

Rock & Ritual

*Caves, Rocky Places and Religious Practices
in the Ancient Mediterranean*

Edited by
Sonia MACHAUSE
Carmen RUEDA
Ignasi GRAU
Réjane ROURE



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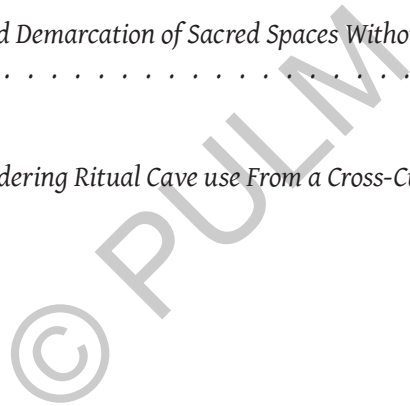
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Modes of Religiosity in Iberian Iron Age Caves: Religious Behaviour and Sensorial Experience

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Iván AMORÓS LÓPEZ³ & Ignasi GRAU MIRA⁴

Introduction

We propose a study aimed at the observation and analysis of the models of religious behaviour (cognitive models) and forms of religiosity associated with worship and Iberian rituality. We focus on cult places, as they clearly enacted an important role in the religiosity of these protohistoric societies. From a spatial perspective they played an active part in the territorial organisation. Their functions were heterogeneous, although their role in community identification and cohesion is evident. They were also a physical reference point for the projection of ideology in the territorial dynamic (González-Alcalde 2002; Ruiz *et al.* 2010; Rueda 2011; Grau, Amorós 2013; Rísquez, Rueda 2013; González Reyero *et al.* 2014; López-Bertran 2015; Rueda, Bellón 2016; Machause 2019; Machause, Quixal 2018).

In general terms, our spatial reference spans a wide strip of the eastern and southeastern Iberian Peninsula stretching from the province of Castellón to the Alto Guadalquivir region (Fig. 1). This brings us into contact with a diverse range of political territories and contexts. Our chronological framework is equally wide, although we focus particularly on the 4th and 3rd centuries BC as a key period for this type site that went hand-in-hand with the transformations undergone by the Iberian societies of the time. We will not enter into an analysis of the continuity or transformation processes following the end of the Second Punic War at the end of the 3rd century BC, as this would lead to a complex discussion concerning the forms of abandonment or remembrance in an extremely wide-ranging map of situations.

Thus, we find ourselves looking at a heterogeneous map as a fundamental feature that defines this type of context. Historiographically, the term “cave-sanctuary” has been used in a broad sense (Gil-Mascarell 1975; Aparicio 1976

1997; Serrano, Fernández 1992; González-Alcalde 1993, 2002, 2002–2003a, 2002–2003b, 2005a, 2005b, 2006; Moneo 2003, among others). This has led to cult places in different territories and with distinguishable features being analysed under a single category and with a certain homogenisation of different religious situations. We would like to break with this idea, as it is a dynamic that has diluted the possible particularities of each of them, while emphasising their common features, which tend to be generic and determined by the presence of the cave (Grau, Amorós 2013: 187–188). With these factors in mind, our approach will be mainly based on two variables. On the one hand, we understand caves as key sites in the landscape, as they contributed to strengthening collective participation and, therefore, to the mechanisms of integration and religious identification that incorporated the ritual mobility processes. On the other hand, we emphasise their multisensorial nature, as they combined special characteristics that facilitated and even fostered the recreation of ritualities charged with symbolism.

1 Cave Sanctuaries in the Territory: Ritual Mobility and Symbolic Appropriation of the Landscape

Studying in depth the ritual aspects linked to caves obliges us to place into context, albeit briefly, the role of the landscape in the religious structure of the Iberian societies. In these societies the religious systems were connected and linked to nature (Moneo 2003; Grau, Rueda 2018). That which was known and selected was projected onto the landscape, which served to build the collective identity and foster the sensation that the physical environment made sense and had value. In the landscape, therefore, we perceive the features that were impressed on it by a society. This was true also in terms of the symbolic aspects, as nature became a source of metaphors and an explanation of the different ways of understanding the world (Urquijo 2010). For that reason, territories had a clear symbolic dimension that was projected through specific landmarks in the landscape. These could have been the caves that became points of attraction that conditioned

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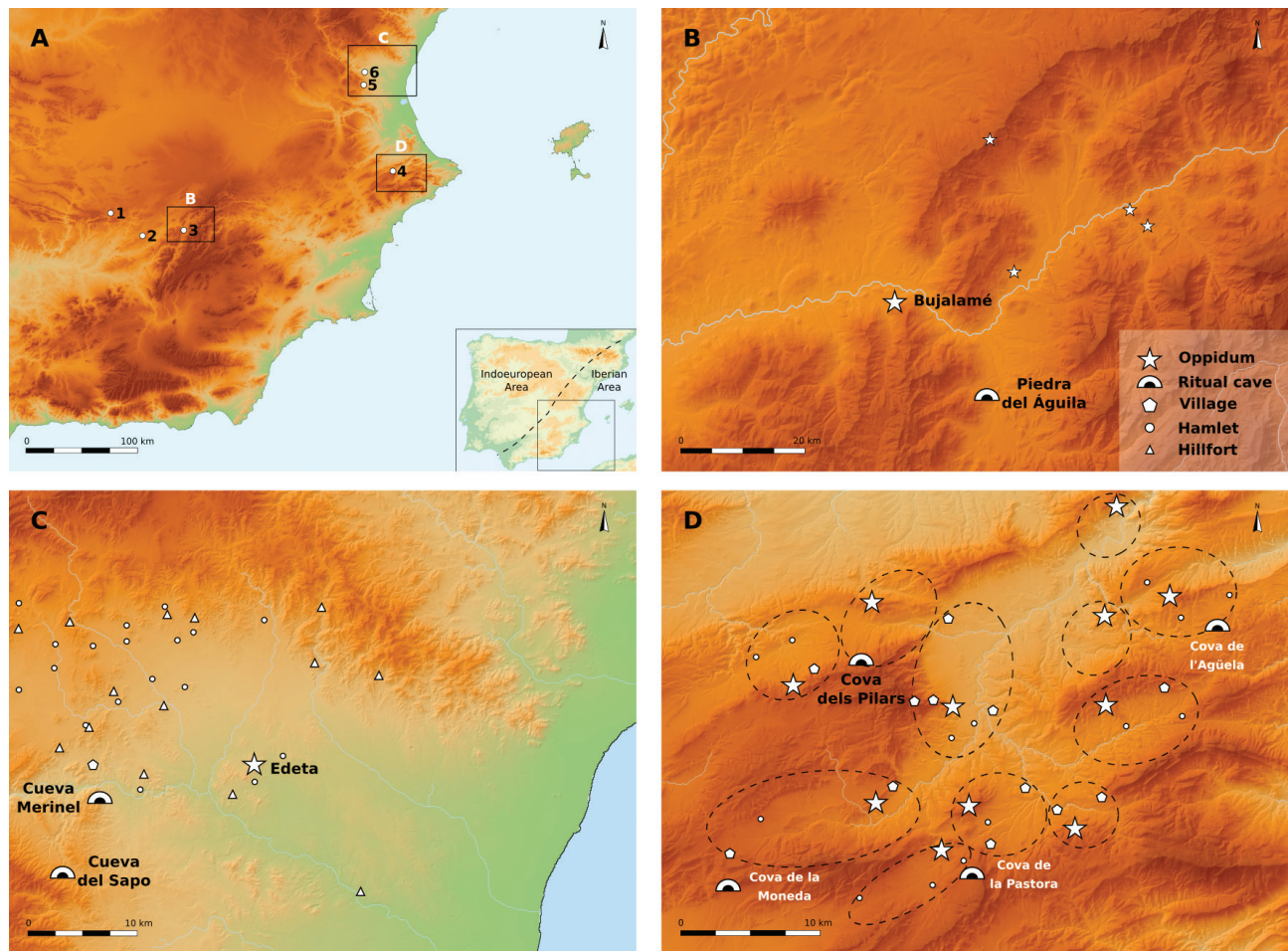


Fig. 1—Location of the ritual caves mentioned in the text (A): 1. Collado de los Jardines; 2. Cueva de la Lobera; 3. Piedra del Águila; 4. Cova dels Pilars; 5. Cueva del Sapo; 6. Cueva Merinel and their territories: Bujalamé (B), Edeta (C), Central area of Contestania (D).

diverse aspects, such as the organisation of ritual mobility, ceremonial calendars, etc. In fact, they formed part of and even participated in the mythological narrations and construction of worldviews, as can be observed in recent study cases (Esteban *et al.* 2014; Esteban, Ocharan 2016; Ruiz *et al.* 2016; Machause *et al.* 2019). In these cases, the cave became a particular localisation associated with divine entities and supernatural forces affirmed visually through unique and unrepeatable narratives.

As such, the way of life of these protohistoric societies was directly projected onto their landscapes and, therefore, methodologically-speaking it is essential that we integrate our knowledge of the political territory into the analysis of these cave spaces. In these societies the *oppidum* became the centre of the relations, defined as complementary to the rural space, that governed the interactions with nature, also on a symbolic level. Resulting from the relationship between the urban and the rural spaces we find at least two types of natural space that depend on the degree of their appropriation or transformation. On the one hand, it was the controlled rural space (the *ager*) and, complementary to it, the wild natural area (the *saltus*), where the physical and the supernatural intermingled (Grau 2012). This scheme is easy to perceive in the analysis of the settlement patterns and territorial organisation as inseparable dimensions that

contributed to building the worldview of the Iberian societies. These dimensions became memory through the imprint on the landscape, at the same time as they were immortalised on the basis of prestige iconographic media and narrations (Olmos 2008).

In the configuration of this ideal scheme, we can clearly see the defined liminal space, that which was distanced from the *oppidum* and in which the opposite of everyday life was symbolised. To this environment were associated the caves as ritual spaces of reference that acted as domains to facilitate communication with the divinities, contributing at the same time to the demarcation of the territories. To them we can associate buildings, structures, altars, deposits of offerings, iconography, etc. that entail transformations which can be measured in diverse degrees. Therefore, to understand the symbolism of the cults in caves we need a wide perspective that encompasses their location, the role they played in the context of the territory, their link to the urban spaces or their complementarity with other sacred spaces. We also have to consider the nature of the worship (reflected in the hierarchisation of the space and the objects placed as offerings) or the symbols that are sometimes associated with them (e.g. wild and/or mythical animals).

Access to nature and those ritual landscapes was subject to religious codes that became more powerful when they

crossed the territorial boundaries (Bradley 2000). Therefore, we believe ritual mobility was a fundamental variable, as it became integrated as a social action that allows us to draw conclusions regarding aspects of self-, territorial and, of course, symbolic-religious definition. All these involved dynamic and multidimensional situations (López-Bertran 2011; Murrieta-Flores *et al.* 2012; Grau 2015) that allow us to tackle, among other questions, multisensoriality in the past (Hamilakis 2017). In fact, the study of mobility for ritual purposes requires paying attention to a multiplicity of aspects linked to the geography, social roles, beliefs, mythologies, psychology, etc. (Elsner, Rutherford 2005: 5–6). In summary, the pilgrimage was also another way of appropriating the ritual landscape as a space charged with cultural and traditional meaning; it formed part of the community memory and was reinforced through cyclical ritual acts (see M. López-Bertran in this volume: chapter 4). Social memory was transmitted through those experiences, visits and rituals, which allows us to introduce the concept of places and landscapes of interaction. The landscapes were not only built in terms of their unique characteristics and their connection with memory or identity, they were also created through lived experiences and, in particular, through the connections generated by the ritual (Palka 2014: 8–9). In this context, mobility became a basic conduit for reinforcing this interrelation.

We need to bear in mind that in the specific case of the Iberian societies ritual mobility may have included the movement of large groups of people, as well as a variable scale of mobility. These would have included movements in the immediate territory (the lived space), *i.e.* a return journey, or those involving a journey to a more distant part of the territory (towards the liminal space) that required several days (Fig. 1b–1c). Thus, in the analysis of ritual mobility in the Iberian religious space it is necessary to include the patterns of mobility in the construction of collective identity relations, in which a strong emotional component was involved. In this context we place the pilgrimage as an initial phase of the complex religious performance and we analyse it as another stage in the ritual process and not as a secondary or subordinate act (Coleman 2002; Nordin 2009; Sommerschild 2016). It meant leaving the safe space, breaking with the daily routine, generating new life experiences and, on some occasions, coming face-to-face with the unknown. The last of these formed part of the initiation rites, in which access to the stage of maturity also involved access to the symbolic landscape as a specific determining factor in the rite that forced a journey to the cave, to that liminal space where the supernatural took on a tangible dimension. As such, pilgrimages to ritual spaces and landscapes ensured communications with the divine and turned those places into “territories of grace” (Morinis 1992: 18–25; Alfayé 2010: 179).

2 Caves as Sensorial Spaces

To begin to analyse the modes of religiosity identifiable in these worship areas we need to incorporate an analysis of the caves as multisensorial spaces. Their physical and symbolic characteristics made them places in which the protagonists

of the ritual connected with each other. As these spaces were the exact opposite of everyday life, *they triggered intense emotional responses* (Rueda, Bellón 2016; Moyes 2016), such as expectation, intrigue or fear (Whitehouse 1992). In fact, many of the ritual practices carried out in caves would not have had the same symbolism if they had been transported to other scenarios, either natural or constructed (see also K. Trimmis in this volume: chapter 2).

The sensorial hypersensitivity also fostered a feeling of community. Whether through extended participation (a ritualised journey, communal commensality rituals, aggregation rituals, etc.) or restricted participation (internal-private rituality), such an exchange of experiences would have created bonds and a feeling of belonging that would have strengthened the group cohesion. Thus, worship communities were emotional communities, as emotions motivated the ritual as a mechanism to control fears (Alfayé 2016), and assisted in connecting with certain supernatural powers (Chaniotis 2011: 267).

Interpretative trends such as archaeology of the senses offer us a fundamental source of information from a wide variety of approaches. Following this proposals, we can approach the multisensorial and emotional feelings that were experienced during the ritual practices performed in caves with restricted air, light and space (Whitehouse 1992, 2001; Lewis-Williams 2002; Hamilakis 2002, 2011, 2013; Skeates 2007, 2012; Betts 2003; Montello, Moyes 2012; Rueda, Bellón 2016; Pellini 2018; Skeates, Day 2020). If we transfer this type of perspective to the Iberian religious space, we need to evaluate two key elements. Firstly, the symbolism of the journey that entailed the use of a ritual space that was within the limits of the known territory but far from daily life. It was a multisensorial journey on which different boundaries were crossed, starting from the house, leaving the inhabited space, crossing the adjoining fields, etc. until the liminal landscape with the cave was reached. Kinetic rituals took place not only on the outward journey to the sacred space, but also at the destination, both inside and outside the cave, and on the return journey to the point of origin, cognitively transforming the landscape through movement (Morinis 1992: 17; Bender 2001; Coleman 2002: 361–363; Coleman, Eade 2004: 1; Cummings, Johnston 2007: 2; López-Bertran 2011: 99). Secondly, the multisensoriality perceived in the restricted space of a cave, in which sensorial impressions would have been magnified, permitted the connection with the other world (Bjerck 2012: 59). The cave itself induced a unique experience, not only in sight and sound, but also as a multisensorial experience (involving all the senses) that influenced each and every one of the ritual practices.

However, there are no universal experiences. Just as the sensations experienced when visiting a cave today differ depending on the age, knowledge and character of each person, it is very difficult for us to know what was experienced by the protagonists of cave ritual practices in the 4th and 3rd centuries BC. Therefore, we defend the need to contextualise these experiences. As Hamilakis (2017: 172) pointed out, both the affective and the sensorial components, as well as those that are both mnemonics and temporary, should be analysed in conjunction with the

political factors and other elements that can be perceived in the archaeological record.

All this sensorial history can be read in the context and in the ritual offerings and/or utensils in the archaeological record. However, emotions and experiences are also important, not only to analyse the past and the present of the ritual practices, but also their future and their survival over the centuries, thus making them *multi-temporal* (Hamilakis 2017: 179) and introducing the concept of remembrance or reviviscence. As Van Dyke (2011: 241) reminds us, “experience is fundamental to memory”, because, when an experience has an impact on a person, it survives in the memory of that agent and/or their community. It is that individual and, above all, the collective memory that legitimises at the same time the continuity of the ritual practices.

From a ritual point of view, in Iberian societies the cave was integrated symbolically and scenographically as an overdimensioned space in the visual dynamics of the myth and the rite and in the incarnation of the invisible. It was seen as a process that contributed to objectivising the sacred phenomenon as a conscious and fundamentally shared exercise, as the sensorial experience required a materiality that magnified it (Esteban *et al.* 2014: 104). It was accredited with special qualities that increased the power of those sensorial experiences. It also had an important symbolic content in relation to the manifestation of the sacred, standing out in some cases as central places to which a cosmological significance was attributed (López-Bertran 2011: 92). This was sometimes reinforced by the presence of prior occupations (prehistoric rock art, earlier levels of occupation, etc.) that may have been used as instruments for ritualising the memory of the landscape, the ritual practices and the mythologies (Alfayé 2011: 162–163). We present some study cases in the following section.

3 Cognitive Models and Modes of Religiosity: Readings From the Iberian Religious Context

The ritual and the liturgical rules make up the keystone through which we wish to approach diverse aspects related to the analysis of the subjectivities inherent in these practices and the cognitive models identifiable in the heterogeneous map of religious manifestations in caves. Taking this idea as our basis, we aim to approach the models of religious behaviour perceptible in the worship carried out in caves as spaces of learning and experience, often accompanied by a strong emotional charge. To our contexts we apply proposals from social anthropology that focus on the identification of modes of religiosity and on how beliefs, experiences and ritual actions were organised. In this way, we include one of the theories with the greatest reach that focuses on the differentiation of two models of religiosity, doctrinal and imagistic, mainly paying attention to variables in their form, participation, frequency, dissemination and memory (Whitehouse 2002, 2004). These models oppose and/or complement each other as methods of determining religious and ritual actions.

	<i>Doctrinal</i>	<i>Imagistic</i>
Form	Repetition	Intense emotion/ motivation
Participation	Hierarchical (leaders)	Collectivity/ Personal
Frequency	High frequency	Low frequency
Dissemination	Easy (routinised)	Difficult (community)
Memory	<i>Semantic memory</i>	<i>Episodic memories</i>

Fig. 2—Main variables to be considered in the Doctrinal and the Imagistic mode (following Whitehouse 2000, 2004).

Thus, the first model (doctrinal) alludes to those practices that correspond to reiterative patterns, while the second (imagistic) model is characterised by the intervention of an intense emotional charge that becomes an enduring lasting sensation of revelation. The heterogeneity of the Iberian religious landscape allows us to apply identification and classification tests following these theoretical guidelines. In this way we analyse how they were incorporated into the religious space in caves and whether they were exclusionary models or, in contrast, they can be read in a complementary manner (Fig. 2).

We begin with the idea of that most of the cave worship areas were governed by fundamentally imagistic models of religiosity that included an important emotional charge fostered in rites led by a small number of people. In this context, the pilgrimage to the sacred place and the experiences in the cave provided stimuli that affected certain psychic properties that conditioned and magnified the religious experience. Deliberating on the fine line that separates the ambit of daily life from the space of the supernatural in itself implies an inspirational effect that has a clearly sensorial derivation, although the motivations for the worship may have been diverse. Below we present some brief examples that illustrate the importance of the imagistic mode in caves as the basic form of ritual organisation. Nevertheless, we observe that in certain political territories the two models complemented each other.

La Piedra del Águila (Orcera, Jaén) (mid-4th century-late 3rd century BC) is an example of a sanctuary that marked the limit of the *ager* of a local community that occupied a strategic territory situated at the entrance to the present-day Sierra de Segura mountains and whose capital was the *oppidum* of Bujalamé (Puerta de Segura, Jaén) (Fig. 1b). It delimits a frontier space at the same time as it defines the limit of the agricultural expansion and colonisation around the left bank of the River Guadalimar and its tributary, the River Trujala, an immediate area of influence characterised by its excellent agricultural potential. This sanctuary became a nearby visual reference, a landmark to which pilgrimages would be made on a mobility scale of proximity and a return journey.

Worship in this cave was understood in this context and was materialised in rites of agricultural propitiation. The ritual was carried out entirely inside the cave, creating very interesting symbolic relations, to the extent that it did not intervene exclusively as a thesaurus, but also functioned as space in which all or most of the ceremonial chain was carried out. The ritual actions were channelled through the lighting of fires in which offerings (mainly cereals and pulses)

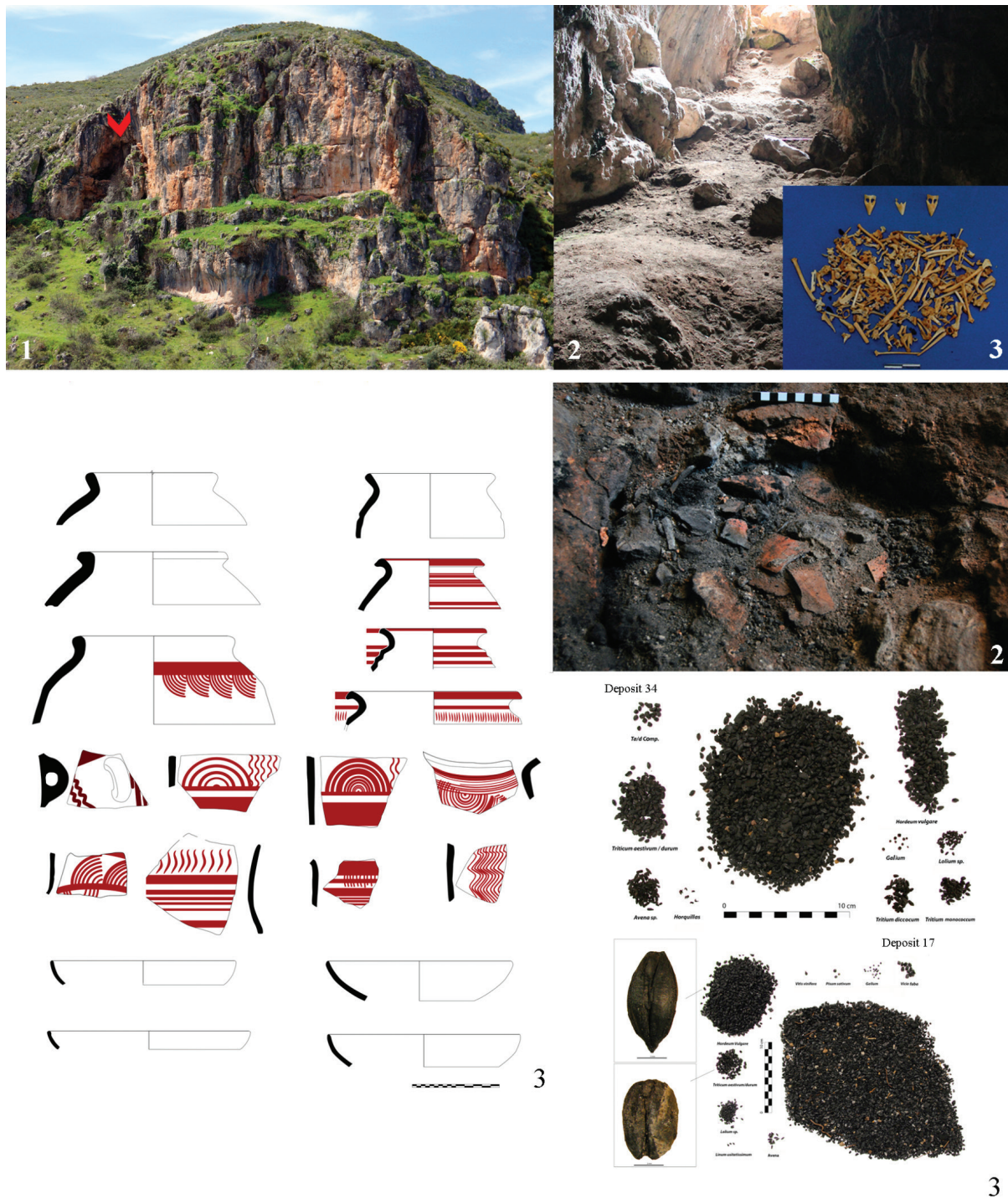


Fig. 3—Piedra del Águila: location (1), inside/deposit area (2) and more representative materials (3).

and more residually animals (birds, ovicaprines, swine and canids in small numbers) were carbonised and then deposited in pottery receptacles (that were intentionally broken) and esparto containers (Fig. 3) (Rueda, Bellón 2016). The ritual cycle ended with the sealing of the votive deposits, possibly aimed at preserving the physiognomy of the offering exactly as it had been made, turning the cave into a depository of the collective memory.

Fire and the cave floor were two of the main variables. Fire was a key element for purification, as well as for the

conservation of the offering. For example, the carbonisation of the plant matter, undoubtedly intentional and controlled, guaranteed the preservation of the structure of grain, a sought-after process as the final deposit of the remains of these rituals was in pits dug in the floor of the cave itself (Fig. 3.3). No alterations were made to the internal structure of the cave; on the contrary, the natural features of the space were incorporated, and its innermost parts acted as a suitable conduit to “nourish” the divinity. These are patterns of symbolic behaviour characterised by their

reiteration over time and in the same space and reflect the eternal return to the rite and the cyclical behaviour linked to the agricultural calendar.

Nevertheless, the exclusivity in the composition of the deposits tells us that the mechanisms were regulated up to a certain point, with each deposit being slightly different to the previous one. Memory was built through multiple voices, with no restrictive range (in other words, it is not possible to define a social hierarchy through the rite). There were diverse ways of communicating with the divinity (through nature) and we can highlight such examples as the deposit with the offering of three birds. Contexts such as this reveal powerful local-scale social cohesion processes based on an imagistic model.

Cueva del Sapo in Chiva and Cueva Merinel in Bugarra, both just a few metres from the River Turia (Valencia), are cave ritual spaces that mark the southwestern limit of the *oppidum* of Edeta (Llíria, Valencia) (Fig. 1c). Both caves are distanced from the territory's places of habitat between the 5th and the 3rd centuries BC (Machause 2019): 22 km and 29 km respectively from the *oppidum* of Edeta. This would have entailed journeys of at least six or seven hours between the settlement and the caves (Machause, Diez in prep.)⁵. Although they are physically different spaces—a simple descending gallery in the case of El Sapo (Fig. 4.1) and a cavity with three accesses and various interconnecting rooms full of karstic formations in the case of Merinel (Fig. 4.2)—they both contain sensorial elements relating to the landscape, access and symbolic performance.

Cueva del Sapo is linked to various ritual deposits discovered in the northeastern area of the cave. Although the natural slope of the site, as well as the repeated clandestine digs, hinder a comprehensive reading of these deposits, recent excavations have identified two zones with offering practices and different types of participation. On the one hand, we have the main deposit area (approximately 4 x 3 m) situated at the end of the slope, in which up to four people could have participated. On the other, there is a small crevice (maximum width barely 40 cm 1 m long and an unknown maximum height) that opens towards the south at a height 2 m of at the end of the cavity, in which there would only have been space for one person.

Among the ritual practices developed at El Sapo, we identify both individual and collective practices. The main process is linked to a hunting ritual, probably collective, and an offering of deer and ovicaprids (Machause *et al.* 2014; Machause and Sanchis 2015). The hunt and the subsequent offering of animals, as well as the deposit of diverse pottery vessels and metal objects, including a fibula and other ornamental items, that share space and time with an atypical inhumation, symbolise different rites of passage. Of particular note among them is a key initiation rite for the Iberian aristocratic societies: the hunt, which is materialised in the pottery images of various territories (Machause, Sanchis 2015: Fig. 6) (Fig. 4.3).

A votive area has been identified in Cueva Merinel; it is surrounded and compartmentalised by several karstic

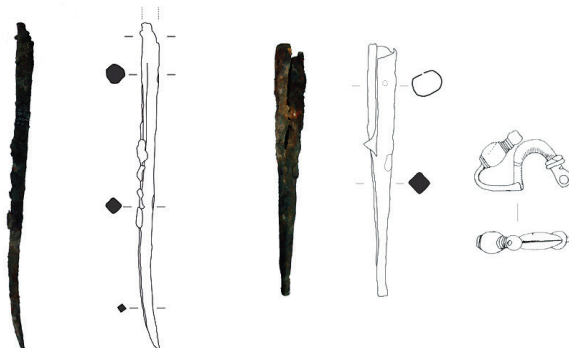
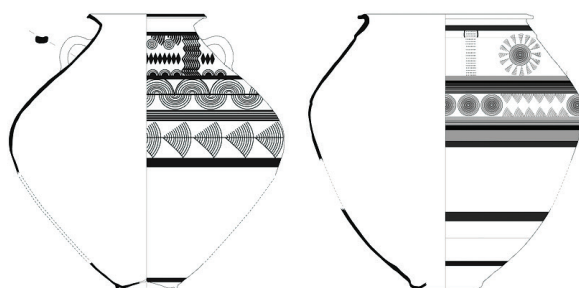
formations that divide the space into three different zones. This room is one of the best hidden and distanced from any natural light seeping in through the cave entrances. As with the crevice in Cueva del Sapo, in this room it is the cave itself that limited direct participation in the final ritual of the offering to just one or two people. Nevertheless, a larger group of people could have been indirect witnesses (although not visual ones) to this performance from the areas near the deposit. The offering practice focused on the repeated deposits of animals (the crania of young swine and ovicaprids), most of which were deposited in pottery vessels and on pottery plates (Martínez Perona 1992; Blay 1992).

El Sapo and Merinel are two caves that, although they share the symbolic power of the journey and the setting, were witness to diverse ritual practices. Despite the fact that the types of offering demonstrate a certain degree of reiteration—focused on the offering of animals, vessels and plates (*doctrinal* model)—the ritual density of both spaces implies a limited frequentation that would have provided unique and unrepeatable experiences for certain social groups. In these experiences a fundamental role would probably have been played by the combinations of light and shade produced by the specific shape of the cave (see C. Esteban's article in this volume: chapter 7), thus entering into the *imagistic* model. They were multisensorial experiences that denote the ritual practice initiated with the journey, continuing by entering the cave and culminating with access to the darkest areas where the ritual was finalised through the offering ceremonies.

La Cova dels Pilars (Agres, Alicante) is a sanctuary within a cave that evidences ritual activity dating mainly between the mid-5th and the late 4th centuries BC, a very similar chronology to that attested in other caves in the region. As in the previous cases, the analysis of the territorial dimension is of key importance, as the cave is located on the slopes of the Serra de Mariola mountains, overlooking the fluvial corridor that functioned as an important communications route in an area that was densely populated in the Iberian period, as was the central area of Contestania. Likewise, this cave acted as a landmark in the landscape that marked the border between two important political territories presided over by the *oppida* of La Covalta and El Cabeçó de Mariola, a territorial model we attest in other caves in this mountainous region (Grau, Amorós 2013) (Fig. 1d). As with the caves in Edeta, the visit to La Cova dels Pilars involved a journey of several hours on which the pilgrims gradually distanced themselves from their everyday environment in the surroundings of the settlements to enter the dense forests of the mountain slopes on which the cave is located.

This space does not appear to have been chosen by chance, especially if we note its physical and morphological characteristics, which include a large visor that makes it visible from a certain distance and below which there is an entrance corridor (Fig. 5.1). Once inside, there is a large room (25 x 10 m) with space for a relatively large group of people to gather; it is lit ethereally from three orifices above the cave's visor and has large stalagmitic formations (Fig. 5.2). In the deepest part of the cave there is another smaller area that can only be accessed by crouching and that receives no natural light. It is here that offerings were documented (Fig. 5.3).

5. These data are from the least-cost routes between the *oppidum* of Edeta and Cueva Merinel and Cueva del Sapo. The relationship between these caves and other places of habitat forms part of a more complex territorial analysis that is currently being carried out.



3



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Fig. 4—Cueva del Sapo (1), Cueva Merinel (2) and more representative materials found in both caves (3).

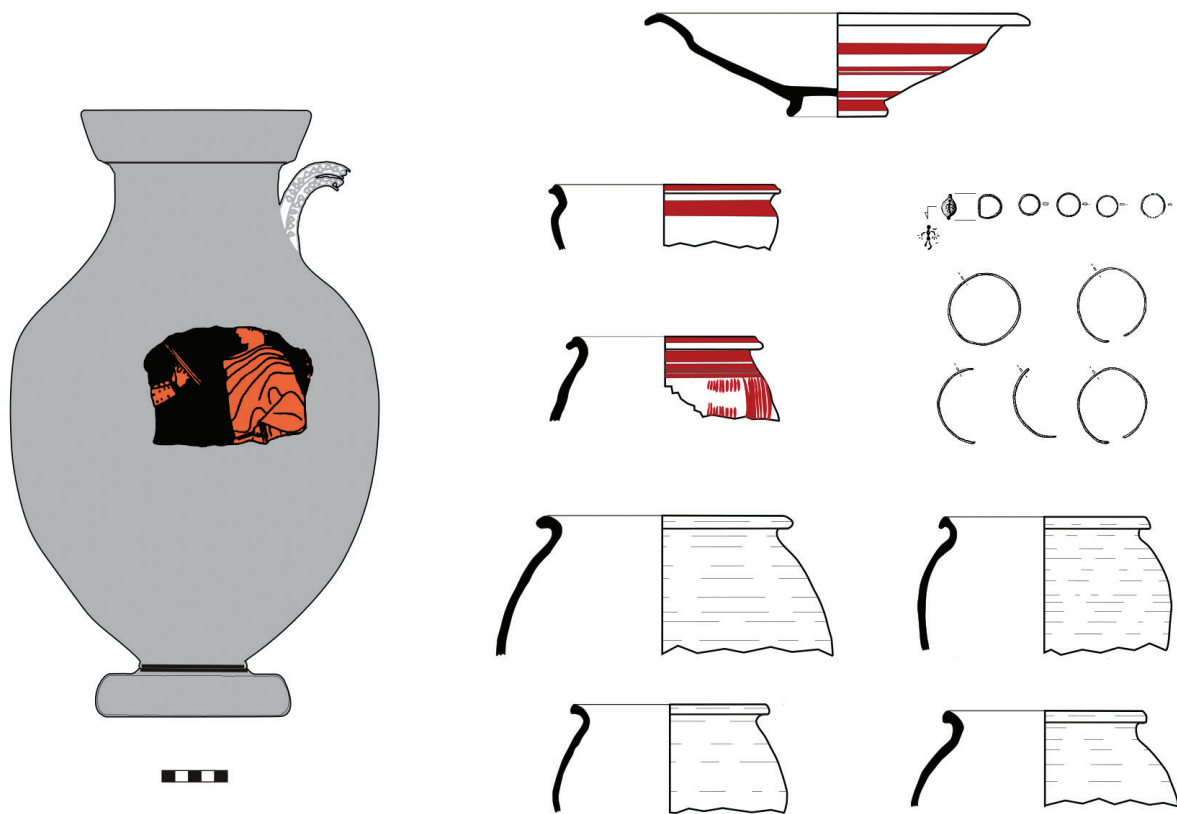
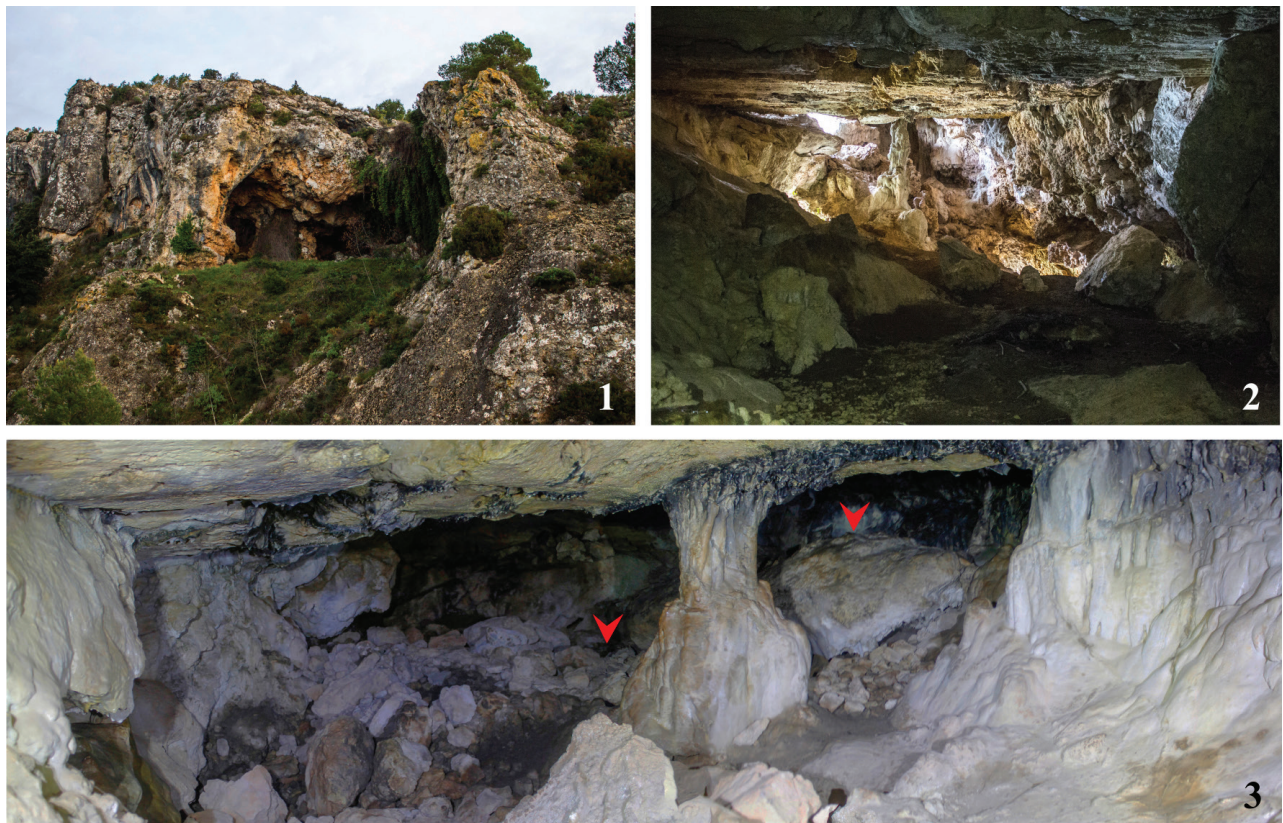


Fig. 5—Cova dels Pilars: access (1), open space (2), deposit area (3) and more representative materials (4).



Fig. 6—Collado de los Jardines (1), Cueva de la Lobera (2) and more representative bronze figurines (3).

It is, therefore, a natural space that induces inward contemplation and alteration of ordinary perception, both in its wooded surroundings and in the rocky interior. This would have brought it closer to the *imagistic* mode of empathetic fixation through the experience of the exceptional atmosphere of the cave. To this experience we have to add the emotional impact on the visitors of the presence of human remains related to both Neolithic and Bronze Age pottery, a pattern that is repeated in practically all the caves used for rituals we have studied in this part of Contestania. Those ancient bones, which would have been partially visible to the visiting Iberians who subsequently performed their ritual activities there, could have been interpreted as vestiges of the ancestors, returning the visitors to a hazy mythical time and reinforcing the identity of the local communities and their close connection with the territory (Grau, Amorós 2013: 206).

Focusing on the archaeological record from Iberian period, we document a varied assemblage consisting mainly

of pottery, both Iberian and imported. Of particular note is an exceptional Attic red-figure amphora with two scenes related to the youth initiation rite and a set of 127 cooking pots that could either be linked to commensality practices or to the offering of produce from the land (Fig. 5.4) (Grau 1996; Grau, Olmos 2005). This offering, clearly reiterated in the same type of object, leads us to believe that there were ritual practices that followed a prescribed form, which brings us closer to the *doctrinal* mode of religiosity. Along the same lines, we could interpret a set of small bronze rings, to which we can add a set of hoops of the same metal, possibly linked to the transformation of the body image, leaving behind the elements linked to childhood, in the case of young women related to plaits.

However, other examples open up diverse possibilities in which we see a clear combination of the properties of both modes of religiosity. There is no contradiction in this, in so far as there are not two forms of religiosity, but rather ways

of organising the religious experience and its practices. A concrete example could clarify this idea. We are referring specifically to the vast territory of Cástulo (Linares, Jaén) and its sanctuaries, Collado de los Jardines (Santa Elena, Jaén) and Cueva de la Lobera (Castellar, Jaén) (mid-4th-3rd centuries BC), that contributed to the organisation of a very large religious community (Fig. 6) (Rueda *et al.* 2008; Rueda 2011). Worship in these cave areas began with a pilgrimage within the territory, starting from different towns and taking up to several days to reach the sanctuaries. Once there, they held very important practices for the society (rites of passage, nuptial rites, aggregation rites, couple and fertility rites, healing rituals, etc.) (Rueda 2013; Rísquez *et al.* 2018).

There are variables that define those contexts from the doctrinal model. Thus, the scale of participation itself (a very extensive community that encompassed various lineage groups) and an equally large frequentation translated into deposits of several thousand offerings, among which the more than 7000 bronze figurines stand out (Rueda 2011; Prados *et al.* 2018) (Fig. 6.3). On the other hand, the rite was channelled through reiterated behaviours of which the bronze iconography was the principal means of expression. In this way were established the different corporal expressions (gestures) that contributed to the learning (organised around the principal phases of the life and social cycle) and to orientating the adaptative conduct and ritual behaviour. Thus, reiteration led to implicit behavioural habits that occurred independently of thought or conscious control. Without doubt, complex performances were involved in the formalisation of the ritual and these can be read in the archaeological record. This is an eye-catching feature of the doctrinal model in which the rituality was organised around processes that were by no means simplistic and that, in some cases involved the transformation of the very person (for example by cutting their hair or placing masks on them). Another important feature is that this rule allowed and favoured a clear class distinction, plainly differentiating between the aristocracy and their clientele through the votive image of the offerings and the hierarchisation of the space in both sanctuaries.

However, from our point of view, these features did not invalidate or restrict intensive emotional experiences in which diverse mechanisms also mediated. One example is the presence, in the case of Cueva de la Lobera, of a visual phenomenon interpreted as a solar hierophany that occurred inside the cave during the equinoxes (Esteban *et al.* 2014) (Fig. 6.2). This phenomenon, which would have been incorporated into the actions and times of the ritual, may have acted as catalyser, to the extent that it reproduced an archetype of the feminine that can be recognised in the collective imaginary, a perceived image that played an important role as an element of social cohesion and that could have magnified intensive sensorial experiences. They would have been sensorial and visual experiences specific to that historical moment and would have contributed to creating a conduit of sensorial empathy based on which collective subjectivities and identities would have been built. They would also have contributed to creating the narratives and mythologies, in other words, the memory of these communities.

Conclusions

The re-readings that can be made based on the application of these theories regarding modes of religiosity enrich the analytical perspectives and offer us new possibilities for revising the archaeological record and incorporating all the possible variables. Moreover, they involve an analysis of those factors that have to do with the subjectivities and their conceptualisation that are implicit in the religious experience. Methodologically therefore they reaffirm the need to overcome the passive concept of the materiality of the objects and to delve more deeply into aspects that go beyond mere visual representations, investigating the channels of sensorial and emotive empathy. The task will be to approach the “cognitive geographies” that offer a fruitful analytical route in the religious space and on the ritual plain.

On the other hand, the heterogeneity of the Iberian religious landscape allows us to appreciate how both ways of organising the religious experience are manifested in contemporary religious contexts. Not everything is based on the nature of the cult, to the extent that similar modes of religiosity organise rituals originating in diverse motivations. Therefore, in cave sanctuaries it is necessary to apply analyses on different scales that explain their functionality in the territorial context, as well as their role in identity-building on a social level.

The scales are necessarily involved in the organisation of the worship. Here, the *imagistic* mode is a basic-primary form of ritual organisation that becomes more complicated in the more complex political territories. In them the intervention of a doctrinal mode is necessary, although without categorically excluding the religious experiences created by sensorial phenomena. This can mainly be seen in hierarchised territorial pyramids, in which the political structures required collective cohesion processes that went beyond the regional scale. The mode of religiosity in these contexts contributed to the organisation and perpetuation of the social order, to regulating political alliances (for example through the ritual sanctioning of marriage) and to reforming the channels of aggregation. These processes can be read above all up to the late 3rd century BC, when Rome brought about their breakup by incorporating a much more stratified doctrinal model.

This is a line of study that we have barely outlined here, but it has tremendous potential in the Iberian religious space.

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