

# *Large Stones, Sacred Landscapes. Inserting Megalithism within an Analysis of Social Complexity in the Recent*

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## Resumen

En este artículo se describe el marco conceptual para un estudio del megalitismo como fenómeno paisajístico, social e ideológico inserto en el desarrollo de la Complejidad Social durante la Prehistoria Reciente. Este estudio se focaliza en el SW de la Península Ibérica, aunque a efectos de recogida de datos opera más concretamente en un sector de Sierra Morena Occidental, en la provincia de Sevilla. La aproximación seguida se articula en torno a tres grandes ejes o dimensiones de análisis. Una es la territorial (Presencia), donde se considera el megalitismo contra las variables que configuran la economía y los patrones de asentamiento. Otra es la social y simbólico-religiosa (Imanencia), y considera el papel de las construcciones megalíticas dentro de los sistemas de reproducción ideológica que explican y justifican el orden social y cósmico dentro de tales sociedades. La tercera dimensión es la temporal (Permanencia), donde se considera el megalitismo desde la perspectiva de su proyección en el tiempo, es decir, su propia evolución y su articulación dentro de (y con) los paisajes creados por sociedades posteriores, no constructoras de megalitos.

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## Abstract

This paper discusses the conceptual framework for a study of megalithism as a territorial, social and ideological phenomenon inscribed within the development of social complexity in Recent Prehistory. This study focuses on the Iberian SW, although in terms of data collation it operates more specifically in a sector of western Sierra Morena, in the Sevilla province (western Andalusia). The approach proposed is articulated around three main dimensions for the analysis of megalithism. The first deals with the territorial dimension (Presence), whereby megalithic constructions are viewed against the other variables that configure the economy and settlement patterns. The second dimension is the social and symbolic-religious (Immanence), and explores the role of megalithic constructions as part of a system of ideological reproduction aimed at explaining and justifying the natural and social orders. The third dimension (Permanence), examines megalithism from the perspective of its own projection in time, that is to say, in its articulation with funerary and ritual landscape created by later, non megalith-building societies.

### 1. Introduction. Large Ubiquitous Stones.

As a material expression of prehistoric societies, megaliths have traditionally exerted a most powerful and durable fascination in the public. Within the European tradition, popular myths and legends wrapped such formidable constructions in an aureole of mystery that included references to the races of giants capable of building them (Michell, 1982:43-44; Moser, 1998:91-94). Perhaps good evidence of the interest that megalithism rises in contemporary society is the current trend towards the proliferation

of megalithic sites and landscapes adapted for public display. Or perhaps a particularly reliable indicator of the validity of this theme of prehistoric archaeology is the fact that it so consistently and steadily attracts unscientific, esoteric explanations of the past (Feder, 1984:534).

Beyond old or modern legends, the fact remains that the scientific inquiry of megalithism has progressed much in the last few decades, increasingly widening the perspectives of study of this class of prehistoric constructions and leading to the configuration of what currently appears as a fascinating area of archaeological research. Identified in regions of Eurasia (Guilaine, 1999), Africa (Zangato, 1999; Joussaume, 1999), and North America (Silverburg, 1986; Anderson, 1990), in Madagascar (Bloch, 1981), Melanesia (Terrell, 1986; Kirch, 1991) or the Indian subcontinent (Allchin y Allchin, 1982; Moorti, 1994), megalithic constructions display a geographic distribution of planetary (in the most literal sense) character. To this, one must add the fact that they were independently developed throughout a long chronological span (practically between the Vth millennium BC and a few centuries ago), by human communities separated by enormous distances. Hence, it is not surprising that megalithism has become a rather crucial problem in the domain of study that prehistorians refer to as the development of social complexity.

In accordance to such wide chronological and geographic premises, the megalithic phenomenon displays a strong morphological and functional polymorphism, presenting a vast diversity of manifestations. These may range from monolithic statues representing mythical ancestors, to platforms, mounds, stone alignments and circles for ritual

purposes or, most commonly, artificial cavities for the deposition and worship of the dead. The very diversity of chronological, geographical or cultural situations in which prehistoric constructions have been described as megalithic has caused the term to convey a certain degree of ambiguity. In the case of Iberian prehistory, different constructive techniques have been grouped under the notion of megalithic architecture, ranging from relatively simple cyclopean constructions with only a few orthostates (such as small dolmens), to sophisticated tholoi, with chambers erected by corbeling technique. From a functional point of view, despite the morphological and architectural diversity, most constructions could be roughly classified as funerary (the wide majority) or ritual (a far less numerous set of stones circles, menhirs, etc.).

From a general perspective, recent approaches to this bewildering diversity of megalithic constructions have attempted to answer a whole array of new questions and problems, mostly in terms of their social and cultural contexts. In the case of European megalithism, once the problem of the origins (as expressed in the binary opposition diffusionism vs. autochtonism) became less central and the absolute chronologies began to be settled more firmly, the research effort has focused on its functional and symbolic dimensions. Thus, on the one hand, megalithic constructions have increasingly been examined in terms of their implication in the ideological reproduction of the social order of Neolithic and Copper Age societies. On the other hand, they have been analysed as elements marking, identifying and signalling the territoriality of those societies as well as their insertion in the cosmos (i.e. nature and the universe as a whole). The transformation that this field of work has experienced over the last thirty years is rather impressive, with innovative

approaches still coming out regularly - see for example recent interesting research on patterns of sensorial perception inside and around megalithic constructions (Watson & Keating, 1999; Pollard & Gillings, 1998).

What can be said about the particular case of SW Spain, or more precisely of Western Andalucía? Within this geographic framework, the study of megalithic constructions is in fact as old as the discipline itself, appearing already as a central theme in the XIXth century, in what is conventionally considered the first study of the prehistoric archaeology of the region (Góngora y Martínez, 1868). In the first part of the XXth century, the first and most outstanding monuments began to be explored mostly thanks to the impulse given by German scholars settled in Spain (Obermaier 1919; 1924; Leisner & Leisner, 1943; 1949; 1959; Cerdán, Leisner & Leisner, 1952). Since the 1960s, Spanish academics based in local institutions assumed more protagonism in this area of work, and a number of sites were excavated or explored.

Since then, most of the research effort has been addressed to the systematic cataloguing of monuments and grave goods, as well as to the definition of architectural typologies and their sub-regional variations (Cabrero, 1985; 1988; etc.). This has led to a current situation whereby some progress has been made in terms of the recording of the empirical basis. An example of this is the catalogue of megalithic structures of the Sevilla province, produced ten years ago (Barrionuevo & Salas 1991). But in turn, little or no effort has been addressed into examining the available data on the light of those innovative theoretical and methodological approaches to the symbolic and functional nature of megaliths cited

above. In consequence, very little is known about the relationship between megaliths and their landscape or about the role of megalithic constructions in the dynamics of change towards social complexity in the Recent Prehistory of the region. Arguably, this is all the more frustrating, since western Andalucía contains some of the most impressive megalithic constructions (as well as some of the most dense concentrations of them) of the European continent, only matched within the Iberian Peninsula by the formidable megalithic nucleus of the Évora region, in Portugal.

Thus, any attempt to overturn the weight of this tradition and make a move towards the interpretation of the social, territorial and symbolic dimensions of the megaliths of western Andalucía must face important problems concerning the suitability of data beyond the basic listing of the already known sites (not to mention the lack of previous interpretations, along those lines, to draw from). The very chronological framework is seriously impaired by the limited amount of available radiocarbon dates, compared to, for example, the availability of such dates for eastern Andalucía and Southeast Spain (Arribas y Molina, 1984:71; Castro, Lull y Micó, 1996:79 y 88).

The discussion that follows in this paper constitutes the basic pre-design of a conceptual framework for the study of the megalithic landscapes within a particular sector of western Andalucía, the Sierra Norte de Sevilla (Almadén de la Plata), at the western extreme of the Sierra Morena mountain range (Figure 1). This research is based on previous investigations on the development of Social Complexity in the Recent Prehistory of the Iberian Southwest (García Sanjuán, 1998; 1999a; 1999b; etc.). Once it is formulated in a more detailed form, such theoretical design will be refined

and tested against the empirical evidence directly recorded as part of the research. This research design is basically articulated around three dimensions for the study of megalithic constructions and landscapes (Figure 2), which I will refer to as the territorial dimension (Presence), the social and religious-symbolic dimension (Immanence) and the temporal dimension (Permanence).

## 2. Sacred Landscapes. Presence.

The first interpretative dimension under which the western Andalusian megalithic phenomenon needs to be examined involves its spatial nature (territory, landscape). In this sense, megalithic constructions (funerary or otherwise) operate as landmarks and messages in the on-going process of enculturation and socialisation of the landscape (as well as in the competition for the resources contained in it).

Megalithic constructions act as external signs or, to be more precise, signals (Hodder, 1987:2-3) of the legitimacy of the appropriation of the land by the kinship group or community. The megalithic sepulchre provides part of this legitimacy by the immanence of the ancestors (i.e. their continuing presence in this world), who remain (reside) in its interior. In its own present time (in its functional context) the megalith displays a spatial pattern with the settlement and other productive spaces that may surround it, fixing and announcing the presence of the kinship group or community in various ways.

One way is by the visibility of the monument itself. Visual impact can be achieved by morphology and size (menhir, mound; profiles rising above the ground level), prominent topographic positions (Criado & Fábregas, 1989; 1994) as well

as by selecting specific types of rock for its construction, an architectural factor which has been claimed to have a profound symbolic meaning (Tilley, 1994:157). In the case of the Recent Prehistory of the Iberian SW, it has been found that in some cases, boulders and stone slabs were transported up to a few dozen kilometres from the natural outcrops from which they were extracted (Kalb, 1996).

Another way is by the locational position of the monument regarding the catchment and/or influence areas of each community or set of communities (Renfrew, 1973:147-150). Evidence of this pattern of distribution of megalithic constructions has been found in the Iberian SW, both at the level of individual settlements (García Sanjuán, 1999a:251-252) and general territories (Calado, 1997:48).

A third way is by the locational position of the megalithic construction regarding communication routes, meeting or crossing points (Tilley, 1994:109), or regarding seasonal economic routes (Chapman, 1979).

The role of megalithic landmarks as visual signals (spatial indicators) of the community's territoriality is reinforced by other material expressions. It is increasingly suspected that Iberian rock art and megalithic art share, to a certain extent, a code (Bueno y Balbín, 1997:153). Because of their position and visibility, numerous Copper and Bronze Age petroglyphs of the Iberian NW (in many cases associated with megalithic-building communities) have been interpreted as markers of pathways and routes to settlements, or even as territorial demarcations (Bradley, 1998:244). Just like rock art paintings and engravings may have acted as (respectively) tattoos or scarifications to denote the ethnicity or ownership of the landscape, then megalithic monuments (unmovable -

unremovable) connected to them through a similar symbolic code, may have performed a similar function.

Of course, there is little need to insist on the fact that the interpretation of megalithic constructions as enculturating and socialising elements in the landscape requires an archaeology of the settlements. In the last instance, the territoriality (ethnic, economic, symbolic) that megaliths express is a consequence of the mode in which the community (or set of communities) settles across the landscape. This is best represented by the nature of the habitational record itself. Understanding the locational strategies and the relations of functional specialisation and hierarchy between settlements is a pre-condition for achieving a robust understanding of the spatial nature of megalithism. To ignore the articulation between megalithic constructions and the settlement record would simply lead to a (slightly different) repetition of the error the culture-historical paradigm made when giving total priority to the funerary megalith as a simple (and decontextualised) deposit of beautiful artefacts (V. Oliveria Jorge, 1997: 55-56).

## 3. Landscapes of Power, Cosmic Landscapes. Immanence.

(3.1) Material Reproduction. Power and Inequality. In the case of European Prehistory, the construction of megalithic burials and monuments operates as a mechanism of ideological reproduction in societies that have evolved into a sedentary and farming way of life and begin to display the first signs of social hierarchisation (Sherrat, 1990:334). Among the first complex agricultural societies, the construction of ceremonial spaces or monumental burials holds a key ritual and ideological meaning, maintaining and reproducing the very principles of the social order.

In this sense, the adjustment to certain esthetic and symbolic principles which transform the construction and its space in a metaphoric representation of the natural and social orders (see below), must be regarded as a bi-product of a previously existing network of social relations of production.

**T**he social dimension of megalithism is best reflected in the collective burial (not all the burials worldwide that can be described as megalithic are collective, although there usually is a correlation in this direction). Beyond the specificities of space, time, scale or morphology, a common feature of megalithic-building societies seems to be that the megalithic burial is inserted within a twofold social dynamics: competition and rivalry among kinship groups on the one hand (Chapman, 1991:264-265), and co-operation and communalism in the maintenance of the social cohesion on the other (Sherratt, 1995:355).

**T**he collective megalithic burial contains the kinship unit/s (family/ies, lineage/s, clan/s) and reflects the importance of the flow of kinship relationships in the definition of the social order (Wason, 1994:89; Bloch, 1981:138-141), which archaeologically may be susceptible to empirical testing by the study of biological kinship among the buried individuals (e.g. by means of DNA analysis of the skeletal record). The scale, form, construction materials, ritual paraphernalia (objects, grave goods), plus the position in the landscape, are the variables that encapsulate the dynamics of competition and exhibition represented by the ceremonial centres and collective burials of the first European agrarian societies.

**T**he collective megalithic burials which (according to the available chronological evidence) were built between the 4th and 2nd millennia B.C. in the Iberian

SW, acted on the one hand as true deposits of the collective identity (an identity, which, as it has been discussed in the previous section, is shown and signaled across the landscape). On the other hand they acted as metaphoric expressions of the communalist, collectivist and solidary character of the social life. A solidary character which, as trace of an arcane egalitarianism, is in growing tension with the increasingly hierarchical social structure, and which will slowly begin to disappear (in certain regions, not homogeneously) totally during the Bronze Age (García Sanjuán & Hurtado Pérez, 1997).

**A** number of indicators suggest that many collective burials show a tendency towards indifferenciation among the buried, particularly indifferenciation of grave goods, mixture of human remains and invisibility of leaders. In the Iberian SW, Copper Age collective burials (tholoi) like those found at La Pijotilla (Badajoz, Spain), possibly containing up to 200 individuals, show these traits (Hurtado, 1991). Among some communities this tendency may have started to change by the end of the Copper Age, when a slow increase in the emphasis of the leadership becomes more evident. This is seen by way of a growing permissiveness in the material characterisation of certain individuals in the funerary ritual which will eventually lead to individual burials.

**T**his development of a symbolic language of inequality and power within the megalithic burial occurs when certain micro-spaces and sets of objects are reserved for certain individuals inside the funerary container. In other words, it occurs when the status of some individuals within the community becomes prominent enough as to break the traditional communal ideology and appear clearly stressed in the funerary ritual. A further set of indicators,

which may be potentially linked to the process of representation of the social hierarchy inside the megalithic tombs, but which are still poorly understood, are the engravings or sculpture-like stones (anthropomorphic stelae, statues-menhir) found in some of the tombs. In most cases they lack personal attributes of prestige or power, which is in sharp opposition with the pattern observed in the Bronze Age, when weapons become the main (or only) focus of the funerary symbolism. In some specific cases, the anthropomorphic representations associated with megalithic burials do seem to be accompanied by prestige items. In western Andalucía, such representations with prestige items have been recently identified at the dolmens of El Pozuelo (Bueno y Balbín, 1997:157), Alberite (Bueno y Balbín, 1996) and El Toconal (Rodríguez, 1990:35).

**T**hese representations suggest perhaps incipient forms of tension between the communal and the individual. Are these anthropomorphic stelae symbolic representations of specific individuals acting as leaders with an increasingly militaristic profile? Or do they represent a more abstract idea, concerning kinship totems or ancestors as it has been suggested (Barceló, 1991)?

**R**egardless of the rhythm and scope of each group or community's trajectory towards social hierarchisation, megalithism as a material phenomenon represents for two thousand years the (apparent) inmutability and durability of a certain social order. A social order, in which communalism and collectivism are the pillars of the network or social relations of production. A social order that, at the same time, is being subject to the pressure of change. Not surprisingly, during the second quarter of the 2nd millennium BC (uncalibrated) megalithism as a material phenomenon

will slowly disappear of the Iberian SW as the communalist way of life gives way to a social order increasingly traumatised by violence and inequality. A different social order in which the leadership becomes increasingly more visible, as well as more militaristic in character, and where the communal effort requested by the large stones can no longer be assembled.

### (3.2) Ideological Reproduction.

**Cosmvision.** Megalithic constructions not only gain their meaning as part of an specific social order. There are many rational indications of their importance as active elements in the process of interpretation and cultural assimilation of the cosmic and natural orders. Numerous megalithic monuments (funerary and otherwise) convey a strong symbolic component as cosmic (and possibly cosmogonic) focal points, thus suggesting their importance in relation to the astral landscape. Evidence such as recurrent orientation patterns has been found both in the European continent (Patrick, 1974; Heggie, 1981; Ruggles & Clive, 1984; etc.) and in the South of the Iberian Peninsula (Hoskin, Allan y Gralewski 1994; 1995a; 1995b).

**A**ny attempt towards an emic approach of megalithic constructions and landscapes in terms of their cosmological dimension must take into account, apart from astronomic orientation, other variables that may be indicative of a deliberate symbolic connection between the material reality and the supernatural (the present connected with the atemporal). As it has been said in many occasions, the architectonic morphology of several megalithic burials strongly suggests a symbolism related to the womb of the earth and/or the primordial cavern to which the bodies are returned after death. In reference to the first of these two elements, it is relatively frequent in European megalithism to find bodies being deposited in a foetal position.

Let us take a classic example of western Andalusia, the Dolmen de Soto (Trigueros, Huelva). Here, the excavator reported that the bodies had appeared forced into a foetal position (possibly tied he stressed) and accompanied by food offerings, tools and ornaments (Obermaier, 1924). The objects with which the bodies were buried strongly suggest a system of beliefs whereby the dead travelled to another life (perhaps to another world), or were possibly to return to this world. The deliberate foetal position (which in western Andalusia is also observed among Bronze Age, non megalith-building communities) suggests, nevertheless, the notion of a rebirth from the womb (where human babies grow and are formed in the foetal position) once again to this world, a notion implicit in the yearly agricultural cycle, and widely observed among many primitive farming societies (Taylor, 1996:152, 183-185).

Other classes of evidence point towards the existence of a symbolic system of sexual and reproductive character, of which megalithic constructions were part. This symbolic system would have been part of a religious ideology deeply rooted in the realities of material

production (agricultural economy). One of the most often quoted examples of such beliefs system are the small figurines (referred to in the bibliography as idols) with eye-like representations. In Iberia they appear most frequently in Copper Age funerary and habitational sites - although conceptually they date back to the Neolithic (Bosch & Estrada, 1994). These representations have been discussed as evidence of a possible cult of a female deity of fertility (agricultural) and/or of death (Almagro Gorbea, 1974; Hurtado, 1978, 1980). Although at present this interpretation of such idols is not entirely devoid of important problems (Chapman, 1991:61), the insertion of a notion of agricultural fertility within Copper Age societies should not be ruled out altogether. Those figurines seem to become more widespread precisely at a time (c. middle 3rd millenium non calibrated BC) when some human communities began to experience a process of intensification and expansion of their farming productive capacity.

Another piece of evidence suggesting a possible symbology of sexual character is the existence of certain representations of fallic character situated at the

entrance of certain megalithic tombs (Bueno and Balbin, 1994:343). The second symbolic element evoked by the megalithic burial (in this case by the architectural morphology) is the cavern, a sacred place in many primitive cultures. At the same time as funerary megaliths were being erected and used, certain natural caves were being used for the disposal (and perhas the cult) of the dead. Of this there is evidence in the northern Portugal (Oosterbeek, 1993) and also in western Andalusia (Perez, Cruz-Auñon and Rivero, 1990:26). Of course, communities settled in different environments and with specific cultural traditions, may have held different beliefs and practised different burial customs, some burying their dead in real caves whilst others were building megaliths. Not even the social factor can be ruled out to account for this variability. However, the apparent spatial proximity and coetaneity of both funerary norms, plus the fact that rock art appears in caves and rock shelters contemporary to megaliths (both somehow frequently sharing a symbolic code), strongly suggests that, in any case, a notion of the cave as a sacred place did exist.

Perhaps the cave was being consciously commemorated as the primordial habitat of the ancestors. Even if searching for an explanation of why caves were regarded sacred places is considered too wildly speculative, the fact remains that two elements as clearly and firmly associated with the beliefs system of Neolithic and Copper Age societies as were rock art and the cult of the dead, appear both in natural caves and in megaliths.

Therefore, in its immanent dimension, megalithic architecture provides symbolic referents on a grand scale: a sort of a cultural anchorage in the universe (astral landscape, agricultural cycles) and in time (generations upon generations occupying the same territory, living, dying and being re-born on the same land). The tension between the earth as a constant provider of biological and material reproduction, and the sepulchre as deposit of social and cultural identity (Figure 3) appears to form the backbone of the cosmivision of the megalith-building communities of Neolithic and Copper Age SW Iberia in general, and of western Andalucía in particular.

#### 4. Landscapes in Time. Permanence.

The third of the suggested dimensions of analysis for this study examines the temporal projection of megalithic constructions, considering its power of permanence through social, cultural and ideological change. It has been observed that during the timespan in which megalithism developed in SW Iberia, the morphological and functional evolution of constructions was accompanied by various forms of re-utilisation (S. Oliveira Jorge, 1990: 165; S. Oliveira Jorge y V. Oliveira Jorge, 1997:140). In other words, although the constructive techniques, morphological and design preferences

(and even the utilisation patterns) may have changed in time, there is strong evidence that the symbolic and cultural value of the monuments remained unaltered throughout several generations.

Furthermore, it has been observed that this survival of the symbolic value of megalithic constructions in time goes even beyond the very dusk and end of megalithism as a cultural phenomenon. Long after they ceased to be built, megalithic burials were still exerting a role as sacred places, providing a background of special significance for, at the very least, the disposal and worship of the dead (Sherratt, 1990:338). In the Iberian SW this is suggested by the parasitic utilisation of such burial grounds for individual burials during the Bronze Age, as it occurs for example at Las Canteras, in the province of Seville (Hurtado & Amores, 1984), and in Colada de Monte Nuevo, in Badajoz (Schubart, 1973). Even though the transition towards the Bronze Age at the end of the 3rd millenium cal BC (first quarter of the 2nd millenium not calibrated BC) seems to represent a sharp change in the system of predominant beliefs (in relation to the progression towards a much more hierachical pattern of social relations of production), megaliths, already outside their original social context, are still re-used for funerary purposes.

An interesting analogy to this particular phenomenon can be taken from Easter Island. There, long after the monumental moai statues and their temples had been knocked down (because of the conflicts that followed the progressive ecological deterioration and demographic overgrowth of the island), they were being used for funerary purposes, even though the dynamics of clan competition, of which the carving and erection of the

moai was an inherent part, had ended (Kirch, 1984:276).

The spatial variability of megalithic burials with those which are not intrinsically synchronic, acquires, therefore, a special significance in the interpretation of the evolution of social complexity within Recent Prehistory. Mostly because, in some cases, the permanence of megalithic constructions and landscapes may extend throughout truly long periods of time. At the site of El Gandul, in the province of Sevilla (and of which the above mentioned Las Canteras tholos is part), the funerary landscape defined by the megalith-building communities maintains its central functionality and character down through the Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman times. This an specially remarkable case of a landscape that, because of its association to some large stones, assumed a sacred character for more than two thousand years.

#### 5. Landscapes of Complexity. A Final Remark.

As it was said at the beginning of this paper, the discussion presented here is only intended as a description of the rationale behind a research project in its preparatory stages. Some colleagues may find such declarations of principles rather risky, which is partly understandable because premises and objectives may reasonably change in the course of any research. The settings advanced here, however, do not presuppose or anticipate conclusions of any kind, despite the fact that, since this work is based on a long-standing programme of research dealing with Copper and Bronze Age societies in SW Iberia, it would have been relatively easy to put forward a number of fairly well founded predictive postulates.

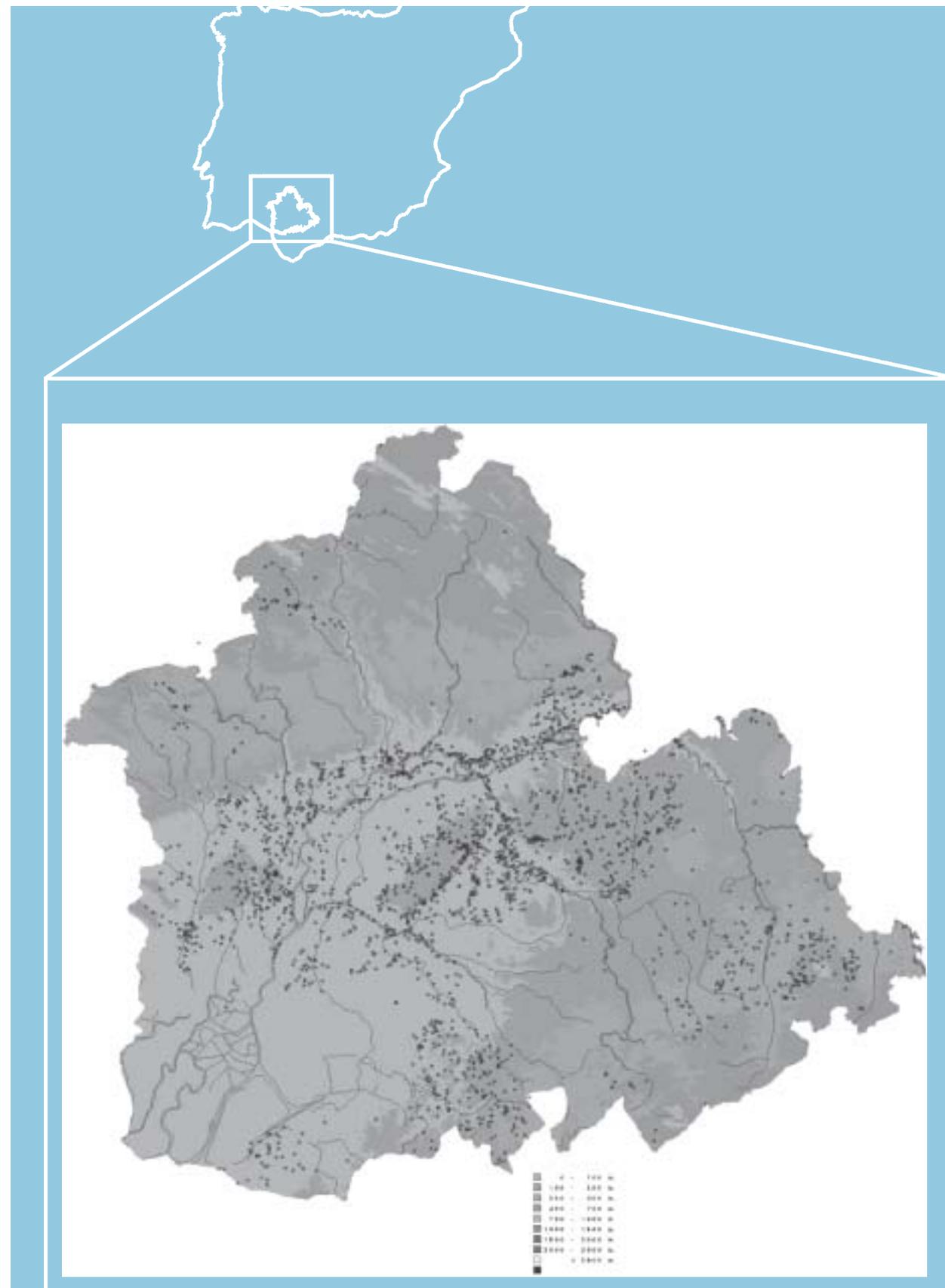
Stating the framework of thought for this approach to megalithic constructions and landscapes is important for two reasons. Firstly, this

particular research is viewed and understood as part of a vastly wider scientific problem, namely the study of the causes and development of social complexity. This is a field of study where conceptual notions and empirical indicators are not always provided with clear-cut meanings, and therefore the explicit definition of the categories utilised is far from trivial. Most of the megalithic sites to be investigated in this particular research constitute funerary material which is contemplated as a set of highly qualified indicators for the analysis of social complexity. I depart from the observation that a recurrent feature among prehistoric societies is the utilisation of the material dimension of the funerary ritual to express social organisation (estatus, inequalities), thus confirming the universal tendency to isomorphism between the funerary ritual and the social structure (Binford, 1972:235; Huntington & Metcalf, 1991:37). There may be exceptions to this general rule, but the consistency of the correlation between the funerary investment of labour and energy and the social status of the deceased (individual, kinship unit, community) is such, that by measuring differences in the material dimension of the ritual (funerary architecture, deposits, grave goods, spatial distribution) it is in fact possible to obtain a measurement of the extent of social inequalities (Wason, 1994:84; Bard, 1994:30). Likewise, the study of funerary and ritual landscapes may be used as a proxy variable of the territorial expressions of those inequalities. This is a main concern in this research.

The second reason why the explicit discussion of this research framework for the study of megalithic constructions and landscapes is important is less epistemological, and more of a practical order. This area of work in the context of western Andalucía is clearly

lagging behind in theoretical terms. So far, local research has not responded to the questions posed by the new

approaches to the subject. Therefore, a special effort is required to phrase the study of this old subject in a more challenging manner



Sevilla Province. Archaeological Sites  
(Square corresponds to the Almadén de la Plata Sector)

DIMENSIONS FOR THE ANALYSIS OF A MEGALITHIC LANDSCAPE		
DIMENSION		VARIABLES
<b>PRESENCE</b> <i>Territoriality</i>	<b>Inter-Group Dimension</b> Synchronic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☐ Signalling Visibility</li> <li>☐ Morphology. Size</li> <li>☐ Topography</li> <li>☐ Rocks (orthostats)</li> <li>☐ Signalling Code (rock art &amp; megalithic art)</li> <li>☐ Land Appropriation. Location               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☐ Catchment and Production Area</li> <li>☐ Transhumance and communication routes</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☐ Morphology. Comparative cost: size, scale.</li> <li>☐ Disposal patterns</li> <li>☐ Differentiation/Indifferentiation.</li> <li>☐ Representations</li> </ul>
<b>IMMANENCE</b> <i>Reproduction</i>	<b>Material Production. Power and Inequality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☐ Orientation</li> <li>☐ Morphology. Metaphoric value</li> <li>☐ Disposal patterns.</li> <li>☐ Foetal Position. Death and re-birth</li> </ul>
	<b>Ideological Reproduction. Cosmivision</b>	
<b>PERMANENCE</b> <i>Temporal Projection</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☐ On-going re-utilisation of burials.</li> <li>☐ Later Parasitic Bronze Age burials.</li> <li>☐ Definition of sacrality.</li> </ul>
<b>Intra-Group Dimension</b> Synchronic		

Figura 2

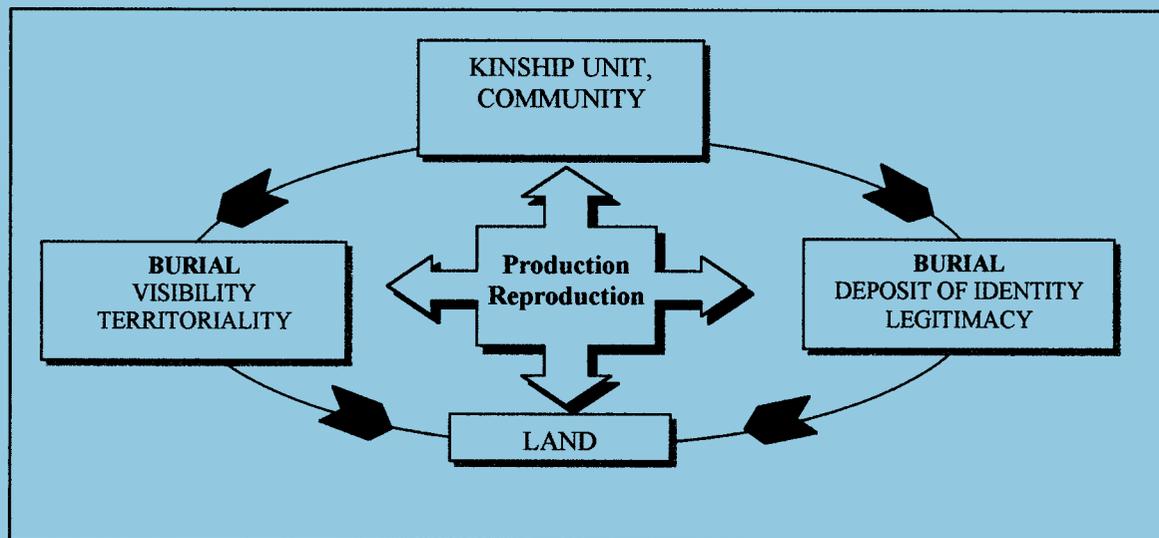


Figura 3

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