# THINKING MEGALITHISM BEYOND PREHISTORY: A BERQUEAN CRITIQUE OF THE IDEA OF REUSE

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#### Abstract:

In this paper, we wish to think Megalithism beyond its (prehistorical) chronology. For that, it becomes necessary to overpass reuse as a concept. Eclipsing it requires seeing it as a testimony of modern thought, with all the problems that come with it. Following the ideas of Augustin Berque, we will overpass the concept of reuse and propose a new classification system based on reappropriations and resignifications, using the megalithism of the Centre/South of Portugal as an example. With this in mind, we will empirically sustain the validity of megalithic studies beyond prehistory through the analysis of seven common trans-chronological tropes, giving theoretical and practical backgrounds for future studies: 1) Megalithism as a Resource/Practical Alterity; 2) Megalithism as a territorial marker, 3) Megalithism as part of Nature, 4) Megalithism as the (space of the) Other, 5) Megalithism as Mythologised Past, 6) Contemporary Megalithism as Aesthetical Identity, 7) Megalithism as a prehistoric monument.

**Keywords:** Megalithism; Trans-chronological; Augustin Berque; Hermeneutics of Reception; Reuse; Modernity

#### Resumo:

Neste artigo, pretendemos pensar o Megalitismo para além da sua cronologia (pré-histórica). Para isso, torna-se necessário ultrapassar a reutilização como conceito. Eclipsá-lo implica vê-lo como um testemunho do pensamento moderno, com todos os problemas que daí advêm. Seguindo as ideias de Augustin Berque, filósofo e geografo francês, ultrapassar-se-á o conceito de reutilização e propor-se-á um novo sistema de classificação baseado em reapropriações e resignificações, usando o megalitismo do Centro/Sul de Portugal como exemplo. Com este objectivo, iremos sustentar empiricamente a validade de estudos megalíticos para lá da pré-história através da análise de sete tropos transcronológicos, fornecendo bases teóricas e práticas para estudos futuros: 1) Megalitismo como recurso/alteridade prática; 2) Megalitismo como marco territorial, 3) Megalitismo como parte da natureza, 4) Megalitismo como (espaço do) Outro, 5) Megalitismo como passado mitologizado, 6) Megalitismo contemporâneo como identidade estética, 7) O Megalitismo como monumento pré-histórico.

Palavras-chave: Megalitismo; Transcronológico; Augustin Berque; Hermenêuticas da Recepção; Reutilização; Modernidade

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## 0. PREAMBLE, OR WHAT TIME IS THIS PLACE?

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, reuse can be defined as "to use something again" (C.U.P., 2023). If we instead turn to use, as a noun, we have the following definitions: 1) "a purpose for which something is used"; 2) "the act of using something, or a period of time when something is being used or can be used"; 3) "the process of reducing the amount of something by burning it, eating it, involving it in a chemical reaction, etc."; 4) "one of the meanings of a word, or the way that a particular word is used." (C.U.P., 2023). We take from this that use and reuse are essentially the act of functionally using something, a pragmatical function towards a functional objective.

To engage in a discussion around reuse one must recognise its modern origin. The advent of

modernity was a defining moment in the intellectual and philosophical development of the Western world. Although its roots stem deep in ancient Greece and Descartes, its effects are still felt in Science, Ethics, or Archaeology. To overpass the idea of reuse in megalithism one must sever the modernist characteristics that permeate it.

Moreover, Archaeology, as a discipline, was born in modern thought (and still embroiled in it, see Thomas, 2004; Witmore, 2004: 133-136), which is still felt in megalithic research. We seek megalithism to surpass its condition as solely a prehistorical phenomenon: to be seen as something trans-temporal, towards a post-prehistorical megalithism. In short, we aim to contribute to megalithic studies to overpass modernity in Archaeology. We also aim, on a wider scope, to unite Philosophy and

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archaeological thought. We believe that such a union can be fruitful for Archaeology to overpass some of its ontological conundra and, on the other hand, for Philosophy to gain some sort of historiographical insight, rendering more operative their contributions. Such an approach requires the usage of methodology coming from Philosophy – in this case –, envisioning an archaeological practice mediated by philosophical guidance.

Reuse is one of such testimonies of modern thought. We do not wish to merely eliminate reuse as part of prehistorians' vocabulary, but instead replace it as a mechanism of thought when interpreting megalithic realities. This involves a philosophical critique of modern thought from which the idea of reuse stems.

Multiple instances in the Iberian Peninsula (e.g., Martinón-Torres, 2001a, 2001b, 2002, 2006, 2008; Holtorf, 2002, 2008; Gonçalves, 2003; GORDÓN-PERAL, 2008) and abroad (e.g., DANIEL, 1972; OLSEN, 1990: 197-202; HOLTORF, 1994; PATTON, 1996; BLAKE, 1998; JEUNESSE et al., 2016) considered modern and contemporary reappropriations and resignifications pertaining to the monument's biography. However, we wish to argue for the existence of a discipline that focuses on studying megalithism beyond prehistory. As an example, Holtorf's work around the dolmen of Monte da Igreja, in Évora (HOLTORF, 2002), would be a prime example of what we strive towards: an archaeological excavation conducted to understand the contemporary reappropriations of the megalithic space. Or, as in another case (e.g, OLIVEIRA, 2001 or LINDSTRÖM, 2014), the study of the contemporary resignification of megalithic monuments through Ethnography.

Megalithic monuments – which are but the result of metamorphic processes (SHANKS, 2012: 148) - do not experience an afterlife, as Bradley (1993) pointed out, but live in a continuum, in a "[...] continuous state of becoming (or vanishing)" (HOLTORF, 2008: 412). Rather than seeing megalithism as an essence, we strive towards a view that replaces it with "[...] an altering history of contingency [...]" (ASHOK, 2007: 1, apud HOLTORF, 2008), where instead of a hermeneutic of recovery that focuses on the origin and the reconstruction of the first meaning of the monument we have a hermeneutic of reception (HOLTORF, 1994, 2008: 414). We believe reuse and a hermeneutic of recovery are connected, for both only exist from an essentialist standpoint that links it to a primordial – and ontologically more significant - period: the time of its construction. This is not to say that megalithic monuments are not prehistoric, but are also prehistorical. To recognise this is to recognise the cultural stratigraphy of places, where "[...] each generation responded to and transformed the Neolithic monument according to their own agendas" (Holtorf, 1996: 128) - the multiples times that a place has (LYNCH, 1972). Verily, periodisations in Archaeology are still one of the most distinctive elements of the impact of modern thought (e.g., Lucas, 2005; Olivier, 2011), where difference is organized through a temporal axis (GOMES, 2019: 147). In megalithism this is still amply visible. Moreover, a hermeneutic of recovery, and thus origin, becomes strictly entangled with periodisations because both seek "[...] totality and closure" (Lucas, 2005: 13). The way archaeologists treat time is not innocent, for time is not a given: the way it is configurated and organised is but the result of the archaeologists' work, thus becoming a matter of politics, of *chronopolitics* (WITMORE, 2013).

To go beyond periodisations and aim at a trans-chronological megalithism contributes to overpass modernity in Archaeology and their time models, whose usage also poses ethical problems (GRIFFITHS et al., 2023). It also aims at changing linear timelines in Prehistory, where "[...] unrelenting change of the modern era is focused and directional." (THOMAS, 2004: 40). This makes megalithism more than simple Architecture, for to assume the plasticity that the hermeneutic of reception entails is to make megalithism a way of writing within space that is always incomplete by default (see VALE, 2011: 159), only to be generationally and individually reinterpreted and fulfilled. Additionally, megalithism within modern thought is still stuck within the logic of eye - the visioncentrism of Archaeology (see Vale, 2011: 160) although the resignifications of megalithic monuments greatly surpass those of the vision.

### 1. MODERNITY AND REUSAGE: A BERQUEAN CRITIOUE

Modernity is closely associated with Archaeology, for "[...] archaeology has been made possible by modernity, and also that it has contributed to the formation of the modern world." (Thomas, 2004: 54). Their links are thus strongly connected. Moreover, the modern origin of Archaeology has already been interrogated, and deconstructed, by archaeologists themselves (e.g., Thomas, 2004; González-Ruibal, 2013), be it through the ideas of Anthropocentrism, Time, Metanarratives or Typology and Reason.

We aim at a more specific level of deconstruction. More than exploring the central ideas that modernity gave Archaeology, our objective is to dismantle reuse as a concept through its philosophical pillars. The required approach must be, henceforth, one provided by Philosophy (Berque, in this case), although the archaeologists' contributions also help in understanding how modernity shaped the discipline.

Deconstruction of what modernity gave Archaeology – and vice-versa – is a crucial step to overcome it, but it is not enough to understand reuse at a conceptual level. It required a specific *articulation* in order to do so. On the other hand, Berque's contributions allow such an exercise to take place through a thorough decomposition of modernity into epistemological and ontological elements applied to Architecture. Reuse overpasses Archaeology conceptually, although our objective is, nevertheless, archaeological.

One of the most fundamental characteristics of modern thought is the detachment between the object and the subject, creating two distinct opposing entities. In this light, the origin of reuse stems from the severance between the body and the mind. This would lead to the illusion of a pure object: something absolute, detachable from the human and its body. In modernity, reality would be reduced to function and matter, to the concrete aspects of reality, in what Berque would call: r = S (reality is the Subject, i.e., Matter/Substance).

Similarly, Newton's concept of space – isometric, homogenous, and infinite – would reduce the qualitative properties of *places* into *non-places*, rendering them as solely quantitative. Newton's space is the space of pure science and abstraction, the space of physics that manipulates reality and turns it into an object, but not the space of humanity nor lived space. There is, thus, a clear difference between the *Earth of Galileo* and the *Earth of Husserl*: between the idea of space in modernity and its scientific apparatus and the idea of space in phenomenology, of lived space. In the second, the being realises itself and brings about multiple processes of becoming.

A central point of this discussion seats around how modernity replaced cosmology with function (Berque, 1996: 43), in a movement of abolition of the spirit, a becoming (devenir) of matter over essence, where the Truth, the Beautiful and Good become disconnected and autonomous (BERQUE, 2019: 34-35). In architecture, this would imply that its cosmophanic properties would instead be replaced with function, as Le Corbusier's maxim "A house is a machine to live in" rightfully shows. Architecture becomes not a multi-layered work but rather the result of a simple equation to solve a problem, a functional and pragmatical solution to a functional and pragmatical question. Archaeology has already shown how architecture, especially in a prehistoric setting, can be much more than simple function (e.g., Furholt & Müller, 2011; Vale, 2011; Ingold, 2013; McFadyen & Vale, 2014; McFadyen, 2016).

This relates to the process of how the world would be reduced to the state of an object (état d'object), to be manipulated and articulated at ease (Berque, 1996: 31). This would be done through a process of desymbolisation, in the sense of Weber's Entzauberung der Welt: the replacement of spirituality with rationalisation, where it can, through calculation (Berechnen), assert control (Weber, 1919: 488). There would be the replacement of the symbolic apparatus: the assemblage of things and representations supported by material and immaterial mediations, by which humans communicate with each other, interpret the world and act upon things (Berque, 1996: 43).

This state of affairs leads to a suppression of abstraction over the concrete materiality of the world. Meanings, auras, dispositions, interpretations, and overall abstractions would enforce the separation between the body and the mind, spirit and matter, idea and form.

All of this is reflected in architecture – and here megalithism is mostly architecture. Reducing the world to matter and function would make the temple (to use a Heideggerian metaphor), for instance, not the element that unites the *sky and the* 

Earth (Heidegger, 1977: 27-29) – thus reflecting a cosmology – but instead, something disconnected from the outside world and its surroundings. This is all too evident in postmodern architecture, or the *junkspace*, as Berque would call it – e.g., Berque, 2019.

For instance, when examining the initial development of Tokyo, it becomes clear that the surrounding landscape influenced the city's design. This was achieved without the imposition of any rigid Hippodamus of Miletus-style grid, as noted by Berque (2021b: 66). On the other hand, Takamatsu Shin's Syntax in Kyoto stands in stark contrast, as it disregarded the natural and architectural elements of its surroundings (Berque, 2019: 39-40). One can also exemplify this in the Western world with the Torres das Amoreiras, made by Tomás Taveira, in Lisbon.

Architecture allows the Earth, as a planet detached from the human, to be a human Earth: it turns the brute environment into lived/human space (Berque's écoumène – e.g., 2015 [1987]). Architecture produces the Earth, and the Earth, in turn, produces the human as *l'etant*, a form of the idea (être) of what is human. To reduce something to a matter of usage and re-usage is but to deprive the human of its Earth, imposing contemporary Western acosmology – what Berque would call our contemporary acosmique condition (e.g., 2018b) – to megalithism, a transcultural and transchronological entity.

Non-human animals are also not considered when discussing such reuses. Instead of a *questionnaire* that takes the megalithic monument and its space as a whole, there is an anthropocentric viewpoint that only considers its human dimensions. This is due to the place that modernity gave animals — the *animaux-machines* of Descartes (2021 [1646]) — where they are but instruments to the realisation of solely human objectives (BERQUE, 1996: 24). In Archaeology there is already a corpus that contests this idea, aiming towards greater integration with non-human animals (e.g., HILL, 2011; OVERTON & TAYLOR, 2018; OVERTON, 2019).

All these also stem from the idea of subject that modernity engineered. The discovery of perspective had significant philosophical implications for its time. It enabled the observer to exist outside of the represented reality, leading to a realisation of its newfound modern subjectivity. This marked a significant moment in modernity, where everything else was viewed as mere objectal mechanics (mécanique objectale) (BERQUE, 2019: 31). In a short chapter of Alain Roger's seminal work "Court traité du Paysage", it is even argued that the invention of the window lies behind the very invention of the Western landscape (ROGER, 1997: 83). Modernity has its own subjectivity rooted in the total and absolute separation between the subject and the object, and the invention of perspective and the window that frames it, allowing for such detachment to take place, be it in the creation of the landscape - mainly stemming from aesthetical and artistical points of view - or in architecture.

If we consider architecture as solely a pragmatical and functional entity, it is only natural that from here arises the idea of reuse: megalithic monuments have a primordial function and, once that function ceases, it is no longer in its original shape, but instead something else, it lays beyond megalithism, but not as something human and with multiple meanings and agents, but rather functional and pragmatical: a reuse, an *afterlife* (BRADLEY, 1997). Subsequent communities found other usages for past monuments. This is the modern paradigm of reusage in megalithism.

The idea of reuse also branches from this detached view of the modern subject, where instead of having a subjectivity that constructs itself within the relationship with others – be they human or non-human animals –, the reappropriation and resignification of megalithic monuments are stripped of their human aspect and seen solely in objectal mechanics. Once more: suppressing abstraction of the intentionality, symbolic and social aspects of any given resignification of megalithic *space*.

As already mentioned, this operation could only occur within the illusion of a pure object. This *arret sur l'object* also reflects the ethnocentrism of Western pragmatism, making the idea of a resignification – and not a reuse – artificial and not natural, in a process of artificialisation of the culture of the *Other* (BERQUE, 1996: 51).

# 2. HOW TO OVERPASS REUSAGE (MODERNITY) IN MEGALITHIC STUDIES: MENDING THE SHATTERING

Before delving any further, it is essential to briefly explain two fundamental concepts: *médiance* and *trajection*.

Tetsurō's *fûdosei* is what stands at the basis of Berque's *Médiance*, being "[...] the structural moment of human existence" (*le moment structurel de l'existence humaine*)" (Tetsurō, 2011 [1935]: 35). This means that *Médiance* in the link that connects the *being (l'être)* to its *environment (milieu)* (Berque, 2021a: 22). *Trajection* is also closely related, since it is the process that constitutes reality: "[...] the back-and-forth (*va-et-vient*) of reality" (Berque, 2018a: 41). It is a cosmosomatic process where nature and culture cosuscitate one another, transcending what can be defined as merely objective or simply subjective (Berque, 2019: 12).

To make these ideas more practical, Aristotelian metaphysics can be applied. The concept of Substance and Accidents can be used, where Substance refers to the matter itself and Accidents refer to its properties or the things that affect it (accidere). For example, a passage grave can be considered the Substance with the Accident of being "big". It is also worth noting that there is a connection between metaphysical Substance and Logic's Subject, as well as between Accident and Predicate, which will lead to the development of Berque's LgS (logic of the identity of the subject/ logique de l'identité du sujet) and the LgP (logic of the identity of the predicate/logique de l'identité du prédicat).

In Berque, Substance is named the Subject (Sujet, or S) – something that can be trajected –, and the Accident the Predicate (Prédicat, or P). Trajection is then what takes the S as P, what trajects a wooden plant with leaves as a tree, or a knapped rock as a handaxe. It is, then, the very fabric of what means to be human.

Philosophically, the primary way to overpass reuse in megalithic studies would be to mend modernity's shattering of the triadic nature of reality. Instead of the illusion of the pure object (r = S), or the *métabassiste* (without base) solution of postmodernity, that turns the predicate into an absolute (r = P), one must see reality as a r = S/P, and since this trajection is impossible without an interpreter: r = S-I-P. To mend the great shattering would render architecture something cosmophanic, uniting the Earth and the sky, producing (herstellen) an Earth. Mending the shattering would also imply that the platonic *chôra*, or the qualitative properties of space would replace Newton's notion of space. This, in turn, gives the megalithic space autonomy, not exclusive to the monument itself nor to prehistory in particular.

Having arrived at this point, it is important to further delve on how megalithic monuments are actually reinterpreted. This is an important exercise, for this will be the mechanism that takes the idea of reuse into something that mends the shattering. For this, we turn to Berque's *Chaîne Trajective*, which can be defined as a: "Suite de trajections, hypostasiant (substantialisant) progressivement S/P (donc hypostasiant du même mouvement P) en S', S'/P' en S'', S''/P'' en S''' et ainsi de suite. Sa représente par la formule (((S/P)/S')/S''')... etc.: les chaînes trajectives sont analogues aux chaînes sémiologiques chez Barthes et à la sémiose chez Pierce." (BERQUE, 2018: 11-12)

In short, and applying to our subject matter: "[...] dans le temps, parce que les générations se succédant, chacune héritant de la précédente une réalité S/P qu'elle va interpréter à son tour, autrement dit surprédiquer en (S/P)/P', puis la génération suivante en ((S/P)/P')P'', la suivante en (((S/P)/P')/P'')P''', et ainsi de suites (remarque : ici par simplification graphique, I n'est pas représenté, il est implicite)" (BERQUE, 2021: 25).

This logical mechanism allows us to interpret the resignification and reappropriation processes that megalithic tombs experienced, turning them into a shelter, a landmark or simple nature throughout (pre)history.

In this sense, reuse is but a term that reduces the complex *suite de trajections* into one term still pertaining to modernity. Other terms, such as reappropriation and resignification, may better fit the role, depending on the circumstance. Categorising the type of *trajection* — whether on the subject (e.g., a physical restructuring of the monument, such as with Anta da Bola da Cera, Anta 1 do Alcogulo or Anta da Marquesa — OLIVEIRA, 1998: 478) or predicate (e.g., a specific tale about a particular monument, such as the *lenda do pastor e da moura* — OLIVEIRA, 2001: 66-67 — or in Anta da Casa do Galhardo. Castelo de Vide — see VASCON-

CELLOS, 1897: 26) – can be a way to overpass the problem with reuses. In this light, we propose that if the derivation in the *chaîne trajective* is in the subject, then it is a reappropriation, and if on the predicate, a resignification. It must be said that, in Berquean fashion, a trajection is a triadic process that takes the S as P, as thus if one of the elements in the equation changes, the trajection that results is already something different. In fairness, a reappropriation is also partially a resignification. However, to render anything operative, a degree of simplification is necessary.

However, we believe a more detailed account of resignifications and reappropriations will further elucidate the subject matter. This will be the basis for a trans-chronological megalithic Archaeology.

#### 3. SEVEN AXES TOWARDS A MEGALI-THISM BEYOND CHRONOLOGY

It is now possible to concentrate on the spe-

cific chaîne trajective of the megalithic monuments. Turning megalithism as not something solely prehistorical requires research topics - lines of thought to be threaded - surpassing any given chronological focus. Based on the previous section's discussion, we merely wish to outline and exemplify them briefly, using the megalithism of the Centre/South of Portugal for such a purpose. Moreover, it is possible to detail specific types of reappropriation and resignifications further. In the former, we can classify a physical reappropriation of a monument as integral, when the physical entirety of the monument is reappropriated, such as in Anta do Monte do Pombal (Castelo de Vide) (OLIVEIRA, 1998: 480) or Anta do Estanque (Montemor-o-Novo) (OLIVEIRA, 2001: 76) (Fig. 1.), as partial, when only part of the monument is physically reappropriated, such as with Late Bronze age depositions of Tholos do Barro (Torres Vedras) (MADEIRA et al., 1972), the Iron Age structures of Hortinha 1 (Évora) (Rocha, 2015:



Figure 1. Anta do Estanque serving as a contemporary storage room. Source: Andarilho.pt Figura 1. Anta do Estanque servindo como área de armazenagem contemporânea. Fonte: Andarilho.pt

224), or the protective structures of Anta Grande do Zambujeiro (Évora) (Fig. 2) and contextual, when only very punctual reappropriations are verified, such as in Centirã 2 (Serpa) (Robles et al., 2013), Monte da Velha 1 (Serpa) (Soares, 2008), or Anta 1 da Herdade das Casas do Canal (Estremoz) (Leisner & Leisner, 1955: 6-7) (Fig. 3).

When it comes to resignifications, classification is more arduous, since it is specific to the nature of the interpretation that it is made. Martinón-Torres, using the historical sources of Galicia as a case study, would classify the interpretation of megalithic monuments in the following manner: "a) a social-territorial value, through the use of megaliths as territorial markers; b) a symbolic-mythical value, through their idealised appeal to

treasure hunters, as well as their inclusion in variable mythical formulations; and c) a historical-archaeological role, when interest arises in referring to the megaliths themselves, as vestiges of a remote past about which they can provide information." (MARTINÓN-TORRES, 2001: 95-96).

Having this in mind, we chose seven main lines of research, divided into two distinct groups:

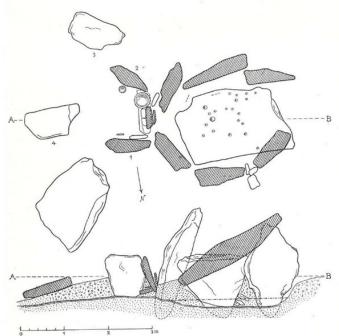
Reappropriation: 1) Megalithism as a Resource/Practical Alterity;

Resignification: 1) Megalithism as a territorial marker, 2) Megalithism as part of Nature, 3) Megalithism as the (space of the) Other, 4) Megalithism as Mythologised Past, 5) Contemporary Megalithism as Aesthetical Identity, 6) Megalithism as a prehistoric monument.



**Figure 2.** Anta Grande do Zambujeiro and its contemporary protective structures both covering the monument and providing internal stability.

Figura 2. Anta Grande do Zambujeiro e as suas estruturas de protecção, quer cobrindo ou dando estabilidade interna ao monumento.



**Figure 3.** The Bell Beaker deposition of Anta 1 das Casas do Canal. Source: Leisner & Leisner, 1955, Est. II.

**Figura 3.** A deposição campaniforme da Anta 1 das Casas do Canal. Fonte: Leisner & Leisner, 1955, Est. II.

#### 3.1. Reappropriations

## 3.1.1. Megalithism as a Resource Practical Alterity

Starting with the first – reappropriations –, megalithism as a resource/practical alterity. It can be defined as when megalithic monuments are reappropriated practically, e.g., as when a monument serves as a shelter (Anta Grande da Comenda da Igreja, Montemor-o-Novo – OLIVEIRA, 2001: 75), as a shoe shop (Anta de Tourais, Montemor-o-Novo – OLIVEIRA, 2001: 82), or becomes a storage room (Anta do Es-

tanque, Montemor-o-Novo — OLIVEIRA, 2001: 76) (Fig. 1), or when there are physical alterations to the monument — due to a deposition, for instance —, that partially stem from a sense of *alterity*. In prehistory, most reappropriations pertain to this practical alterity. Once tombs lose their initial cosmology, having entered their necessary mythological phase after the first cycles of memory have passed (150-200 years — Bradley, 2014), a necessary

radical alterity surrounds the ruin, like an aura. Legitimation and dispositive processes are derived from collective memory practices and policies (e.g., MATALOTO, 2007). These processes are triggered by the challenging tension that arises when confronting the radical alterity of the megalithic ruin. While accurate, they demand careful consideration due to their inherent complexity. The richness of such a sentiment makes it the basis of both reappropriation and resignification processes, such as in the variety of scales found in the archaeological record.

#### 3.2. Resignifications

#### 3.2.1. Megalithism as a territorial marker

The vast amount of resignifications shows the different, new interpretations that monuments can take. The first one listed deals with the first point made by Martinón-Torres: a social-territorial value, as landmarks. Many known cases exist in Portugal where megalithic monuments are used as territorial markers/landmarks, such as with Reguengos de Monsaraz (GONCALVES, 1999: 9), Redondo (MATALOTO, 2020: 142), or Marvão (OLIVEIRA, 1998: 42). A quick recap of Portugaliae Monumenta Historica (PMH) – a compilation of medieval documents made by Alexandre Herculano from 1856 to 1917 – presents us with multiple instances of megalithic monuments – antas – being used to define portions of land, territories, and parishes, such as "[...] et uai per illa anta pro ad termino de custodias [...]" (PMH DIPLOMATA, Vol. I Fasc. II: 168); "[...] deinde ad antam de Vespeiroo, deinde per lombam de Selares, deinde ad petram de Penalva [...]" (PMH INQUISITIONES, Vol. I Fasc. IX: 1514) or "[...] et inde super covello, et per illas antas [...]" (PMH DIPLOMATA, Vol. I Fasc. III: 338). The frequent mentions of these structures can likely be attributed to the presence of a tumulus, as they are easily noticeable in the surrounding landscape, making it a helpful landmark. Moreover, if the tomb does not have a tumulus, the stone structure can serve as a recognisable landmark. In Berquean terms, it is also important to mention that some of the dolmens that were seen as landmarks also had physical alterations (such as Anta 7 do Colmeeiro, in Redondo), which in turn makes not only a S/P', but a S'/P'.

#### 3.2.2. Megalithism as part of Nature

The evidence from historical sources and ethnographic data strongly suggests that the second point - Megalithism as part of Nature - is a frequent trope in megalithic resignification, albeit in a subtle manner. While it may be challenging to determine whether any particular structure in the archaeological record was viewed as such, the tumulus already possesses a natural hill-like appearance. It can also be interpreted as an attempt to imitate nature, thus reinforcing the notion that art was initially based on nature (SEEL, 1991: 11). Etnographical data does help with this line of research: "Os menires são coisas da natureza. A Terra vai descendo com a água e a pedra vai aparecendo. Ninguém lá as pôs, as pedras nascem." (Menhirs pertain to Nature. The Earth flows with water and the stone appears. No one put them there, the stone simply appears.) (OLIVEIRA, 2001: 53). Dolmens are also sometimes considered natural shelters (OLIVEIRA, 2001: 53). Throughout Europe, there are many examples of comparisons between megalithic tombs and natural elements, often viewed as the homes of mythical creatures like giants, dwarves, and elves (SCHNAPP, 1996: 17; BAKKER, 2010). In Portugal, this does not seem to be the case, as the mouros and mourama would fill the void and replace the need for mythological

Additionally, words used to describe megalithic tombs as landmarks are often the same words used for natural features. Toponymy also reflects this reality, as megalithic monuments are sometimes indistinguishable from natural geological formations, as in the case of the "Anta" de Adrenunes (Sintra) (Fig. 4).



Figure 4. "Anta" de Adrenunes. Figura 4. "Anta" de Adrenunes.

## 3.2.3. Megalithism as the (space of the) Other

The third point – Megalithism as the (space of the) Other – is defined as when megalithic monuments are seen as alterity - a defining characteristic of such ruins -, being attributed to an Other, or a general category that represents that Other. Although possible to find in historical sources, it is most frequent in Ethnography and, to a different degree, in Archaeology. When it comes to historical sources, one of the most fascinating passages is found in the Chronicles of the Conquest of Algarve: "[...] e tomada a villa a deichou o mestre segura e tornou com munta gente ás antas onde jaziaõ os cavalleiros mortos e com grandes gemidos e dor os tirarao dantre os moros, que jaziao os corpos delles lançados no sangue com as es-padas nuas." ([...] conquered the village, the master left it with ease, returning to the dolmens where fallen knights laid and with great woe and pain took them from amongst the bloodied corpses of the mourish, runned by naked swords) (PMH. SCRIP., Vol. I. Fasc. III: 418, emphasis added). Not only is there an association between the anta and its funerary function, but they are also associated

with the dominant theme of the Other in Portuguese folklore - the *mouros* and *mourama* (SARMENTO, 1990). It is worth noting that these *mouros* were soldiers who died in battle.

Another example of megalithism as the (space of) the Other is observed in the antas-capela of southern Portugal. These structures were initially used in Pagan rituals and were considered profane and heretical. However, Christian communities did not avoid them. Instead, they Christianised them, converting them into Christian churches like Anta-Capela de S. Dinis (Mora) (Fig. 5) or Nossa Senhora do Livramento (Montemor-o-Novo). It is worth noting that not all megalithic tombs were seen as heretical; some were even viewed as altars dedicated to the Christian God by ancient people in the 18th century: "[...] não serão temerarias conjecturas, as que nos inclinão a crer, que as nossas Antas forão dedicadas, pelos primeiros Povoadores da Lusitania, ao verdadeiro Déos, que adorou Israel, e venerão os Christães." ([...] it is not foolhardy conjecture to believe that our Dolmens were dedicated by the first settlers of Lusitania to the one true God, who worshipped Israel, and the Christians venerated.) (PINA, 1733: 17).



Figure 5. Anta-Capela de São Dinis. Source: Almeida, 2018: 20 Figura 5. Anta-Capela de São Dinis. Fonte: Almeida, 2018: 20

#### 3.2.4. Megalithism as Mythologised Past

The main difference between this fourth point - Megalithism as Mythologised Past - and the previous one is that while the former deals with a specific, concrete mythos, the latter only talks of an unspecified Other, such as mouros. The case of São Torpes is a remarkable example of such. It involves the excavation of a megalithic tomb in Portugal, in 1591, making it one of the oldest recorded excavations of its kind (CARDOSO, 2017). The tomb, believed to be a megalithic necropolis located in Cabo de Sines, was said to contain the mortal remains of St. Torpes of Pisa, an Italian saint. The excavation aimed to retrieve St. Torpes' bones and take them to a Christian church for burial (Vasconcellos, 1914; Cardoso, 2017).

However, archaeological data is the most abundant and valuable new information source. The post-Neolithic/Chalcolithic reappropriation of megalithic monuments saw physical depositions everywhere in the monument, be it in the corridor, chamber or *tumulus*. It is likely that placing artefacts and remains into ancient ruins was an attempt to connect with any given mythos, in a process of legitimising present communities (e.g., MATALOTO, 2007; FURHOLT & MÜLLER, 2011). This process, which is both a resignification and a reappropriation, turns the mega-

lithic tomb into a monument – sensu monere, something to be remembered – that becomes part of the collective memory and social practices, linking the past and the present. This may take the form of simple depositions, or, instead, entire reappropriations.

## 3.2.5. Contemporary Megalithism as Aesthetical Identity

Point five – contemporary megalithism as aesthetical identity – deals with the fact that there are megalithic monuments that are so heavily influenced/informed by contemporary aesthetical elements - such as the landscape - that it becomes impossible to read them beyond that filter, forming a symbiosis between both. Moreover, the presence of the monument and its disposition (Stimmung) create a unique aesthetical identity in the space it is in. We underline this point's contemporary dimension: the research line is the new aesthetical identity formed out of the symbiosis between the megalithic tomb and the contemporary element that shaped a new relationship with the landscape. As examples, we can point to Anta 1 and 2 of Torrejona (Fig. 6), in Portel, and Cromeleque do Xerez (Fig. 7), in Reguengos de Monsaraz.

In the first case, the surrounding landscape is different from what it was before the Alqueva dam,



Figure 6. Anta 2 de Torrejona and the surrounding Landscape.
Figura 6. A Anta 2 de Torrejona e a paisagem envolvente.



Figure 7. Cromeleque do Xerez. Source: Câmara Municipal de Reguengos de Monsaraz.
Figura 7. Cromeleque do Xerez. Fonte: Câmara Municipal de Reguengos de Monsaraz.

for its reservoir flooded it. The present view of the monument is one that it is closely entangled in a water-based landscape, yet, nothing could be further from the truth. A new aesthetical dimension arises between the formed lagoon and the area's megalithic monument. The perception of the megalithic monument is highly influenced by its surroundings. Any changes in its environment can pose a threat to its preservation and aesthetics. It is crucial to analyse how we perceive the ruin and its relationship with its surroundings for better understanding and preservation.

On the other hand, the Cromeleque do Xerez was displaced during the filling of the Alqueva dam, that is not standing in its original position. This changes the relationship between the moment and their surroundings, since they are artificial – in the sense that it was not part of the first architectural plans for the monument – thus losing their cosmophanic properties. Yet, from here arises a new aesthetic identity – as well as a kind of contemporary megalithism –, that can be further explored by archaeologists, historians, and philosophers alike.

## 3.2.6. Megalithism as a prehistoric monument

The last point – megalithism as a prehistoric monument – is akin to Martinón-Torres (2001: 95-96) point c) – "[...] a historical-archaeological role, when interest arises in referring to the megaliths themselves, as vestiges of a remote past about which they can provide information". This deals with how megalithic monuments have been studied as prehistoric monuments throughout time, and is closely linked to the research history on the subject matter and the History of Archaeology (e.g., BAKKER, 2010).

#### 4. Conclusions

Megalithism is a complex, diverse phenomenon with a large diachrony. More than viewing it as solely a prehistoric monument, reducing it to an essence, we strive towards an anti-essentialist view that entangles the monument with its biography, mending the shattering that modernity entails. This shattering position is still visible within the idea of reuse. Thus, it was necessary to conduct a critique of reuse, as a subproduct of modernity, to open the megalith to more thorough investigations that go beyond prehistory.

Nevertheless, in order for Archaeology to move beyond modernity, it must undergo a thorough epistemological revision that acknowledges modernity and does not ignore it. Moving to a premodern paradigm does not take into account the potentialities of the new millennium. If new lights are to be shed, if the practical, hermeneutic problems of prehistorians and archaeologists alike are to be met, Archaeology must strive towards a transmodern (Berque's transmodernité) state of affairs. We believe Philosophy can play a decisive role in the redefinition of the discipline and how we conduct the study of the vast phenomenon that is megalithism. Using Philosophy's methodology,

as well as its innate capabilities of introspective thought and conceptual (re)definition, Archaeology can unlock its unique potential, within the historical sciences, as well as its unique connection to the Earth. Archaeology is already well-suited for a Geophilosophically-based Epistemology, and a stronger relationship between Philosophy and Archaeology can help catalyse this.

In this case, more than a critique of the concept, this paper identified the problem with reuses – modernity – and conducted its deconstruction in a Berquean framework, further refined it into an operative system of reappropriations and resignifications, and gave seven possible lines of investigations in an anti-essentialist and trans-chronological viewpoint of megalithism. It must, however, be read within the tradition of the aforementioned works (e.g., Daniel, 1972; Olsen, 1990: 197-202; Holtorf, 1994, 1996, 2008; Patton, 1996; Blake, 1998).

In this light, the deconstruction of modern thought stands at the basis of the best-defining properties that explain how reuse came to be: 1) the functionalisation of the world/objectification du monde; 2) space as isometric, homogenous, and infinite; 3) disenchantment of the world (Weber's Entzauberung der Welt); and 4) ET Architecture and the acosmic condition of contemporary architecture.

This, in turn, allowed the replacement of reuse with two general concepts: reappropriation – if the inflexion is on the *subject* – and resignification – if the inflexion is on the *predicate*.

Concluding, and aiming at the study of megalithism from a diachronic perspective, reappropriations and resignifications allowed the eight main lines of research to branch out:

Reappropriation: 1) Megalithism as a Resource/Practical Alterity

Resignification: 1) Megalithism as a territorial marker, 2) Megalithism as part of Nature, 3) Megalithism as the (space of the) Other, 4) Megalithism as Mythologised Past, 5) Contemporary Megalithism as Aesthetical Identity, 6) Megalithism as a prehistoric monument.

This allows for the development not only of a megalithism that surpasses that of a *hermeneutic of recovery* but also the development of new ways of facing megalithic realities, where seven new lines of study open up for investigation. This makes it possible to organise trans-chronological megalithic studies into neat categories, easing the research and making it possible to establish lines of comparison between works.

May this contribute to envision a different way of understanding megalithism: one ruled by a trans-chronological – and not *chronographical* (*sensu* HOLTORF, 1996: 119) – sense of History, where Prehistory, although the beginning of the *life -history* of the monument, does not eclipse its lively, and rich, *hermeneutics of reception*.

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