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# 08

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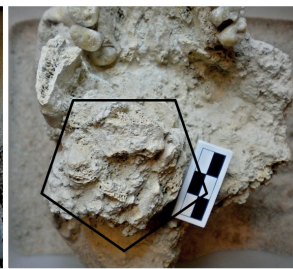
Sitio de los Dólmenes de Antequera  
Patrimonio Mundial desde 2016

Antequera Dolmens Site  
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Corredor de Viera desde el interior de la cámara funeraria.  
Photo: Miguel A. Blanco de la Rubia.



# STELES, TIME AND ANCESTORS IN THE MEGALITHS OF ANTEQUERA, MÁLAGA (SPAIN)

Primitiva Bueno Ramírez, Rodrigo de Balbín Behrmann and Rosa Barroso Bermejo<sup>1</sup>

*To Rosa Enríquez Arcas. In memory.*

## Abstract:

The study of the Menga and Viera megalithic orthostats has led to the discovery of reused steles and fragments. This has been achieved through specific protocols, focusing on analysing engravings and paintings. The new evidence about the study of the installation, re-installation and insertion of the stones at these two sites situate the Antequeran megaliths within a wider dynamic. The transport and fragmentation of stones is thought to be one of the principal characteristics of the construction of large Atlantic monuments. The chronology of these dolmens demonstrates the continuity of this system as part of the building ritual of these tombs during the whole construction sequence of megalithic monuments. Further evidence is known at emblematic sites along the European Atlantic façade. Menga and Viera are the final outcome of elaborate systems of stone monument transformations, whose initial formula was based on large sculpted anthropomorphic representations.

**Keywords:** Megaliths, Stele, Menhir, Megalithic art, Neolithic, Chalcolithic.

## ESTELAS, TIEMPO Y ANCESTROS EN LOS MEGALITOS DE ANTEQUERA, MÁLAGA (ESPAÑA)

### Resumen:

El estudio de los soportes de los dólmenes de Menga y Viera mediante protocolos específicos orientados a analizar posibles grabados y pinturas, ha dado como resultado el hallazgo de estelas y fragmentos de estelas reutilizadas. La instalación, reinstalación e inserción de estas piezas en los dos monumentos cuyo estudio tenemos más avanzado, sitúa los megalitos antequeranos en la dinámica de traslado y fragmentación de piezas que caracteriza la construcción de los grandes monumentos atlánticos. La cronología de los malagueños concreta la continuidad de este sistema como parte del ritual constructivo de estas sepulturas a lo largo de toda la secuencia constructiva del megalitismo, lo que dispone de evidencias en otros emblemáticos sitios de la fachada atlántica europea. Menga y Viera constituyen la imagen final de procesos elaborados de transformación de monumentos de piedra cuya fórmula inicial se basa en grandes representaciones escultóricas de carácter antropomorfo.

**Palabras clave:** Megalitismo, Estelas, Menhires, Arte Megalítico, Neolítico, Calcolítico.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Several studies published about the graphic discourse in the dolmens at Antequera form part of a wider project aiming to determine patterns in the location, transport and transformation of the decorated stones associated with the development of megalithism in the southern Iberian Peninsula. Our objective is currently to compare the results obtained in this region with data from monuments on the Atlantic seaboard in order to analyse the forms of interaction between Western Europe megalithic monuments through the materialisation of symbology on the large stones in the tombs.

Several factors have to be borne in mind when addressing this project. They include the relationship between the raising of the large stones and other graphic expression in the territory of farming and metallurgical groups in southern Iberia (Bueno *et al.*, 2004a, 2006, 2013a, 2014a, 2014b) and the insertion of these processes in the system of building tombs (Bueno *et al.*, 2013b, 2016a). Antequera in particular and Iberian megalithism in general have become clear points of reference for an understanding of graphism in Late Prehistory of Europe and its role in the areas occupied by the megalith builders. Its presence in territories marked since the Upper Palaeolithic reveals a diachronic dimension to the formulation of complex ways of defining, using and identifying the fertile land in the valleys, within which tradition was one of the ideological arguments to make control over them explicit (Bueno, 2009; Bueno *et al.*, 2009a).

This paper focuses on proposing hypotheses to analyse the building sequences in the large Antequeran monuments, through the presence, position and study of steles and menhirs. These stones are evidence of phases prior to the present situation of the dolmens in the same way as at other megalithic sites in Europe. The rebuilding events to be described are supported by the documentation of previous structures underneath the tumuli of Menga and Viera, including radiocarbon dates (Aranda Jiménez *et al.*, 2013; Lozano *et al.*, 2014). This is very convincing evidence that is rarely found at European sites of the same kind. The relationship of possible open-air structures or old megaliths in which the large stones would have played an important part before being inserted in the megaliths subsumes the dolmens at Antequera in the elaborate social

processes documented at other megalithic sites on the Atlantic seaboard, visible in the sculpted images that have reached our days.

A complex history on Menga hill, similar to that at other European megalithic sites that acted as depositories of the remembrance of ancestors (O'Sullivan *et al.*, 2013), most closely correlates with the evidence presented here.

## 2. MEGALITHIC ART AS A BIOGRAPHY OF THE MEGALITHIC MONUMENTS

The idea that research on graphic activity is on the sidelines of the overall study of these populations has exerted a significant influence in recent prehistory (Bueno and Balbín, 2009). Some of the teams working on megaliths do not consider it necessary to include specialists on graphic representations and this is harmful not only for a desirable hypothetical full documentation but patently also for the conservation of the engravings and paintings. Recent cases at Antequera itself illustrate this, as the paintings at Menga, which were evidently poorly preserved, were erased almost completely when the site was last cleaned (Carrera, 2009: 240). This contrasts with research in which a prior study of the orthostats has succeeded in making positive identifications, as in the recent work at the dolmen in Soto, Huelva. There, a prior study to identify pigments before Cresarte carried out restoration work (Unpublished report of the Delegation of Culture in Huelva 2012; Bueno *et al.*, 2014c) revealed artificial colouring (red, white and black), which was protected when the orthostats were cleaned.

From the point of view of the study of rituals, the demonstration of several operations on the stones is extremely important information to be able to interpret the "biography" of the monuments. Protocols applied to the study of each of the stones, regarded as a panel, have succeeded in detecting evidence of individualised work (Bueno *et al.*, 2007); deliberate cuts that attest the inclusion of fragmented material (L'Helgouach, 1983; Le Roux, 1984; Briard, 1993; Scarre, 2009), and engravings that were re-carved, changed or moved from other places (Shee, 1981; Bailloud *et al.*, 1995; Bradley, 1997; Mens, 2008; Bueno *et al.*, 2009b), or re-painted (Carrera and Fábregas, 2002; Carrera, 2009; Bueno *et al.*, 2009c, 2015a). One of our objectives is to



contribute data to the “biography of the stones”. Their individualised analysis is vital to be able to reconstruct each of the events in which these stones participated and the architecture in which they were inserted; from their selection and shaping to their decoration and installation in their foundation and then to their maintenance throughout their use (Bueno *et al.* 2015 b, 2015c; Laporte *et al.*, 2017).

All these observations derive directly from the protocols applied to the study of the depictions in megalithic monuments. This approach is therefore a fundamental parameter in the documentation of the actions of reuse, maintenance and transformation of the funerary structures. Data obtained so far in the Iberian Peninsula confirm that the quantitative level of this kind of evidence increases when protocols aimed at documenting it are implemented. Thus, in contrast with the traditional interpretation of recycled elements exclusively in the Bretagne areas (Migdley, 2013), it can now be considered that such events were equally common in the Iberian Peninsula. The same types of protocols are beginning to provide similar results at other Atlantic megalithic sites (Hensey and Robin, 2011).

The megaliths we see today are the final outcome of a sequence of transformation, maintenance and rebuilding (Laporte, 2010). Interpretations with a testable basis in the protocol for the analysis of

the decorations in monuments have yielded data that would have been unimaginable for this kind of assessment only a short time ago. This dynamic hypothesis regarding the large constructions is beginning to determine points of reference in a large part of the structures that have been studied in depth. This is the case of the Antequeran dolmens. Although the graphic documentation has not been fully completed, the evidence so far obtained in Menga and Viera have revealed the major role of the reuse of the oldest stones in their constructions. We also suspect that stones were reused in Romeral, as indicated by the menhir fragments cited in other studies.

Similarly, the system of the preparation of stones in both monuments and the decorative applications relate the two structures very closely, and this leads to a necessary reflection on the possible source of the large steles that were used to create the dolmens of Menga and Viera as we see them today (Fig. 1).

### 3. RECUPERATING PASTS: THE CASE STUDIES OF MENGA AND VIERA

Our team’s research has not been able to adjust to a continuous period of study due to administrative issues. We began by documenting the stones in Menga dolmen, including the identification of

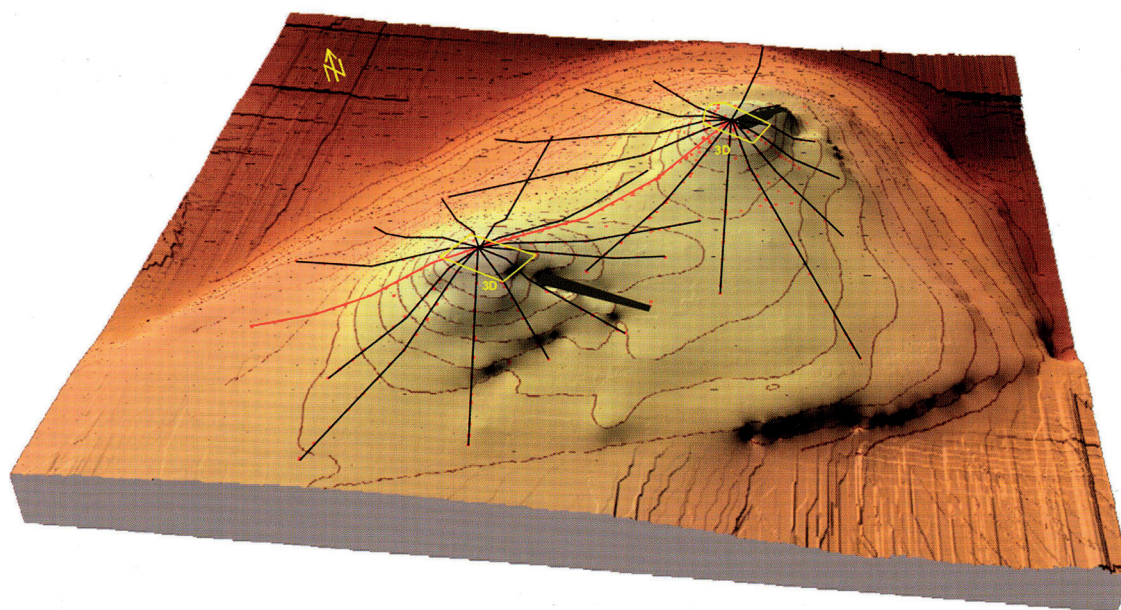


Fig. 1. 3D reconstruction with contour lines of Viera and Menga “twins” tumuli from J. A. Peña Ruano y T. Teixidó Ulloa, 2009:172.

pigments with an X-ray fluorescence tube. This achieved the first analytical confirmation, in addition to the photographic evidence that had already been obtained, of complex pictorial applications in the dolmen (Bueno *et al.*, 2008, 2009a, forthcoming). The next phase of our work at Menga is aimed at working with the original photographs in order to obtain restituted images, from which copies of the depictions will be made. Work still needs to be done, but the interpretation that can currently be made suggests a complex process of the movements of stones in which these each play an individual role, in addition to their evident collective role as they were brought together to create a single monument.

Data from Viera helps to understand the events documented on the Menga stones. The orthostats are preserved better and their surfaces can be used more easily to reconstruct the successive stages, from old steles with motifs in relief with large red-painted zigzags, accompanied by large horizontal series of triangles, also in red, to the successive layers of white, red and black layers that indicate their maintenance throughout the time in which the two structures were in use.

Chamber, ante-chamber and passage, with different heights and widths, are the components of both monuments. The proportions in Viera are smaller in total height, but not so different in length: 21 m in Viera and 27.5 m in Menga. In the latter structure, the different spaces are clearly larger. However, despite its greater proportions, it seems that Menga does not have a passage, which agrees with the data obtained in the excavation of the access area.

The geology in Viera is very homogeneous, as most of the stones are of calcarenite in the foreshore phase. This type of rock is also found in Menga, but other types of calcarenite indicate that the raw materials for this monument came from other sources. Geological evidence of the same type is concentrated in an area near the dolmens, between Los Remedios district and Santa Cruz Hill (Carrión *et al.*, 2009). This was therefore a quarrying area in common to the two monuments.

The chamber in Viera is easily differentiated. It is an enclosed space with its access through a quite small door where it is necessary to stoop. The stone was carved after it had been used as a stele. The decoration on the stele has clearly been cut through

on both faces and the door was carved by centring on the fragment of stele that is still preserved (Bueno *et al.*, 2013b: 260). Its preparation as a door included painting red and black stripes that can still be seen on some of its corners, especially on the side facing the interior of the chamber. The image of some Mediterranean monuments with a perforated access door made from a stone that had previously been a stele is very revealing as regards our hypothesis about the Viera chamber door (Fig. 2).

The door carved in a similar way in the open passage is larger, both in the height of the stone itself and in the opening. However, it is noticeably thinner. It was also decorated with paint (Fig. 3).

The type of work needed to create these doors can be identified in Orthostat 2 at Menga. Vertical stone carving shaped the side of what might have been the start of the same kind of working. It also resembles the Bobadilla stele, perhaps the mobile part of a carved stone (Bueno *et al.*, 2009a). Its reuse is convincing: the stone is fragmented. It is possible that Menga had a carved door in its outer access that was restructured at some time in its use. Indeed, the position of this stone would coincide with that of a possible threshold. Another explanation may be the reuse of this stone, taking it from another tomb. Some sculpted preparations of hypogea in Alcaide necropolis (Berdichewsky, 1964; Giménez Reyna, 1954) support this relationship. The closest example to our idea is the door of Hypogea 14 (Tovar *et al.*, 2014). The proximity of the hypogea on Marimacho Hill (González *et al.*, 2014) would facilitate this transport, but in fact, no doors of this type have been documented at its necropolis (Fig. 4).

In Viera, the ante-chamber is defined by four stones, two on each side, contiguous to the chamber, while the start of the first section of the passage is shown by the decrease in height and lesser intensity in decoration. The second section of the passage begins in the modern door and is again identified by the difference in height and the presence of stones that are different from those in the rest of the tomb. They tend to be rectangular but narrower than those in the interior, and their surfaces are full of cupmarks. These are mostly natural, but artificial marks were added in order to create circles, lines and zigzags. It is even possible that some of these stones only display artificial cupmarks that “copy” the natural forms on the stones in the rest of the passage (Bueno





Fig. 2. Above: outside and inside view of the stele used to excavate the entry of Sa Coveccada's megalith (Sassari, Sardinia). Below: perforated door's obverse and reverse at Viera' chamber. Upper and lateral cuts show the reuse of a bigger stele for this specific space. Photographies by R. de Balbín.

*et al.*, 2013b: 257). In contrast, the old outer door was fitted on a stone of the same kind as those inside the monument, better worked and smooth, as well as prepared with a vertical groove, probably carved with chisels with a narrow straight edge, which may have held a wooden door. Part of this passage was

also covered but, as mentioned above, it formed a different section of the access to the monument. The standard of engraving in this section is noticeably higher than in the inner sections, and the most frequent techniques employed were pecking and abrasion (Bueno *et al.*, 2013b: 260) (Fig. 5).





Fig. 3. Viera's view from the sculpted door. Photography by R. de Balbín.



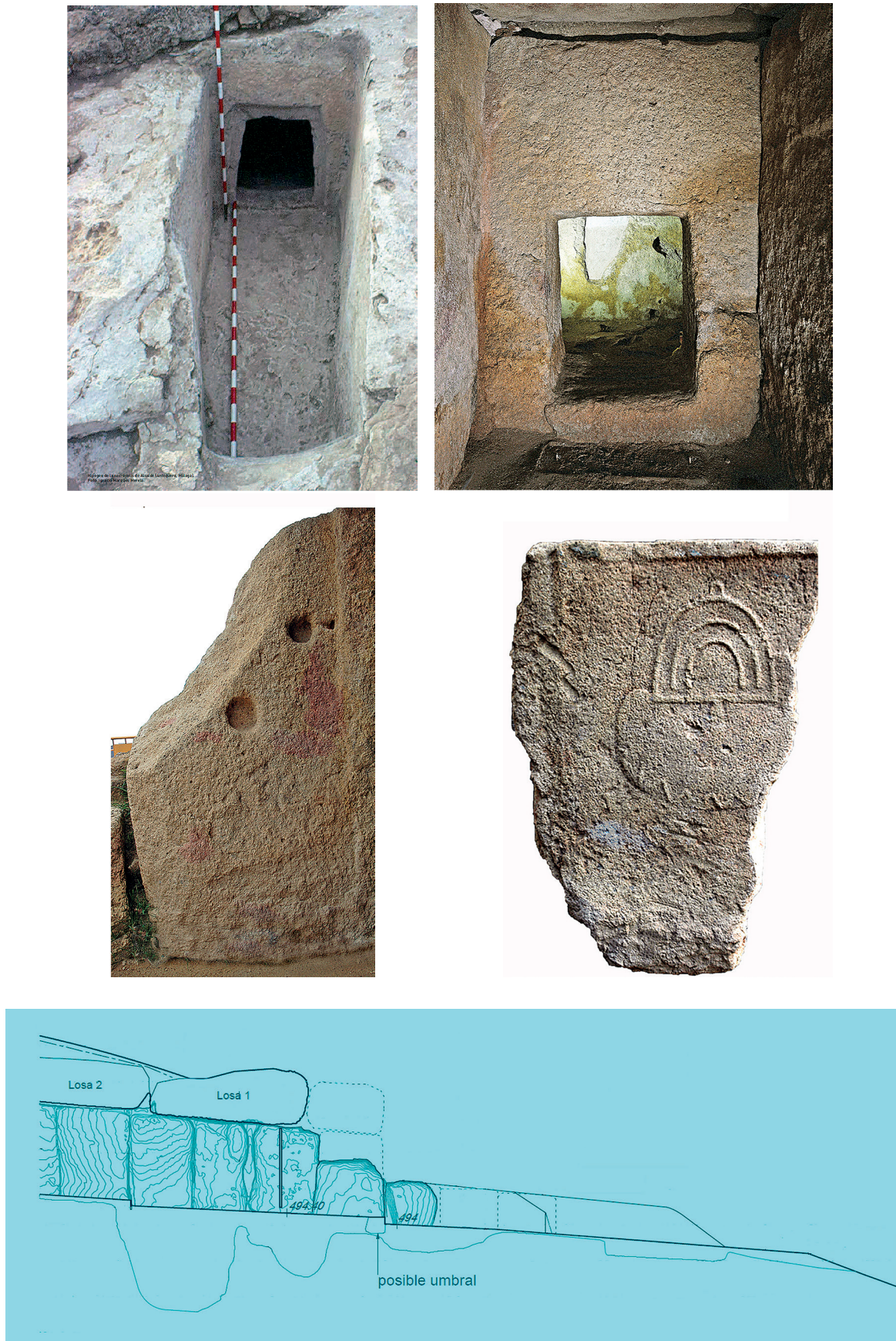


Fig. 4. Hypogeum's 14 door from the Alcaide's necropolis [Tovar *et al.*, 2014:122]; entrance door from Viera's chamber; orthostat 2 from Menga and Bobadilla's stele. Photographies by R. de Balbín. Menga's dolmen elevation with possible doorstep by J. R. Menéndez de Luarda and P. Soler.



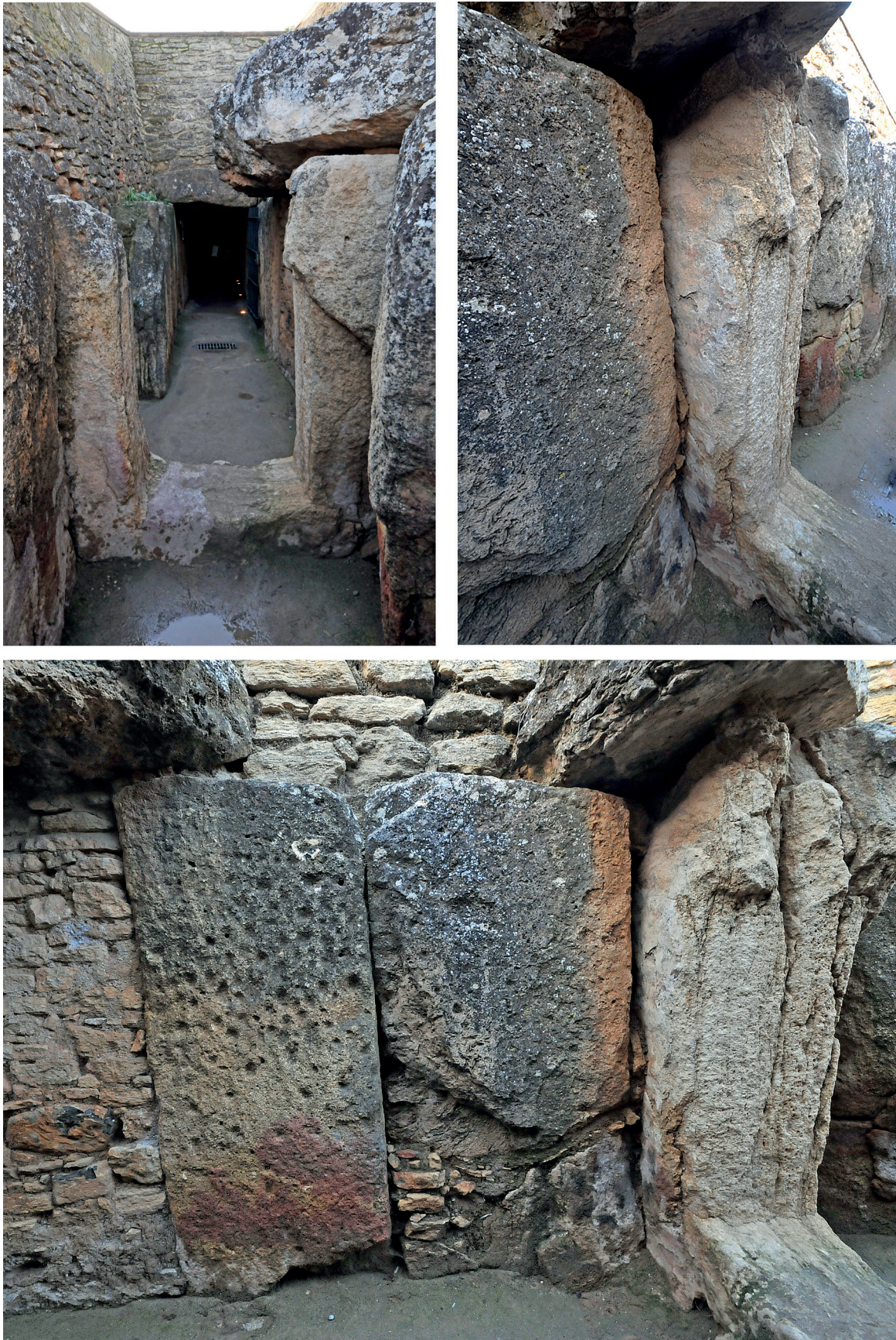


Fig. 5. Detail of the sculpture in the corridor's door and its coloured stucco still visible. Photography by R. de Balbín.



The paint that still remains on many of these stones shows that their outer surfaces resemble those in the rest of the monument. Evidence of lime and rows of triangles filled in red are especially common, together with well-conserved remains of “stucco” on the inner door, consisting of a white undercoat with red and probably black paint on top, quite similar to the decoration on the door to the chamber.

The stones in the chamber and ante-chamber best preserve painted decoration. The only motif, apart from geometric patterns, is anthropomorphic and resembles the forms detected in the famous engravings at the entrance to Menga (Orthostat 3) and in other monuments in the region (Maura *et al.*, 2006)

(Fig. 6). The red figure was painted on a delimited surface on the stone, which had been smoothed previously. The technical sequence was identical to the one recently identified by our team in the production of painted figurative motifs in Soto Dolmen (Huelva).

Among the geometric motifs, two types of application can be appreciated, as already explained: a deep red colour over lines of zigzags in relief, which are known to belong to an earlier phase because the engravings are usually cut through on the outer edges of the stones. Good examples are the stones in the door of the chamber, on the inner and outer faces, or the upper part of Stone 14 in the ante-chamber.



Fig. 6. Red painted anthropomorphous in orthostat 11 at Viera's dolmen. Photography by R. de Balbín.





Fig. 7. Adverse, reverse and detail of the top of Menga's Pillar 2. Serrated outline's around the Pilar are visible, together with a cut in the upper section. Photographies by R. de Balbín.





Fig. 8. Frontal slab of the chamber. It has been prepared to have a pointed end in the left lateral and a rounded finish lower section. Photography by R. de Balbín.

Other engravings are found on the old stones. These are narrower and rounder kinds of relief than can be seen particularly well on the outer face of the door but which also appear on its inner face and on other stones. They usually form geometric motifs in rows, including wavy lines and zigzags. The sun in the upper part of the outer face of the chamber door is the only example known so far of ideographic motifs produced with this technique.

This same type of relief is also found on some stones in Menga, especially on Pillars 1 and 2, in this case within the range of geometric patterns of zigzags and wavy lines. Their sides and the upper parts display irregular cuts in a surface that had been shaped previously, and these produce a very striking toothed profile (Fig. 7). The technique was very similar to the one documented on the Bobadilla stele. Of particular interest is the smoothing of the areas in relief, which created a special quality to the raised surfaces, and this effect is seen in the best conserved motifs in Viera, such as in the case of the sun (vide Fig. 4).

This interpretation of cut stones matches the results of the formal study of the stones in Viera ante-

chamber, where some of the upper surfaces were cut back obliquely, as also seen in the stones in the chamber. This has been interpreted as evidence of the fragmentation of larger stele. With their pointed upper parts, tending towards triangular shapes, these stones would have been “decapitated” when they were broken up. The conjunction of oblique cuts on the left and right sides (always on one of them, never on both sides of the same orthostats) may show that two stones may once have formed part of the same original stone.

It is more difficult to make the same kind of observations in Menga, although some evidence suggests that large steles were included in the monument. This may be the case of Orthostat 10, cut through on the top right by some abrupt blows that reveal a semi-circular head through the volumes obtained. However, the clearest work is seen in the headstone that was noticeably cut and smoothed on its left side. The original stele was placed on its side with the top towards Orthostat 11 and three-quarters of it is visible. The other part of it is fragmented or was fitted in the hole where the headstone was placed (Fig. 8).





Fig. 9. Upper section of the entrance door from Viera's chamber. It can be appreciated the cutback of the support as well as the lime covering of the chamber. Photography by R. de Balbín.

As noted some time ago, and as we now know, the capstones in Viera display evidence of old red paint, at least in the ante-chamber. The cover of the chamber has notable remains of lime on the inside. The exceptional fact that they can be seen in the gap between the frame of the chamber door and the cover shows that this layer of lime is old (Fig. 9). It was applied before the chamber capstone was placed in its present position. Therefore, rather than a capstone in Viera, it is a reused stele. The sequence of red paint and the application of lime can be seen on other stones, especially in the ante-chamber. It is hoped that the continuation of our research will provide graphic and analytical data

with which to reconstruct events of this kind for each of the capstones in this monument (Fig. 10).

Lime can also be seen on the capstones in Menga, as well as some signs of red paint. However, it is prudent to carry out the relevant analyses to confirm this in all or some of the examples. In this respect, the amount of lime visible on the moved part of Orthostat 15 is a further argument in the hypothesis of old preparation for the capstone in Viera chamber. The position of this stone, the rear of Orthostat 15, is suggestive. In the latest plan carried out by Carrión's team (2009: 155), the break in the architectonic plan between Stones 13 and 16 can easily be seen. Stones 14 and





Fig. 10. Chamber and antechamber's roof covers from Viera's dolmen. Lime remains in the chamber and in the second slab in the antechamber. Also, red paint remains on the antechamber's first roof cover. Photographies by R. de Balbín.



15 are located inside the line followed by the rest of the wall, as well as being noticeably narrower stones. Their capstones are supported more on this side than on the other side, as in the case of Capstones 1 and 3. In these large constructions, the tumulus and particularly the buttressing of the chamber are the parts that the capstones rest on, and which support their weight, whereas, if not passive agents, the uprights play little part in supporting the weight of the capstones. Great conclusions cannot be extrapolated from these observations, but it is possible that the distortion in the alignment of the stones is connected with a reconstruction of an older space. The rear of Orthostat 15 suggests that older stones are behind Stones 14 and 15, which would explain their unusual current position. They would have been fitted in order to propose a linear sequence that would have changed a more open direction, which is what can be deduced from the current position of the rear of 15. The distortion between the two lines would have left this stone visible and, for this reason, it received the lime corresponding to the second decorative phase in the construction. In any case, this needs to be investigated further. In fact, this disruption is thought to be a broken part of Orthostat 15 itself. The work in progress will probably provide more precise information (Fig. 11).

Documentation already published about the cover of Menga chamber relates the engraving techniques used with those seen in Viera passage. The current state of the stone does not allow a determination of whether or not it was decorated again; although the white of lime is visible, this is still without analytical confirmation. Photographs taken in the archaeological documentation by the Menga team are able to reconstruct its outer shape with a central protuberance, as well as the careful shaping in its outline, which is clearly trapezoidal (Fig. 12).

The other capstones in Menga are noticeably similar in their shape and preparation. This is easier to observe by using the images prepared for the 3D reconstruction of the monument (Source: Dolmens of Antequera) together with the textures from our own photographs. To improve the external interpretations of the stones, we have made use of the organisation of the documentation of all the research in Menga, based on the work carried out by Soler and Menéndez de Luarca. Capstones 4 and 3 must originally have been a single stone with the same trapezoidal shape as Capstone 5. This can be deduced from the way their edges fit together perfectly, and from their identical raw material and the joint work in their whole perimeter.



Fig. 11. General view of orthostat 15. Detail: Displaced area of the orthostat 15. Photographies by R. de Balbín.



Fig. 12. Menga's roof cover reconstructed through 3D documentation of the Antequera dolmens and photographic documentation by Malaga's team. Adverse was reconstructed with the photographic documentation of R. de Balbín. Reconstructed by F. J. López Fraile.



Fig. 13. 3D reconstruction of Menga's roof covers. Source: 3D study of the Antequera dolmens and photographic documentation of interventions in Menga's dolmen, by J. R. Menéndez de Luarda and P. Soler.

In the other two capstones, the notch in one side of Capstone 2 is of interest (Photo) as it is possible that this aimed to achieve an anthropomorphic appearance (Bueno *et al.*, forthcoming). Similarly, in the stone nearest the entry, the shaping of the outer part and the perfect horizontal cut above the modern door can be appreciated. The feasibility of this hypothesis will continue to be analysed, but it is quite plausible that the trapezoidal capstones in Menga dolmen, worked around their whole perimeter and displaying clear signs of reproducing anthropomorphic figures, are stones that had seen a previous use (Fig. 13).

The trapezoidal shape of these stelae means that they were possibly cut into three portions, which seems to be the most common pattern in Viera and in some uprights in Menga. The pillars may have been made

with some of the remaining thirds. A basic study of the thickness of the stones is difficult without more precise measurements of the non-visible sides of each orthostat and capstone. However, the thickness of the stones in the access to Menga is the same as that of the pillars, especially with 1 and 2.

The thickness of the inner door in Viera, which was undoubtedly cut from a larger stone, is considerable and equally supports the hypothesis that the original stelae must have been large, not only in height but also in thickness. The evidence of all the capstones in Viera, which are much larger than the space they cover, is very revealing in this respect. The trapezoidal shapes of the slab in the chamber and those in the passage are coherent with this hypothesis of previous stelae (Fig. 14).





Fig. 14. Size comparison of Viera's stele, left, and Menga's orthostat 10 and roof cover.

The work of refitting the stones to build Viera dolmen included painting a coat of white pigment. When the stones were placed to form the tomb as we see it today (except for the missing part of the passage cover), decoration in the form of horizontal bands of red zigzags, which must have been completed with black, was painted over the white undercoat. The black pigment is more poorly preserved but is still visible.

In the chamber, the decoration took the form of black and red stripes over the white layer, which covered the older decoration of red triangles and relief in red. This decoration also appears in Menga, where Orthostat 11 and Pillar 1 are clear examples showing that the superimposition of the paintings of triangles by stripes also occurred in the large monument (Bueno *et al.*, forthcoming). The degree of conservation of the paintings in Viera adds an interesting nuance. It seems that the over-painting of stripes directly links the chamber area in the two monuments, although more evidence is needed to be able to confirm this.

The dates obtained in Menga and Viera (Linares and García Sanjuán, 2010; Aranda Jiménez *et al.*, 2013; Lozano *et al.*, 2014) define the stages prior to the construction of both monuments, in the first half of the 4th millennium cal BC. The agreement in the dates from under the mounds contributes certainty in the time of the activities before the construction, and this time can be established as a point of reference for the steles that acted as the starting point for building the large monuments. The dates from Viera demonstrate that the monument had been built by the first half of the 3rd millennium, as it was being used for mortuary deposits. The monuments were built during that span of time, which must also have

included the additions to the passage in Viera and possibly the rebuilding of the access area at Menga.

This approximate chronology, of great interest, provides new arguments to the data obtained in the graphic discourse in both monuments. Menga and Viera are closer in time than was thought and it is even possible that some of the reused stele fragments employed in building the two monuments came from a single earlier group of steles. The stages in their introduction and re-installation follow a very similar pattern: decoration of large red triangles, over which a white base and striped decoration were painted. Therefore, the study of the decoration in both monuments has shown great analogies that suggest they were built at a relatively similar time, as argued in a text that has taken longer to be published than was expected (Bueno *et al.*, forthcoming).

#### 4. THE SOURCE AS A SIGNIFICANT FACTOR IN THE RITUAL OF THE LARGE STONES

In recent years, research on European megaliths has stressed studies on the sources of materials, either for the buildings themselves or for the objects forming part of the grave goods. Many varied hypotheses have been proposed within the search for the sources and the relationship between geology and megaliths (Bello *et al.*, 1982) and the consideration of motives related with ritual and the exhibition (Scarre, 2002, 2004) of certain types of stones because of their distant provenance, weight or colour.

The addition of old steles and menhirs observed in Bretagne (L'Helgouach, 1983; Le Roux, 1984; Briard,



1993; Cassen *et al.*, 2009) pointed towards the ideological realm. Recent research has placed the weight of selection on the relationship between the stones and their significance as human images identifiable to the people who raised, transported and reinterpreted them. Their role in the ideological construction of the megaliths is becoming increasingly important. In the Iberian Peninsula, and especially in the south, where we have worked most intensively, a very large number of stones were reused. This is suggestive of a reiterative dynamic making explicit a generalised reuse of old stone images in order to generate new pasts (Bueno *et al.*, 2013a, 2014a, 2015c, 2016a).

The monuments themselves do not only have a biography. Each of the stones possesses an individual biography which, when added to the other biographies of reused old stones, helped to give content to a new past that was constantly being built until the monuments were abandoned. At that time, some anthropomorphic stones were frequently positioned either at the entrance of the tomb or above it (Bueno and Balbín, forthcoming).

The most widely accepted interpretations situate this process in the building of the monuments, but in reality, the system in these constructions employed the movement of large stones from external buildings or between megaliths as one of their most solid ideological arguments. The strong bond between stones and ancestors was clearest in the second half of the 4th millennium and first half of the 3rd millennium cal BC (Bueno *et al.*, 2007, 2010). Large monuments were built at that time, like the ones in Antequera, or other very large ones in Bretagne, Ireland or Britain. The source of each of the stones in these monuments is very varied and, in some cases, still unknown.

New mounds were sometimes built over old monuments, or new monuments were built with old stones. The stones were often added without any modifications, as archaeological studies can show, whereas on other occasions the old stones were smashed and were replaced or covered by new uprights. This seems to have happened in the dolmen of Lagunita I, in Extremadura (Bueno *et al.*, 2013c) and in Dolmens 3 and 4 at Pozuelo or in dolmen of Soto both in Huelva (Bueno *et al.*, 2014b; Linares, 2011).

Many nuances have to be taken into account. Perhaps the most evident is that stones were reused in the sense of *expolia* in the classical world, which

would be explained by the constant reworking of the same places. However, the anthropomorphic image was normally the main objective of these stones and some of them were transported, and therefore had been sought. The fact that some of them had been part of complex constructions in their original location equally points towards the ideological role of old stones in the building of megaliths (Bueno *et al.*, 2014a, 2016a). Observations about breaking up stones in the monuments themselves are of great interest as they are indicative of buildings undergoing constant change (Masset, 2010).

The classic example of Gavrinis (Le Roux, 1984) suggests another explanation: the old formulas were repeated, but by new builders. The presence of identical depictions on the front and back of that large monument also confirmed the permanence of those references over time, as equally argued for the Iberian Peninsula (Bueno and Balbín, 1992). The stone with hafted axes in the dolmen of Alberite II is a clear example of the reinterpretation of the same motifs on the front and back of orthostats (Bueno *et al.*, 2007: Fig. 11, 2013a: Fig. 18).

The hypothesis of formal permanence, in the sense of a clear difference in time between the oldest graphic formulas applied to megaliths and the more recent ones, has been supported by an increasing amount of chronological data (Bueno *et al.*, 2007; Carrera and Fábregas, 2002). This systematic is best correlated by the work that is applied to the totality of the ritual of the ancestors to reiterate the argument of the past as social justification. However, as we have pointed out in several papers, this continuity should not be regarded as static. On the contrary, ideological exhibition of the past is the clearest evidence of the social transformation of the contents of European megalithism.

The development of anthropomorphic images and their relationship with formulas defined from the territorial point of view (Bueno *et al.*, 2005a, 2007, 2011a) enables the insertion of this type of argument in the definition of the social status of social groups with increasing affluence. The figures of the ancestors were accepted, adapted and inserted in tombs used by specific segments of the population (Bueno and Balbín, 2006).

Portable anthropomorphic objects, easily transported, became medium-sized stelae, as documented in

the dolmen of Palacio III. A trapezoidal shape, with engraved and painted decoration, is an interesting example of the transfer of widely-known forms in portable figures to sculpted images, which in the case of Menga and Viera were materialised in very large versions. Without entering into a study that goes beyond the objectives of the present paper, it is interesting to cite the role of the Iberian Peninsula in the development of this type of anthropomorphic formula, characterised by geometric garments, whose appearance at some European sites can be dated by the large Antequeran steles in a way never imagined before.

Research in southern Iberia in recent years has provided further interesting information to understand the value of display in the Antequeran monuments. Recent studies at Pozuelo 3 and 4 have shown a double group of mounds that repeats the image of twin dolmens at Antequera. Archaeological information obtained by Linares (2011) highlights the close relationship between these monuments and previous buildings, supported by reused steles from the first construction (Bueno *et al.*, 2013a, 2014a). Both monuments display steles, but they are different from one another. Some reproduce Almizaraque-type anthropomorphic idols and the others, decorated plaques. The hypothesis that

each of the monuments was the burial place for the ancestors of lineages with different origins (at least at first) is very suggestive. This interpretation would connect with widely-accepted formulas in the expression of the material traits of each of these figures (Bueno, 1992, 2010; Hurtado, 2008; Robb, 2008; O'Connor, *et al.*, 2009). Within this interpretation, Menga and Viera suggest the burial place of ancestors that are associated with a single type of figure with an identity component, revealing solid ties between groups with evident demographic depth, capable of sustaining this type of display socially and economically. This conjunction shows that these monuments represent some of the few examples in southern Europe of a powerful social organisation with the capacity for ideological centralisation, as seen in the unity of its materialisations (Fig. 15).

This kind of conclusion is normally reached through evidence of the circulation of prestigious goods, their provenance and other types of considerations. Antequera provides the material significance of its large steles to add evidence (weight, capacity of social mobilisation, knowledge of graphic and technical formulas) that contribute to quantifying the value given to this kind of generation of the past.



Fig. 15. General view of Pozuelo's number 3 and 4 dolmens, archaeologically studied by J. A. Linares. To the left the steles correspond to each one of the burials mounds. Photographies by R. de Balbín.



If the argument of the ancestors is convincing to understand the oldest megaliths, the development of recent megalithism noticeably intensifies these displays of the past. This highlights the role of these concepts in a ritual that is often contemporary with deposits including bell-beakers (Bueno *et al.*, 2005b). Antequera is the most important example of these processes of construction and reconstruction of pasts in the late Neolithic and Chalcolithic.

The possibility that there was an old tomb in Menga has already been mentioned, although it needs more solid evidence that we hope to obtain in future studies. Other possibilities would be convincing. The menhir at Romeral would make sense in groups of this type of megalith, which are known to exist in other parts of Andalusia, especially the cromlech underneath the dolmen at Llano de la Belleza (García Sanjuán *et al.*, 2003; Bueno *et al.*, 2013a).

In Menga, the general trend of research suggests another interpretation. The large fragments of stone discovered in the sections dug by F. Carrión in the lower part of the northern slope and in front of the monument may indicate that a cromlech existed outside the dolmen and its stones were destroyed (Fig. 16 and 17). This sequence: cromlech - destruction of stones - reuse, to build a tomb or tombs has also been documented in the dolmen of Soto, with an architecture that is very similar to that at Antequera (Fig. 18).

This hypothesis also needs more explicit evidence, but it is suggestive in the present state of our knowledge in Andalusia. It also coincides with the situation at other Atlantic sites, especially New Grange, and proposes a sequence of open-air and covered constructions (and *vice versa*) of great interest in an analysis of the ideological role of these large stones.

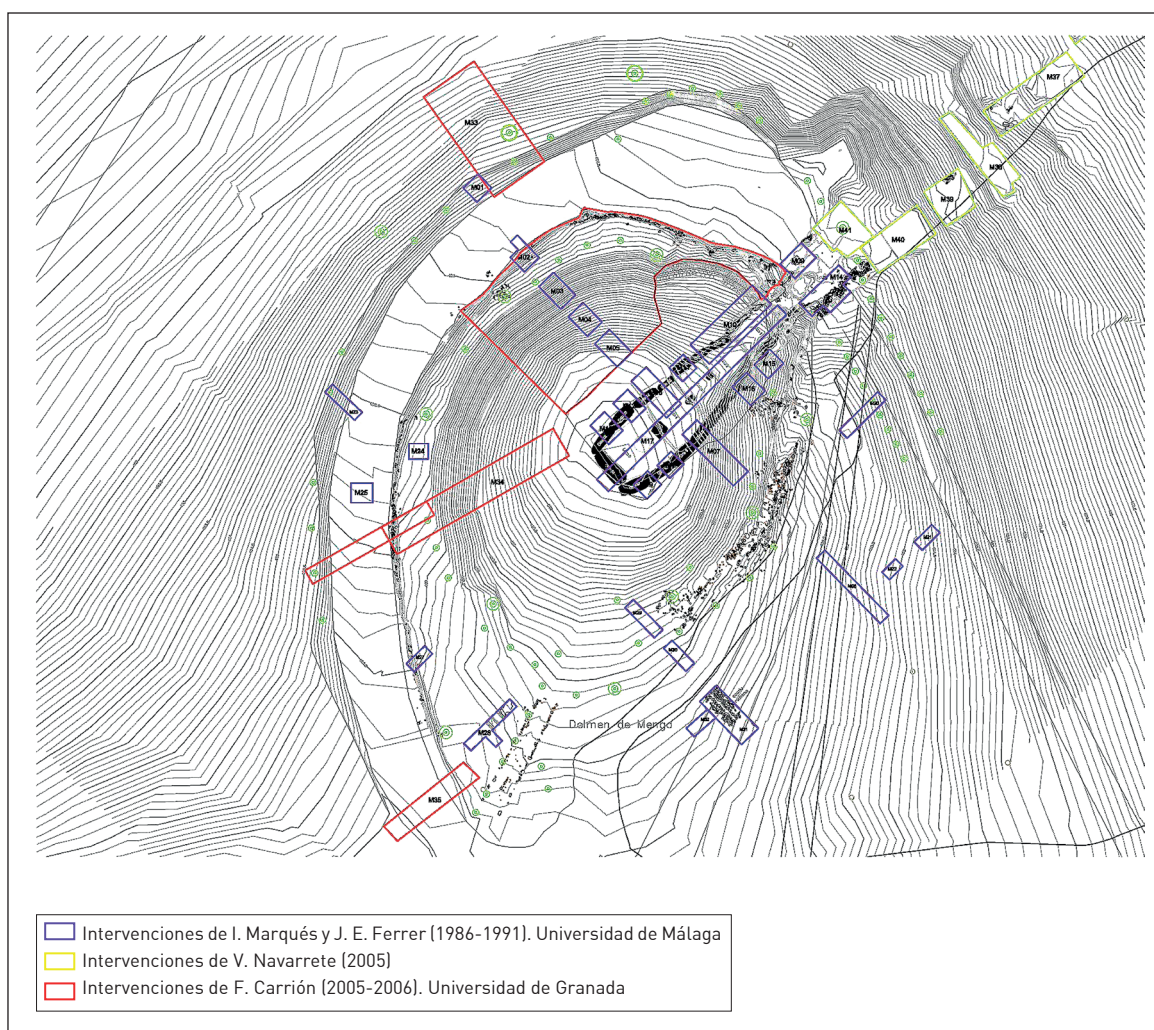


Fig. 16. General plan of the archaeological interventions at Menga's dolmen. Made by J. R. Menéndez de Lúcar and P. Soler.



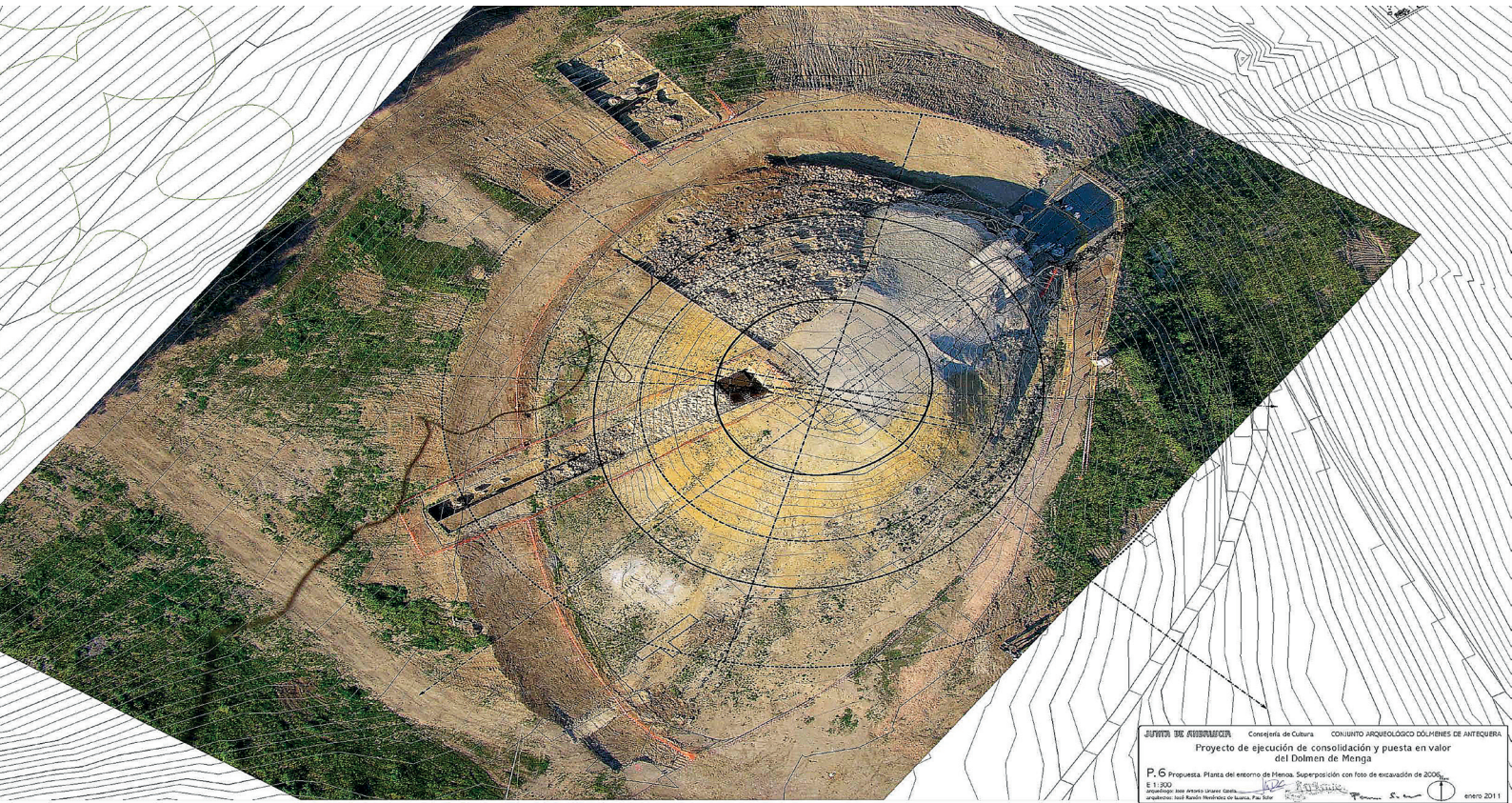


Fig. 17. Thought reconstruction of the outside stone line, made by J. R. Menéndez de Lueza and P. Soler, based on F. Carrión's aerial photography and archaeological documentation.



Fig. 18. External circle's reconstruction of Soto's dolmen. Photography by J. A. Linares.



Menga and Viera reflect, like few other Iberian monuments, the changes that took place from the 5th millennium to the second half of the 3rd millennium cal BC on the hill where the monuments were built. If the presence of a large outer circle can be proved, it is likely that the archaeological evidence found will be related to that phase of use. If the presence of an older megalith at Menga can be demonstrated, the sequence may be more complex. The two options may have occurred together, with an old megalith surrounded by a cromlech with a large diameter, which was re-structured to build the monuments we see today.

In any case, the steles in the first construction had a pointed head, were quite high, wide and thick, and were decorated with oblique reliefs on the sides, which were painted over with horizontal bands of red and black triangles to represent the persons' garments. Like at some sites in France (Benéteau-Douillard, 2012) and on Mediterranean islands (D'Anna *et al.*, 2006), the size of the steles may have varied. Menga has the largest stones in its cover, with a *décalage* in their volume from the huge size of Capstone 5 to the smaller stones in the cover near the entrance. These are more similar in size to the reused stones in Viera (*vide* Fig. 14).

As stated above, the old steles may have been coetaneous with the dates obtained beneath both tombs, in the first half of the 4th millennium cal BC. The stones in Menga and Viera are much larger than those at other sites and the dates suggest an age whose relationship with classic megaliths needs to be studied in greater depth. Similar sizes have been observed in old menhirs at Anta Grande de Zambujeiro (Bueno *et al.*, 2014a) in the Iberian Peninsula and, naturally, in the well-known examples in Bretagne.

It is possible that in the second half of the 4th millennium cal BC or early 3rd millennium, the previous cromlech, alignment or structure was partly taken down to build the two monuments. OSL analyses in progress in Menga will help to determine patterns for the chronology of this process.

In this way, a common past was created for two groups or lineages that appropriated the history of the ancestors, including some of the old steles, in the buildings. The decorative process in both tombs was the same. When the stones were fitted in their holes, a white layer consisting mainly of lime was applied to

them and series of red zigzags completed with black were painted on top of this. Later repainting with red and black stripes is equally seen in both tombs. Finally, some of the stones in the two monuments display a thick coat made of red pigment and charcoal, but attempts to date this have been unsuccessful. This long sequence supports the hypothesis that the decoration in Viera was being repainted until the end of its use (Aranda Jiménez *et al.*, 2013).

The identification of these stones and their decoration brings to mind well-known sites in the south of France (Maillet, 2010). The archaeological site of the cist at Reguers del Seró (Lleida) and its alignment (López *et al.*, 2009) yielded a radiocarbon date for a similar process in the first half of the 3rd millennium cal BC, which matches dates for similar events at European sites; the best known is probably Petit-Chasseur (Harrison and Heyd, 2007).

The idea of the past constantly reinterpreted, exhibited and flaunted best explains the movements of large stones in all Europe. It is the ideology of ancestor worship that justifies the position of communities in their lands, linking ancestors, materialised in stones, fragments of stones and human remains, with the monuments that hold their genealogy.

## 5. TIME OF ANCESTORS

Research in the dolmens at Antequera has discovered a series of elements, some of which have been described here, in connection with the process of building the megaliths. The close relationship between events and steles, similar to the situation at megalithic monuments in other parts of Europe, shows that the presence of the stones, the detailed study of their position and therefore of their role in the construction, and the analysis of their graphic representations, contribute a significant increase in the evidence to understand the biography of these monuments.

The hypotheses proposed here open up many lines of research to explore in the study of this group of megaliths. Menga and Viera are beginning to be appraised as important examples of the scale of labour and social cohesion in the building of old structures in southern Europe. The possibility of obtaining a feasible period of time for these events is not too common. Most of the dates employed to



interpret the reuse of large stones focus on their use in the new structure. Hence, the data that has been and will be obtained at these tombs will be of great interest.

The acceptance of an age of large stones before the oldest megalithic monuments in Europe has become commonplace since the studies of L'Helgouach in Bretagne. In contrast, the evidence that this kind of event was perpetuated and even expanded in more recent phases within the construction of European megaliths is not so widely accepted. On one hand, fewer data is available from the quantitative point of view and, on the other, it is generally thought that building stopped in the 3rd millennium cal BC and was replaced by individual burials in the bell beaker ritual.

Sites studied in recent years in southern Iberian, especially in Andalusia and Extremadura (Bueno *et al.*, 2004b, 2009b, 2013b, 2013c; Linares and García Sanjuán, 2010; Barroso *et al.*, 2012; Linares and Vera, 2015; Aranda Jiménez *et al.*, 2017 and others) have raised the possibility of this other reality. Many of the megaliths correspond to successive constructive events that became especially frequent after the end of the 4th millennium cal BC. This hypothesis agrees with the chronology of some of the large monuments in Ireland and the Orkney Islands, the places that have provided most evidence of constructions built in late stages of megalithism (Bayliss *et al.*, 2007). Stonehenge is a good case study of the same processes in open air sites (Darvill *et al.*, 2012).

The site is equally in harmony with Mediterranean monuments. The position of Andalusia greatly helped to control prestigious products and their movement between the Mediterranean and Atlantic (or *vice versa*), indicating the need for a new appraisal of its role in exchange networks in southern Europe (Bueno *et al.*, forthcoming).

These events are related to evidence visible in the territories of the builders, both paintings and engravings in the open air and other stone structures. The menhirs at Piedras Blancas, at the foot of Peña de los Enamorados and therefore visible from Menga dolmen, suggest possible ancient points of reference in the Antequera area for this systematic of stones erected in memory of ancestors (Bueno *et al.*, 2009a, forthcoming).

Menga and Viera contribute the materialisation of anthropomorphic figures of the past as an ideological argument for the construction of new pasts in the form of very large monuments that might have been standing in the second half of the 4th millennium and definitely were in the 3rd millennium. The characteristics of these steles: figures tending towards a trapezoidal shape with a marked head, and garments with geometric patterns, especially triangles and wavy lines, repeat known formulas in the framework of southwestern megalithism, with smaller versions at other sites, such as the dolmen of Palacio III. They confirm the major role of the representations of ancestors as evidence of the permanence of these points of reference in this ideological context, repeating graphic patterns with many other examples in Europe.

In this chronological framework of late megalithism, evidence of the role of prestigious objects in ancestor rituals becomes more common. Ivory, gold, amber and variscite are indicative of this tendency towards display at funerary sites. Its symbolic version was materialised in steles taken from other structures with the value of the past, as an argument within social display that aimed to define the importance of some groups or lineages.

Our knowledge about the circulation of these prestigious objects in Andalusia has increased greatly in recent years (rare stones, variscite, ivory and amber) (Scarre *et al.*, 2011; García Sanjuán *et al.*, 2013; Murillo and García Sanjuán, 2013) and it fits within other studies in the whole south-west (Valera *et al.*, 2015) and regions in the interior of Iberia (Bueno *et al.*, 2000, 2005b, 2011b; Liesau and Blasco, 2012). Display in the mortuary sites corresponds to intensification in decoration and the use of old references to the past, thus contributing to define the images of synchronisation between past and present among the builders of the megaliths.

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