served a dual purpose: in addition to its symbolic role of purifying and regenerating the souls of the departed, it would have served the practical purpose of clearing the unhealthy air in the musky interior of a collective tomb by burning aromatic plants, a necessary purification whenever there was a new body to be buried. This hearth might also be related to partial cremation rituals, as seen for example at megalithic monuments at the Serra de São Mamede, Portalegre (Oliveira, 1997a) and in other megalithic regions of the Alto Alentejo, as in Anta de Estremoz, once excavated by Manuel Heleno and recently published in its results (Rocha, 2005).

7. The small monument of Amieiro 8, horse-shoe shaped, presented in the centre of the chamber a stella oriented towards the entrance (Fig. 10.13) whose height is smaller that the orthostates that define the chamber of the monument. This orientation is similar to the closed chamber with ellipsoid development of Madroñal, Cáceres (Bueno, 2000). The implantation of this monolith in the centre of the chamber has divided it in two almost equal parts able to receive no more than one corps.

8. Two monuments, Amieiro 2 and Cabeço da Forca, presented ritual deposits of polished artefacts. In Amieiro 2, two axes were found deposited in the left side of the
In some monuments it was possible to recognize some reutilizations, either from the late Calcolithic period as from Bronze Age. This was the case of a fragment of archer’s brassard collected in Couto da Espanhola 2, which also yielded fragments of carinated recipients from the Bronze Age, and Amieiro 2, with materials belonging to the same diachrony, with emphasis on a plate basis with an omphalus and a copper dagger (Fig. 10.15).

Despite the good state of preservation and the architectonic complexity of Amieiro 3 – constituted by the vestibule, corridor and ellipsoidal chamber (Fig. 10.16) there are no artefacts or other finds from its builders or users: os únicos artefactos recolhidos dentro do monumento correspondem a fragmento de taça em calote e a uma ponta Palmela, de tipologia evoluída, reportável a uma reutilização do monumento, tal como os casos já atrás mencionados. No exterior, apenas se recolheu fragmento de artefacto de pedra polida (Fig. 10.17) que pode, contudo, indicar uma violação antiga do mesmo. A situação descrita: the only artefacts collected inside the monument were a fragment of a small bowl and a Palmela point with an evolved typology, that can be reported to a reutilization of the monument in the Late Chalcolithic, such as occurred in previously reported cases. On the outside, only a fragment of an artefact of polished stone was collected (Fig. 10.17). The described scenario cannot be the result of robbery, for there is no sign of this; maybe the materials deposited inside were all perishable – wood, leather, straw, raw materials evidently important at the time, as proved by the rare, and therefore celebrated, cases where they have been preserved.
11. The prime resource used almost or nearly always in the manufacture of the chipped artefacts was flint. This rock was unknown in the region and it is probable that it was acquired through trans-regional commercial circuits established with the Estremadura, through the important circulation route made by the river Tejo and its tributaries. However, the lack of petrographic studies prevents us to test this hypothesis. On the other hand, the presence of a large plate of carved schist collected in Amieiro 5 a indicates a clear origin from Alentejo (Fig. 10.18), from where the amphibolitic rocks that constituted the polished stone were probably originated (metabasites of green xhists) though the northern part of Beira Interior could also have contributed as supply source. As a matter of fact, the Castro de Santiago, Fornos de Algodres, has yielded true amphibolite ingots destined to local transformation and or exportation (VALERA, 1997). Therefore, the study area could have been functioning as a core point of trans-regional articulation between both northern and southern, as littoral and interior areas.

12. The reutilization of some monuments was accompanied in just one case by the construction of a new structure in the vicinity. This was the case of Amieiro 5 a, an horse-shoe shaped small-sized chamber, from which, 5 meters away, a sub-rectangular cyst (Fig.10.19) was built, in the periphery of the tumulus. Such cyst (Amieiro 5b) yielded a fragment of a schist plate of which only the posterior smooth face was preserved and a fragment of a bell-beaker vessel with a pseudo-excise decoration.

13. Archaeological materials were also found in the exterior of some of the megalithic precincts in the surrounding tumuli. Such occurrences can be explained in some cases by recent violations of the tombs; but in other cases they may be related to the presence of ritual depositions related to outdoor ceremonies. One such later case was found in Amieiro 8 because no violation of the tomb chamber occurred but the area outside the tomb structure supplied various materials (Fig. 10.20, nº 4, 5, 6 and 8).
Fig. 10.19. In the first plane, Amieiro 5a in the centre of the tumulus made essentially of large quartz blocks; in the second plane, the Beaker cyst of Amieiro 5b

Fig. 10.20. Amieiro 8: remains collected at the chamber and in the tumulus including an arrow point of flint with fracture due to fire, a lamella of milky quartz, geometrics of flint, a bead of cornaline, a fragment of an axe with a sub-rectangular section and various ceramics

**10.4. TOWARDS A CHRONOSEQUENCE OF THE STUDIED MEGALITHIC TOMBS**

From the analysis of the architectural typologies and archaeological remains, the following sequence for the construction of the studied megalithic tombs can be proposed:

1. Close chambers, of small size from the middle of the V/first half of the IV millenium a.C. (Middle Neolithic). This initial phase is represented in Couto da Espanhola 6: the oldest moment of the use of this monument is not documented in the archaeological record; the intermediate phase has yielded a lamella and a rough blade, a segment and a trapeze with a straight basis, accompanied by a sub-rectangular axe, and the late phase supplied another axe, an adze and several vases, which did not occur previously (Fig. 10.21). To this group of monuments one can associate Amieiro 1, with a polygonal chamber without a corridor (Fig. 10.22); however, the collection of just three uncharacteristic ceramic fragments does not allow further analysis.

Fig. 10.21. Archaeological remains from the second phase (above) and third phase (below) of occupation of Couto da Espanhola 6

Fig. 10.22. Amieiro 1. General overview of the monument, constituted by a polygonal chamber without corridor. The chamber perimeter is partially defined by the location of the foundations of the disappeared orthostatic elements
2. Small-sized single chambers with a horseshoe plant, with remains from the late IV/early III millenium BC (Late Neolithic/Early Chalcolithic); this was the case of Amieiro 5a, that contained plates of xhist, arrow tips and blades of large dimensions (Fig. 10.18, Fig. 10.23) and Amieiro 8, with a similar plant, where materials from late Neolithic or maybe already Calcolithic were found in the interior of the chamber, represented by a concave-shaped arrow tip fissured by an heat source (Fig. 10.20 nº 1), an additional proof of rituals using fire in some of these monuments.

3. Dolmens with well defined chambers and corridors, contemporary of the previous small chambers (Amieiro 2 e Poço do Chibo), sometimes with large dimensions, having polygonal chambers and long corridors, sometimes with an abundant industry of flint and polished stone (Couto da Espanhola 2), characterized by a remarkable variety of arrow points, blades, geometrics and nuclei (Fig. 10.24, Fig. 10.25).

4. Dolmens with round chambers built by eight or more orthostats with probably a false vault and long corridors, from the first half of the III millenium a.C. (Chalcolithic); it is the case of Amieiro 3 and Cabeço da Forca (Fig. 10.26) whose findings seem scarce almost inexistent in the later, whilst in the former there is a large amount of polished stone artefacts (Fig. 10.27), contrasting with the scarcity of flint stone materials (Fig. 10.28).

5. Small cists, from the second half of the III millenium BC (Late Chalcolithic, Beaker), represented only by Amieiro 5b, constructed in the vicinity of the already existing tomb, Amieiro 5a (Fig. 10.19). It is about the only monument that yielded a fragment of Beaker ceramics decorated with the pseudo-excise technique.

6. Small tumuli, from the II millennium BC (Middle and Late Bronze Age), represented only by Amieiro 9, without remains (Fig. 10.29).
Fig. 10.24. Lithic industry of flint and quartz, collected in the chamber and the corridor of Couto da Espanhola 2
Fig. 10.25. Lithic industry of schist, quartz and amphibolite, collected in the chamber and corridor of Couto da Espanhola 2

Fig. 10.26. Plant of Cabeço da Forca, having a sub-circular to polygonal chamber and a long corridor
Fig. 10.27. Polished artefacts collected in Cabeço da Forca: 1- incomplete gouge, collected during the scraping of the first layer in the area of the corridor; 2- adze collected during the scraping in the area north of the chamber; 3- adze collected close to the external border of the *tumulus* at the basis of the surface layer; 4- adze collected between two slabs of the corridor and perpendicular to another one, of smaller size; 5- adze collected in the corridor
Fig. 10.28. Artefacts collected in Cabeço da Forca: 1 to 3- fragments of blades collected respectively inside the chamber (1) and in the northeastern part of it (2 and 3); 4- fragment of blade retouched collected during the scraping of the superficial layer; 5- sickle element with marks of the cereal cutting, collected during the scraping of the superficial layer (Bronze Age); 6- quartz core collected in the area of the chamber; 7- core in rock crystal collected in the chamber; 8- geometric collected at the surface before the beginning of the excavation; 9- ship of milky quartz from the chamber; 10- bead of polished stone collected in the surface layer in the corridor area.

Fig. 10.29. General overview of Amieiro 9, a precint with sub-ellipsoidal shape defined by small slabs placed vertically, covered by a well preserved tumulus predominantly of quartz blocks.
Chapter 11


Jorge de OLIVEIRA
CIDEHUS – University of Évora

Abstract: This brief synthesis presents the conclusions of the archaeological studies carried out in the megalithic tombs located on the banks of the Sever River, close to the rock art of the Tagus Valley. Most of these are small orthostatic tombs made of slate that define chambers with passage and which possess mounds that originally were covered with white quartz. Judging by the dimensions of the mounds, the assemblages of votive artefacts and the setting of the tombs within the landscape, the builders of these small dolmens appear to have developed an economy based on herding. In this article we argue that they were these Neolithic artist-shepherds, those who erected the small tombs, who are responsible for most of the rock art known in the Tagus Valley, which they engraved whilst watching over their herds during the summer seasons.

Key words: Megaliths; Neolithic; Rock art; Herding

This paper is the result of more than twelve years of the archaeological study of the megalithic monuments of the District of Cedillo. When prospective fieldwork started in 1994, there were no known references to any megalithic remains in the district. The only available information about the east bank of the Rio Sever were references to the megalithic monuments of the District of Valencia de Alcántara dating from at least the 19th century in Spanish archaeological works (Bueno, 1988). The importance of most of the megalithic burial sites found in the district diverted attention from smaller sites, as is the case in other places: almost all researchers concentrated their attention on the large granite monuments which are highly visible in the landscape and above all they focussed on the wealth and diversity of the grave goods usually found in these tombs. This explains the widespread ignorance about a different dimension of megalithic remains: monuments which were less visible but much greater in number, located half a dozen kilometres north of Valencia de Alcántara. Although the discreet nature of the architecture of the Cedillo and Herrera de Alcántara monuments led to their being ignored over the course of millennia, it is nevertheless strange that following the identification in the mid-1970s, which was very late in the day, of the extremely important Tagus Valley rock carvings and the recognition that they were mainly post-Palaeolithic phenomena, archaeologists did not attempt to understand the context in which they were produced by carrying out prospecting work on the hillsides flanking the river. This is even odder in view of the fact that Georg and Vera Leisner (Leisner & Leisner, 1956) had published in German in the 1950s the locations of more than fifty megalithic burial sites in the area surrounding the mouth of the River Sever, a tributary of the Tagus, its mouth located just a few hundred metres from the principal rock-carving sites.

Although the artistic manifestations of the Tagus Valley are practically all submerged by the reservoir and there-
fore cannot be re-examined, it seems clear that the artists who created them are buried in the hundreds of megalithic tumuli which flank them on both banks of the Tagus. It seems equally clear that with the development of archaeological knowledge, both about the chronology of artistic styles and the long-term functional use of dolmens, we are now fairly certain of the contemporaneity of the rock carvings of the Tagus Valley and the megalithic tumuli of the mouth of River Sever.

It should be noted that for at least twelve years we have made claims regarding the basis of the economy of the people buried in the small schist tumuli on the hillsides overlooking River Sever: the quality of the soils, the small size of funereal monuments, the poor quality of the collections of grave goods found in them, their specific features, and the characteristics of the few habitats which have hitherto been identified, have led us to the conclusion that the economy of the Neolithic communities which lived here was very likely based mainly on pastoralism and hunting. This seems be echoed in the recurrent theme of the art carved in the schists of the Tagus, in which scenes of hunting and pastoralism predominate. The natural tendency for shepherds to carve away at pieces of wood, decorate their crooks, and carve in rock their memories of solitude during long hours of patient herding of their flocks seems to strengthen the link between the Tagus artists and the builders of the tombs of Montalvão-Cedillo. Over the millennia, these pastimes have been an ever-present feature of pastoral life, and could have originated the art of the Tagus Valley. This link seems to make even more sense in view of the fact that no carvings have been found on monuments at the mouth of the Sever; meanwhile, about 20 kilometres up the Tagus valley stream, in the region of Santiago de Alcântara, we would expect to see rock carvings on river boulders but there are none, although there are a very few on dolmen stones. Of course, it should be noted that the soils of Santiago de Alcântara are well-suited to farming, which is reflected in the large size of tombs and the diversity and wealth of the grave goods they contain. In this region, the Neolithic economy would have been mainly based on farming, and pastoralism would have been less important, which is reflected in the small number of artistic manifestations that have been discovered in the region.

All this means that it is very likely that the remains of the artist-shepherds who produced the exuberant art of the Tagus Valley are to be found buried in the small megalithic tombs at the mouth of the River Sever.
11.1. THE LANDSCAPE AND THE BUILDING OF BURIAL SITES

The area through which the final stretch of the River Sever runs up to the point where it feeds into the Tagus is marked by steep slopes and enclosed valleys. Other valleys which are not so deep were carved out on the schistose soils which shape the landscape by streams which now mostly run dry in the summer. Thus, on both banks of the Sever, there is an undulating orography defined by several ridges which run mainly parallel with the Sever and perpendicular to the Tagus. It was the principal and secondary eminences of these ridges that the communities of Neolithic shepherds selected for the building of their tombs, and there are only extremely rare exceptions to this rule. The best example of such an exception is the Charca Grande de la Regañada Dolmen, which though not sited on the crest of a ridge, is visible in the landscape from all directions because it is built in one of the few level zones in the district. One point of interest regarding this monument, probably the largest of its type hitherto identified, is its centrality in relation to ten other smaller tombs which surround it. It is also interesting to note that this dolmen was built in one of the few places with fertile soil enabling some farming to take place. The rest of the landscape, with the exception of the very small valleys, has very thin soils with almost zero farming potential. The vegetation is characterised by dense patches of spotted rockrose (Cistus ladanifer) with a scattering of short holm-oaks and a very few cork-oaks. Though it is recognised that nowadays the soils do not present exactly the same characteristics as those of the Neolithic period, there has been very little change. Today, the rockrose is kept at bay by cutting and the land is only suitable for grazing for goats and sheep, on which the economy of the people of Cedillo depends. Mechanical cutters are used to control the naturally-occurring rockrose, but not long ago forest fires performed this task, some of them occurring naturally and others set by Man; evidence of such fires can easily be traced in the ashes and carbon that are found beneath the superficial soils deposited by the wind, detected in the areas surrounding the burial sites. They also contributed to the sparse tree cover that is a feature of most of the Cedillo landscape, associated with the damage caused to most young trees by the animals, especially goats.

The burial mounds of the small megalithic tombs were lined with kerbs made of milky quartz boulders to make them stand out in the landscape but these are obscured by patches of spotted rockrose that naturally envelop them. This plant cover grows up unchecked obscuring the monuments, but in the Neolithic era they would have been visible as the grazing of animals which kept the vegetation down formed the basis of the economy of the communities of the region. The lack of water in the soils, in which springs are rare (the few that exist normally dry up during the summer and autumn), would have forced Neolithic communities and their flocks to remain near the Sever and the Tagus Rivers. Their dependence on these perennial water-courses seems to be reflected in the concentration of tombs on the ridges nearest the two rivers and a corresponding decrease in the number of sites as we move away from them. Nowadays, from late May, the highest parts of Cedillo district already show signs of insufficient grass cover to provide for flocks, and shepherds move them down to the banks of the rivers where greenery still flourishes. Similarly, the Neolithic shepherds of the Montalvão and Cedillo area would have herded their flocks along the river banks during summers, and with the rivers were at their lowest point, in their long hours of solitude, they carved away at the schist boulders found in the semi-dry courses of the Tagus and the Sever, thus giving vent to their creative energies.

11.2. TOMB ARCHITECTURE

It has long been recognized that the megalithic tomb architecture is characterised by a range of forms reflecting a model which was largely based on myth, or a mythological complex, rather than a real architectural solution. All the tombs which have been excavated in the area of the mouth of the River Sever present three structural elements: the chamber, the passage and the tumulus; however, there are others which have still not been excavated and are thought to be cist-shaped, without a passage and a single uniform tumulus. Nevertheless, this theory will probably be discarded when these sites are eventually excavated. When excavation work started at the very small Cedillo site known as Era dos Guardas, we thought we would find a small chamber with no passage as all the surface features pointed to this; however, what we discovered was a highly regular chamber to which a symbolic passage was attached. The whole monument was enveloped in a tumulus constructed with schist boulders originally lined with a kerb made of milky quartz slabs (Oliveira, 1993).

Thus, out of the seven monuments that we have hitherto studied on both banks of the Sever: Padre Santo, Fonte da Pipa, and Lomba da Barca on the Portuguese side; and Joainha, Cuatro Lindones, Era dos Guardas and Charca Grande de la Regañada on the Spanish side (to which we can add Sevillana, at Cedillo, on which we only carried out consolidation work to two upright stones), two main architectural variants have been identified. The first of these, taking in Padre Santo, Fonte da Pipa, Lomba da Barca, Era dos Guardas and Charca Grande de la Regañada, is characterised by a clearly differentiated chamber and passage. The chamber is built in the form of a regular polygon which is almost circular, and a passage is attached which is substantially narrower than the diameter of the chamber. The greater or lesser regularity of the chamber seems due to the size of the uprights that form it, especially the width of the capstone, rather than any planning on the part of the builders. The second type takes in all the other monuments hitherto excavated. The head-stone is regular in shape and the interior space narrows towards the passage, so it is difficult to say where
this begins. This is true both for the horizontal and vertical plane. From the head-stone the height of the uprights gradually diminishes so that they are almost indistinguishable from the natural topography of the land.

With the first type of design, the chamber and the passage are well-defined, mainly by the use of individualized uprights; with the second type, there are multiple slabs of schist or graywacke, which overlap and delimit the funeral space. This feature is particularly well-defined at the Joaninha site.

With both types, the level of the interior floor is generally below that of the surrounding topography. Thus, the builders of these tombs lowered and flattened their floors and made cavities in the underlying rock for the erection of uprights. This feature is visible at the Charca Grande de la Regañada site, with a difference in height between the centre of the chamber and the surrounding land which exceeds fifty centimetres. Similarly, at most sites, as one penetrates the monument through the passage to the chamber there is a slight downward inclination, demonstrating a clear intention on the part of the builders to situate the main tumulus space below the level of the surrounding land.

There are several questions as to the way in which the interior space is covered. Hitherto, a single type of in situ covering has been recognized. At the Sevillana site, a capstone formed with a schist slab covers the uprights of what could be termed a passage. All the monuments with an elongated shape would probably have been covered with such slabs. However, with more spacious chambers, this type of covering, although possible, was much more difficult to fashion in view of the fact it is not easy to obtain such large schist slabs as can be had in granite. At the same time, no chamber covering has ever been found in situ (one would expect to find such features having either fallen into the chamber or lying broken within it or nearby). We know that the temptation for communities settling in the region at a later date to use such slabs for other purposes would have been great, thus it is somewhat surprising that no evidence of any such slabs has survived. So how would the spacious chambers of these schist monuments have been covered? Besides the obvious assumption that they were appropriated by local people, there are several theories. Hypothetically, the chambers could have been covered with not just a single slab, as with granite monuments, but several slabs placed on the tops of the uprights thus covering the interior space. However, excavation work has never brought any evidence to light in the interior of chambers that can confirm this theory. It would be very strange, to say the least, that no evidence had survived after so many thousands of years from a pattern of reuse of stones which could be identified in other contexts. In view of this fact, and in view of the fact that one can very often find what seems to be man-made grooves at the tops of uprights, we have reached the conclusion that the tumuli were covered with vegetable matter. The possibility of several pieces of
Regañada monument. As a natural extension to the façade covered with dew or when it was wet and the sun shone meanwhile, we are certain that these funereal spaces were naturally this kind of covering would not last long; explanation of how larger chambers were covered.

In order to construct the tumuli it is clear that the builders first removed the earth from the space chosen as the tomb site and laid overlapping slabs of schist on the rock foundation cushioned with a layer of fine compacted clay. The removal of the earth lent a degree of stability to the whole burial mound that would enclose the funerary space. The large number of blocks of milky quartz found scattered around these tombs, which very occasionally occur as construction features of the burial mound, leads us to consider the theory that following the building of a monument it was lined with a kerb of quartz blocks that would endow it with visibility in the landscape. This effect would be even more marked when the quartz was covered with dew or when it was wet and the sun shone on it, creating the effect of a shiny veneer. It is therefore recognised that the builders of these monuments wanted to mark them out in the landscape, both through their choice of sites and the way in which they constructed the tumuli in the burial mounds. The use of quartz for kerbs which made burial mounds stand out in the landscape seems to have been the way in which the Neolithic communities of the region compensated for the small size of these monuments as compared with granite tombs located in the south of the country. These funereal sites would have been visible from afar not only thanks to their shiny veneer but also due to the likely configuration of perishable materials, which today usually adorn the tumuli of isolated communities in Africa and the Indian Ocean islands.

Besides the basic structure of these tombs, a complex forecourt constructed in front of the façade has been identified, hitherto only at the great Charca Grande de la Regañada monument. As a natural extension to the façade it spreads out and delimits the tumulus. It is recognised that different ritual practices would have taken place in this space, in spite of it being damaged by recent earth movements by Man and the roots of an old cork-oak. Various fragments of flint blades, cut-stone remains, beads and a flint arrowhead were found among the schist boulders (a few of them lying overturned while others stand upright), and a large number of blocks of quartz. In view of the construction materials used and the artefacts found in this space, it is thought likely that the site provided the stage for a number of ritual practices and, at the same time, the deposit of grave goods. Also, during excavation work at this site, around the tumulus, at the extremity opposite the passage, a structure was identified made up of schist slabs, laid out horizontally in an almost circular shape with an irregular outline and a diameter of around two metres. The slabs that form this structure are set in a layer of clay on the underlying rock. Half of this structure having been dismantled, nothing was found under the slabs. In the small space between the tumulus and this strange structure we found at a depth of about thirty-five centimetres three dung-beetle balls, which had been cut open, fired in a kiln and made into small ceramic containers. Though we have no idea of the function of these enigmatic items, they are no doubt linked to the tomb. We know that most burials were preceded by the preparation of the corpse, involving the reduction of its volume by means of cremation, excarnation and dismemberment; this structure may have been designed for this purpose. Nevertheless, there is no sign of fire and no other evidence was detected on the surfaces of the slabs that form it, nor in the area immediately surrounding the monument.

As regards variations in terms of construction features employed in the building of the monuments of the mouth of the Sever, the stones of the Joainha site are notable. The floor of this megalithic tomb is completely covered with fine schist slabs, carefully shaped to cover the whole of the interior, and this is especially evident in the chamber. Though this type of floor was also present in the passage, the slabs have been partially destroyed at the south end where the damage caused by farming is most in evidence. The passage of this monument seems to have been extended in length; this observation derives from the identification in the interior of the monument, near the entrance, of two schist blocks placed transversally, eighty centimetres apart, creating a sort of extension to the passage. The space delimited by these blocks is enclosed by the passage uprights, although these are smaller and provide less stability. Thus, this seems to be an extension to the tomb built at a stage later than the original construction.

It was found that the direction of the passages of the monuments excavated (those referred to in this paper, because only those figures are accurate) range from 95º to 120º, as follows: Joainha – 95º, Charca Grande da Regañada – 100º, Era dos Guardas – 115º, Cuatro Lindones – 115º, Padre Santo – 95º, Fonte da Pipa – 120º, and Lomba da Barca – 115º.
11.3. DATINGS

The contemporaneousness of schist and granite megalithic monuments is suggested by the following factors: geographical proximity, great similarity in terms of architecture (despite the difference in scale), and a degree of similarity between the collections of grave goods found (although each type displays its own specificities). Before the excavation of the Joaninha Dolmen in the district of Cedillo, the only dated samples originating from schist monuments in the mouth of the Sever area had been obtained from carbon taken from the Lomba da Barca Dolmen in the district of Nisa. This carbon was dated 950±80 years BP, which, even if translated into calendar years, certainly represents a very late stage for the desecration of the monument. Because other tombs excavated on the Portuguese bank were greatly damaged by the plantation of eucalyptuses, no datable materials could be obtained. Thus, before taking organic matter from the Joaninha site, we were in a position in which there were no absolute chronometric values available. The radiocarbon dating of the two samples taken from the Joaninha monument provided the following figures: 3840±170 and 5400±210 years BP, respectively. These samples involved the collection of carbon at two different levels and for separate structures. The first of these, Sac-1381: 3840±170 years BP, is the dating provided for a number of carbon fragments collected from the base of the monument in the transition zone between the chamber and the passage, which is covered with a great deal of compacted earth, which displays no sign of desecration, and this is where most of the artefacts were gathered. The carbon is derived from ashes and was taken from earth that covered the slabs that formed the floor of the funeral space. Under these slabs, between the fine layer of earth that separated it from the underlying rock, another collection of carbonized wood fragments was taken, associated with small ash stains, and the following dating was obtained: Sac - 1380: 5400±210 years BP (Oliveira, 1997).

Though we have only two datings, they are extremely important, as they are the only ones hitherto available for the sites in the mouth of the Sever area and, in some measure, they were taken from site which do not seem to have been desecrated and also they clearly provide parallels with the dates already available for larger monuments constructed in granite and situated in the Sever basin.

The first dating obtained for the Joaninha Dolmen, Sac -1381: 3840±170 years BP, in terms of temporal context, coincides with those of Samples 1 and 3 taken from Cabecuda Dolmen in the district of Marvão, a monument with a regular polygonal chamber and a short passage, with the following datings: 3650±110 years BP and 3720±45 years BP, respectively. The first sample derives from carbon taken from inside a small silo in the chamber-floor where open ceramic receptacles with smooth surfaces were found. The second was taken from roasted acorns gathered from beneath the overturned chamber uprights, also where smooth ceramic receptacles were found. There are also chronological parallels with Sample 1 taken from the Castelhanas Dolmen, a granite monument with a regular polygonal chamber and a short passage, while there is a degree of difference between them, although this is not very significant, especially when the margins of error are taken into account. This sample (OXA-5432), which was dated 3220±65 years BP, was taken from burnt human bones found along with undecorated semi-spherical containers, flint arrowheads with a convex base and fragments of schist plaque.

The second sample from the Joaninha dolmen (Sac -1380: 5400±210 years BP) (Oliveira, 1997) was taken from beneath the slabs of the base of the monument, where no artefacts were uncovered, and seems to fall within the set of dates which are commonly considered as being extremely ancient, now applied to the granite monuments of the area under analysis. These samples, taken from monuments in the district of Marvão, such as the Castelhanas Dolmen (ICEN-1264: 6360±110 years BP), the Cabecuda Dolmen (ICEN-978: 7660±60 years BP) and the Figueira Branca Dolmen (ICEN-823: 6210±50 years BP), involved carbon collected from the sandy soils at the base of the chamber, where no artefacts were found, probably resulting from the digging of cavities for the erection of uprights or, as is the case of the Figueira Branca Dolmen, carbon from an unstructured hearth identified at the base of the tumulus. In this last example, the carbon sample was taken from a site at which a broken millstone and smooth pottery fragments were found.

The datings obtained at the Joaninha site seem to bear out the theory of the contemporaneousness of the use of the two types of megalithic sites situated in the Sever basin. On the basis of the data collected, this temporal parallelism seems to be more significant for granite monuments with a short passage than those with an extended passage. The only dated sample hitherto available for this region associated with monuments with an extended passage was obtained at the site of the Coureleiros IV Dolmen in the district of Castelo de Vide, dated 4240±150 years BP (ICEN-976).

At the same time, it is interesting to note how the age of the carbon (Utc-4452: 6022±40 years BP) gathered from the cavity in which the menhir of Meada, in the district of Castelo de Vide, was erected, is approximate to the dates of the megalithic monuments presented here, which are regarded as being extremely ancient (Oliveira, 1997a).

The older dating provided for the Joaninha monument confirms that the first stage in the construction of these tombs occurred in the early Neolithic era and that they were used up until the beginning of the Chalcolithic period. It is associated with a series of datings with a degree of significance for this small hydrological basin; in previous papers a more detailed analysis of this has been
provided. The difference between the two carbon-datings for the Joainhina monument show that these tombs had an extended functional life, just like other tombs outside the area examined in this paper.

11.4. ARTEFACTS AS A REFLECTION OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

The type of economy practiced by the Neolithic communities is reflected in the range of artefacts unearthed in the tombs. Among the large number of funerary items identified at the large sites on soils suited to farming, there is a large number of ceramic items. These were essential features of life in settled farming-based societies and would not have been used much by communities which were always on the move, such as those whose economy was based on pastoralism. The latter mainly used receptacles and containers made of animal or vegetable matter which are subject to decay and have therefore not survived. At the sites of the mouth of the Sever ceramic artefacts are either absent or present in small numbers. Thus, the almost complete absence of ceramic items at these sites points to the existence of predominantly pastoral communities. The corpses buried in the tomb may have been accompanied by some containers that once served as utensils but because these were made from organic materials they did not survive: such artefacts, made of skin, wood, or horn, would have formed part of the equipment of shepherds herding flocks. These were placed in their graves with their corpses, rather than ceramic receptacles which would have indicated the existence of more settled communities.

Millstones are other artefacts which are found in large numbers in the monuments situated on soils better suited to farming. Scattered in burial mounds, sometimes used as wedges for large boulders, or even as grave goods, lots of over fifty such items can be found at a single site, for example, at the Cabeçuda Dolmen in the district of Marvão. However, this rarely occurs with the small tombs of the mouth the Sever. Of the various sites studied in the region, only the Joainhina site, that of Era dos Guardas, at Cedillo, and that of Lomba da Barca, near Montalvão, have supplied a millstone. However, a close link between the millstone found at the Lomba da Barca site and the funereal monument was not established: it was found on the surface, ten metres from the dolmen, leaning against an old holm-oak tree. It had long served and continued to serve as a seat for the shepherd who watched his flocks sheep and goats.

Out of all artefacts, the millstone is certainly that which bears the closest relationship to farming practices, and its absence from the megalithic remains of the mouth of the Sever is significant.

Among the collections of grave goods taken from the tombs in the schist zone, of note are the large number of robust polished stone tools found; however, adzes/hoes rarely occur. Large axes predominate, generally only their cutting edges polished and quadrangular or rectangular in cross-section. At the sites in areas with good farming potential, fewer polished stone implements are found: equal numbers of adzes/hoes and axes occur, while some monuments, especially those with an extended passage, provide a larger number of adzes/hoes. Though most of the polished stone implements are closely related to the existence of farming, it is naturally adzes/hoes that were used on a daily basis by those whose principal economic activity involved tillage of the land. Comparing the axes found at the two types of sites, they differ in terms of weight, cross-section and above all, the width of the cutting edge in relation to the total length of the tool. The axes found in areas most suited to farming are small, tooled to a higher standard, with a generally rectangular or elliptical cross-section, and have long cutting edges and a narrow bevel, and were suitable for cutting wood. However, most of the axes gathered at the monuments at the mouth of the River Sever are not suitable for this purpose; their features indicate that the purpose of the cutting edge is not so much achieving a perfect cut but rather inflicting injury, and they therefore served mainly as weapons. The shepherd was much more exposed to danger than the farmer and usually carried weapons for self-defence. This also points to the existence of an economy mainly based on pastoralism characterizing the communities of the mouth of the River Sever. They had little excess capacity in terms of produce to trade with on a regular basis in order to obtain raw materials like flint, which did not exist in the region. This lack of trading capability seems to be confirmed by the small number of flint arrowheads and blades found at these burial sites, especially when compared with megalithic remains found in soils better suited to farming.

Another megalithic artefact par excellence which is worthy of mention because it is absence in the collections of tomb goods found at sites at the mouth of Sever is the decorated schist plaque. Hitherto, no decorated schist plaques have been identified at these sites, but two pieces which have been identified as variants of common schist plaques have been uncovered at the Fonte da Pipa site, north of Montalvão. These two polished sandstone items, one of them intact, are nearly parallelepiped in shape, undecorated and not carved, and slightly concave on both sides. Possibly representing the schematic forms of sandstone and grès plaques, which normally feature anthropomorphic decoration, they are similar to the unusual collection of grave goods found at the Horta da Coudelaria de Alter Dolmen.

There are a range of possible explanations for the absence of schist plaques at the sites located at the mouth of the River Sever. One of those which best fits the interpretations presented above is associated with the same likely reason for the very small number of flint artefacts found. We now know that there existed centres for producing artefacts and networks for the distribution of schist plaques and that obtaining these luxury funereal
artefacts would necessitate trade; assuming the economy of the communities of the mouth of the Sever was poor, little excess produce would have been available for commercial exchange, so these artefacts would have represented an unaffordable luxury to these communities, and the same thing is true of flint artefacts.

The presence of two sandstone plaques at the Fonte da Pipa monument, one of the schist burial sites situated furthest from the mouth of the Sever, where better resources were available and where the soils were more suitable for farming, could provide evidence of a more prosperous economy with regard to the community that built it and, consequently, sufficient excess produce in order that luxury funereal artefacts could be obtained.

Although only highly fragmentary evidence is available and only a small number of funereal monuments have been studied, everything seems to point to the fact that the economy of the Neolithic communities that built the tombs in the mouth of the River Sever area was poor and based mainly on pastoralism, which was naturally reflected in the quality and number of grave goods and the very small size of most of the tombs. These aspects also portray a society which was less complex, less organized and less pyramidal than those based on farming and consequently more settled. It was these shepherds of the mouth of the Sever area who produced the large number of carvings on the schist boulders which are now largely submerged by the waters of the Fratel Reservoir. This they did especially in summer-time, while herding their flocks along the banks of the Tagus and the Sever in search of pasture which was unavailable in the dry uplands at that time of year. While the animals moved slowly along the banks and spacious river-bed of the Tagus, the shepherds would patiently turn the flat polished schists they encountered into memorials of their sojourn. In a cycle of artistic activity, the ancient men of the mouth of the Sever carved and re-carved the schist slabs with images of their experiences of nature or and hopes; still today, shepherds carve with their penknives decorations on crooks or the horn containers in which they carry their provisions, with one eye on their flocks.

11.5. CONCLUSION

Though the scant evidence of settlements of the builders of the megalithic burial sites of the mouth of the River Sever has never previously been studied, as a result of the information gathered from excavations it is now possible to reconstitute some aspects of the society, economy and rituals of the communities that lived in this region during the Neolithic era. On the extremely thin soils of the area, the economy of these communities was mainly pastorally-based, while in the better-drained valleys they were able to grow some crops, complemented by hunting and fishing. Pastoralism, however, forms the basis of the economy, as is still the case nowadays in the region. Herding their flocks in constant nomadic movement, the Neolithic people of the mouth of the Sever did not live in an organized fashion in cohesive structured communities that would have provided them with the manpower needed for the construction of large collective tumuli. Their small-scale burial sites built with schist blocks, which two or three people could easily transport and raise, were organized in necropolises along hillcrests which stood out in the landscape. Burial mounds were lined with kerbs made blocks of white quartz which contrasted with the green and brown hues of the vegetation. The poor economy meant very little excess produce and the people of the area established few contacts with the traders that could have supplied with them luxury items, such as flint and schist blocks. The absence of this type of artefact or its presence in small numbers as well as the virtual absence of ceramic recipients at burial sites indicate that the Neolithic people of the area survived almost entirely thanks to pastoralism. Practising transhumance during the summer and autumn, they herded their flocks along the banks of the Tagus and the Sever in search of the pasture which was unavailable in the dry uplands at that time of year. While the animals moved slowly along the banks and spacious river-bed of the Tagus, the shepherds would patiently turn the flat polished schists they encountered into memorials of their sojourn. In a cycle of artistic activity, the ancient men of the mouth of the Sever carved and re-carved the schist slabs with images of their experiences of nature or and hopes; still today, shepherds carve with their penknives decorations on crooks or the horn containers in which they carry their provisions, with one eye on their flocks.

![Fig. 11.4. Charca Grande de la Regañada – General view from the west: the tumulus following excavation](image)

![Fig. 11.5. Charca Grande de la Regañada – General view from the north: the chamber and passage](image)
Fig. 11.6. Charca Grande de la Regañada – General view of the structure identified west of the tumulus

Fig. 11.7. Charca Grande de la Regañada – View of the structure after partial dismantling

Fig. 11.8. Charca Grande de la Regañada – General view of the monument with the structured forecourt in the foreground

Fig. 11.9. Charca Grande de la Regañada – Three dung-beetle balls made into ceramic containers found in the monument tumulus

Fig. 11.10. Fonte da Pipa – View of the monument before the start of excavations

Fig. 11.11. Fonte da Pipa – Idol-plaque *in situ* near the head-stone
Fig. 11.12. Fonte da Pipa – View of the excavation of the monument

Fig. 11.13. Fonte da Pipa – General view of the dolmen after excavation

Fig. 11.14. Lomba da Barca – Monument viewed from the North

Fig. 11.15. Lomba da Barca – View of the excavation of the monument

Fig. 11.16. Lomba da Barca – View of the excavation of the tumulus

Fig. 11.17. Lomba da Barca – General view of the monument after excavation
Fig. 11.18. Padre Santo – General view of the monument from the south

Fig. 11.19. Padre Santo – General view of the monument from the north
Chapter 12

DOCUMENTACION ARQUEOLOGICA OBTENIDA DURANTE LOS TRABAJOS DE CONSOLIDACION DE LOS DOLMENES DE VALENCIA DE ALCANTARA

Juan Javier ENRÍQUEZ NAVASCUÉS, María Jesús CARRASCO MARTÍN

Universidad de Extremadura

Resumen: Las actuaciones de limpieza y consolidación efectuadas en 27 dólmenes de granito de Valencia de Alcántara han proporcionado nuevos datos arqueológicos sobre el conjunto, de modo especial en cuanto a la tipología y estructura de algunos de ellos. Los casos más sobresalientes son los de El Palancar, La Miera, Datos 1, Cajarón 2, Zafra 2, Huerta Nueva y Tapada del Anta, así como la incorporación de un nuevo dólmen, Salón de los Canchales. También se han recuperado elementos de ajuares de interés, aunque descontextualizados casi siempre salvo casos muy puntuales como los pulimentados de La Miera.

Palabras clave: Megalitos; Consolidación; Ajuares

Abstract: The performances of cleaning and consolidation carried out in 27 dolmens of granite in Valencia de Alcántara have provided new archeological data about the site, in a special way as for the typology and structure of some of them. The most excellent cases are those of El Palancar, La Miera, Datos 1, Cajarón 2, Zafra 2, Huerta Nueva and Tapada del Anta, as well as the incorporation of a new dolmen, Salón de los Canchales. Some elements of trousseaus of interest have also been recovered, even though they are almost never contextualized except for very specific cases like the polishing ones of La Miera.

Key words: Megaliths; Consolidation; Grave goods

12.1. EL MARCO DE INTERVENCIÓN

El marco en el que se desarrolló, hace ahora diez años, el proyecto de consolidación de los dólmenes de Valencia de Alcántara fue el programa Interreg I de Patrimonio Cultural, planteado y desarrollado por la entonces Consejería de Cultura y Patrimonio (hoy Consejería de Cultura) de la Junta de Extremadura. Dentro de los parámetros contemplados por dicho programa, la intervención en los dólmenes debía ajustarse a la consolidación arquitectónica y no orientarse a la solución de problemas y cuestiones de índole estrictamente arqueológica, de tal manera que se trataba de acompañar, dentro de un equipo multidisciplinar, los diagnósticos previos sobre el estado de conservación, las medidas concretas para la consolidación de cada sepulcro y el desarrollo de los trabajos de campo1. En su conjunto, la intervención partió así con unos presupuestos de partida diferentes a los contemplados en otros proyectos de recuperación dolménica como los realizados en los sepulcros del término municipal de Alcántara (Bueno et al. 1998a y b) o en Cedillo (Oliveira, 2000).

1 El planteamiento general y el desarrollo de las primeras actuaciones del proyecto ya fueron dados a conocer en una visión de conjunto en el nº 7 de la revista Ibn Maruan (Carrasco & Enríquez, 1997) y de ellos se habló también en las “I Jornadas de Patrimonio Histórico Transfronterizo” celebrada en Badajoz y en el coloquio “Arqueología e desenvolvimiento social” celebrado en Idanha a Nova en 1998. A él nos vamos a referir brevemente por ser el marco de referencia y explicación, pero vamos a prestar mayor atención aquí a la documentación arqueológica que se obtuvo, que pese a las limitaciones inherentes a que ya nos hemos referido más arriba no carece de interés.

12.2. EL PROYECTO Y SU DESARROLLO

El proyecto de consolidación tuvo su punto de partida en la documentación previa existente, fundamentalmente en los trabajos de Diéguez (1976) y sobre todo en el estudio realizado por P. Bueno sobre los dólmenes del término (Bueno, 1988). De este modo su fase inicial consistió en la puesta al día de dicha documentación con la visita directa y el análisis de los dólmenes publicados por parte de un equipo multidisciplinar formado por arquitectos (C. Borrallo, S. Martín Corrales y J. López Alvarez), geólogo (J. Jonquera), arqueólogos (M.J. Carrasco & J.J. Enríquez) e ingeniero técnico agrícola (F. Carrasco López), con ayuda eventual de topógrafo y arquitecto técnico. El resultado de ese análisis se plasmó en 5 volúmenes de diagnóstico, donde para cada dólmen se contó un documento que contenía: situación, cartografía, datos administrativos, accesos reales y posibles, intervenciones precedentes, clasificación arquitectónica, actualización de las descripciones de los ortostatos, planimetrías, fotografías, patologías detectadas, estado de conservación y propuestas de intervención reversibles para su conservación y rehabilitación. Al final, en función de las disponibilidades presupuestarias, se seleccionaron 28 dólmenes, todos ellos de granito, de los que se actuó en 27 (no se acabó la intervención en Cajarón 1) entre los...
que se incluía uno hasta entonces inédito: el Salón de los Canchales, así como dos ortostatos de otro más en la finca Huerta del Látigo, que no debe confundirse con el así denominado por Diéguez (1976: 38) y Bueno (1988: 125).

La ejecución se efectuó en tres niveles de actuación. En el primero de ellos se contemplant la limpieza interior y exterior de estructuras, sellado de fisuras, eliminación de humedades y manchas, corrección de desplomes sin desplazamientos, relleno de cámara y corredor cuando lo había, así como la protección de los restos de túmulo con tierra compactada de la zona (sabio) sobre capa geotextil. En este nivel de intervención se incluyeron un total de diez dólmenes: Zafra 1, Changarrilla, Anta de la Marquesa (Los Mellizos), La Morera, Salón de los Canchales, S. Antón, Valbón 2, Huerta del Látigo, Tapias 1 y Tapias 2.

Con estas actuaciones se pretendió fundamentalmente frenar el deterioro y evitar que se perdieran las referencias de algunos de ellos, como Zafra 1, Tapias 2, Huerta del Látigo, Changarrilla, o La Morera, que estaban a punto de desaparecer, mientras que en otros casos se trataba de evitar el avance del accusto proceso de deterioro en que se encontraban, como ocurría en Tapias 1, Lanchas 2, Valbón 2, S. Antón y Salón de los Canchales. Especial fue el caso del popular Anta de la Marquesa, también denominado Los Mellizos, en donde para poder efectuar la limpieza y más tarde facilitar la visita fue preciso que el Ayuntamiento de Valencia de Alcántara adquiriera el terreno circundante y procediera a su vallado.

El segundo nivel no se circunscribió solo a limpieza, sellado de fisuras, capa de protección en el suelo etc., sino que incluyó la reubicación en las fosas de cimentación de los ortostatos movidos o desplazados cuya estabilidad era precaria, el cosido de fragmentos rotos y la restitución de fragmentos partidos, caídos o desplazados una vez insertados en zanjas de cimentación y reforzados con calzos. Por último, en la entrada asomaban dos piedras que afloraba 50 cms. Durante la limpieza superficial del primero de ellos caído y apenas visible en superficie y otro roto que afloraba 50 cms. Durante la limpieza superficial del terreno se descubrió todo el ortostato caído, que tenía unas medidas de 3 x 1,55 m., y la caja de cimentación excavada en el suelo en la que había ido insertado, junto

12.3. LA DOCUMENTACIÓN ARQUEOLÓGICA OBTENIDA

La documentación arqueológica más interesante es obviamente la obtenida en los dólmenes del tercer nivel de intervención, parte de la cual ya ha sido dada a conocer (Carrasco & Enríquez, 1997; Enríquez & Carrasco, 2000), pero también de los dólmenes de los otros dos niveles se obtuvieron a veces nuevos datos que conviene dar a conocer.

Así, a efectos documentales y dentro del primero de los niveles de intervención referida, el que aporta mayor novedad es el Salón de los Canchales que, como se ha dicho, estaba inédito. Su situación sobre la hoja 727 1/50.000 del IGM es de 7º 10’ 45,6’’ de longitud y 39º 19’ 47,5’’ de latitud, con una altitud de 487 m. Se emplaza a media ladera de la vertiente oriental de una colina de pizarras muy próxima a roquedos graníticos, dentro de un olivar con amplio campo visual abierto únicamente al E. Se encontraba lleno de maleza y con las piedras removidas, de modo que con la limpieza efectuada solo es posible apuntar datos relativos a la cámara (Fig. 12.1). Esta es de tendencia circular, abierta al E., con un diámetro de 3,10 m. en el eje N-S y 3 m. en el E-W, formada por siete ortostatos conservados de granito que alcanzan una altura máxima de 2,90 m. En el ortostato 4 se observaba como los ortostatos estaban insertados en zanjas de cimentación y reforzados con calzos. Por último, en la entrada asomaban dos piedras más bajas hincadas verticalmente a manera de jambas. No se apreciaban restos de corredor en superficie y la estructura tumular se hallaba completamente desmontada, aunque se observaban algunos restos tras el ortostato 6.

Hay que reseñar también el dólmen casi desaparecido de la finca conocida como Huerta del Látigo, que recordamos como no es el publicado con este nombre, sino otro inédito que solo conservaba dos ortostatos, uno de ellos caído y apenas visible en superficie y otro roto que afloraba 50 cms. Durante la limpieza superficial del terreno se descubrió todo el ortostato caído, que tenía unas medidas de 3 x 1,55 m., y la caja de cimentación excavada en el suelo en la que había ido insertado, junto
Fig. 12.1. Planta de Salón de los Canchales, materiales de Los Mellizos y planta y materiales de Lanchas 2

con las entibaciones. Con estos elementos se repuso este ortostato en su lugar y se protegió un área de 5 m. de diámetro con tierra compactada del terreno. Su situación sobre la hoja 701 del IGM es de 7º 12´ 1,8´´ de longitud y 39º 23´ 20´´ de latitud, a una cota de 478 m. de altitud.

Materiales arqueológicos solo se encontraron en la limpieza de Los Mellizos o Anta de La Marquesa. Son cinco piezas en total que estaban algo separadas del dolmen, junto a la tapia de piedra de la linde derecha: dos fragmentos de ídolos placa, dos puntas de flecha, una con aletas y base pedunculada y la otra triangular de base recta, y una azuela pulimentada completa de sección rectangular (Fig. 12.1).

De entre los del segundo nivel, hay que reseñar el caso de Lanchas 2, que ya había sido objeto de excavaciones, el cual se encontraba totalmente arruinado. Los expolios habían llegado a alcanzar cotas que incluso estaban por debajo del nivel de cimentación de la cámara. Los trabajos de limpieza y drenaje al exterior pudieron verificar la estructura de la cámara y parte de la del corredor y atrio, aunque el lado N. del corredor estaba destruido y del S. solo se conservaban tres ortostatos movidos. En aquel revoltijo aparecieron sin embargo
Fig. 12.2. Plantas de La Miera, Zafra 2, Cajirón 2 y El Palancar

algunos materiales de interés como son los cuatro fragmentos de ídolos antropomorfos y los treinta y cuatro de vasijas cerámicas, con platos bajos que en algunos casos tenían el borde reforzado, cuencos semiesféricos y en forma de casquete esférico y un fragmento de cuchara (Fig. 12.1).

Para los del tercer nivel, hay que aludir a las intervenciones y resultados en Zafra 2 y El Palancar (Carrasco & Enríquez, 1997) y a las de los sepulcros de corredor corto de La Miera, Datos 1 y Cajirón 2 (Enríquez & Carrasco, 2000). Inédita se encontraban la actuación y consiguiente nueva documentación de los dólmenes de El Fragoso, Huerta Nueva (el recogido como Huerta del Látigo en la bibliografía precedente) y Tapada del Anta, que enseguida se expondrán.

Pero los casos más singulares y hasta espectaculares fueron los de los dólmenes de Zafra 2 y El Palancar (Fig. 12.2). Este último se encontraba totalmente en ruinas,
convertido en un auténtico pedregal, no solo expoliado, sino que además había sido objeto de voladuras. Su desescombro y limpieza permitieron reconocer la traza de la planta, de grandes dimensiones (4,70 x 4,30 m. de diámetros y 2,9 m. de altura) y parte del corredor en 2,6 m. Pudo definirse así como de corredor corto, pero dentro de este tipo resultó ser el de mayores dimensiones del conjunto de Valencia de Alcántara. El caso de Zafra 2 es un tanto curioso pues había sido excavado en los años 60 y luego completamente desmontado para aprovechar las losas, que incluso se habían usado en un puente cercano (y de allí las hubo que recuperar). Tras las labores de limpieza se localizaron las huellas de las cimentaciones de los ortostatos de la cámara, los cuales se habían conservado cuando se arrancaron de cuajo las losas. Este hecho, unido a la documentación previa existente (descripciones, fotos y planos) y a que las losas estaban muy enteras, permitieron que se recuperase la memoria de este sufrido dolmen con cámara poligonal y corredor largo, pero de estructura sencilla.

Los sepulcros con corredor corto de La Miera, Datas 1 y Cajirón 2 también ofrecieron datos de interés que añadir a la documentación ya conocida de los dólmenes de Valencia de Alcántara (Bueno, 1988) y de la cuenca del Sever (Oliveira, 1997a). El de La Miera, no exento de una cierta complejidad estructural y simbólica que ya Sever (Oliveira, 1997a). El de La Miera, no exento de una cierta complejidad estructural y simbólica que ya comentamos (Enríquez & Carrasco, 2000: 282), constaba de una cámara de tendencia circular que medía 4x3,9 m. de diámetros y una altura que alcanzaba 3,85 m. donde las lascas internas de silex y cuarcita y dos objetos pulimentados, uno incompleto y una azuela de sección oval. Pero hay que destacar el hallazgo de tres fragmentos de ídolos placa de pizarra con decoración geométrica y otros tres, más otro probable, correspondientes a ídolos antropomorfo sobre placas. El más claro es una cabeza (Fig. 12.3) cuya morfología, factura y tatuajes que se marcan las cejas, nariz, ojos y tatuaje facial resultan casi idénticos a los que ofrece una placa antropomorfa de Lanchas 1 (Bueno, 1988: 56; 1990:105), muy similar también pero algo menos a otra de Indanha-a-Nova (Bueno, 1992:586).

Cajirón 2 es un pequeño dolmen con corredor corto, cuya cámara mide 2,72 m. en el eje E-W y 2,93 m. en el N-S. Con una altura máxima del 1,92 m., conservaba una jamba en el lateral S. El corredor, desviado respecto al eje y con 2,54 m. de longitud por 1,27/1,18 m. de anchura, contenía una pieza de pizarra junto a la entrada en el lateral S. A él se accedía por un pequeño atrio cuyas trazas se conservan en el lateral N. Del túmulo pudo comprobarse como estaba formado por hiladas horizon-tales de piedras en un diámetro conservado de 12 m., con una disposición perimetral de grandes piedras que sobresalían y bien pudieron conformar un anillo de refuerzo (Fig. 12.2).

Por otra parte, como antes se apuntó, inédita permanecía hasta ahora la documentación obtenida en los dólmenes de El Fragoso, Huerta Nueva y Tapada del Anta, que pasamos a exponer.

12.3.1. El Fragoso

Inventariado por Diéguez con el nº 30 (Diéguez, 1976: 30), quien presentó un croquis con dos ortostatos y apuntó la existencia de construcciones con falsa cúpula en las inmediaciones, fue recogido por Bueno como sepulcro de tipología indeterminada dado el estado en que se encontraba (Bueno, 1988: 22 y 33). En la visita de reconocimiento solo pudo identificarse un montón arruinado de piedras oculto entre cochiquerías abandonadas que habían aprovechado su estructura ([las construcciones de falsa cúpula que refirió Diéguez?]). Tras la primera limpieza superficial se identificaron 5 ortostatos, dos completos y tres fracturados. Más tarde, el desmonte de las construcciones parásitas y la retirada de piedras sueltas permitieron reconocer las trazas de una cámara y el inicio de un corredor. En una segunda limpieza y pese al carácter ruinoso en que estaba la estructura se pudo determinar como se trataba de una cámara poligonal de tendencia circular, que con orientación E-O estaba compuesta por 7 ortostatos de sección rectangular u oval, con un diámetro máximo de 3,72 m. en el eje N-S y de 3,10 m. en el E-O. El vano de acceso contaba con 0,90 m. de ancho en la base y el interior estaba completamente alterado (Fig. 12.4).
Es interesante apuntar como se pudo comprobar la existencia una jamba segura junto a esa entrada y la fosa de inserción de la opuesta. El ortostato 1° del lado sur apareció roto y caído pero la localización de la fosa de cimentación y de los calzos permitió su recolocación. Justo al lado del mismo por el interior apareció una pieza de pizarra de 0,99 x 0,28 m. que pudo haber sido la jamba de ese lado, ya que en el lado N. si que se conservó otra pieza similar algo desplazada pero con el arranque “in situ”. Del corredor pudieron descubrirse dos grandes ortostatos colocados horizontalmente, uno a cada lado, y en el lateral N. también las huellas de una cimentación abierta en la roca con unas dimensiones algo menores (0,80 x 0,16 m.). A partir de esta huella ya no se detectó traza alguna.

En cuanto a materiales arqueológicos, la mayor parte de los encontrados fueron fragmentos de cerámicas a torno, pero no faltaron los de cerámica a mano y algunos objetos de piedra trabajada, así como un buen número de piedras
medianas y pequeñas de cuarzo sin trabajar. Del revuelto
de la cámara se pueden reconocer formas de cuencos
semiesféricos y de paredes entrantes, aunque destaca un
vaso de marcada carena baja y perfil en S que estaba
prácticamente entero. Entre los líticos, una punta de
flecha de sílex pedunculada, un trapecio microlítico, un
núcleo prismático de cristal de roca, un cincel o gubia
pulimentada y un hacha pulida rota longitudinalmente,
ambas piezas de sección trapezoidal (Fig. 12.4).

12.3.2. Huerta Nueva
Inventariado por Diéguez con el nº 34 bajo la denomi-
nación de Huerta del Látigo (Diéguez, 1976: 38), así fue
recogido por Bueno quien ya aludió al expolio que había
sufrido (Bueno, 1988: 125). Esta nueva denominación que
apuntamos se debe al hecho de que en los correspon-
dientes registros de fincas ésta en la que se ubica este
dolmen es reconocida como Huerta Nueva, mientras que
Huerta del Látigo es el nombre que recibe otra colindante al S.O., que es en la que se hallaron los dos ortostatos del perdido sepulcro que así hemos llamado.

El estado en que se encontraba era de grave deterioro, con la cámara completamente rebajada. Había seis ortostatos hincados en el suelo y uno caído al interior parcialmente visible bajo una gran losa trapezoidal que parecía haber correspondido a la cubierta. De esos siete ortostatos, cinco estaban completos con una altura por el exterior desde el suelo actual de 2,20 m. pero con 3 m. por el interior. El corredor por su parte estaba destrozado pero eran reconocibles tres ortostatos en el lateral sur y cuarto en el norte. Conservaba también restos del túmulo, aunque desfigurado por la maleza y por las terreras dejadas tras su expolio. Las patologías eran por tanto graves, destacando el hecho de que en la cámara se había excavado por debajo del nivel de cimentación de los ortostatos con el consiguiente peligro para su estabilidad, de igual modo acusadas eran las grandes fisuras de los ortostatos 1 y 7, el desplazamiento exterior N.O. del 3, la fractura del 6, caído al interior, y el desplome y fractura de la cubierta. Las intervenciones se centraron preferentemente en el sellado y grapado de fisuras de los ortostatos 1 y 3, corrección del desplazamiento de este último; pegado y recolocación del 6; relleno de la cámara y nueva entibación de todos los ortostatos; limpieza del corredor y eliminación de las terreras allí generadas y por último limpieza superficial y protección de los restos del túmulo.

Concluidos estos trabajos, se pudieron individualizar (Fig. 12.5) la cámara, corredor, un pequeño atrio y restos de una colina tumular de planta oval delimitada por un anillo perimetral de bloques de granito, conservados sobre todo en el sector N.E. La cámara, con siete ortostatos, delimita un espacio poligonal de tendencia circular que alcanza 3,60 m. de diámetro en el eje E-O y 3,40 en el N-S, con una altura de 2,80/2,70 m. desde los elementos de entibación interiores, si bien la altura real de los ortostatos supera los 4 m. ya que tenían enterrados un tercio de de su longitud real. Completamente expoliada y rebajada de su cota como se ha dicho, conserva las fosas de cimentación abiertas en la roca y algunos bloques de mediano tamaño que sirvieron como refuerzos interiores. Al exterior no se documentaron elementos de entibación, de manera que fue la propia estructura del túmulo la que sirvió para contener la presión exterior y la disposición de niveles de tierra y piedras del mismo la que hizo las veces de entibaciones. Frente a la losa central, que en este caso no era la de mayores dimensiones, se sitúa la entrada con una anchura de 0,86 m., a partir de la cual se desarrolla el corredor cuya intersección venía marcada por dos jambas de granito de las que solo se conserva la del lateral N.

El corredor ofreció una planta trapezoidal determinada por la asimetría de sus flancos, con 2,90 m. de largo y una anchura de 1,64 m., con siete ortostatos encajados en fosas abiertas en la roca y refuerzos por el interior, cuatro en el S. y tres en el N., uno de los cuales actúa como jamba cuando la pared empieza a divergir. A partir de ahí se abre un pequeño atrio de 1 m. de longitud por 2,70 m. de anchura máxima. El lateral N. tiene una longitud de 2,56 m. desde la entrada de la cámara a la intersección del atrio, con una altura de 1 m. desde los elementos de entibación. De los tres ortostatos que lo delimitan, el mayor está colocado horizontalmente en el centro, los otros dos verticales. El lateral S. proporciónó 2,90 m. de longitud y un desarrollo formado por cuatro ortostatos cuya altura oscila entre 0,80 y 1,20 m. Como particularidad ofrece una pieza de tamaño medio situada entre el ortostato de entrada, que está colocado horizontalmente, y los otros tres que se dispusieron verticales. Es una pieza de menor altura que, al igual que la jamba conservada, está encajada en una fosa abierta en el terreno natural sin llegar a la roca y sin entibación. Su presencia no tiene relación con los aspectos constructivos (Fig. 12.5), de modo que su presencia parece obedecer más bien a razones conceptuales, como señalización o compartimentación simbólica del espacio del corredor.

Se documentó pues al final un desarrollo de 7,50 m., con altura descendente desde la cámara, que estaba integrado en una estructura tumular muy deteriorada cuyas trazas fueron reconocibles en un diámetro máximo de 12,60 m. en el eje mayor (E-O) y una potencia máxima de 1,50 m. desde la roca tras el ortostato 6. Aquí se conservaban cuatro hiladas de piedras graníticas de mediano y pequeño tamaño, colocadas horizontalmente y trabadas con tierra arenosa sin compactar, que alternaban con capas de tierra dispuestas regularmente también en sentido horizontal.

Los materiales arqueológicos encontrados estaban completamente revueltos y procedían de las rebuscas y rebajadas efectuados, concentrándose sobre todo en la confluencia entre cámara y corredor (Fig. 12.5). Había algunas cerámicas a torno y 70 fragmentos a mano, 51 amorros no clasificables y 19 clasificables, además de seis objetos líticos. Las formas cerámicas reconocibles corresponden a cuencos semifírlicos, de paredes enterrantes y en casquete, a un vaso globular de paredes cerradas y a un asa de mamelón. Los líticos son un prisma de cuarzo hialino traslúcido, dos núcleos prismáticos de cuarzo, dos fragmentos de ídolos placa de pizarra y una cuenta de collar pétrea bicónica.

12.3.3. Tapada del Anta

Corresponde al dolmen recogido por Diéquez con el nº 11 (Diéquez, 1976: 36) y al Tapada del Anta I de Bueno (1988:55). Se sitúa sobre una pequeña meseta de 448 m. del altitud ubicada en el la ladera O. de un suave cerro, el entorno presenta afloramientos graníticos y una vegetación de monte bajo que llegaba a semicerrar el sepulcro. Su estado de conservación era totalmente ruinoso, con la cámara rebajada incluso en la roca madre, las bases de los ortostatos desenterradas y éstos totalmente vencidos al interior, mientras por fuera había sido desmontada la estructura tumular y aprovechadas las piedras para majanos. Del corredor solo se apreciaban indicios a la altura de su intersección con la cámara.
Las patologías más importantes afectaban al desplome acusado de los ortostatos 2, 4, 5, y 6, con fisuras graves los 2 y 6, el descalce sobre todo de los 5 y 6, la excavación interior de la cámara, los restos de fuego tanto interiores como exteriores y la fractura de la losa de cubierta caída al interior. Por el exterior, también los desmontes.

Tras el desbroce de la maleza y la retirada de las piedras sueltas, se abrió una zanja perimetral para la recolocación de los ortostatos con sellado de las fisuras del 2 y 5, grapado de los dos trozos que presentaba el 1 y corrección de los desplomes. Se rellenó el interior de la cámara con tierra apisonada y se graparon los trozos de la losa de cubierta, que fue repuesta. Por su parte se limpió y delimitó la trayectoria del corredor, que también estaba arruinado, donde de igual manera se echó una capa de tierra apisonada como en el entorno, aquí con un diámetro de 12 m.

Los trabajos de desbroce, limpieza y consolidación de los elementos permitieron documentar la planta, restituir
Fig. 12.6. Tapada del Anta

J.J. ENRÍQUEZ NAVASCUES, M.J. CARRASCO MARTÍN

parte del alzado y recuperar la fisonomía general del dolmen. Desde el punto de vista morfológico, puede encuadrarse dentro del grupo de dólmenes con cámara poligonal de tendencia circular, corredor largo con dos tramos y atrio (Fig. 12.6). La cámara con siete ortostatos de grandes dimensiones inclinados al interior y apoyados unos en otros, delimita un espacio oval de 4,28 m. en el eje mayor, que es el N-S, y 3,90 m. en el menor, en el E-O. La altura media desde el nivel de entibación se situaba entre 3,80 y 3,54 m. Frente al ortostato de cabecera pero algo desviada respecto a su eje se encuentra la entrada, de 1,5 m. de anchura, a partir de la cual se desarrolla el corredor. Como elemento de intersección se encontró en el lateral N. una pieza vertical de granito rectangular de menor altura que los ortostatos, inserta en una fosa poco profunda del terreno y sin entibación. En el lado S. no se conservaba ni la jamba ni las marcas de inserción al estar esta parte totalmente rebajada.
El corredor mide 5,70 m. de longitud y está organizado en dos tramos de plantas trapezoidales separados por un estrangulamiento de las paredes, conseguido mediante la disposición de los ortostatos finales del primer tramo en sentido perpendicular al eje del dolmen. El primer tramo está integrado por ortostatos mayores que los del segundo, con bloques de refuerzos posteriores en el lateral N., que delimitan un espacio de 3,60 m. de longitud por 1,28 m. de anchura a la altura de su intersección con la cámara. La altura va decreciendo desde el interior hacia el exterior, mientras las paredes tienden a converger produciendo el estrangulamiento de 0,70 m. con el que se marca el inicio del segundo tramo. El número de ortostatos es de tres en el lateral S. y cuatro en el N., con el mismo esquema compositivo en el que las piezas de mayores dimensiones se sitúan en la zona central colocadas longitudinalmente y flanqueadas por otras menores colocadas en sentido vertical. Dentro de este tramo apareció in situ junto al lateral S. una pieza de granito de tamaño medio (0,80 m. de alto por 0,50 m. de ancho por 0,14 m. de grosor) colocada perpendicularmente a la pared con su fosa de encaje abierta en el suelo y que a penas penetraba en la roca (Fig. 12.6). El segundo de los tramos possee ortostatos menores, de los que se conservan cuatro en cada lado insertados verticalmente en fosas poco profundas con elementos de entibación. Su longitud es de 2,10 m., la anchura de 0,86 m. y la altura máxima de 0,80 m. desde la base de los ortostatos. En algunos puntos de este corredor había restos de un suelo formado por tierra amarilla apelmazada, cuyas alteraciones a veces parecen obedecer a agujeros de expolios y rebuscas. Al exterior se abre un pequeño atrió de 1,50 m. de longitud por 2,20 m. de anchura máxima, conformado por bloques graníticos de tamaño mediano (0,60 m. de alto y 0,20 m. de ancho), que por el sur se aprecia como enlaza con el perímetro del túmulo. Respecto a este túmulo, la zanja perimetral abierta tras la cámara para la recolocación de los ortostatos permitió distinguir la composición, que en ese punto era a base de piedras de tamaño mediano sin alineación aparente, trabadas con tierra.

Algunos materiales arqueológicos revueltos aparecieron, sobre todo en la zona exterior correspondiente al atrió (Fig. 12.7). Entre los fragmentos cerámicos, dominan nuevamente los correspondientes a cuencos semiesféricos, pequeños y medianos, en ocasiones con las paredes entrantes, también hay algunos fragmentos que pertenecen a vasos hondos de paredes cerradas y a dos cuencos bajos de paredes cortas. Los objetos de piedra presenta mayor variedad pese a su corto número, en concreto geométricos, puntas de flecha, fragmentos de lascas y láminas, de idólos placa y de pulimentados más una moliadera. Los geométricos corresponden a microlitos trapezoidales de sílex, las puntas de flecha son dos, una de sílex con la base convexa y retoque bifacial que solo cubre una cara y la otra en esquisto, de silueta alargada con base convexa y aletas incipientes y un retoque simple bifacial. Miden 2,8 x 1,5 x 0,4 cms la primera y 3,5 x 1,6 x 0,4 cms. la segunda. Los fragmentos de láminas y lascas son de sílex así como un núcleo pequeño agotado. Por otro lado, dos son claros fragmentos de idólos placa de pizarra y tres los posibles al tratarse de placas pulidas y bien cortadas aunque lisas. Entre los pulimentados dos hachas de sección rectangular solo pulidas en el filo y un cincel igualmente de sección rectangular/trapezoidal con pulimento solo en el extremo distal. Por último una piedra moliadera sobre canto de cuarcita con las superficies patinadas y un rebaje central repiqueteado. Mide 8 x 7,8 x 4 cms.

12.4. ALGUNAS CONSIDERACIONES

El primer aspecto que estas intervenciones han puesto de manifiesto es como todos los dólmenes en que se actuó habían sido objeto de repetidos expolios, a veces con brutales rebajos del terreno y la propia roca (Tapías 1, Huerta Nueva, Tapada del Anta, Lanchas 2), en otras con desmantelamientos (Zafra 2, Corchero, Fragoso etc), voladuras incluso (Palancar) y por supuesto reutilizaciones de diversas maneras como es el conocido caso del uso como chozas (Barca) y cochiqueras (Fragoso, Tapada del Anta), canteras de piedra (Tapías 2, Zafra 2) etc. Como consecuencia de todo ello, salvo en el caso del espacio del depósito de pulimentados de La Miera –solo parcial- y los trozos del suelo conservado del corredor de Tapada del Anta, tanto al interior como al exterior inmediato de estos dólmenes todo estaba revuelto. En ningún lugar se hallaron restos óseos y los elementos de ajuares encontrados estaban fuera de contexto y casi siempre fragmentados, con las excepciones apuntadas.

Pese a ello, estos trabajos, junto al objetivo primordial de los mismos que ya se expuso, han permitido una mejor definición tipológica de algunos de los dólmenes del conjunto, como que los casos de La Miera, El Palancar, Datos 2 o el Cajirón 2 son CCC, mientras Zafra 2 y Tapada del Anta son grandes CCL. Pero más allá de estas cuestiones, desde el punto de vista arquitectónico cabe incidir en la complejidad estructural que en varios casos encierra una aparente simplicidad constructiva. Las propias diferencias no solo de tamaño, sino también de elementos estructurales y simbólicos, es evidente entre dólmenes de tipología básica común como ocurre tanto con los CCC como con los CCL. Ello incide de igual modo en la complejidad de los aspectos simbólicos y también de los territoriales, que ya han puesto de relieve distintas investigaciones, dentro de un marco de integración más amplio que también ha sido objeto de recientes actualizaciones (Bueno, 2000).

Cabe citar en relación a esos aspectos el habitual uso de pizarras como jambas (Fragoso, Cajirón 2 o Lanchas 2) así como la presencia de lajas de ese material en las estructuras tumulares (Huerta Nueva, el mismo Cajirón 2 etc.). También la existencia de molinos de mano partidos en entibaciones sobre todo en las traseras de la cámara (Datos 2, Huerta Nueva, la Miera), la presencia de piedras de cuarzo que ya resaltara Oliveira para todo el Sever (Oliveira, 1997a) o la constatación cada vez más clara de
la existencia de atrios exteriores tanto en grandes como en pequeños sepulcros, con corredores largos o cortos, simples o estructurados (Cajirón 2, Huerta Nueva, la Miera, Tapada del Anta etc.). De igual modo ese octavo ortostato de cierre, como el del Anta de la Marquesa y el de Datos 1, que debió ser más habitual (Oliveira, 1997a: 305). También dentro de los aspectos constructivos hay que resaltar ciertas particularidades, como son los potentes refuerzos exteriores de Datos 1 y sobre todo la colocación en último lugar de los ortostatos 2 y 6 de La Miera.

Interés tiene además la existencia en la zona de algunas plataformas donde hay huellas de extracciones de grandes bloques, de idénticos granitos a los usados en los dólmenes, como son la que dista 50 m. en dirección SO del Cajirón 2 y la que se encuentra junto a Zafra 2, ambas plataformas en declive con negativos y líneas de fractura aprovechando las diaclasas, pero no siempre. Más dudoso es otro punto cercano a Las Datos, con un frente de extracción vertical, de huellas aparentemente más modernas.

Por último, en cuanto a los materiales arqueológicos poco puede precisarse sobre su posición. Salvo los pulimentados de La Miera todo se encontró revuelto aunque a veces con una cierta concentración en la zona exterior al corredor (Datos 1 y Tapada del Anta por ejemplo). En cualquier caso, no contradicen en absoluto ciertas propuestas realizadas al respecto (Bueno, 2000: 63). Por su parte las tipologías de los mismos no aportan grandes novedades en sí ni en sus asociaciones, aunque sí que parece que hay que entenderlos, como recuerda Bueno, en relación con espacios ritualizados, dentro de los cuales esas tipologías apoyan una continuidad ideológica espacio-temporal que incluye al Calcolítico y parece que llega incluso a la E. del Bronce (Bueno et al. 2004).