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FINIGLACIAL ART (STYLE VAZILIAN).

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ART FORMS AND CONTEXTUALIZATION
OF THE CÔA AND SIEGA VERDE ENSEMBLES

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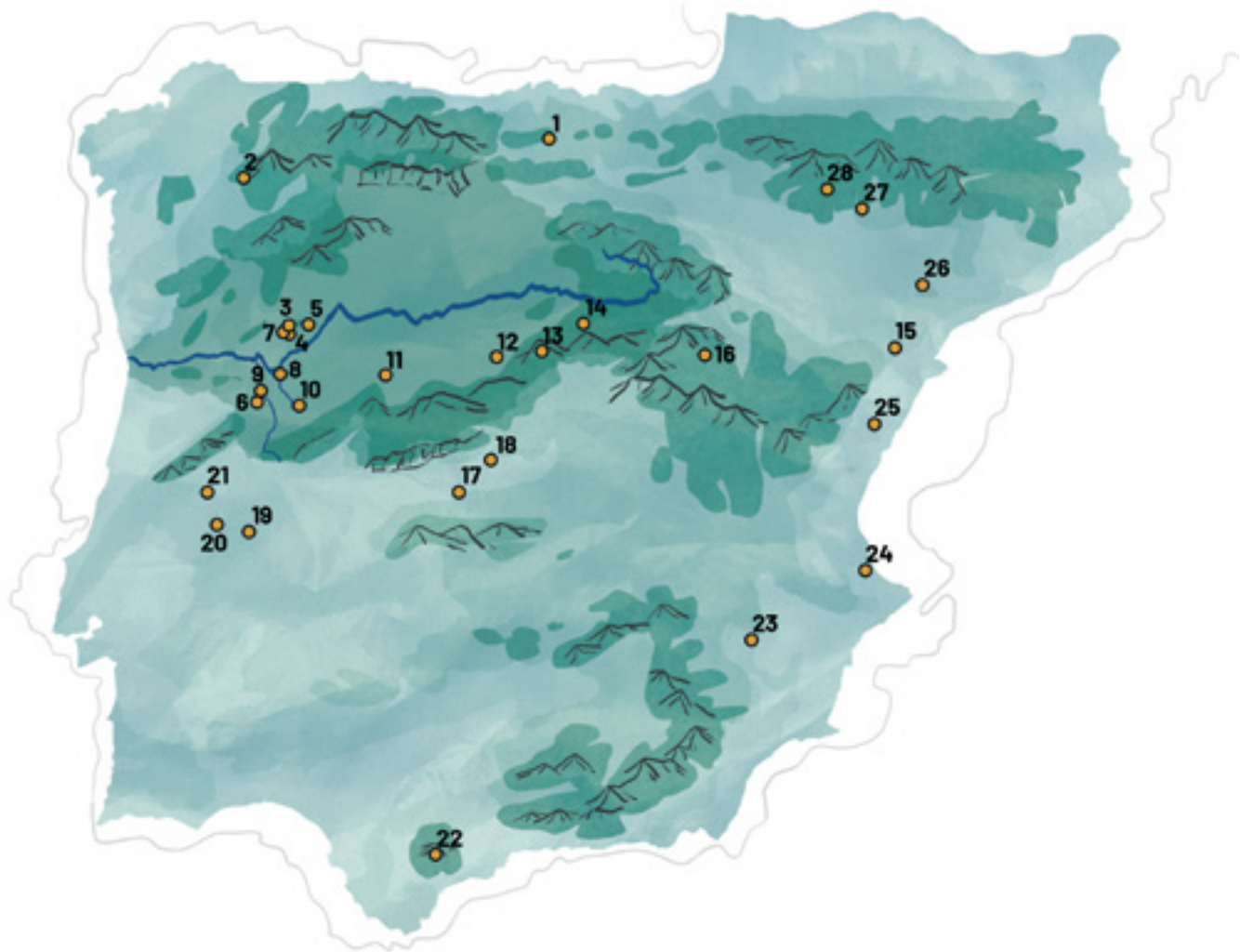
Until almost the end of the 20th century, figurative Pleistocene art was assumed to have ended around 14,000 years ago. The only known art forms after that time consisted of geometric repertoires like the ones identified on the Azilian pebbles, a late Pleistocene chronoculture identified in France and in northern Spain.

Excavations of the French sites at Murat, La Borie-del-Rey and Pont d'Ambon demonstrated that, at least in France, there was portable figurative art that ran parallel to the creation of the Azilian pebbles. Even some parietal figures in the Gouy Cave were attributed to this epoch. Their characteristics were defined over time by several authors, such as Rousot, Lorblanchet, d'Errico and Guy.

On the Iberian Peninsula, the Sant Gregori plaque, attributed to this time period, was interpreted as the nexus between figurative and Levantine art. Some figures from the ensemble of engravings along the Tagus were also attributed to the Epipalaeolithic, already in the Holocene, that is, later than 12,000 BP.

The study and documentation of the open-air site at Siega Verde provided evidence of images superimposed on those from the Upper Palaeolithic, whose interpretation corresponded to the archaeological information from French sites, in addition to the data that was starting to be collected from the Côa sites and the C¹⁴ dating of the Palomera Cave in Burgos. The correlation between the dates obtained at the decorated open-air sites, the aforementioned French locations and the Palomera Cave allowed us to define, in 2007, a single ensemble of figurative and geometric images of both portable and parietal art on the Iberian Peninsula, created over an extensive period between 14,000 and 8,000 BP.

Some of these images are small, incised figures filled with repeated lines or geometric shapes. They have elongated or globular bodies – but always diverging from the proportions of classical Palaeolithic art – poorly finished legs,



- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 Cueva Palomera
(Ojo Guareña) | 8 Arroyo de las Almas | 16 Cave of los Casares | 24 Cave of Parpalló |
| 2 Cova Eirós | 9 Fariseu | 17 Arroyo Manzanas | 25 Abric d'en Melià |
| 3 Pedra d'Asma | 10 Siega Verde | 18 Covacho de la Higuera | 26 Caves of El Cogull |
| 4 Cabeço do Aguilhão | 11 Paraje de la Salud | 19 Cave of Maltravieso | 27 Abric del Àngel |
| 5 Passadeiro | 12 Domingo Garcia | 20 Santiago de Alcántara | 28 Cave of Chaves |
| 6 Faia | 13 Cave of la Griega | 21 Almourão | |
| 7 Parada | 14 La Peña de Estebanvela | 22 Cave of La Pileta | |
| | 15 Abric del Àngel | 23 Rock-shelter of Minateda | |

Fig. 1. Map with distribution of the main sites with Finiglacial artistic manifestations.

and no anatomical details except for antlers or manes. Others were created using the pecking technique. They maintain the typical themes and concepts of Palaeolithic art, such as vertical layouts, one animal below another, layouts aligned with the ground, which is never depicted, accumulations and superimpositions. Small and quickly executed, they share portable and parietal supports with Palaeolithic-style animal figures as well as with human figures. The dates of the Palomera Cave paintings offered a powerful argument to support

this contemporaneity, continuity and change rooted in the evolution of the pictographs of the Magdalenian hunters. A new C¹⁴ dating series obtained by A.I. Ortega's team has confirmed these dates. Another cave painted with black figures of this style and time period was documented in the northwest, at Cova Eirós, expanding the number and scope of parietal records.

Excavations of the open-air site at Fariseu, in the Côa Valley, made a fundamental contribution to determine the dates of these images. The dating of its layer 4 (using C¹⁴ and thermoluminescence) to around 12,000 BP made it possible to determine the age of a collection of 85 engraved and painted pieces with a similar figurative repertoire to that of some panels in the Côa Valley, Siega Verde and other stations along the Douro, confirming the Alcalá team's 2007 hypothesis.

The impact of the Siega Verde and the Côa Valley studies caused these types of images to be reinterpreted throughout the Iberian Peninsula, including some figures in Levante, Cantabria, Andalusia, the Tagus Basin and along the Guadiana, in addition to the figures described along the Douro.

The long diachrony in the use of these locations, both open air and cave sites, demonstrates the role of graphic markers in the traditional Palaeolithic territories occupied by hunter-gatherers in southern Europe.

FARISEU PORTABLE ART IN THE CONTEXT OF THE END OF THE UPPER PALAEOOLITHIC'S GRAPHIC PRODUCTION IN THE CÔA VALLEY

The site is located on the left side of the Côa Valley, at the bottom of Fariseu Hill. The hill 'goes into' the river, forming a meander that protected the accumulated archaeological levels from the river's erosive action detected throughout the valley.

Burnt quartzite pebbles from Fariseu's layer 4 were dated by thermoluminescence and were found to have been burned 11,000 ±1,100 BP, 10,800 ±1,700 BP, and 11,800 ±900 BP. Animal bones were also collected at this level, two of which were dated using C¹⁴ to periods between 12,675–12,207 BP and 11,801–10,780 BP. Additionally, an important ensemble of lithic artifacts was found, attributable to the recent Azilian, whose presence in the Côa Valley is now undeniable. These dates, together with the sedimentological characteristics, associated layer 4 with a cold phase that may have corresponded to the final stage of the Pleistocene, which transitioned to the Holocene around 11,700 BP.

The portable art series is made up of eighty five engraved and four painted pieces. Among them, only eight appeared outside of layer 4, while two were in a context that was clearly earlier. The latter are two pigmented pebbles used during the site's Magdalenian phase. These 89 pieces are perhaps only a small sample of what would be found at this location, since an area representing less than 10% of the site has been excavated.

The painted pieces are pebbles. On one of them, made of quartzite, we observe an anthropomorphic figure scraped over a layer of red pigment previously



Fig.2. Parietal art: small bovids and a large anthropomorph in red pigment. Faia. Côa, as per Bueno *et al.*, 2007, fig. 9 (Photograph by R. de Balbín).

applied to the pebble. A similar technique was detected using DStretch – a technology for the colorimetric analysis of digital photographic reproductions – on another granite pebble at the same level. We observe a schematic human figure associated with a possible red deer, a composition reminiscent of those documented at Riparo Dalmeri, Italy.

The red base of the painted pieces could have been achieved in the engraved pieces by burning them before engraving them, such as it was identified in several of them. All the engraved pieces are schist, and while some are pebbles, most are plaques and plaquettes.

Although there are some isolated peckings, or circular groups of peckings, the majority show fine incisions. The repertoire is abstract in nature, with an emphasis on lines, as is commonplace across southwestern Europe throughout this period. There are also some complex forms, such as reticulated and filled oval shapes.

A total of 92 figurative motifs have been identified. Most are representations of male and female red deer of different ages, from fawns to young and adult specimens. They are followed by caprids, bovids, horses and anthropomorphic figures. All have markedly geometric bodies filled with incised lines, linear limbs and sometimes distinctions between triangular hindquarters and linear legs. Neither the heads nor the bodies have anatomical details. The limbs, horns and antlers are shown from a twisted or semi-twisted perspective, while the bodies are shown directly from the side. The majority of the anthropomorphic figures are shown from a front view.

Based on this stratigraphically contextualised collection, we have been able to precisely date similar figures on more than 500 rocks distributed across 52 sites in the Côa Valley (Phase 4 of Côa Valley parietal art), as indicated in the previous chapter. We were thus able to include in this phase figures that had been attributed to the most recent prehistoric periods, such as some of the human and animal images from the Faia site.

As observed with the portable art, the rock art from this period in the Côa Valley is dominated by cervids, followed by caprids, which are both dominant species at the other contemporary sites of the Douro Valley. They are followed by horses and fish, and to a lesser extent, bovids and human figures.

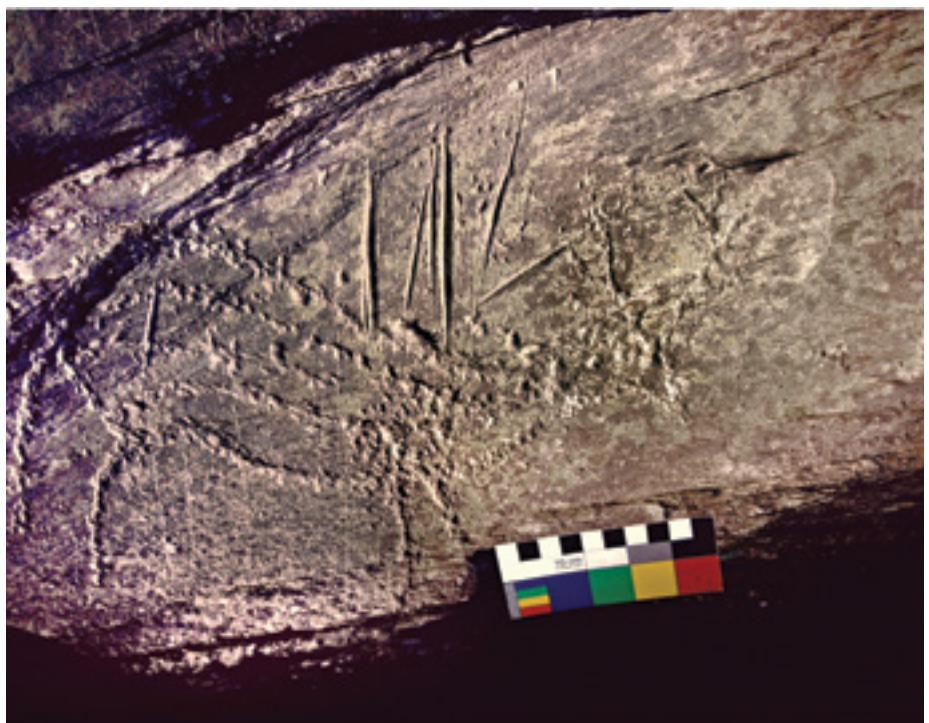
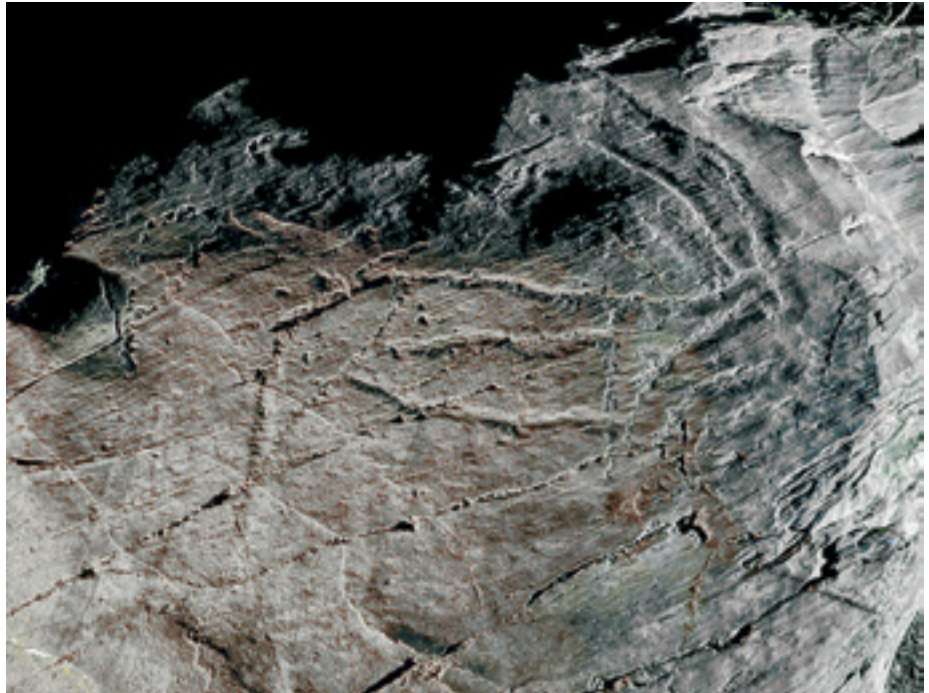


Fig.3. Parietal art: Up: pecked ibex, Zézere. (Photograph by the Côa Foundation Museum); Under: pecked red deer, Passadeiro, as per Sanches and Teixeira, 2014. (Photograph by Joana C. Teixeira).



Fig.4. Parietal art: Left: triangle surrounded by incised lines from the Vale of José Esteves rock shelter, Côa, Portugal; Right: red deer, Vermelhana (Photographs by R. de Balbín).

OTHER SITES WITH FINIGLACIAL ART IN THE DOURO BASIN

Additional decorated stations have been identified in the Portuguese area of the Douro. The most outstanding ones are in the Sabor Valley. Among them is that of Pedra d'Asma 7, with incised figures very similar to those of Phase 4 of the Côa Valley: a caprid and eight geometric figures. In the same area, other pecked representations that were attributed to the Holocene are known, but some, such as the Cabeço do Aguilhão red deer, the one in Passadeiro or the Parada figures, could be even older.

As has been pointed out, a large part of the Palaeolithic art sites is concentrated in the central and eastern areas of the Douro Valley. They include at least two large open-air sites, Siega Verde and Domingo García, two caves, Palomera and La Griega, a significant collection of portable art in the Estebanvela rock shelter and some isolated pieces.

At Siega Verde, the small figures and Finiglacial symbols were found in both the oldest and most recent areas of the site, reflecting attempt at appropriation of the previously made ensemble of figures, which was probably more visible than it is today. The discoveries have grown, making it necessary to update the quantity, location and variety of these images. Among the new contributions, the most complete panel is found at the start of the path down to the River Águeda Bridge, in a higher, more visible position than most panels



at the site. Some isolated figures have also been identified on small panels. Others are practically buried in the ground today, which makes it difficult to detect them, confirming the need for archaeological interventions.

New sites in the vicinity of Siega Verde point to an organisation similar to that of the Côa Valley. La Salud (along the Tormes) features a rock with geometric symbols over a Palaeolithic pecked horse, a superimposition documented on panel 48 at Siega Verde. These superimpositions are also found at the site of Arroyo de las Almas, along with panels where only Style V figures are observed. Both locations are probably larger sites that will require intensive survey.

Domingo García, in Segovia, has several decorated ensembles that can be followed to the Guadarrama Mountains, again reminiscent of models like that of the Côa Valley, which would have to be confirmed. Style V images are superimposed on Palaeolithic figures, although many panels with small incised figures still require a detailed study, like the rest of the site.

The most famous evidence of parietal cave art is found in the aforementioned paintings in the Palomera Cave. Some of the figures in La Griega Cave are related to this group, especially quadrupeds filled with geometric and triangular symbols.

Estebanvela is a rock shelter in the province of Segovia. On its portable art, we find the same associations that demonstrated the coexistence between naturalistic figures, sometimes accompanied by geometric components, Style

Fig. 5. Parietal art: Left: ensemble of lines incised in zig zags. Siega Verde, photograph by R. de Balbín; Right: portable art, plaque 44 layer 4 at Fariseu, Côa; zoomorph with upper band of geometric infill. (Photograph by José Paulo Ruas).



Fig. 6. Parietal art: Up: incised fish, panel 48 at Siega Verde. (Photograph by R. de Balbín); Portable art: Under: Plaque 04, anthropomorph incised with vertical lines that are associated with a semicircular head. (Photograph by José Paulo Ruas).

V images and Azilian pebbles at sites in the South of France. The datings of these layers coincide with what is also documented on the other side of the Pyrenees.

Caprids and cervids are the most common zoomorphic figures in Siega Verde, La Salud, Domingo García and the Palomera Cave, being less present in La Griega and Los Casares. They are joined by bovids and horses at Arroyo de las Almas and especially horses in Los Casares. Some unique themes such as fish appear in Siega Verde and the Côa Valley, as well as signs shaped as compartmentalised rectangles and triangles, sometimes in *fil de fer*. All of these parietal and portable art sites coincide on these themes and the prominence of geometric shapes that are isolated or associated with naturalistic figures. But there is also a theme that contributes a fresh interpretation of the records in southern Europe. We are referring to the human figures, whose age we have inferred in the Côa Valley, was confirmed by the direct dating similar figures of the Palomera Cave. Large anthropomorphic figures with open arms, using forms perpetuated on the earliest Neolithic pottery, with ages of 11,000 BP. Other types are clearly schematic art, situating the oldest versions of Iberian schematic art in the Finiglacial cultures.

At many of these sites, these figures remain present at more recent times, confirming the hypothesis of the continued use and relevance of these sites throughout the Prehistoric Period.



SITES ON THE IBERIAN PENINSULA WITH STYLE V REPRESENTATIONS

Elsewhere on the Iberian Peninsula, the most extensive records of this figurative art on rock surfaces are found in the open-air sites along the Tagus and the Guadiana, as well as in Levante, Andalusia and Cantabria.

The territorial and cultural proximity between the Tagus Basin and the Douro Basin is inarguable, which is why Los Casares is usually included in this area. The same happens with the portable art of the Cave of Maltravieso (Cáceres) and Covacho de la Higuera, with the Azilian pebbles of Arroyo Manzanas (Madrid), and with the cavities in the Patones area, also in Madrid, and of the broader Guadalajara ensemble. The painted pebbles in Arroyo Manzanas, in the course of the Tagus, confirm the role of Azilian pebbles in the inland areas of the Iberian Peninsula. The best-preserved sample has wavy lines in red mixed with charcoal black, with C¹⁴ dating of 9,000 BP.

Los Casares provides updated information. In area A, a decorated panel with small, incised figures of horses, anthropomorphic figures and signs is related to the archaeological context excavated below it, now under study.

The open-air engravings along the Tagus, like those along the Guadiana and the Douro, are distributed along both banks. As observed in Andalusia and Levante, these sites coincide with an abundant inventory of paintings that cannot

Fig. 7. Parietal art: Left: scene with three incised little ibexes arranged below another one, panel 48. Siega Verde; Right: parietal art, horse painted and repainted in red pigment, Almourão, Tagus, Portugal. (Photographs by R. de Balbín).

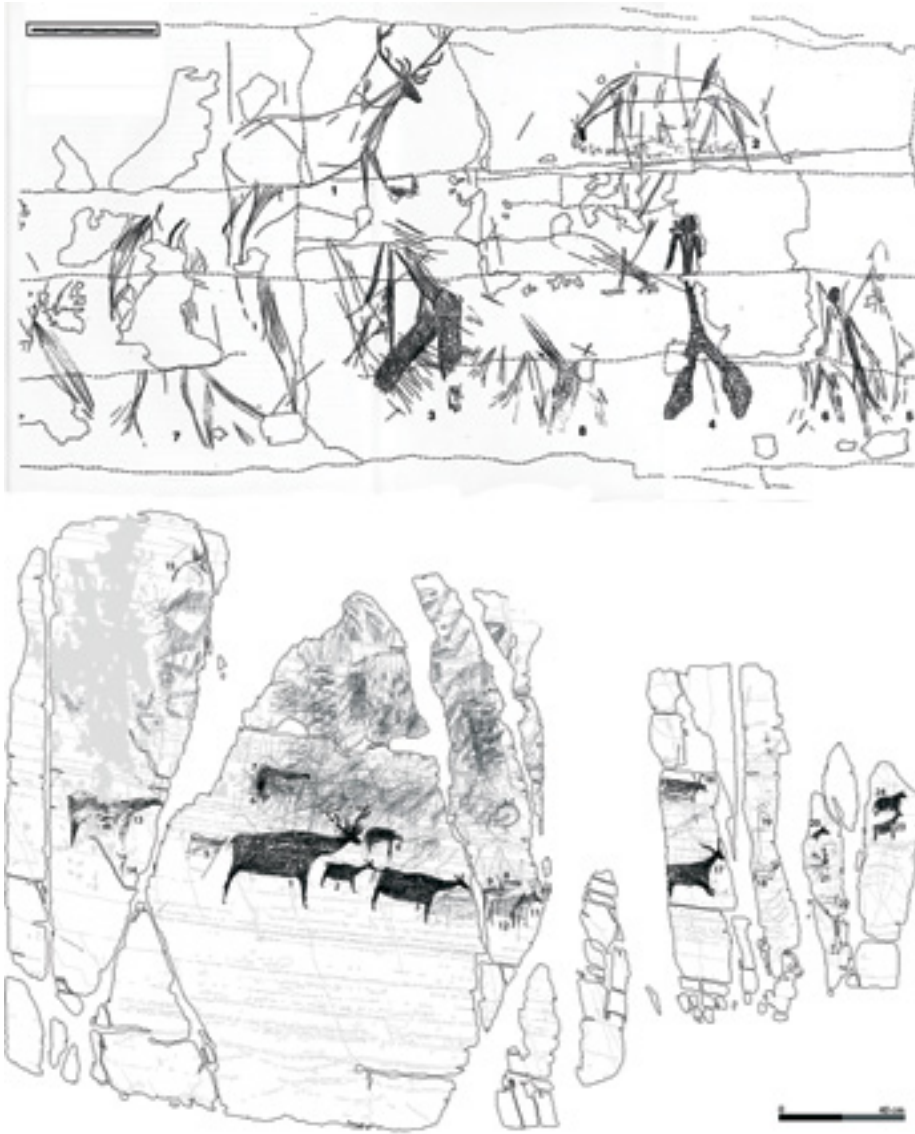


Fig.8. Tracings of parietal features dated between 14,000 and 8,000 BP.

Up: panel with incised engravings from Barranco del Ángel, as per Utrilla and Villaverde, 2004.

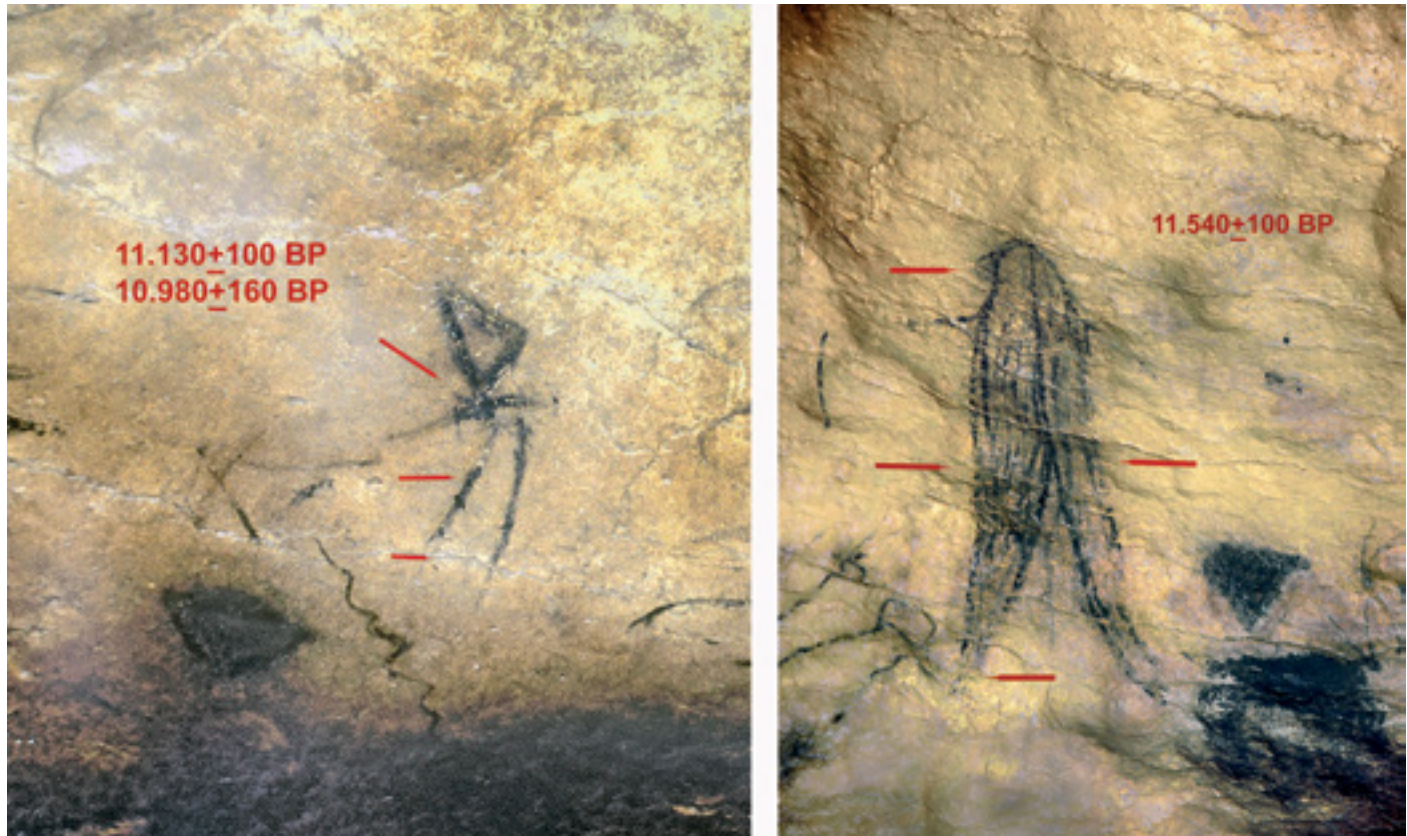
Under. Vale de José Esteves rock shelter, Côa, as per A. T. Santos, 2019, fig. 154.

and should not be treated in isolation from all the art forms of the same style. Proof of this is the painted horse in the Almourão rock shelter, which is located in a topographically prominent sector, on the rocks of the river with peckings and incisions from these time periods. While the Spanish area still requires exploration, the efforts made to date have had positive results. This is the case of the works in Santiago de Alcántara, Cáceres, where engravings were found on the rocks near the river and Palaeolithic and Style V paintings, and schematic depictions were found on the rock shelters in the foothills of the sector. Rocks with Palaeolithic engravings have been identified in Toledo as well, along with schematic depictions in places that would require systematic documentation. Its painted rock shelters suggest occupation during this phase, as is the case of the caves in Madrid and especially in Guadalajara, some of which are related to the Levantine designation, with painted images that coincide with the graphic ensembles we have been describing.

Along the Guadiana in Spain, there are open-air engravings with small, incised representations that have their richest and most varied examples in the Portuguese area. As we find along the Tagus, there are also abundant painted rock shelters, al-

though more detailed studies would be required to establish the relationships between the different art forms.

Andalusia has also added information on rock art connected to these periods after the Upper Palaeolithic. In open-air painted rock shelters, on open-air engraved rocks or inside Palaeolithic caves, a repertoire of images similar to the one we have been discussing is found in the southern Iberian Peninsula. First we must highlight the new discoveries in La Pileta Cave, in Benaolán, as they are figures created using black paint that are awaiting direct dating. Cervids and caprids with linear fillings appear on some of the panels in this cave, whose graphic sequence is unique in Europe for its diachrony and the conservation and quality of its figures.



Other Palaeolithic caves conserve images included in this repertoire. The relevance of the double sinuous lines found on Azilian pebbles and some Cantabrian panels stands out, and they are also being documented in open-air painted rock shelters in Andalusia. Their formal links with some classic themes of the so-called macroschematic art gain significance, since some human figures of this style are found on pebbles in the Mas d'Azil site and in Chaves and El Esplugón.

Due to the wealth of rock shelters and decorated caves in this vast territory, we recommend an intensive study of this phase, which must be present in the only open-air site known to date in Almería, Piedras Blancas. Its decorated rock is just one of the panels in a more extensive site that requires an updated study, as we brought to the attention of the Andalusian Regional Government.

The Iberian Levante has numerous rock shelters in which, as of our 2007 proposal, a Finiglacial phase began to be accepted for the open-air rock engravings, which are similar to the well-known images in the West. Abric d'en Meliá, in Castellón, or those considered classic rock shelters for Levantine art, such as Cogul and others, are good examples. Updated studies such as the one concerning the large Minateda rock shelter add data for a renewed interpretation of the so-called Levantine art. In terms of shapes, techniques and sizes, the parietal art in the Levante coincides with the portable art discovered in the area since the late 20th century at sites dating from the same period as those in the west-

Fig.9. Part of the parietal feature from Palomera Cave, Burgos, tracing done as per the information in Corchón *et al.*,1996, including its C¹⁴ results as per Bueno *et al.* 2007, fig. 13 to 16. (Photographs by R. de Balbin).

ern Iberian Peninsula and in the South of France. And, as mentioned earlier, there is even evidence that these figures coexisted with Azilian pebbles and naturalistic figures. There are many sites that we could list whose painted images, represented in motion, easily fit into this interpretation. However, we will highlight at least two for providing contextual evidence for their parietal art and for their portable art. We are referring to the El Angel rock shelter in Teruel and the portable ensemble in Parpalló Cave, in Valencia. The former reveals the association between elongated and naturalistic zoomorphic and human figures of different shapes, namely those of the classic hunters of Levantine art. During excavations, the Utrilla team determined a time period of 11,000 and 8,000 BP using C¹⁴ dating. Parpalló Cave's extensive portable collection includes a late upper Magdalenian repertoire, part of which offers graphic references that can be associated with both the geometric-themed plaques of the Azilian tradition and the animals with elongated bodies and proportions recognisable within Style V, together with naturalistic figures filled with geometric shapes.

The portable collections in Chaves and Esplugón come from sites occupied in the Epipaleolithic/Mesolithic and late Neolithic periods, providing solid arguments about the permanence and evolution of some traditional Palaeolithic themes in the arrangement of symbols by the groups of the earliest farmers.

The direct dates of Cantabrian cave paintings from this time period were traditionally rejected, as were those of Palomera Cave. However, they have been confirmed by some recently documented findings, in the case of Tito Bustillo Cave, thus generating expectations that these records will be updated as necessary. In addition, open-air sites are likely to exist, as observed in the inland areas.

Caves, open-air sites and portable art present unequal levels of information in the territories of the Iberian Peninsula. They are convincing starting points for a more exhaustive investigation of this phase with enormous potential due to its quantitative representation and its variety of supports on the Iberian Peninsula.

Caprids and cervids predominate in the representations in the Iberian Levante, sometimes accompanied by signs en barbelure. Geometric themes are equally plentiful, and in Andalusia, the marked double sinuous lines on some Azilian pebbles stand out. This theme also plays a role on some parietal supports of the so-called macroschematic art. Human figures are depicted from the side and in motion, some with bows, but along with them a variety of forms are recognised, including characters disguised as animals, seen from the side with their arms bent upwards, with male genitalia clearly depicted, in the manner of the Palaeolithic tradition. These figures are dated from the end of the Pleistocene/beginning of the Holocene in the inland areas of the Iberian Peninsula, such as it happens in emblematic places such as Mas d'Azil.

REFERENCES IN THE REST OF EUROPE FOR THE CONTINUITY OF PALAEOLITHIC ART

As we have indicated, the stratigraphy of the French sites excavated by Lorblanchet provided the first dates (recently confirmed by the Langlais team) to establish the continuity of the figurative art associated with the schematic versions of the Azilian pebbles, although the French author denied its parietal presence.

With just a quick glance at the graphic ensembles from this phase in northern Europe, we can see that there is no divergence from the themes and techniques of Palaeolithic art, which was once considered exclusively portable, and now there are even some cases in caves of the greatest interest. The coldest area of the continent did not have the population or cultural absences that have been considered for the area with the best climate, the South, where this hypothesis has left a very powerful historiographical mark.

The Venus sequence that can be followed in continental Europe from the end of the Upper Palaeolithic until the Neolithic is revelatory. Along with this interpretation of long-term diachronies, there is evidence of clay figurines from the Upper Palaeolithic, which present another argument (concerning the raw material used) that blurs the traditional lines between the technology of the groups of hunters of the Upper Palaeolithic and the first farmers. There are spectacular examples of the use of wood in sculptures, such as the statue of Sighir, which stands out for its size and abundant geometric decorations. Based on C¹⁴ dating, its age is between 11,000 and 12,000 BP.

These and other discoveries from northern and central Europe also expand the records in the classic sectors of European Palaeolithic art. In France, the excavation of the Rocher de l'Imperatrice rock shelter in Brittany adds a site with high-quality portable art—including Azilian pebbles, plaquettes with geometric decorations and naturalistic figures associated with geometric ones—as well as an unexpected Atlantic site that consolidates the data from the north-western Iberian Peninsula and promises future records. The updating of the French Massif Central sites is offering a growing number of figures of this style, including the representation of a painted red deer that is undeniably reminiscent of well-known groups in northern Europe.

Very interesting advances were made when reviewing Mas d'Azil Cave, whose abundant portable art seemed to have no correspondence with its parietal art. However, that idea is now changing due to new discoveries still in the study phase.

The Italian sites also provide more complete studies of parietal decorations in both open-air rock shelters and in caves. These references join the portable art described by D'Errico and Possenti in the 1990s, enhanced with important collections such as the Riparo Dalmeri or Vilabruna, whose time periods were confirmed by human remains from the burial site with which they were associated, ca. 14,000 BP.

In Dalmeri, red deer and ibexes painted with globular or elongated bodies filled with lines, moving or more static, are joined by traditional Palaeolithic geo-

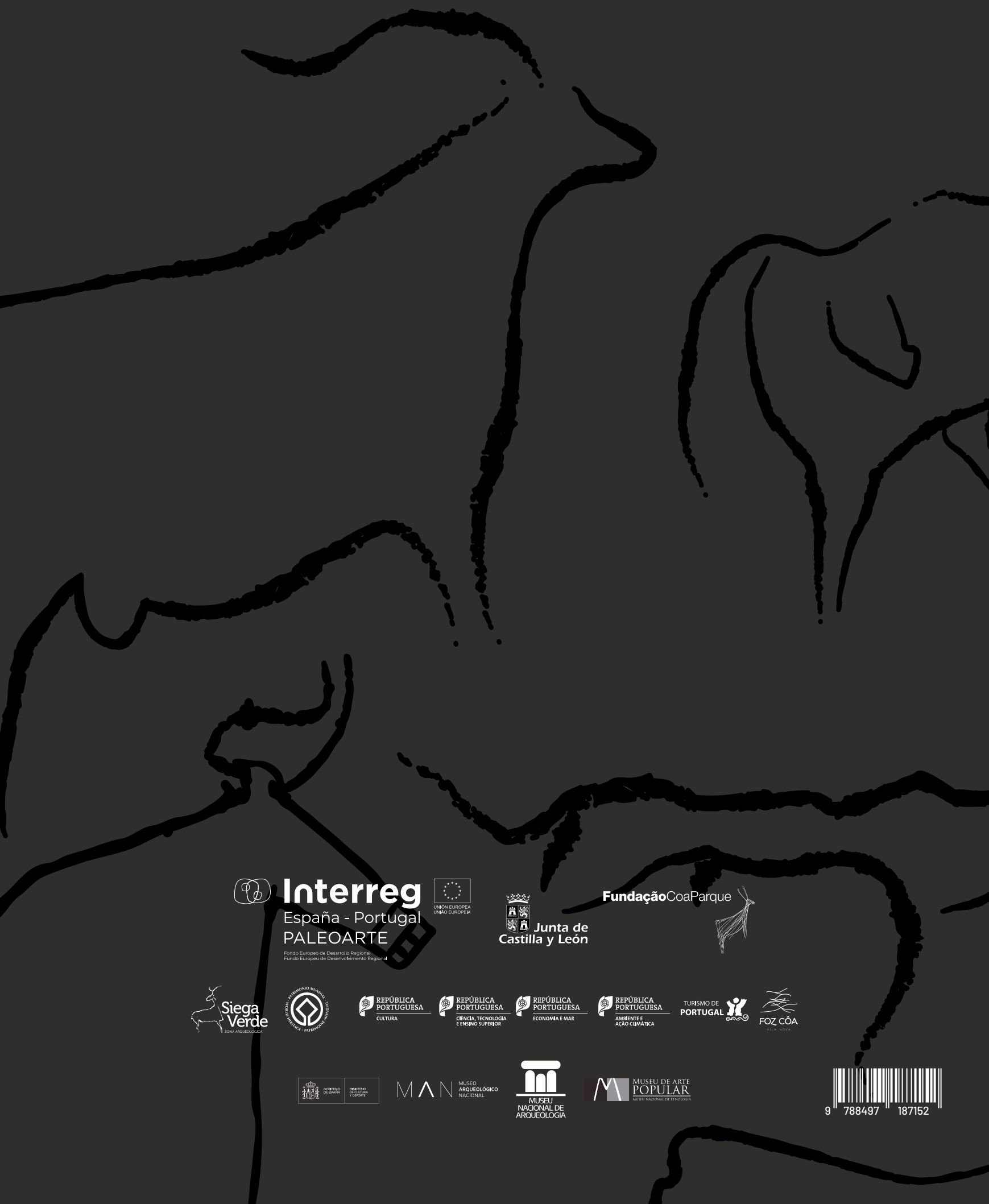
metric representations, including triangles and sinuous lines, and human figures ascribable to schematic art that have aspects similar to the ones on the Iberian Peninsula that we have described.

Between the period of the hunters from the end of the Upper Palaeolithic and the Neolithic periods, there was no disappearance of populations or their art forms. The population increase observed in Magdalenian settlements, including the rise of parietal decorations at that time, is unquestionable. The graphic repertoires that we have briefly described argue for the continuity and transformation of the themes and techniques of the hunters of the late Upper Palaeolithic, as well as for a continuity of use of the same territories. Although much work remains to be done to determine more specific time periods between 14,000 and 8,000 BP, the path undertaken, based on an archaeological study of prehistoric art with scientific foundations, is the new generations' most notable contribution to the research into the images that transformed the way we thought about our ancestors at the start of the 20th century.

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