



# ARCHAEOLOGIES *of* ART

## *Time, Place, Identity*

INÉS DOMINGO SANZ, DÁNAE FIORE, & SALLY K. MAY

EDITORS

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# Archaeologies of Art

## Time, Place, and Identity



Edited by  
**Inés Domingo Sanz, Dánae Fiore, and Sally K. May**



**Left Coast  
Press Inc.**

Walnut Creek, CA



Left Coast  
Press inc.

LEFT COAST PRESS, INC.  
1630 North Main Street, #400  
Walnut Creek, California 94596  
<http://www.LCoastPress.com>

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Archaeologies of art: time, place, and identity / edited by Inés Domingo Sanz, Dánae Fiore, and Sally K. May.

p. cm. – (One world archaeology)

Includes index.

ISBN 978-1-59874-264-0 (hardback : alk. paper)

1. Petroglyphs—Case studies. 2. Rock paintings—Case studies. I. Domingo Sanz, Inés. II. Fiore, Dánae. III. May, Sally K.

GN799.P4A72 2008

709.01'13—dc22

2007044311

*To Isabel Domingo, Heather May, and Julio Caramelo and especially to Fiona Caramelo, who was born during the preparation of this volume.*

Printed in the United States of America

©™ The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI/NISO Z39.48—1992.

08 09 10 11 5 4 3 2 1

Cover design: Joanna Ebenstein

## CHAPTER 7

### Same Tradition, Different Views: The Côa Valley Rock Art and Social Identity

Luís Luís and Marcos García Díez



The Côa Valley rock art is an interesting case study in rock art and social identity theory (for example, Tajfel and Turner 1986). Importantly, it presents one of the longest artistic cycles in the world, from the Upper Palaeolithic to the 1950s. Different social groups marked the same landscape, sometimes using the same rock panels, with engraved rock art using similar techniques. In the Côa example, we are not dealing with indigenous societies, as in Australia or the Americas, where rock art is perceived as part of the living heritage of contemporary groups and claimed accordingly. Researchers can perceive a diachronic sequence in the artistic expression in this valley, but the local population does not perceive this similarly.

In this chapter, we argue that the rock art in the Côa Valley implies a totally different perception of this art by two different social groups, both living and engraving in the same space. We use the Côa Valley as a frame of reference for the determination of social identity. Both individuals and social groups developed their lives in the landscape, with the structure of *place-identity* playing an important role in the configuration of the identity of the *self* (Proshansky et al. 1983; Stokols 1990). The objects (the engravings) are just one more social category in the landscape (Aragonés et al. 1992; Berger and Luckmann 1966). They are given an ontological dimension by individuals and groups, and in the process become social constructions (Blumer 1982). In this chapter, we examine two artistic cycles that are contrasted chronologically and that represent the beginning and the end of a graphic sequence (Palaeolithic [28,000 B.P.] and Contemporary Ages [fifteenth to twentieth century], respectively). The age difference (over 12,000 years) justifies the conclusion that two conceptual realities were produced by perceptions of the same landscape from different social, cultural, and economic perspectives. This chapter aims to understand questions such as: How was the natural landscape perceived? What was the graphic interaction

with the landscape? How was social reality understood through symbolization of the landscape?

## The Côa Valley Rock Art

The Côa Valley is located in the north interior of Portugal, near the Spanish border, at the eastern limit of the Iberian Plateau (Figure 7.1). Geologically, it consists mostly of schist domains, inserted in the Schist-Greywacke Complex. Schist outcrops form large vertical panels owing to the valley's proximity to the Vilarica geological fault and local tectonics. Granite makes its appearance toward the south of the basin, where rock art is rare.

The Côa Valley contains one of the most important artistic complexes in European rock art. First, it is one of the most significant early examples of human artistic expression: Upper Palaeolithic art. The oldest representations in the valley have been stylistically attributed to the Gravettian (28,000 to 21,000 B.P.) (Aubry and Baptista 2000; Aubry and García Díez 2001; Zilhão 2003).

Second, until the discovery of the Côa Valley, researchers thought that Palaeolithic art was mainly restricted to caves, despite the discovery of Mazouco, Piedras Blancas, Siega Verde, and Domingo García. All over Western Europe hundreds of caves containing paintings and engravings dating from the Upper Palaeolithic were known from the end of the nineteenth century, although mostly in France and northern Spain (Altamira, Rouffignac, Lascaux, Castillo, and so on) (Lorblanchet 1995).

Since it is located in the open air, Côa Valley rock art has changed scholars' conception of Palaeolithic art as exclusively cave art, producing what has been characterised as a Copernican revolution (Zilhão et al. 1997). Different weathering conditions have certainly distorted the conservation of rock art images (and hence what has survived through today), and the Côa Valley is one of the only known preserved open-air Palaeolithic rock art sites. It certainly is the largest.

Its dimensions also indicate its importance. It consists of a vast artistic complex, closely related to the Côa River and its surrounding landscape. Until now, 29 different rock art sites have been registered, located on both riverbanks and stretching along 17 km of the river, in its main tributaries and at its confluence with the Douro (Figure 7.2). These sites contain several hundred vertical and subvertical schist panels inscribed with rock art.

Finally, the Côa Valley rock art is not limited to the early stages of human artistic expression. It began during the Upper Palaeolithic and Epipalaeolithic-Mesolithic (28,000 to 8,000 B.P.) but continued throughout Late Prehistory (5,500 to 3,000 B.C.E.), the Second Iron

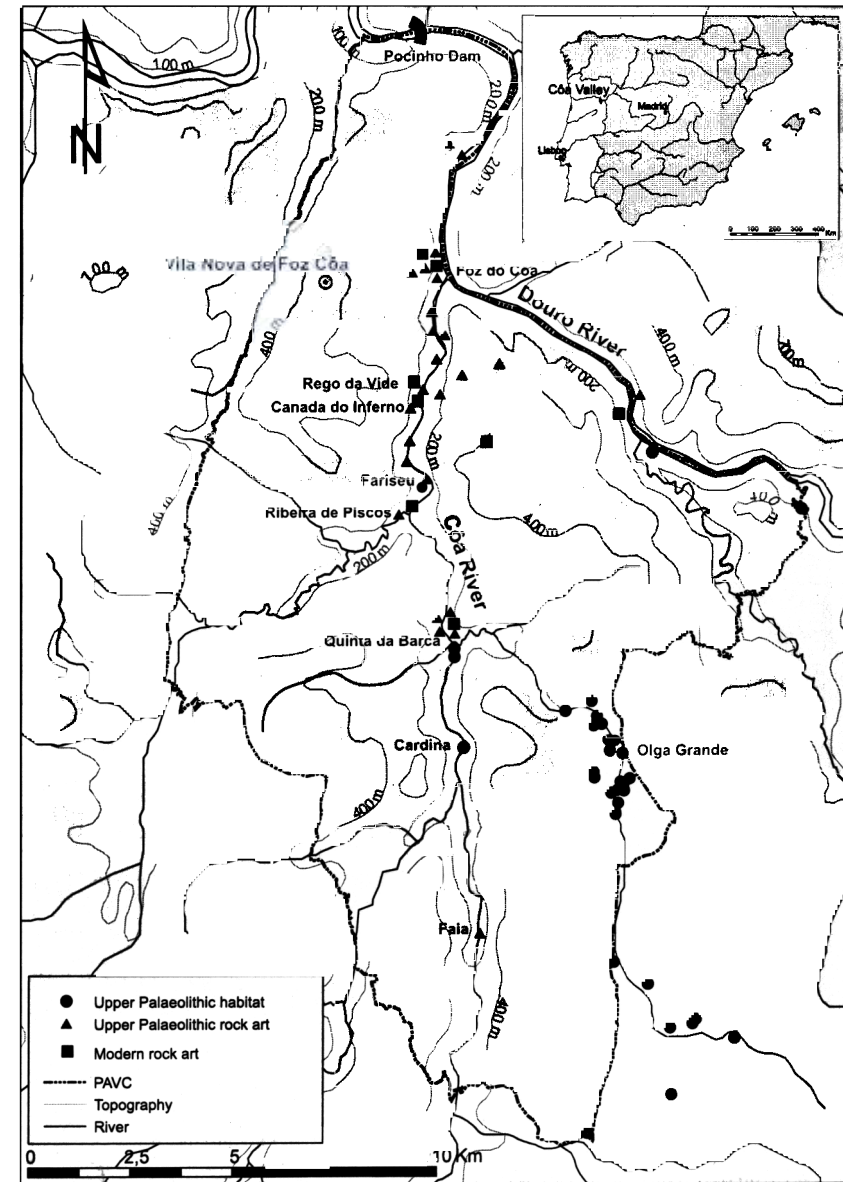
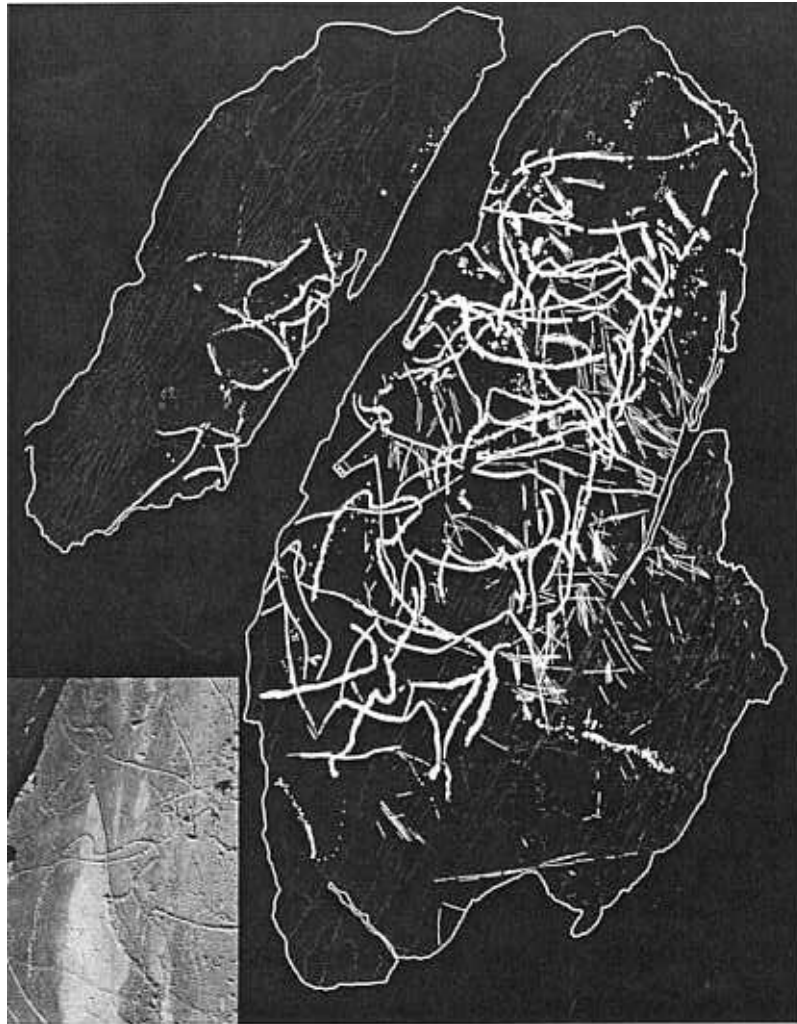


Figure 7.1 Palaeolithic and modern rock art sites and the Upper Palaeolithic occupation sites in the Côa Valley (Portugal).

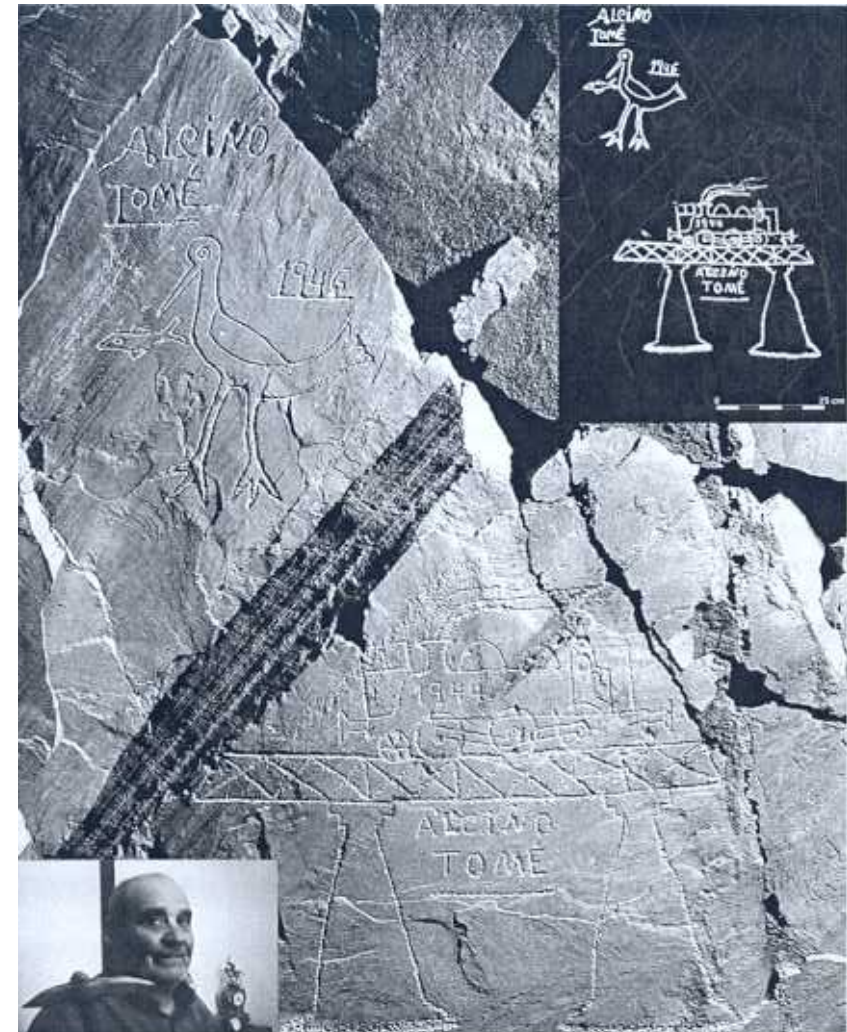
Age (500 to 0 B.C.E.), into Modern and Contemporary Times (fifteenth to twentieth century), and finishing only in the 1950s (Baptista 1999; Baptista and Gomes 1998; García Díez and Luís 2003).



**Figure 7.2** Penascosa, panel 3 – typical Upper Palaeolithic superimposition of a horse and several aurochs and goats (Baptista 1999:99); detail of an abraded aurochs and a pecked horse (Baptista 1999:32) (panel dimensions 139 x 173 cm).

### The Upper Palaeolithic Rock Art and its Artists

The Côa Valley rock art presents all the features that define the Palaeolithic artistic canon (Figure 7.3). Its main theme consists of large herbivores, many of which can be found in contemporary ecosystems. The most represented species are the caprids: mountain and chamois



**Figure 7.3** Partial view of Rego da Vide, panel 5 (Baptista 1999:184); details – drawing of the same part of the panel (Baptista and Gomes 1998:302); José Alcino Tomé and his iron pick (García Díez and Luís 2003:205).

goats (23%). They are followed by horses, more robust than modern ones, with standing manes, and similar to the present day *Equus przewalskii* (21%). The bovines are represented by the extinct aurochs, with their lyre-shaped horns (15%). The fourth most depicted species is cervidae (11%), with a few representations of fish (Baptista 1999). All these species have been identified in Portuguese Upper Palaeolithic

sites, as, for example, in the Extremadura region where faunal remains were also preserved (Davis 2002). Moreover, in the Côa Valley there is an absence of several species that are found in the Franco-Cantabrian region, such as the mammoth, reindeer, and woolly rhinoceros. These are also absent in the Portuguese archaeological record (Zilhão 1997), owing to differences in ecological conditions.

One particularly distinct group in terms of its nature and form of representation is that of human figures. At present, only two panels have been identified with this type of figure (Ribeira de Piscos 2 and 24). These are depicted less realistically than the animals and display incomplete upper and lower limbs and distorted faces (Baptista 2001).

The final group of motifs encompasses signs and symbols (5%), such as zigzags, stepped lines, tectiforms, wavy lines, and so on. These figures are sometimes isolated, but they often are associated either with scenes or superimpositions. Scenes are associations between animals of the same species in a way we could consider 'natural', such as through the representation of herds or through other animal behaviours such as mating and grooming (Ribeira de Piscos 1). It is notable that an association between people and animals has not been recorded. Most commonly, individual representations appear to be superimposed, in differing orientations, either in a small part of a panel or using the entire rock surface. This makes it difficult for the untrained eye to perceive them and for researchers to interpret them fully. It seems that the act of engraving in a certain space, perhaps on a certain occasion, was far more important than making the individual figure easily perceived afterward.

The anatomy of animals is portrayed in profile, with the exception of the horns, which are twisted in a way that makes both of them visible. The dorsal line is sinuous, and the bellies are voluminous. Several of these graphic conventions can be related to artistic relations between French and Spanish cave and portable art, notably Parpalló, La Pileta, Pair-Non-Pair, and Mayenne-Sciences (Guy 2000; Zilhão 1995).

Although the Côa Valley rock art is perfectly integrated into a Palaeolithic canon, it also presents some rare features, the most important of which concerns animation. A limited, but important, group of representations was executed in such a way that conveys movement. Instead of depicting an animal with a single head, Palaeolithic artists drew two to three heads in successive stages of movement on the same animal, thus conveying its movement downward or backward. With this technique, very close to that of today's animation and comics, they were able to bring their representations to life, showing a notable capacity of abstraction and ingenuity.

The dominant technique of representation in the Palaeolithic art of the Côa Valley is engraving and is identified through four different

methods: fine-line incision, pecking, abrasion, and scraping (Baptista 1999; Zilhão et al. 1997). Fine-line incisions were produced by using a fine but resistant stone to scratch the surface of the panel. By pecking, we refer to those lines obtained through direct or indirect percussion, creating an irregular outline easily visible at considerable distances. Abrasion corresponds to deep and wide lines, with V or U shape furrows, produced by the continuous and repeated action of incision on the same surface. These three techniques can complement one another, in different phases, to create one motif. In such cases, the fine-line incision was used first as a sketch, then pecked and finally deepened and made regular through abrasion. A completely different and less well represented technique is scraping, which is used to define the image, resulting in a chromatic contrast between the original surface of the panel and the scraped area. This technique was probably done with a pebble.

Apart from this, we should not exclude the possibility of some figures having been painted, but the open-air conditions did not allow for their preservation. The only indication of painting as a technique in the Côa Valley are five aurochs heads depicted in red paint located underneath a shelter in the granite site of Faia. The paint was used to fill the engraved lines and also to draw other lines that were not engraved, such as the muzzle (Baptista 2001).

Since 1995, soon after the modern recognition of Upper Palaeolithic rock art in the Côa Valley, researchers began to study its human context. For a long time, the interior of the Iberian Peninsula was seen as being empty of human settlement during the Upper Palaeolithic, with very few exceptions (Zilhão et al. 1997). Today there are approximately 30 known sites, located along both riverbanks of the Côa River (Figure 7.2). From the excavation of several of these sites, typological study of their lithic tools and thermoluminescence dating (TL), it is possible to know the chrono-stratigraphic sequence of this art (Aubry et al. 2002; Valladas et al. 2001).

Upper Palaeolithic occupation began during the Gravettian. This is certified not only by lithic assemblages in sites such as Cardina and Olga Grande 4 and 14 but also by several TL dates, with an average of  $27,900 \pm 1,400$  B.P. for Cardina, and  $28,700 \pm 1,800$  B.P. for Olga Grande 4. The Terminal Gravettian has also been identified at the same sites as the Proto-Solutrean (Aubry et al. 2002; Valladas et al. 2001). There is evidence also for the Solutrean, although it seems these settlements have suffered from sedimentary erosion. There is evidence of an early Magdalenian occupation, and a late phase of this culture is also documented, notably in Quinta da Barca Sul, which presents a TL date of  $12,100 \pm 600$  B.P. (Aubry et al. 2002; Valladas et al. 2001). The continuity between these two phases is not certain.

The geomorphological distribution of these sites is relevant to the ways in which this territory was used (Aubry et al. 2003, 2004). The first type of site location to be identified is that on the bottom of the valley, near the river, such as Cardina and Quinta da Barca Sul. Cardina stands out by virtue of its recurrent use in the Upper Palaeolithic, the high density of its remains, and the identification of a feature related to the construction of a hut, which seems to point to a residential use (Aubry et al. 2003).

The large group of Olga Grande sites document the second type of location. These sites occupy a large granitic plateau above the river. Micro-morphological studies (Aubry et al. 2004) have identified the freezing and thawing that has affected the archaeological layers at these sites. In Olga Grande 4, several large fire structures formed by quartz and large granite stones were found associated with Gravettian lithic tools. While organic material was not preserved, ongoing studies suggest that the use of this site related to the initial processing of hunted game. These hunting places are often associated with the formation of ponds owing to defrosting. Several quartzite picks were found at Olga Grande 4. Associated with the Gravettian layer, these picks have a triangular shaped point, which is similar in shape and size to the kind of implement that produced several of the pecked representations, such as the incomplete pecked horse of Canada do Inferno 1 (Aubry 2002).

The last site type is directly related to the rock art. Although several attempts were made to establish a direct relationship between the archaeological record and the rock art, they were not successful until December 1999, when an excavation was conducted near Fariseu's panel 1. Upper Palaeolithic layers at this location lay in direct contact with an engraved panel (Aubry and Baptista 2000; Aubry et al. 2002; García Díez and Aubry 2002). OSL and TL datings obtained from stratigraphically collected samples gave a minimum date of 15,000 B.P. for the panel engraving (Mercier et al. 2006). This is the first direct dating of an open-air Palaeolithic rock art site in Europe.

During September/October 2005, new fieldwork made it possible to identify a new part of the engraved panel, but most importantly it was possible to recover 50 schist slabs containing artistic representations, as well as the first Palaeolithic faunal remains from the Côa Valley (Aubry 2006). These remains have provided radiocarbon dates for the most recent phase of Palaeolithic rock art, at around 10,500 B.P. (Aubry 2006). Ongoing studies will shed new light on the relationship between the artistic themes and the human occupation of the valley.

As mentioned above, flint does not occur naturally in the Côa Valley. Despite this important ecological limitation, the presence of flint within some sites and the study of other kind of raw materials and the location

of the sources are providing interesting information in recent studies (Aubry and Mangado Llach 2003; Aubry et al. 2003, 2004). These studies show that the Gravettian, Solutrean, and Magdalenian hunters used relatively common local raw materials, such as rock crystal, quartz, and quartzite. For specific tools they used the limited silicious rocks sourced from a 50-km radius within the Côa River basin. Although similar, these silicious rocks do not exhibit the same qualities as flint. The studies of T. Aubry and X. Mangado show that flint arrived to the Côa sites in small quantities, from the Gravettian to the Magdalenian. Its origins were the Portuguese Extremadura, along the Tagus basin, but also the Meseta, 150 to 250 km from the Côa Valley (Aubry and Mangado Llach 2003; Aubry et al. 2003, 2004).

Since flint came from sources outside the valley, either the Côa Valley was visited by seasonal incursions, or there was a local group that was seasonally visited by groups from these different locations. Current research tends to favour the second hypothesis, based on the fact that the inhabitants of the valley appeared to have perfect knowledge of all the local lithic raw materials, some of which have very limited sources (Aubry and Mangado Llach 2003; Aubry et al. 2003, 2004). Whatever the case, both these hypotheses based on raw material procurement indicate that the Côa Valley could have been an aggregation space during the Gravettian and possibly continued as such until the Magdalenian. It was during this time period that rock art was being produced.

A third hypothesis – that the local group went abroad to gather flint from distant and opposed sources – has been discarded for three major reasons (Thierry Aubry, pers. comm. May 4, 2005). First, such a group territory, whether intensively explored or used only for flint gathering expeditions, has never been recorded ethnographically. Second, contemporary and comparable sites in Portuguese Extremadura have flint exploitation territories of around a 30-km radius (Aubry and Mangado Llach 2003), similar to the local exploitation territories of silicious rocks in the Côa Valley. Third, the low density of flint nodules in these sources would make it economically unviable to organize expeditions to gather it.

### Modern Rock Art and José Alcino Tomé

Post-Palaeolithic rock art is not as numerous as previous forms of art. The Late Prehistory rock art cycle (5,500 to 3,000 B.C.E.) is represented by schematic anthropomorphic representations, painted mostly in red, although there is also evidence of engraving (Baptista 1999). This form of anthropomorphic art is documented in rock shelters, on megaliths,

and in pottery motifs from the Iberian Peninsula (Sanchidrián 2001; Torregosa and Galiana 2001).

The Iron Age (500 B.C.E. to 1 C.E.) is the second most important phase in the valley. Throughout this phase, the representations continue to be mostly anthropomorphic, but this time they are engraved, and there is a clear relationship between men and animals in the form of warriors on horseback. These warriors carry weaponry, such as shields, spears, and swords. This rock art begins the historical phase of the Côa Valley rock art, with an alphabetic inscription in the celtiberian language (Vale da Casa 23) (Baptista 1999).

Although it has been pointed out that rock art is generally produced by nonliterate societies (Taçon and Chippindale 1998), that is not the case in the Côa Valley, where historical rock art has been identified in 12 different sites (Baptista 1999; Baptista and Gomes 1998). Most of these sites also contain Palaeolithic rock art, but the motifs are rarely superimposed in the same panel (Baptista and Gomes 1998; Zilhão et al. 1997).

Themes are varied but can be grouped into four types: naturalistic, religious, everyday life, and alphabetic and numeric inscriptions. The naturalistic themes are composed of motifs such as fish, birds, flowers, and other vegetation. The religious theme is extremely common. Besides crosses and cruciform representations there are also a considerable number of monstres related to the Holy Ghost cult. Instances of everyday life are one of the most recent themes, directly related to the commencement of industrial activity of milling in the valley. Finally, alphabetic inscriptions occur either singly or in association with other motifs. Generally they act as 'certificates' of authorship and time period (García Díez and Luís 2003).

These numeric inscriptions date the first historical engravings of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, which is confirmed by the typology of the letters (Baptista and Gomes 1998). However, religious symbols began in the previous centuries (fifteenth to eighteenth). The most recent inscriptions date from the 1940s and 1950s. Most representations regarding everyday life, such as boats, fish, birds, bridges, and trains, are associated with the twentieth century. This is determined by some engraved motifs being associated with dates and having a similar technique and patina.

Modern graffiti made in reaction to the recognition of this rock art are not considered, since the main goal of these graffiti was to destroy the recently recognised cultural heritage as a reaction against its preservation. Even though, for us, these motifs are not as important as the rock art itself, they can still be seen as symbols of more recent individual/social identity in the Côa Valley.

In terms of techniques, pecking dominates and fine-line incision appears only rarely. Pecking was produced by metallic picks, confirmed by close analysis of the panels and also from an account by José Alcino Tomé (García Díez and Luís 2003), one of the last engravers of the Côa Valley. Shortly before he died, we had an opportunity to interview him. His life experience had the potential to contribute to knowledge of rock art in two ways. First, because it is direct testimony, it could contribute to an understanding of the modern Côa Valley rock art by providing information on the methods that were used (Taçon and Chippindale 1998). Second, Tomé's account can also be used to compare with past artistic experiences, using the methods of ethnoarchaeology. This is the subject of a previous paper, which focused primarily on the artistic graphic process (García Díez and Luís 2003).

Our interview with José Alcino Tomé was conducted in his house in Vila Nova de Foz Côa on 15th December 2000. Through this interview we got to know his life story and, more specifically, the context within which Tomé engraved. José Alcino Tomé was born in Vila Nova de Foz Côa on 12 March 1925. Having undertaken his fourth-grade examination, he went to work in his family's watermills in Rego da Vide, near Canada do Inferno. He left these mills at the age of 18, when he was conscripted for military service.

After the army, he tried to immigrate illegally to France, where he had family, but he was arrested in Madrid and delivered at the border to the Portuguese political police. Meanwhile, he had married Balbina de Jesus, with whom he had two sons and one daughter. He was able to immigrate to Nampula (Mozambique) in 1951 and returned in 1975, after the decolonization of Portugal. He lived poorly in Vila Nova de Foz Côa until his death in February 2002.

Alcino Tomé's known artistic corpus is scarce. It comprises five panels, distributed in two different rock art sites 2.8 km apart, Rego da Vide and Foz Côa at the mouth of the Côa. Both sites are related to milling.

Panel 2 of Rego da Vide Tomé depicted two anchors, a fish (associated with the inscription O BARBO [*Barbus bocagei*]), and the inscription ALCINO/TOMÉ/1944 above what seems to be a scale, a cross, and another numeric inscription (18 4 40) (Baptista and Gomes 1998). On panel 3 we found one anthropomorphized representation of the sun and two of the moon in crescent, associated with the inscriptions ADEUS/A LUA/E O SOL (Goodbye the moon and the sun) and 1943/JOSÉ/ALCINO/TOMÉ. Panel 4 contains the inscription (TOMÉ/1944[?]), two monstres, and one Latin cross. Only the inscription should be attributed to Tomé, as the morpho-metric features of the rest of the figures are quite different. On panel 5 there is a representation of a

long-legged bird, presumably a stork, with a fish close to its beak, and underneath, the inscription ALCINO/TOMÉ/1946. In this panel we also find a locomotive crossing an iron bridge, with the inscription 1944/ALCINO/TOMÉ, and a representation of a skull and two tibiae with the inscription TOMÉ/1943/MORTE (death). In this panel there are two other groups of engravings that cannot be attributed to Alcino Tomé: one sailing boat with the initials AJN and another '1850/giraldes' (Figure 7.4).

On panel 2 at Foz do Cõa, there is a train, very similar to that depicted in Rego da Vide 5, this time above a simple line with the inscription 1946 and the letter T. (Baptista 1999). Apart from these panels, Tomé's account also refers to a mermaid on a panel on Douro's left bank.

Descoberto santuário de importância mundial  
**Barragem de Foz Cõa  
 ameaça achado arqueológico**

Manuel Correia

Dez anos após a digressão da barragem de Foz do Cõa, no entanto, a este nome de profundeza, cerca de 30 metros, registada no rio há mais de dez séculos. Um arqueólogo descobriu

no momento, mas a distância entre os pontos de origem e o destino da barragem de Foz do Cõa é de cerca de 100 metros de profundidade. Para além do santuário de 900 metros de água, há um rio de cerca de 100 metros de profundidade. Para além do santuário de 900 metros de água, há um rio de cerca de 100 metros de profundidade. Para além do santuário de 900 metros de água, há um rio de cerca de 100 metros de profundidade.



Um santuário de importância mundial, descoberto há dez anos, está ameaçado pela construção da barragem de Foz do Cõa. O santuário, que se encontra a uma distância de cerca de 100 metros do rio, é um dos mais importantes descobertos em Portugal. O santuário, que se encontra a uma distância de cerca de 100 metros do rio, é um dos mais importantes descobertos em Portugal.

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Figure 7.4 Newspaper article that first published the Cõa rock art (title: 'Foz Cõa Dam Threatens Archaeological Findings', *Publico*, November 21, 1994).

Today this entire ensemble is underwater because of the construction of Pocinho Dam in 1983. It was possible to document these engravings in 1995 only as the result of a lowering of the water level behind the dam to study Palaeolithic rock art.

Alcino Tomé's memory of engraving on the Cõa riverbanks places these actions within the time that he worked in his family's mills, between the end of his school days and the army, when he was 14 to 16 years old. However, this account contradicts the dates he inscribed, which indicate that he was 18 to 20 years old at the time he made these depictions (1943, 1944, and 1946). Whatever the case, he was between his teens and early adulthood.

Tomé's parents owned one of the many mills of Canada do Inferno, near a small brook that runs into the Cõa, Rego da Vide. When he finished elementary school, his job was to grind wheat, rye, and barley, while his father transported grain from his customers to the mill and then brought the flour back. The existence of Tomé's engravings at two different sites, Rego da Vide and Foz do Cõa, derives from the custom of the Cõa millers to move to the Douro river between St. John's day (24 June) and Christmas day, when the Cõa 'lost its waters'. Tomé's parents had a watermill in Rego da Vide, near the Cõa, and another in the Douro. This means that the modern engravings at both sites were executed at different times of the year.

During his father's absences Tomé spent most of his time alone, milling, cooking his food, and washing his clothes. He worked continually throughout the night, lighted by small oil lamps, listening to the foxes barking to threaten the chickens. It was during these times that he engraved. Work came first: 'I ground the cereal, got everything ready, and then went to do it'. His father didn't care whether he engraved or not, as long as he completed his work first.

One important question was his choice of panel. Tomé said that he chose the panels that were smooth, and that he could see well. Each engraving was done in three stages. He would 'think first'. Then, with a 'small thin stone', he would 'draw'. Finally, 'over the line, toc, toc, toc' he would 'deepen' or 'peck' with an iron pick. This pick was the tool Tomé used to resharpen the 'upper grinding wheels' of the mill, when they were 'tired', and losing their 'teeth'. The result of this technique is very similar to Palaeolithic pecking. The main difference, apart from the whiteness of the traits, is that modern pecking exhibits rounded and regular impacts, whereas Palaeolithic pecking has more irregular and triangular impacts.

Tomé's themes were based on his individual experience, with everyday elements associated with common and real scenes. For example, the stork fishing, the train crossing the bridge, or, less explicitly, the

sun, the moon, and the inscription 'goodbye', portraying the transition between day and night, or the passage of time. Questioned specifically about the nature of his themes, he was able to say only that 'it was what came to my mind'. Even specific themes were difficult for him to explain.

When interviewed, Alcino Tomé had difficulty in explaining directly the motivation behind his acts, saying 'it was ideas, imagination'. Even so, throughout the whole interview one could perceive a number of possible motivations for his work. Leisure time was one of them. Milling work was not constant, there were moments of inactivity, while his father was absent and the wheels were doing their work.

Another reason could be the tradition of the place. Canada do Inferno and Rego da Vide both exhibit an artistic tradition that began during the Upper Palaeolithic. In fact, Alcino said that he 'saw those old ones, and then I got excited'. He recognised the local tradition, and it was a probable source of inspiration.

Associated with this, there was the desire for individual perpetuation. 'I thought of the old ones' and 'Let me draw, so that when I die it will also be engraved here' – hence the name and date inscriptions. It is unclear whether the 'old ones' Tomé refers to were the Palaeolithic or historical depictions. We believe they were the most recent ones, because most of the Palaeolithic ones were already invisible owing to patina and lichen colonization.

The rock art was known by few people, mostly millers and shepherds 'who passed by, saw them', 'but they didn't care'. It is clear that engraving did not imply any social recognition. Concerning the value of his work, Alcino Tomé said simply: 'that has value . . . it's memories from past times', 'memories that one has'.

### Modern Identification of the Rock Art

The 1950s saw the end of the millers' activity and their art. Most of them emigrated, and the Côa riversides were almost abandoned until 1991, when the construction of a dam was announced. The dam consisted of a large, highly expensive infrastructure that inundated a large part of the valley's lower section. In 1991, the first engraved panel with Palaeolithic motifs was found in the Côa Valley (Canada do Inferno 1) (Baptista 1999; Rebanda 1995). This find was not revealed at the time, and work on the dam began. At the end of summer 1993, when work on the dam's construction lowered the water level at the mouth of the Côa River, a surprising number of engravings were found at Canada do Inferno. This information was revealed only in November 1994 in a newspaper article that accused the construction

company and the accompanying parties of hiding the finds (Carvalho 1994; Zilhão 2004).

The exposure of the engravings posed a dilemma: to continue the construction or to preserve the engravings. This aroused a national and international debate (Gonçalves 1998; Jorge 1995; Luís 2000; Zilhão 2004). Defending the dam was EDP, the company responsible for its construction and for the distribution of electricity in Portugal. This company presented several forceful arguments: the amount of money already invested in the construction and the necessity of electricity and water, as well as initial doubts as to the age of the engravings. On the side of conservation of the engravings were the Portuguese scientific community, augmented by foreign researchers, the opposition political party, and a considerable part of Portuguese public opinion, motivated by a public information campaign carried out by the Portuguese media.

In Vila Nova de Foz, feelings about Côa were contradictory. The town council and a large part of the population defended the construction of the dam, using the arguments of job creation and economic development. Despite this, one of the most significant movements of support was carried out by the students of the local school, which organized the world's first rock art demonstration (Bahn 1995).

In October 1995, a newly elected government decided to suspend the dam's construction and created the Côa Valley Archaeological Park (PAVC) and the National Centre of Rock Art (CNART) to promote public access to, and academic investigation of, the rock art and its context. On 2 July 1997, the Côa Valley rock art sites were classified as national monuments, and in December 1998, UNESCO's World Heritage Committee included them on the World Heritage List.

None of the sides in the debate considered the historic engravings, even though they were already reported (Baptista 1983).

### Discussion

The Côa Valley case shows that different social groups in different times engraved different motifs in the same space, using the same supports and similar techniques. More than this, however, they also incorporated rock art into their social identity in different ways.

It is difficult to know whether 28,000- to 10,000-years-old societies used rock art to reproduce or construct their identities. Our limited knowledge about the Côa Valley and the degree to which we can access these societies does not allow us to give a definitive answer. For the archaeologist and the historian, artistic expression is valued as the expression of the society that produced it. Whether they support totemism, sympathetic

magic, structuralism, or shamanism, prehistorians see Palaeolithic art as a reflex of hunter-gatherers' sociocultural system. It constitutes one of the keys for understanding its authors' way of life and mentality. And although it may not reflect directly the artists' diet, there is an obvious relationship between its themes and their daily life. These men and women were hunters, and they depicted the large herbivores that were typical of their environments.

Therefore, it is generally accepted that C $\hat{o}$ a Valley Upper Palaeolithic rock art reproduced hunter-gatherers' social identity. One of the criteria used to inscribe it on the UNESCO's World Heritage List was 'The C $\hat{o}$ a Valley rock art throws light on the social, economic, and spiritual life of the early ancestors of humankind in a wholly exceptional manner' (UNESCO 1999).

But if Upper Palaeolithic rock art can be seen by scholars as the reproduction of a society's ideology, then it could also have been used to construct that society's own identity. The C $\hat{o}$ a Valley investigation seems to indicate this. The different sources for Upper Palaeolithic lithic raw material suggest that the C $\hat{o}$ a Valley was an aggregation territory. Based on their knowledge of raw materials in the region, a local group inhabited this space all year long. This group would have been visited by other groups from geographically distant areas, bringing flint with them, and possibly other items we can no longer identify owing to their decay. The significant and extensive artistic expression in this aggregation space leads us to think that this art was used to construct these groups' social identity, or at least to produce a certain degree of cohesion among them. It was a part of their social identity, and it was through this that these geographically distant groups identified themselves as belonging to a larger entity. This idea is not particularly new, since Upper Palaeolithic rock art in general and the C $\hat{o}$ a Valley case in particular have already been interpreted as the product of such a social reality, on the basis of the art's formal features, without consideration of excavated archaeological contexts (Baptista and Garc $\acute{a}$  Diez 2002).

Until recently, this rock art had lost its meaning to local communities. They were a different society who did not integrate rock art in their categorization or identity. This fact is illustrated by the various viewpoints expressed by the local population during the debate over the dam. Palaeolithic rock art was negligible in the face of the larger issue of modern development. And, although the scientific community argued the importance of the Palaeolithic C $\hat{o}$ a Valley rock art, locals did not integrate this into their social categorization.

The *fozcoenses* (local residents of Foz C $\hat{o}$ a) were not concerned with the destruction of modern rock art either, irrespective of whether it was valued by archaeologists. From Jos $\acute{e}$  Alcino Tom $\acute{e}$ 's account, we

can realize that this art was part of his personal identity, but it was not relevant to him at the level of society. It was the expression of individuals, not of a group. Even the artists showed no great concerns with it being inundated owing to the P $\acute{o}$ cinho Dam. Alcino Tom $\acute{e}$  just said he was sorry, but seemed content. It was the price of development. In a similar manner, modern rock art was not incorporated into local people's social identity.

We would like to stress that the analysis presented here has its limitations. Since we are comparing chronologically distant realities and basing our conclusions on different types of documents – archaeological and indirect, on one side, oral and direct, on the other – we should question whether taphonomic processes are influencing our conclusions. However, when talking about an Upper Palaeolithic society we are obviously generalizing. During 18,000 years there was surely evolution and mutation, even though its rate may have been slower.

Nevertheless, from the current data we conclude that these two social groups perceived rock art differently. Palaeolithic hunters integrated rock art as a part of their social and cultural identity, whereas modern *fozcoenses* saw it as something that was the product of individual will, the millers'. In addition, they did not differentiate the most ancient examples from modern rock art, as we can see from Alcino's report. It was others, an outgroup of archaeologists, who categorized this rock art and forced the locals to perceive it as their own heritage, albeit his heritage that was seen by the locals as an impediment to progress as they understood it. It was the 'archaeologists', from Lisbon and abroad, who identified the locals with the rock art. Since this categorization was forced from the outside, it was not accepted by the local, and particularly the older, population.

In summary, Archaeologists perceive Upper Palaeolithic rock art as a reproduction of Upper Palaeolithic societies, but, as the C $\hat{o}$ a Valley research shows, it could also have been a means to construct these groups' social identity. Rock art was produced within the context of a society in which geographically distant groups would gather periodically in the C $\hat{o}$ a Valley area. The act of producing this art, the associated rites, and its meaning could have been one way to make different individuals and groups feel a part of a larger entity. In the twentieth century, local people from Foz C $\hat{o}$ a did not recognize this art as theirs.

Today, mostly because of the economic profits that the rock art may bring, and also because of the coming of age of the youngsters who defended the rock art against destruction, people are slowly beginning to accept this art. It seems as if the archaeologists are helping to construct a new social identity for the *fozcoenses*. Only time will tell if they will ever fully identify with the C $\hat{o}$ a Valley's rock art.

In this chapter, we have argued that the Côa Valley rock art was perceived differently in these two totally different societies, even if it was produced on the same kind of support and using similar techniques. To demonstrate this, we have used two different methods, the archaeological for the Palaeolithic and the ethnographic for the modern society, based on one miller's life story and the local population's reaction to the construction of a dam that would destroy the rock art.

These two kinds of rock art were produced in different contexts and had necessarily different meanings. We have used ethnographic analogy only to compare the Palaeolithic graphic process with that of the modern miller (García Díez and Luís 2003). This analogy is focused on the fact that the same kind of rock panels were engraved, sometimes using the same technique. We do not suggest that they both have the same significance. On the contrary, our goal is to state that these two graphic expressions had different social significance.

We conclude that, besides some formal similarities, the social significance of this rock art was different for each society. Palaeolithic rock art was the symbolic expression of a hunter-gatherer society, which we are only beginning to understand. Nevertheless, by combining the archaeological data with analysis of the artistic expression, we can state that the rock art was the representation of a community that used it to strengthen its cohesion. In contrast, modern rock art was the expression of individuals. Although it can be interpreted by researchers as the representation of an industrialised society with its Catholic beliefs, its production and appreciation were not related to group identity.

## Acknowledgment

The English translation of this paper has been kindly reviewed by Claire Smith and Heather Burke. However, any faults remain exclusively our own.

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