

An abstract black line drawing on a dark gray background, depicting a profile of a face and neck. The lines are expressive and sketchy, with some areas filled with stippling. The face is oriented towards the right, and the neck extends downwards.

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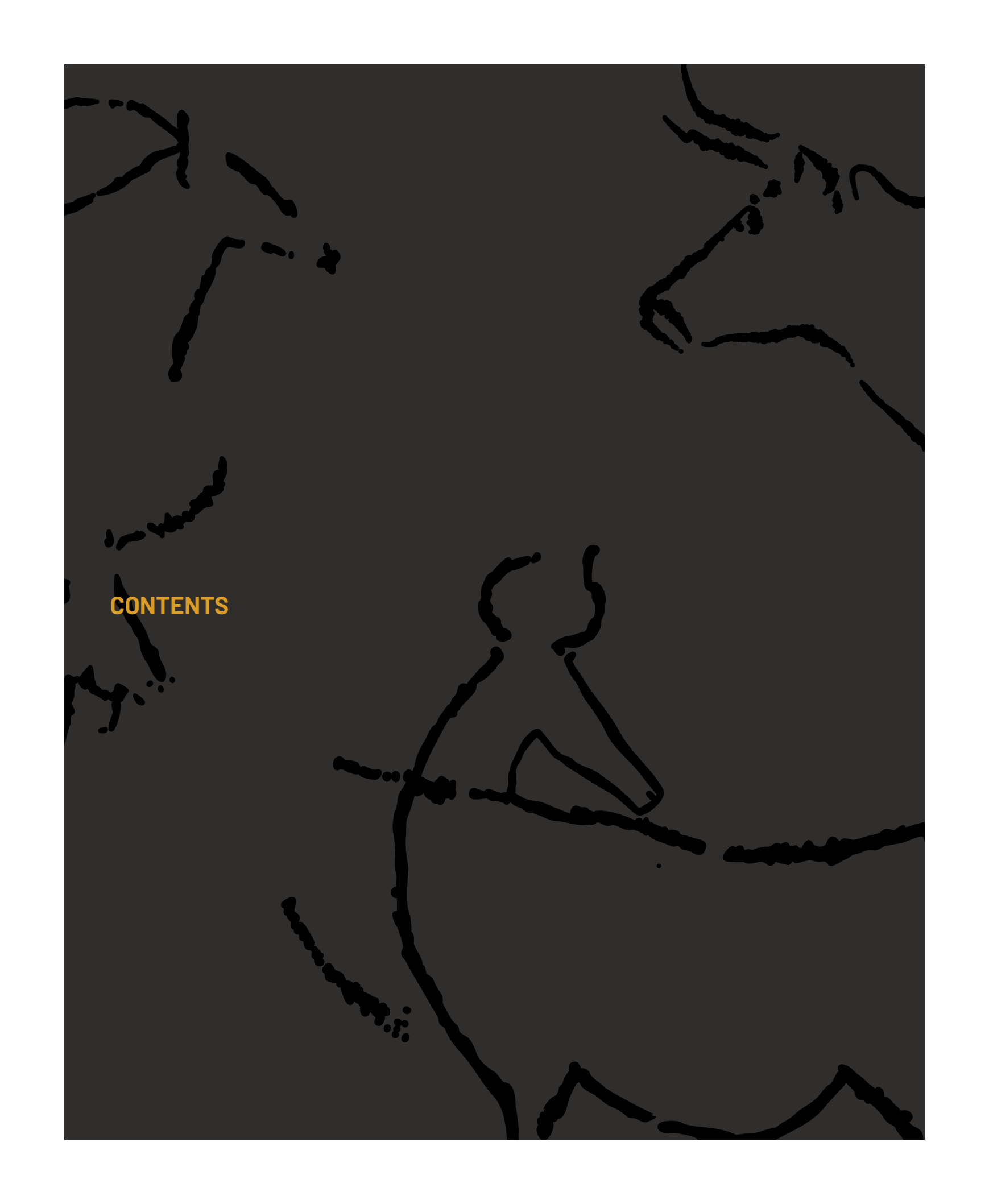
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In memoriam a Bruno Navarro



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The background of the page is a dark gray color. It is decorated with several abstract, hand-drawn black lines. These lines are of varying thickness and form, some resembling branches, others like scribbles or simple shapes. They are scattered across the page, with a notable cluster in the lower right and some lines extending towards the top and left edges.

CONTENTS

007	Preface
013	Introduction
019	Human groups and the occupation of the Douro Valley during the Upper Palaeolithic and the emergence of prehistoric art
033	The Douro Valley during the upper Palaeolithic environmental conditions and livelihoods
049	The palaeolithic art of the Douro Basin in the context of Southwestern Europe
067	Distribution and contextualisation of open-air Palaeolithic art of the Côa and Siega Verde ensembles
081	Characteristics and evolution of Palaeolithic art at the Côa Valley and Siega Verde sites.
097	Finiglacial art (Style V/Azilian). Characteristics of the art forms and contextualization of the Côa and Siega Verde ensembles.
113	Between Spain and Portugal. Schematic art in the middle and lower Douro basin
135	Iron Age representations near the western boundary of the northern sub-plateau: characteristics and their spatial and conceptual relationship
147	Shepherds, millers and other people. Historical rock art on both sides of the border
159	Côa Valley and Siega Verde. World Heritage Sites to visit

**SHEPHERDS, MILLERS AND OTHER PEOPLE.
HISTORICAL ROCK ART ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER**

Mário Reis

Fundação Côa-Parque/Parque Arqueológico do Vale do Côa

Carlos Vázquez Marcos

C.E.M., Labtec y (Gir) Prehusal

INTRODUCTION

This contribution, addressing an artistic phenomenon of such a richly suggestive nature as the more recent rock art, and inventoried in the immediate surroundings of the rock art sites featured in the catalogue; in the border area lying between the Côa Valley in Portugal and the far western section of the province of Salamanca, aims to shed light on a significant reality connected with the experiences of the rural inhabitants of these neighbouring territories.

However, this type of iconography, prolific throughout the Iberian Peninsula and found mainly engraved on rocky outcrops, although studies have tended to focus on other substrates such as portable objects, has aroused little interest, as evidenced by the scant archaeological research that has been conducted on the subject. An art that has therefore not always received the same scientific commitment and approach as those devoted to older chronological phases and which, albeit concisely, we have attempted to redress here, as well as in previous works (see bibliographical references).

The majority of the known examples correspond to the modern and contemporary eras, although there are certain situations of either confirmed or suggested medieval origin. In this sense, it is preferable to consider this iconographic universe as belonging to the historical era, free from excessive restraints on a reality of such a far-reaching heterogeneous nature in terms of its dating system, regional contexts, topics, forms, techniques and environments.

The same applies to the question of authorship as in Spain there is a consolidated tradition of referring to it as *"arte pastoril"* (pastoral art) or *"agro-pastoril y popular"* (agro-pastoral and folk art), due to the prominence and abundance of this type of decoration on portable objects. Such associations have not been drawn in Portugal, although in the Côa Valley engravings made by millers have been highlighted. Yet, overall, we consider that it is unreasonable to limit authorship of the numerous documented engravings to specific groups such as shepherds or millers, as there were surely other authors within these communities. We therefore believe that a more neutral expression is preferable, such as "historical period rock art".

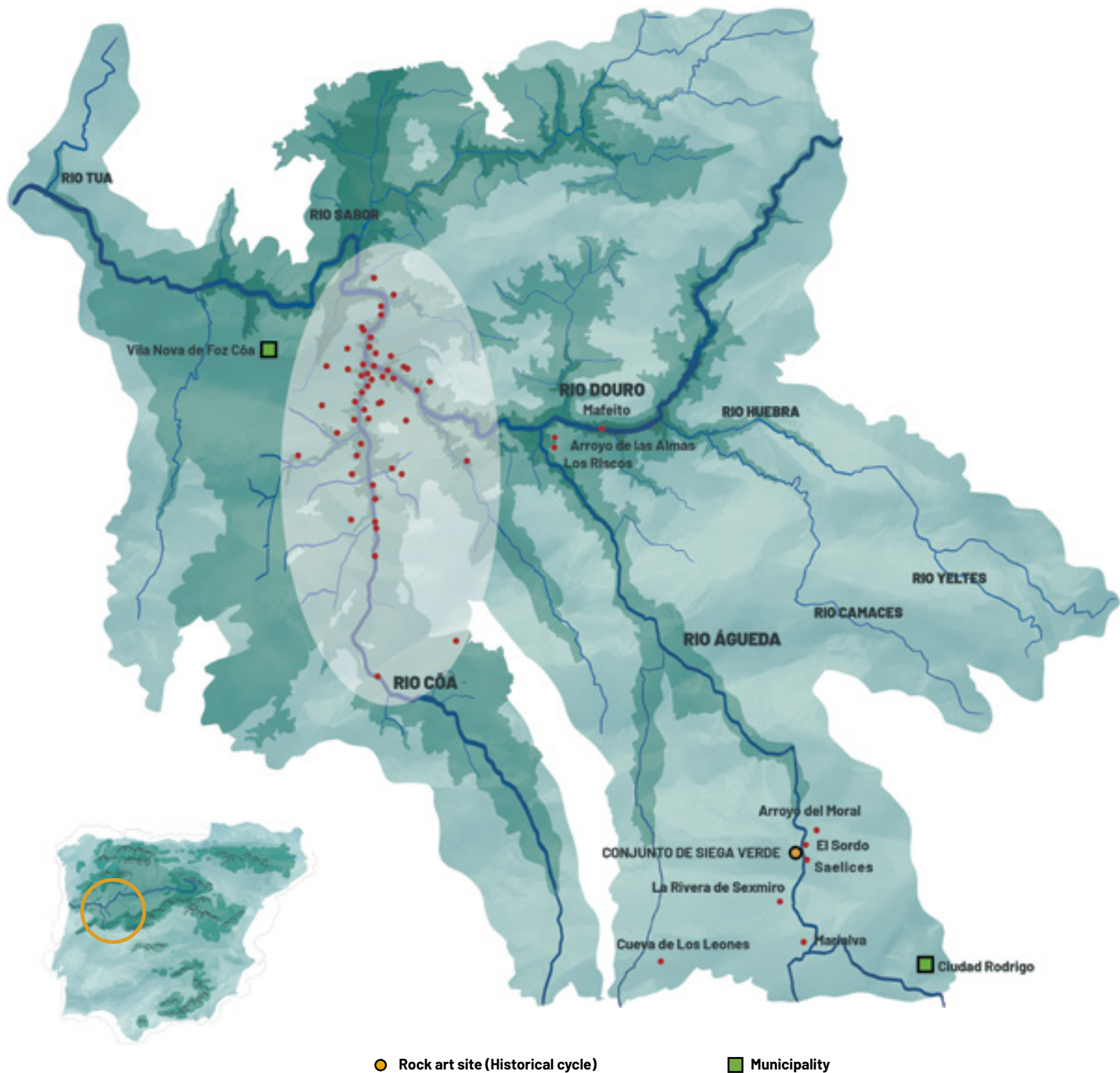


Fig. 1. Map, made by the authors, indicating the mentioned sites with parietal art ascribed to the historical cycle, on both sides of the border.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING: FRAGMENTED NOTES ON KNOWN SITES, ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER

The number of sites and the research conducted on them varies in the two areas that are the object of analysis and comparison: the Côa Valley and the west of the province of Salamanca. However, in both territories, research on this historical rock art is recent, with few precedents.

In the case of the Côa Valley, the inventory has always included these images, which have been featured in a variety of publications, with varying degrees of detail. In Salamanca, there were few known examples of historical engravings until work was carried out by the authors of this chapter (see bibliographical references), which contributed extensive knowledge to this subject, thanks to the inclusion of more than a dozen new enclaves.

The large concentration of sites in the Côa Valley reflects the ongoing research that has been conducted in recent years, contrasting with the scarcity and dispersion of the Salamanca group. The ease and speed with which these recent sites were detected may well indicate that they make up only a tiny fraction of the reality, which could prove to be vast and only now beginning to emerge.

This iconography from the historical period in the Côa River valley extends throughout the same area as the other examples of rock art, with more than 300 catalogued rocks on 61 sites. This plethora of examples, in keeping with those dating back to earlier periods, can be explained by the abundance of suitable rock surfaces located in the final stretches of the River Côa and the adjacent area of the Douro. Further explanation can be found in the intense use of the territory by rural populations in recent centuries, which, although today characterised by their low demographic density and lands that are undergoing gradual environmental regeneration, conserve myriad ruins that are a true and faithful testimony to their intense agricultural past.

Generally speaking, the chosen sites are the slopes that line the rivers Côa and Douro or, alternatively, the tributaries of both. The decoration is distributed throughout all possible locations, depending mainly on the availability of the outcrops. The exception lies in the engravings asso-



Fig. 2. A. Rocha 24 da Canada do Inferno. Motivos religiosos. **B.** Rocha 7 da Canada do Inferno. Crucifixo. **C.** Muro dos Namorados. Motivos abstractos. **D.** Rocha 56 do Vale do Forno. Conjunto de figuras diversas.





Fig. 2. A. Rock 24 of Canada do Inferno. Religious motifs. **B.** Rock 7 of Canada do Inferno. Crucifix. **C.** Muro dos Namorados. Abstract motifs. **D.** Rock 56 of Vale do Forno. Set of diverse figures.

ciated with the existing mills. In these cases, such as in Canada do Inferno, the engravings are located close to the riverbeds, mainly on the Côa itself, although examples have been identified in the Douro or in tributaries of both rivers (e.g. Vale de Moinhos).

There are other associations between engravings and structures, such as on the vertical surfaces that act as internal walls of rural shacks (e.g. Vale do Forno, Bulha or Vale de Cabrões). Another suggestive implantation can be found in the Cavalaria site, with a rock engraved with tens of crosses that could be linked to an ancient causeway. In the village of Castelo Melhor, there are numerous engraved stones on a wall, the Muro dos Namorados, which may have been part of an earlier structure.

There are only a few decorated rock shelters; the vast majority of vertical decorated schist surfaces are in the open air, in line with the predominant geomorphology. There are also scarce examples on horizontal surfaces (e.g. Cavalaria or Vale da Casa), as well as images on other supports, such as a quartzite rock shelter in Colmeal, various granite sites associated with mills deep down in valleys (e.g. Faia, Ervideiro and Moinho do Chocho) or at other altitudes and contexts (e.g. Picão da Lapa, Faia do Coto or Tambores).

If we consider its sheer size, coherence and the strong identity tied with the territory, the immense assemblage of historical engravings of the Côa Valley reveals the intense use by rural populations of the exceptional geological conditions in order to create a vast and varied iconography over an extended period of time in a limited and relatively homogenous territory in geomorphological terms: the end of the northern sub-plateau. An area bounded by mountainous formations and an intricate hydrological network, with the deep valleys of the Côa and the Douro and their myriad tributaries.

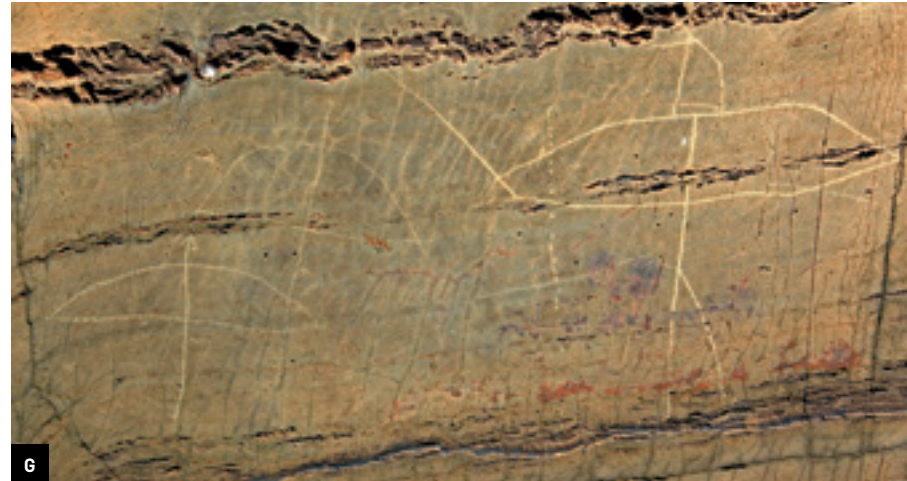


Fig. 2. **E.** Rock 3 of Ribeira do Picão. Crucifix. **F.** Rock 25 of Vale da Casa. Horseman. **G.** Rock 4 of Ribeira de Urros. Group of crossbows. **H.** Rock 48 of Vale do Forno. Mythological figure: human-serpent hybrid. (Photographs: **A:** Fernando Barbosa; **B, C, D, E, F, G, H:** Mário Reis).

In the western half of the province of Salamanca, the current situation is considerably different. The few known sites are dotted over a geomorphologically heterogenous territory, appearing either in isolation or in small scattered groups. However, we do know of a large group of at least 5 sites around the Siega Verde Palaeolithic Art site, on the banks of the River Águeda and in some of its small tributaries. The most noteworthy of these include the vast Las Vegas y Las Laderas site, with 14 decorated rocks, or the smaller, Molino de Pedro/Pero Gordo, featuring engravings made with pecking and incision techniques, the only site in the Salamanca assemblage directly related to milling. Most of the remaining rock art sites are geomorphologically similar and are scattered around the sub-pla-teau. The exception is a small group located around the mountainous area of the Sierra de Francia, with the sites of Puente de L'Olla and El Charco de los Mozos (Monsagro).



Fig. 3. A. Cueva de los Leones. Lions, cross and heart of life, among other engraved motifs.
B. Puente de L'Olla. Animals and other motifs.

Finally, although different in nature, mention must be made of the Cueva de los Leones granite hermitage and the Arroyo de las Almas site. This latter is the largest and best studied of the documented sites. Furthermore, and despite its particular iconography, geomorphologically speaking, it is the closest to the Côa ensemble.

HISTORICAL ART ROCK ICONOGRAPHY: CHARACTERISTICS, SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES ON EITHER SIDE OF THE BORDER

One of the most outstanding features is the variety of this historical rock iconography – not only in stylistic aspects, but also in terms of its contexts and settings. Despite a certain similarity that can be identified in the majority of the sites studied on both sides of the border, the originality and variety of some of its principal components can also be observed, with singular sites and iconographies as well as a number of notable differences between the Portuguese and Spanish sides.

This heterogeneity extends to technical aspects and to the chosen surfaces, which range between schist/slate and granite (with an example on quartzite in the Côa ensemble), but with the predominance of the former in both areas which, besides reflecting a common geological reality, also suggests that it is easier to find engravings on these surfaces, since their execution requires less time, effort or skills. This same factor also explains the overwhelming predominance of the use



of incision, which is practically the only technique used on the Salamanca sites and accounts for 80% of the Côa assemblage; normally impracticable on granite, it is accessible to all on this main support. The pecking technique is less frequent (as is high relief, found only in the Cueva de los Leones), which has commonly been documented in association with mills in various geologies. This technique is particularly suited to the miller's pick, as well as in other contexts (e.g. Cueva de los Leones, Cavalaria, Foz do Côa or Vale do Forno).

As for the iconographic considerations, we wish to highlight some of the most striking elements. In the Côa, a clear diachrony of the art can be drawn thanks to the numerous engraved dates which, together with the analysis of the formal aspects and themes, point to a continuity of more than 400 years. The images date back to at least the early 17th century, as indicated by engraved dates in Canada do Inferno or Vale de Moinhos. It is still uncertain whether there are any earlier figures, although if they do exist, they will be rare and without any associated inscriptions.

On the Salamanca side, most of the figures are recent, from the 19th century onwards, although the lower degree of systematisation in this area allows us to suggest the existence of rock art earlier than the currently known. For example, the earliest decoration in the Cueva de los Leones could date back to the Middle Ages. In Arroyo de las Almas, the lack of inscriptions and dates complicates the dating work, but the historical engravings on this site "seem" older on this site and, hypothetically, allow us to venture that they could date back to the beginning of the Modern Period.

Mention could be made of a number of sites which, in some areas exemplify the principal characteristics of this rock art. The Cueva de los Leones is a unique



Fig. 3. **C.** Las Vegas and Las Laderas. Bull, dates and inscriptions. **D.** El Sordo. Bullfighting scene. **E.** Las Vegas and Las Laderas. Signature.



Fig. 3. F. Las Almas stream. Humans, signs and animals. (Photos: Mário Reis and Carlos Vázquez Marcos).

site, originally a Christian hermitage, perhaps medieval, decorated with a cross on its altar. Later, in the 17th or 18th centuries, superb reliefs of animals would be added to the side walls. The finest examples include two lions, depicted face-to-face. In the final phase (19th and 20th centuries), there are “popular” motifs such as the “Heart of Life”. This motif is frequently featured on shepherd’s milk pails and can be found in countless examples in the province of Salamanca. Arroyo de las Almas is remarkable for the specific styles of the anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figures and for the predominance and diversity of the abstract themes. Also noteworthy is the absence of religious motifs and inscriptions. Its Rock 1 (nucleus I) features 180 identified motifs, with thousands of incisions that cover the entire surface and are superimposed on images from Late Prehistory, as a resignified and intertwined diachronic graphic documentary treasure. There is also an abundance of decoration on the Las Vegas y Las Laderas site, albeit of a different nature, representative of the predominant decorative features of the 19th and 20th centuries, in which a greater creative freedom and thematic diversity stand out. In some ways, it provides a model for defining the general characteristics of historical rock art in both areas, although it also has a number of attributes that are exclusive to the Spanish area. Here, the emphasis on the execution of human and animal figures, with a wide thematic and stylistic variety, is complemented by abundant inscriptions and signatures with rubrics, as well as pentalphas and abstract motifs of considerable diversity.

Of the many sites that make up the Côa assemblage, special mention must be made of the Canada do Inferno and Vale do Forno sites for their outstanding iconog-



raphy and complementarity. The former has a magnificent ensemble of engravings, practically all of which are picked and associated with an ancient mill. Diachronically ranging from the 17th century (with an engraved date of 1600, the oldest in the area) to the 20th century, it stands out for its intensely religious theme, possibly related to the peculiar toponymy of this place. The second of these sites features almost only incised engravings, dating from the 19th century onwards and sharing similar characteristics to the Las Vegas y Las Laderas site. In addition to the customary variety of themes and styles, also worthy of note are some narrative scenes, including one associated with popular mythology, as in the case of Puente de L'Olla.

A trend observed in the Cõa Valley, and also in evidence in the Salamanca assemblage, is the gradual reduction of rigid rules and canons in the way the engravings were made. This is reflected in the variability of individual choices and in the thematic centralization in the authors of the engravings themselves or in their world and immediate environment, a tendency that, in time, predominates over the more canonical and less varied themes of earlier periods. However, this self-centric trend does not imply the individual atomization and alienation of the rock art iconography from the dominant sociological tendencies of the rural societies in which it is inserted. Indeed, the gradual lifting of the unwritten rules that determined which themes were authorised led to a certain degree of creative freedom and the appearance of a new paradigm whereby, as is to be expected in conservative rural societies, the connection with their mental and sociological universe is always predominant.

Fig. 3. G. Serranillo. Sign. **H.** Souls stream. Humans, signs and animals. (Photos: Mario Reis and Carlos Vázquez Marcos)

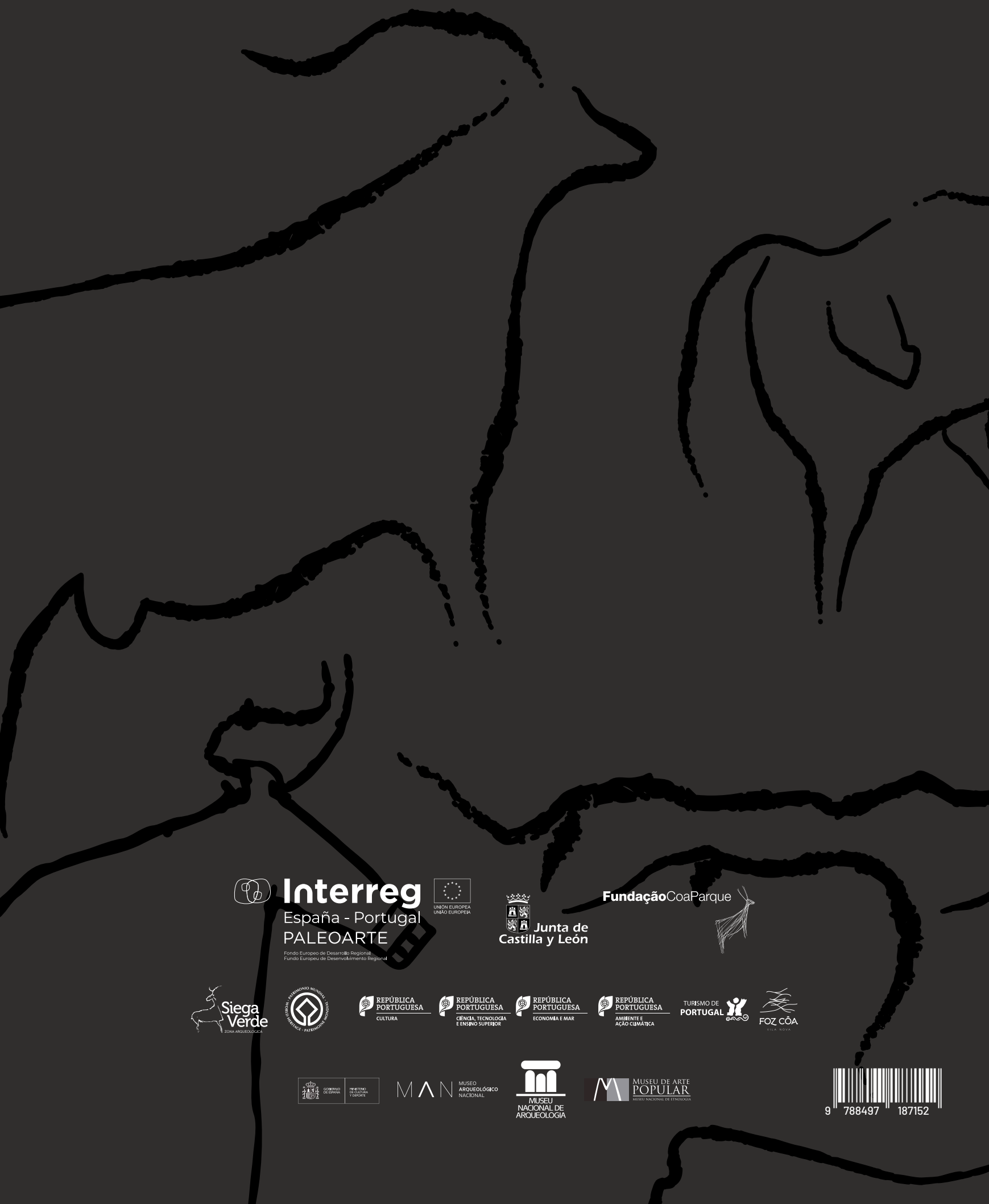
Whilst this factor is common to both areas, so is the thematic centrality in the human being, although there are some appreciable differences. A slight dissimilarity can be seen in the inscriptions and signatures. In both areas they are generally limited to the name, occasionally with the date, but in Salamanca, a particular form of signature with flourishes can often be observed, a feature that is not present in the Côa assemblage.

Another difference can be found in the zoomorphic theme, which is common in the final centuries of the historical period. Although a wide variety of animals are represented, with a particular insistence on birds, bulls and lions are amply represented in the case of Salamanca. The bulls are depicted alone or in groups, as well as in bullfighting scenes, which are repeated in many of the sites studied. This difference can be explained by the importance of bullfighting in Spain, that has no equivalence equivalent in northern or central Portugal.

Historical art in the Côa assemblage is also noted for the greater number of figures and its iconographic variety, which can be partly explained by the quantitative difference of the assemblage. Nevertheless, mention must be made of another divergent element: religious iconography. Whilst it is true that a large number of pentalphas have been documented in both areas, probably with an apotropaic meaning and typical of the superstitious world of rural societies, in the case of Salamanca, specifically Christian iconography is particularly scarce, contrasting sharply with its profusion in the Côa assemblage, where religion is the principal theme throughout the historical cycle, in a variety of contexts and settings. This thematic predominance is not surprising, given the rurality proper of the Old Regime, and it is the lack of examples to be found in the Salamanca assemblage, the majority of which date back to the 19th and 20th centuries, that requires an explanation. This could be related to the small size of the studied sample or to the cultural and historical specificities of the Spanish population of this period

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