

An abstract black line drawing on a dark gray background. The drawing depicts a face in profile, looking upwards and to the right. The lines are expressive and somewhat sketchy, capturing the essence of the face and neck. The text is overlaid on the central part of the face.

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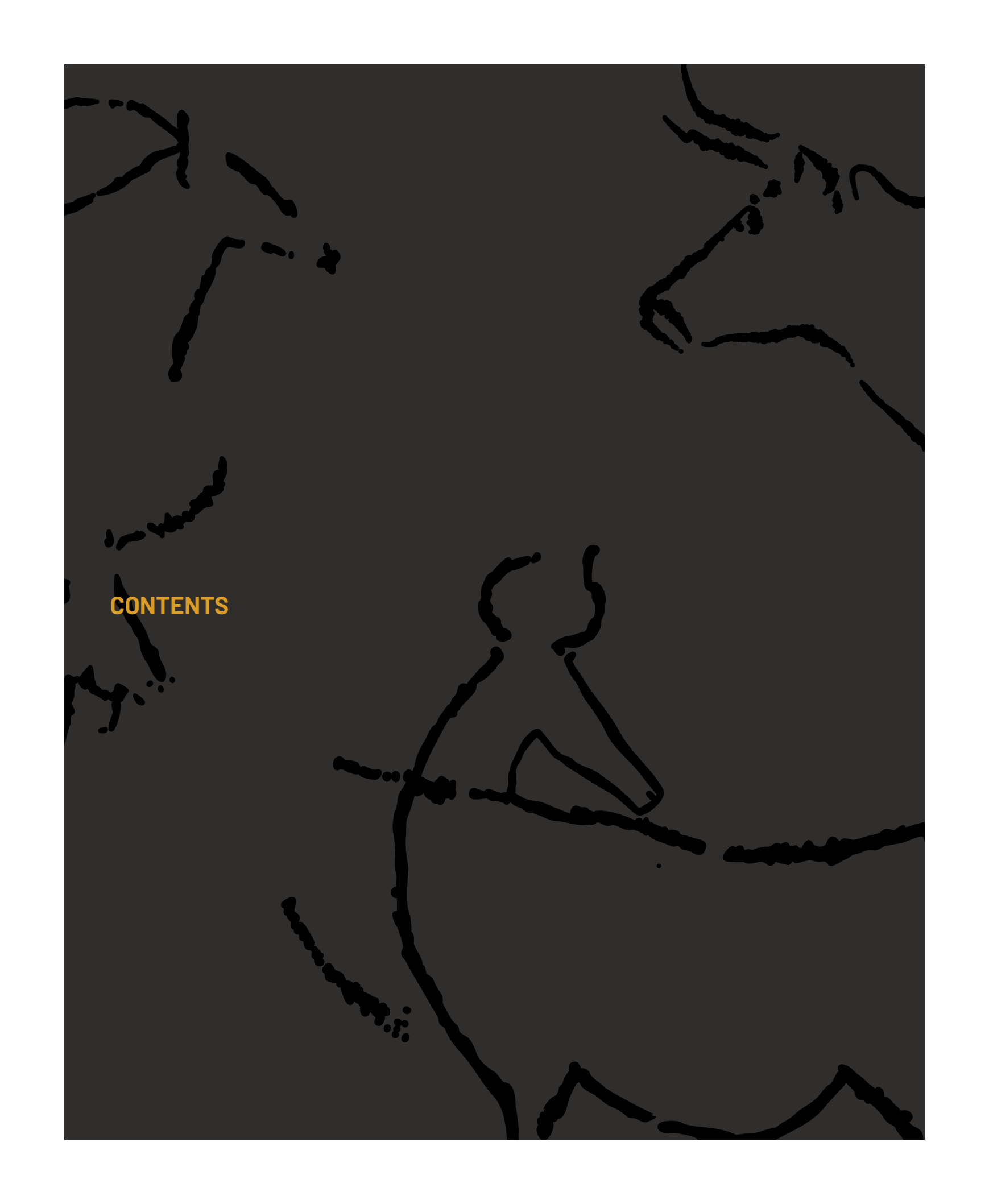
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In memoriam a Bruno Navarro

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The background of the entire page is a dark gray color. Overlaid on this background are several abstract, hand-drawn black lines. These lines vary in thickness and style, some appearing as simple strokes while others form more complex, branching patterns. The lines are scattered across the page, with a notable concentration in the lower half. One prominent line starts near the bottom center and curves upwards and to the right. Another line is positioned horizontally across the middle of the page. There are also several shorter, more isolated strokes in the upper left and upper right areas.

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**HUMAN GROUPS AND THE OCCUPATION OF THE DOURO
VALLEY DURING THE UPPER PALAEOLITHIC AND
THE EMERGENCE OF PREHISTORIC ART**

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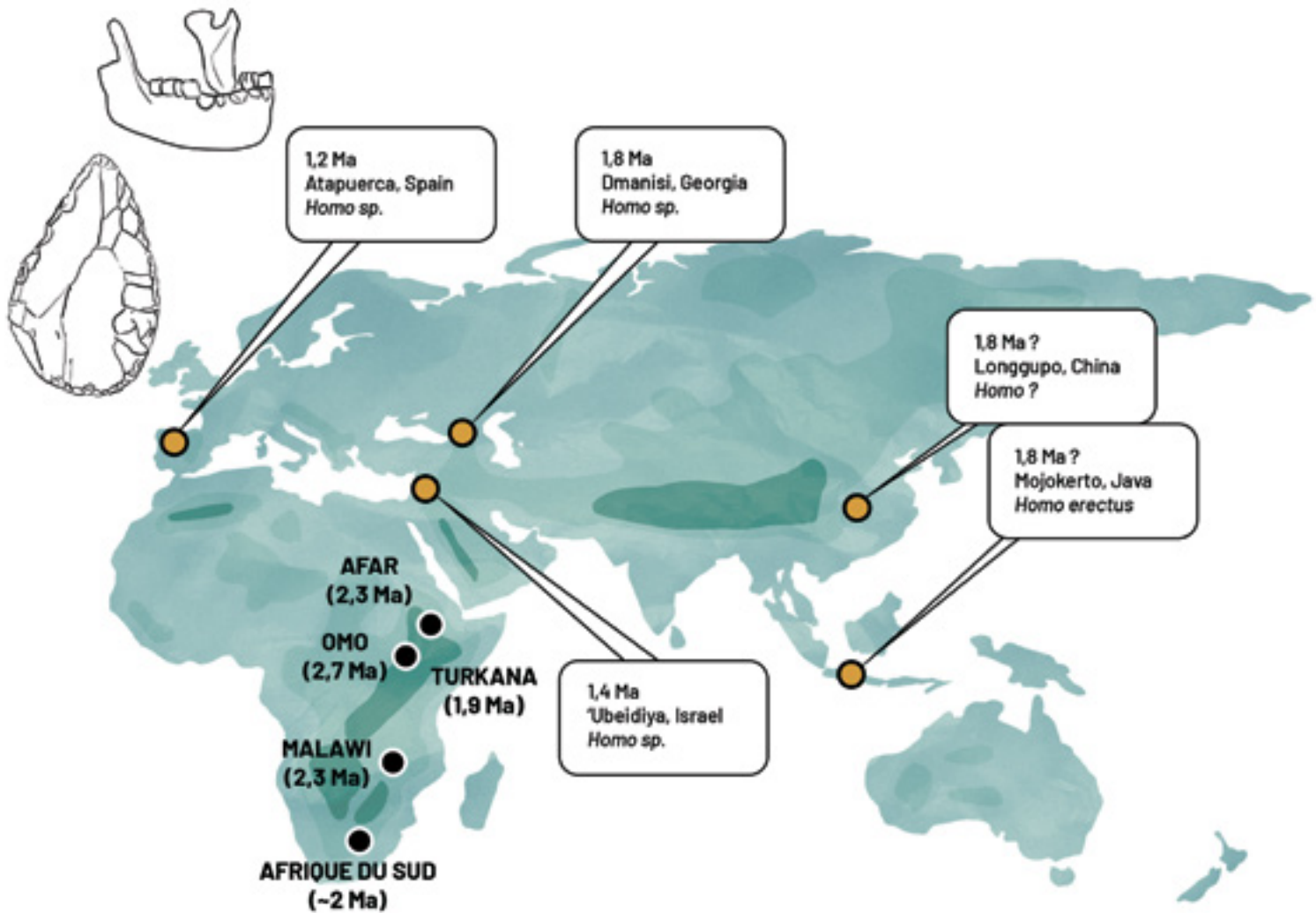
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The appearance of the first hominin in Africa coincides with the start of the Palaeolithic, more than 3 million years ago (Ma), according to the dating of the strata where the oldest stone tools were found. During the majority of this evolutionary process and its spread to the various continents, small hunter-gatherer groups left few traces of their everyday activities, and only a small number of these have survived until the present-day.

This type of remains had greater chances of conservation inside caves or rock shelters that offered favourable conditions. The discovery of bones from hunted animals and vegetable remains used for hearth or conserved on the ground allows the reconstruction of the environment in which these ancient groups lived. The geological characteristics of the bedrock in the majority of the Douro basin are not propitious for the formation of caves and rocky shelters. This leads to greater difficulties in terms of the conservation of remains that allow the recreation of the ancient settlements and evolution of the environment, due to the numerous hypotheses regarding the spaces that may have been used for hunting or building huts. Furthermore, the remains are occasionally covered by sedimentary deposits that have accumulated over time.

Evidence of the presence of humans in the Douro Valley reveals that they settled there long before the Upper Palaeolithic, the period corresponding to the first manifestations of rock art in both caves and the open air. The discovery over the course of the 20th century of simple tools knapped from quartz or quartzite pebbles or boulders, indicates the presence of the first hominin on the slopes of the Douro Valley, which dates back more than 1.2 Ma, as demonstrated in the Sierra de Atapuerca archaeological site, situated just outside Burgos.



THE UPPER PALAEOLITHIC

Fig. 1. Stages of human settlement in the world.

The Upper Palaeolithic dates between 42,000 and 11,700 years Before Present (BP), corresponding to the final period of the Pleistocene epoch (between 2,600,000 and 11,700). In the Iberian Peninsula it is characterised by two singular events: on the one hand, the time referred to as the “Ice Age” (c. 125,000 – 11,700), which was followed by a period of greater climatic stability and mildness and which corresponds to the current time (an epoch known as the Holocene); and on the other, the appearance of modern humans (*Homo sapiens sapiens*), who would eventually replace the previous dominant group, the Neandertals (*Homo neanderthalensis*).

From a climatic and environmental perspective, the Upper Palaeolithic can be divided into two major periods (up to and from around 24,500 BP), when the Last Glacial Maximum (LGM) occurred, and the whole of northern Europe was covered by a vast layer of ice, as in the upper areas of the Pyrenees, the Iberian Cordillera and the Central System in the Iberian Peninsula. This is followed by a new climate period characterised by a succession of milder and wetter episodes, interspersed with other colder ones, and in all cases, a gradual thawing that leads to a rise in the coastline and in general, a more temperate and wetter atmosphere (see chapter 2).

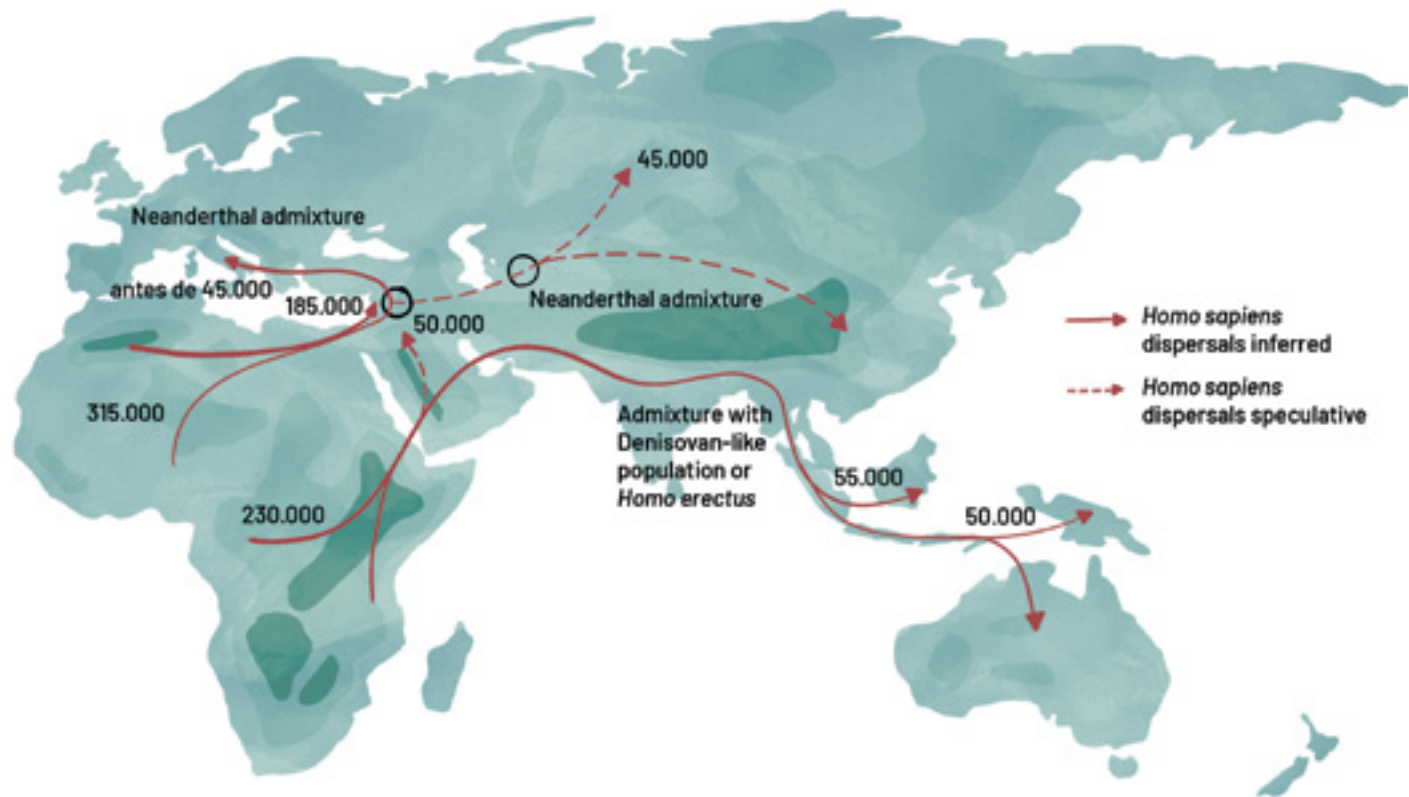


Fig. 2. Spread of modern humans.

The analysis of the tools used by the paleolithic hunter-gatherers, in particular those made of stone and bone, allow for progress in the grouping of sets and the identification of their evolution, in accordance with dating systems based on a variety of methodologies and materials: carbon, bone, teeth, sediments and calcite concretion. Despite the numerous specificities, in general terms the Upper Palaeolithic can be divided into several chronological phases, named after the findings in eponymous sites (the majority in France), which are supposed to be chronologically successive, although naturally their impact on the various territories leads to gaps and juxtapositions.

The first, known as Châtelperronian (after the Châtelperron cave in France) and associated with the remains of the last Neanderthals at two sites in France, dates from 45,000 BP and is therefore considered by some authors as the transition from the Middle to the Upper Palaeolithic. Their stone tools were made on a blade (knapped flint fragments that were twice as long as their width) to produce points with curved backs, using a technology that would evolve throughout the Upper Palaeolithic. This type of stone tools has only been found in central and southern France and the north of Spain, on both sides of the Pyrenees. None has been identified in the rest of the Iberian Peninsula. This distribution and characteristic of the stone tools have been seen as the result of the possible influence of the first modern humans on the last Neanderthals. Alternative theories

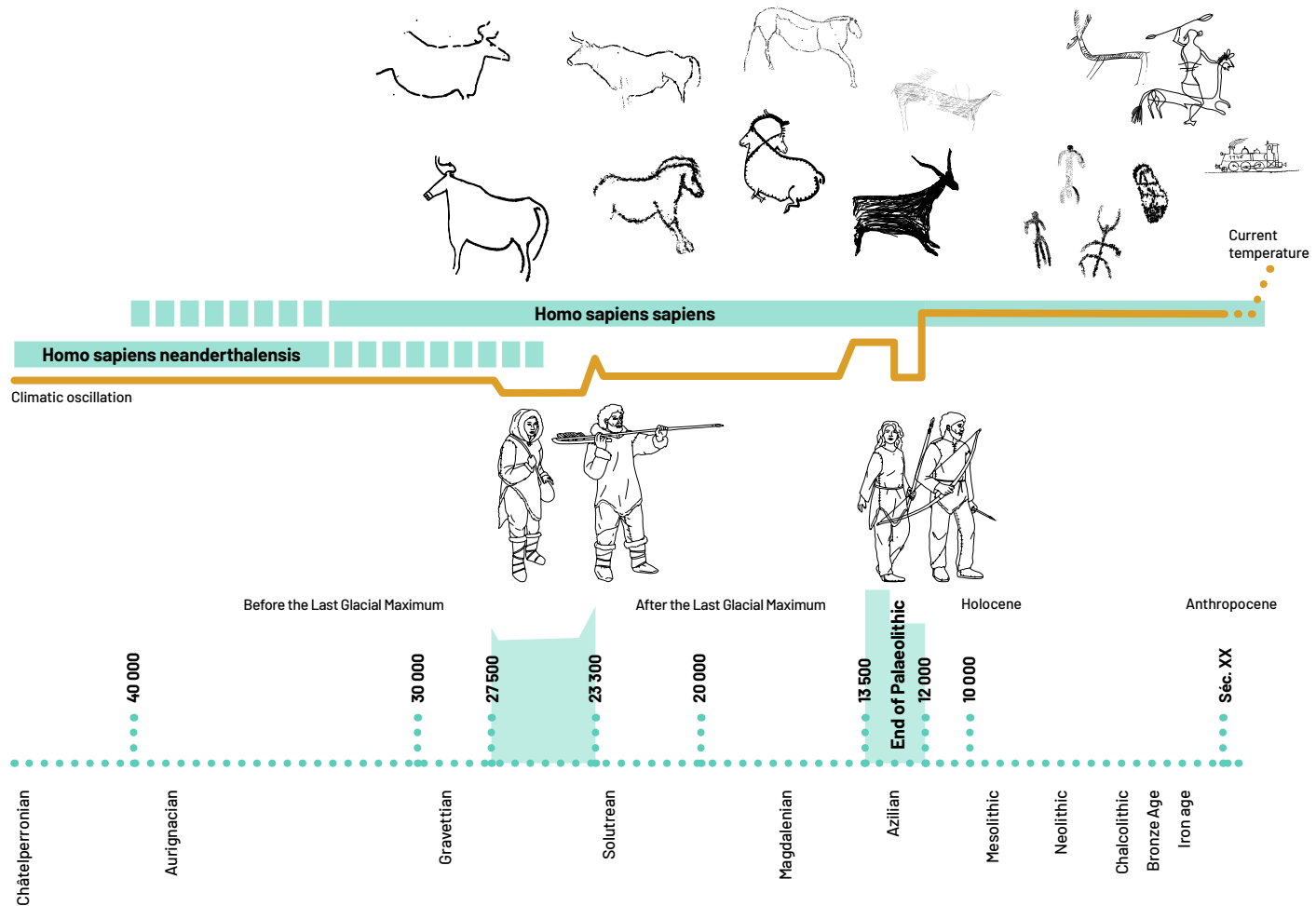


Fig. 3. Timeline of the Upper Palaeolithic complexes and main landmark events.

point to an independent technological evolution that would lead to the adoption of similar industries.

A further four phases of the Upper Palaeolithic have also been described, in which figurative artistic manifestations have been identified. The characteristic artefacts of the oldest of these, the Aurignacian, are associated with human remains considered to correspond to the first anatomically modern human settlements in Europe. The arrival and large settlement of this group in the Iberian Peninsula occurred mainly during the Gravettian phase, which evolved during the transition phase of the Glacial Maximum at the height of the Upper Palaeolithic, attributed to Solutrean groups, whilst the final phase was the so-called Magdalenian culture.

The lack of Neanderthal findings in the interior of the Iberian Peninsula, and the fact that modern humans did not spread to these areas until practically the end of the second period, in the full and final phases of the Upper Palaeolithic, has been explained by the harsh climatic conditions that existed in the continental inlands of the Douro Basin. Indeed, the Ebro is considered to have acted as a

barrier between two bioclimatic zones (until $\pm 36,500$ BP). The presence of modern humans has been discovered in the north, whilst the Neanderthal groups remained in the south.

In contrast, on the periphery of the Iberian Peninsula (the Cantabrian coast, the Portuguese Atlantic seaboard and the Mediterranean coastline), the proximity of the sea could have created a more favourable environment that was soon occupied by modern humans from the start of the Upper Palaeolithic, as evidenced by the cave dwellings that boast the best-known examples of Palaeolithic rock art in northern Spain.

In this hypothesis, the few remaining races of Palaeolithic art to be found inside a few inland caves in the Iberian Peninsula were associated with later settlements dating back to the end of the Palaeolithic and therefore can unquestionably be attributed to sapiens. Their existence (conservation) was linked precisely to caves, and the possibility of their existence outside this environment or in certain sheltered rocky areas was not considered.

However, more recent findings have led to the possibility of a far more complex reality. There is increasing evidence of the recurrent occupation of the Douro Basin throughout the Upper Palaeolithic, both before the Last Glacial Maximum and, most clearly, until the final phases of this period.

THE LAST NEANDERTHALS

The oldest periods are characterised by the use of stone tools produced using Neanderthal reduction sequences, namely the Levallois and Discoidal method which standardised flake extraction knapping the core geometrically, thereby allowing for a better use of the raw material and greater utensil standardisation.

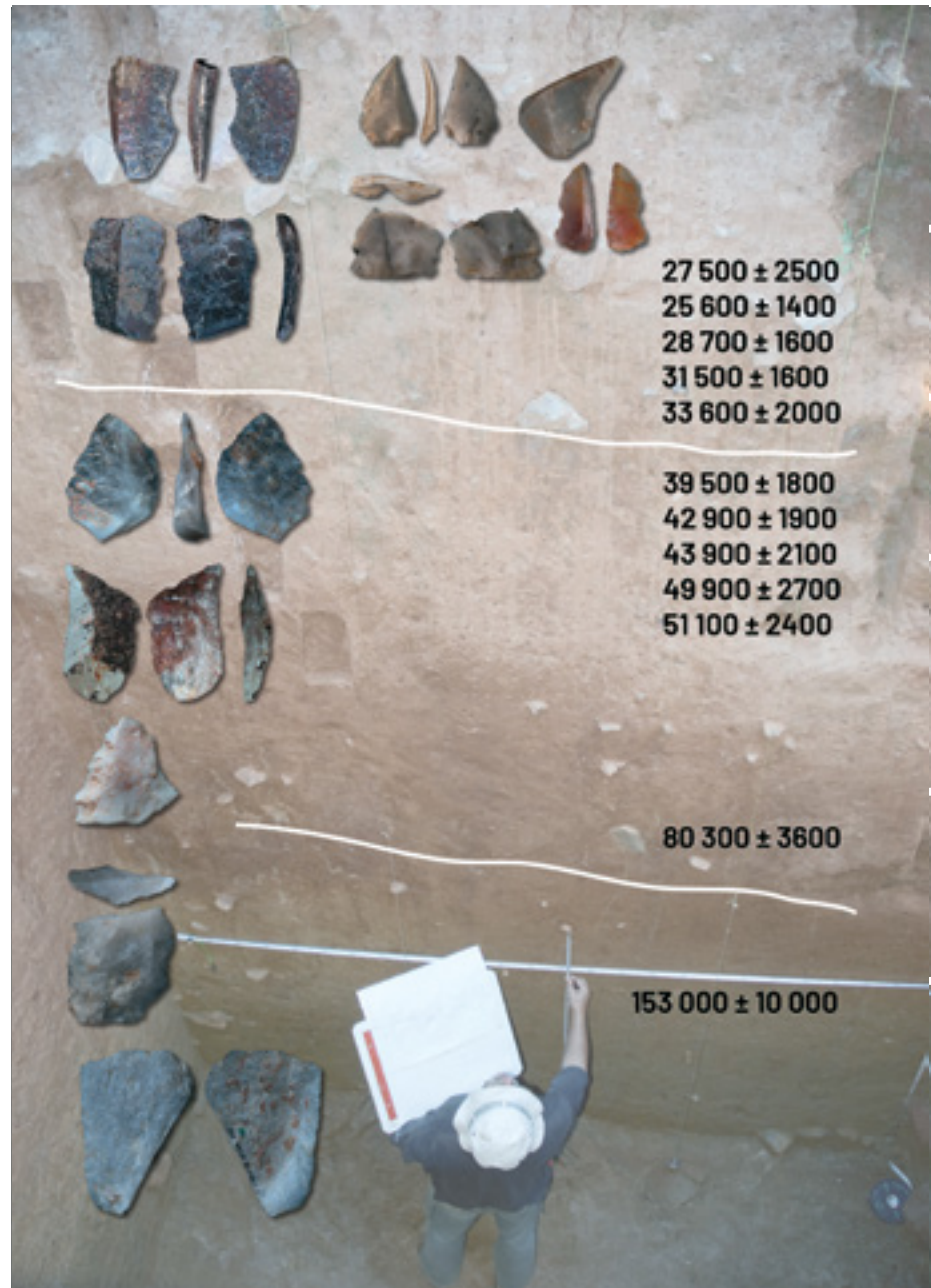
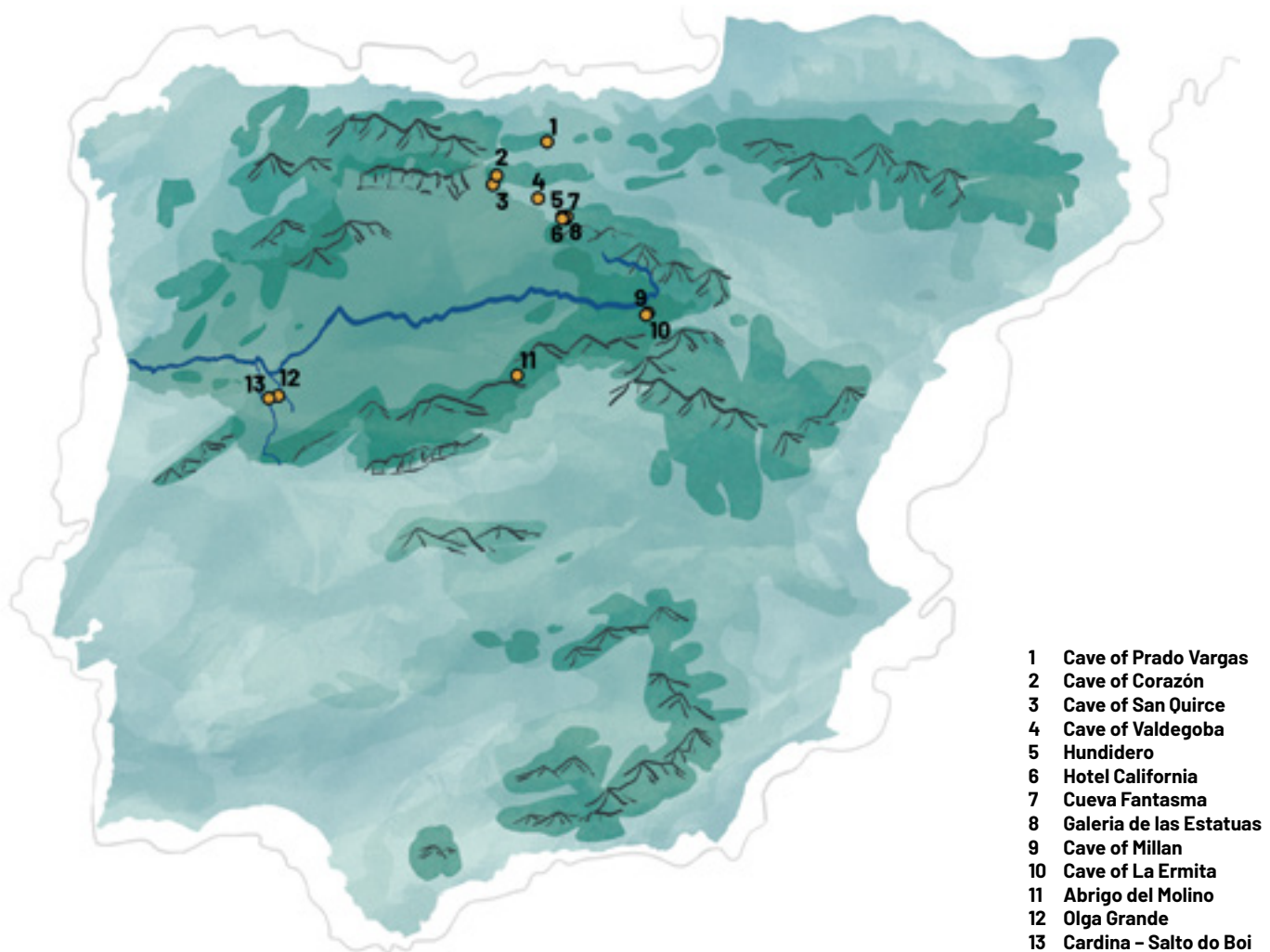


Fig. 4. Stratigraphic section from Cardina-Salto do Boi in which a rock is documented with strata from the Middle and Upper Palaeolithic.

In the east of the basin, in the Côa Valley, the findings were concentrated on the granite plateau, on both banks (Chãs and Almendra) and at the bottom of the valley (Cardina-Salto do Boi). In the case of the latter, excavation has revealed a large sequence of sedimentary deposits measuring up to five metres in depth. Successive archaeological works have revealed that the site was occupied for a long period, with evidence of the presence of Neanderthals from 150,000 and up to 38,500 BP, as well as the first laminar stone industries, attributed to the Aurignacian, c. 34,000 BP and the Gravettian, c. 32,000 BP. Evidence of other more recent occupations, dating to c. 29,000 BP, include a circular structure believed to be the paved floor of a cabin.

Fig. 5. Map of sites from the late Middle Palaeolithic attributed to Neanderthal groups in the Douro basin.



Furthermore, in Pedras Altas (Olga Grande), several concentrations of stone remains have been identified on the plateau that extends between the valleys of Côa and Ribeira de Aguiar. The results obtained from the archaeological excavations at Olga Grande 4 and 14 confirmed the existence of stone tools, mainly hunting points, associated with fire-lighting tools dating back to c. 30,000 BP. These findings indicate that these inland areas were continuously inhabited at this time, at a distance from the coastal platform that was considered the usual and exclusive area for settlement.

Several tens of kilometres north-east of these sites, on the left bank of the River Sabor and on the Foz do Medal meander, documented evidence exists of a long period of human occupation throughout the Upper Palaeolithic, beginning during the early Gravettian industry, c. 27,000 BP.

The findings located at the opposite end of the Douro Valley paint a similar picture. The human fossils located in the Valdegoba Cave are prior to 48,000 BP, and according to researchers, they unquestionably correspond to a Neanderthal group that frequently used this space in summer in order to hunt adult chamois (59%) for meat and the transformation of their skins, given the nature of the stone tools found, made of local flint and quartzite. Other Neanderthal fossils have been located nearby in the Cueva Fantasma on the Sierra de Atapuerca archaeological site and Abrigo de Molino Cave, in the city of Segovia. These are recently discovered and are currently undergoing study and dating. Similar findings dated 46,400 BP have been made in the Ebro Valley itself, in one of the channels leading to the north plateau, specifically in the Prado Vargas Cave. Again, they are considered to correspond to seasonal occupation during spring and summer in order to hunt chamois. The traces of the cuts and fractures inflicted on fauna remains by stone instruments corresponding to the advanced Mousterian industry, are combined with those caused by carnivore bites, and are not always easy to distinguish.

Other sites, where no human fossils have been found, confirm the occupation of the Douro Basin from the height of the Middle Palaeolithic. Examples include the Cueva Corazón with Levallois stone tools dated between 96,500 and 74,000 BP, or the nearby San Quirce site, c. 73,000 BP, both of which are situated in the south of the Montaña Palentina area. The Sierra de Atapuerca referred to earlier, has several dated sites that can be accessed from the current Cueva Mayor: the Galería de Estatuas, dating from 80,000 – 70,000 years ago houses a set consisting mainly of flakes of local flint, quartzite and sandstone. In turn, the archaeological exploration of El Portalón landfills revealed stone pieces dated c. 34,000 BP which, although they may correspond to modern human settlements, can be situated during the period prior to the Last Glacial Maximum. Nearby, in the Sierra de Atapuerca mountain range itself, other open-air settlements have been identified, dating back some 70,000 and 30,000 years.

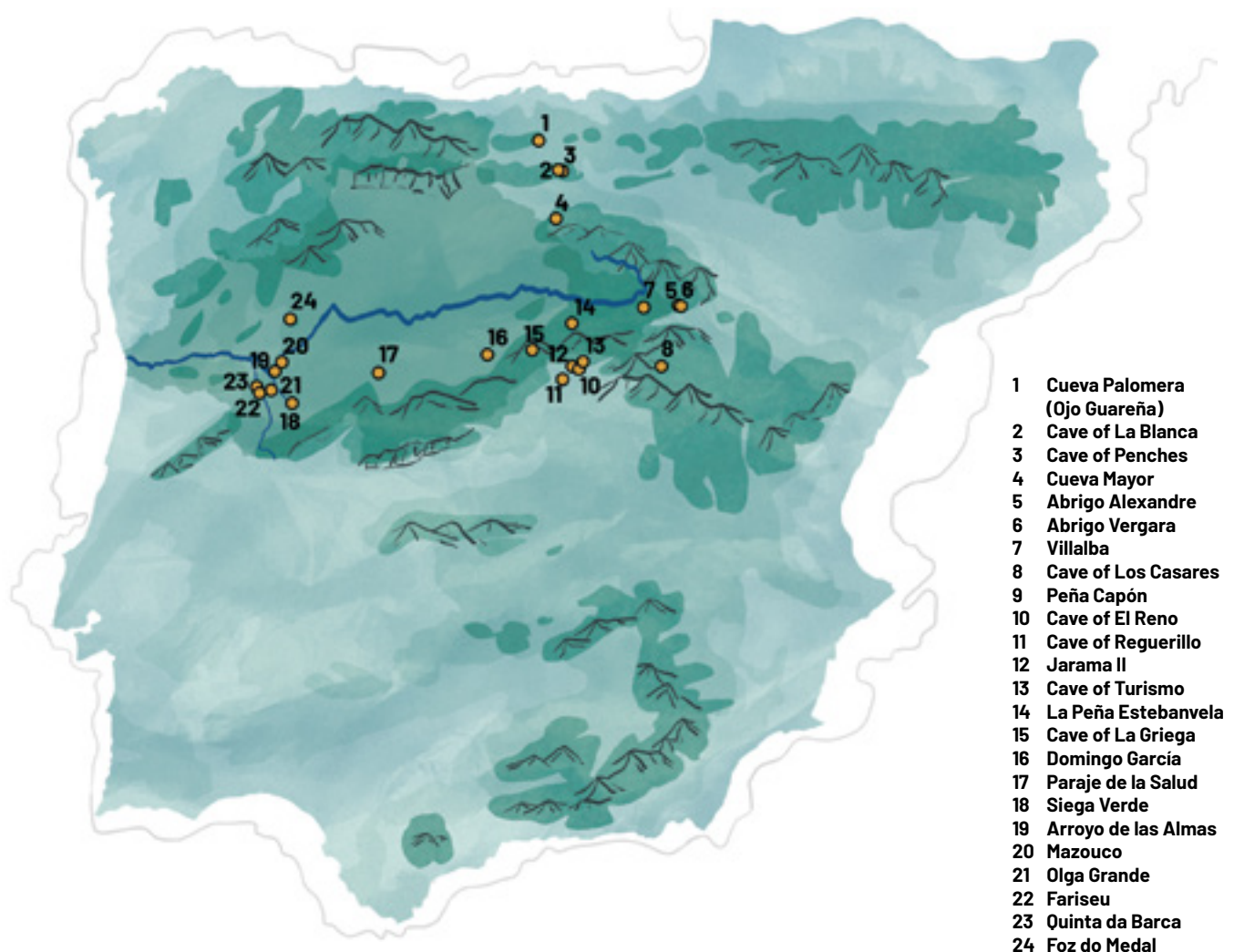
To complete the scenario, it must be noted that in the Sierra de la Demanda mountains, also nestling on the eastern edge of the Douro Basin, other occupations have also been identified since ancient times, namely La Ermita Cave and Millán Cave, dating back to before 35,000 BP.

THE MODERN HUMAN

In the Douro Basin, the early dates identified at the Cardina-Salto site in Boi allow us to conclude that the first industries associated with modern humans date back to 34,000 BP. They are characterised by blades and bladelets retouched as small points (normally less than 4 cm in length), that would become progressively smaller. Flint was the raw material stone for these instruments, a limestone rock that is ideal for obtaining sharp and highly resistant edges, together with local silica and igneous rock, namely quartz and quartzite, when the former was not available locally. In addition, the lithic remains include other tools, such as points, harpoons and scrapers, etc., made from bone or antlers.

Following the harshest climatic period, the occupation continued of a number of sites that had previously been used as camps, as evidenced by the dating of Cardina-Salto do Boi (20,700 BP) or again, at a higher level that the base of El Portalón in the Cueva Mayor (17,000 BP). Further open-air settlements were also identified, such as

Fig. 6. Map of sites from the Upper Palaeolithic attributed to modern human groups in the Douro basin.



the Upper Solutrean Fariseu (23,000 BP) or Olga Grande 4 and 14 that would be used extensively during the Magdalenian and Azilian industries, until 11,700 BP or Quinta da Barca Sul (15,000 – 11,700 BP). Returning to the far eastern end of the basin, we find the dating of the Alejandro and Vergara caves (18,930 to 16,950 BP). These sites are located in the passes between the Douro and Ebro valleys, whilst Estebanvela Crag (15,500 to 9,250 BP) nestles further inside the basin, albeit in a peripheral location.

In the light of these findings, it is hard to continue to maintain the hypothesis that the inland tertiary depressions on the Iberian Peninsula were not populated during the Middle and Upper Palaeolithic ages. Indeed, the data provided here have revealed quite the opposite, as have other findings such as those in the Tagus Valley, home to a large number of stations both in caves, Jarama I and II, and outdoors; the many sites on the terraces of the Manzanares or Jarama itself. They all confirm a recurrent presence throughout the various periods, regardless of the harshness of the climatic conditions. Some researchers attribute this to the continentality of both territories and the alternating peneplains and valleys.

In both cases, these sites of anthropic occupation, from the Mousterian industry and throughout the Upper Palaeolithic, and the fact that they are repeated in certain time periods, may well indicate regular human settlements, two *Homo sapiens* groups, that follow the movements of herds through certain corridors or ecotones, driven by climate change, which far from preventing the presence of thermophilic species, may well have encouraged them to seek shelter in both basins. All the settlements would appear to be small temporary and specialised hunting camps, although those attributed to modern humans reflect a greater variety of utensils, indicating a wider variety of activities and social relations, as will be discussed later on in the explanation of the origins of the raw materials used for the production of stone tools (see chapter 2).

THE AUTHORSHIP OF PALAEOLITHIC ART

Many of these sites, in particular the most recent, have been identified by the new approaches that questioned the depopulation of the inland areas of the Iberian Peninsula. The change of paradigm was endorsed by the discovery in the 1990s of the so-called open-air rock art sites in the Côa Valley and Siega Verde.

Until the late 20th century, examples of Palaeolithic art had been identified in cave. These sites were located in the Douro Basin, mainly in the plateau periphery, in places associated with the passes in the Ebro Valley (Penches, La Blanca, El Caballón, Ojo Guareña, or the small caves of Alejandro and Vergara), or on the mountainsides of both the eastern Iberian Cordillera (Cueva Mayor or Cueva La Griega) and the southern side of the Central System (Los Casares, El Reno, El Reguerillo and Cueva Turismo). In addition, there were occasional findings of portable art (in La Blanca, the now missing decorated El Caballón stick, or the more recent finding in Jarama II, in the Tagus Basin), as well as outdoor examples (the Villalba plaque). Apart from these rare findings, less than a dozen in all, we must add two rock engravings representing a horse and attributable to the Palaeolithic, situated at either end of the basin at Mazouco and Domingo García.



Fig. 7. Signo retangular pintado da gruta de La Pasiega (Santander) datado por Urânio-Tório, o que confirma a sua execução antes da chegada do Homem moderno (©Regional Government of Cantabria. MUPAC. Photograph by Pedro Saura).

This scant repertoire would appear to be in keeping with the scarce population of these lands, attributable, as mentioned earlier, to the harsh climate conditions of the last glaciation. The discoveries in the Siega Verde in 1988 and the Côa Valley a few years later, in 1991, pointed to a very different scenario. Research centred on documenting these manifestations, and the number of open air Palaeolithic art discoveries grew both in the Douro Basin (the large number in Domingo García, Puente de la Salud, Fregeneda, etc.) as well as in the distribution of site in Iberia (see chapter 4). Likewise, major efforts were channelled into the search for the settlements of the authors of this art, with unquestionable success in the Côa Valley, where investigators were able to contextualise this art with remains of other activities, particularly in the case of Fariseu panel nº1. An engraved rock covered

BY sediments and archaeological remains of Palaeolithic occupations, including engraved schist slabs, confirms that this rock art was made before 18,400 BP. Other datings, already mentioned in the Paleolithic layer of Fariseu, namely Quinta da Barca and Estebanvela Crag, again situated at either end of the basin, confirm the evolution of stylistic features of engravings throughout the Palaeolithic cycle, from the Gravettian to the Azilian (30,000 to 11,700 BP).

However, the debate surrounding the authorship of the first examples of Palaeolithic art is very much alive; or, to be more precise, the question of whether the oldest examples could be the work of Neanderthal groups, or whether they are all attributable to modern humans, our species.

The former option is defended by a group of authors that have dated artistic manifestations as prior to 50,000 years BP. One of their arguments in this sense is that the stylistic classification, from the classic systems of Breuil or Leroy-Gourhan, defined an initial non-figurative phase, which would include some of the dated motifs. In contrast, it has been noted there is no evidence of portable art corresponding to the long period of the Neanderthal groups in the Iberian Peninsula, and that the new datings attribute their supposed artistic awakening to contact with modern humans.

Supporters of this latter option also argue that the method used to date these works (known as Uranium-thorium dating) must be reviewed, claiming that the results obtained using the more traditional method (based on radio-carbon) do not exceed 38,000 BP. ¹⁴C dating can only be applied to very few



examples – black pigments with organic content – as it is not effective with red pigments and mineral colourings, or engravings. For this reason, those that argue in favour of the antiquity of the art stress that the absence of radiocarbon dating does not imply that there are no earlier examples of art. These authors also point out is that the scientific community has accepted datings in other regions such as Indonesia prior to 40,000 BP, without questioning the same Uranium-thorium dating method.

This debate is also applicable to the Douro Basin. The ancient phase has not been dated with any degree of chronological precision. As mentioned, there is proof of the presence of stone tools assemblages attributable to Neanderthals contemporary to the early phases of the Upper Palaeolithic in the north of the Iberian Peninsula. Those of Cardina-Salto do Boi are one such example. A sequence on this site has been referred, where the layer where Neanderthal and *Homo sapiens sapiens* lithic artefacts are recovered are five thousand years apart (Fig. 4). Moreover, the technological study of the quartzite carving tools found in the Gravettian layer of occupation at Olga Grande 4, c. 30,000 BP, provides a further argument for attributing the oldest artistic phase of the Côa Valley to this period. There is therefore a need for caution when interpreting presence and absence both in territories and time.

It is impossible to know who the first artists were, although in all likelihood, the authorship of this open air Palaeolithic art could well be attributed to modern humans. However, what we do know is that there are more examples

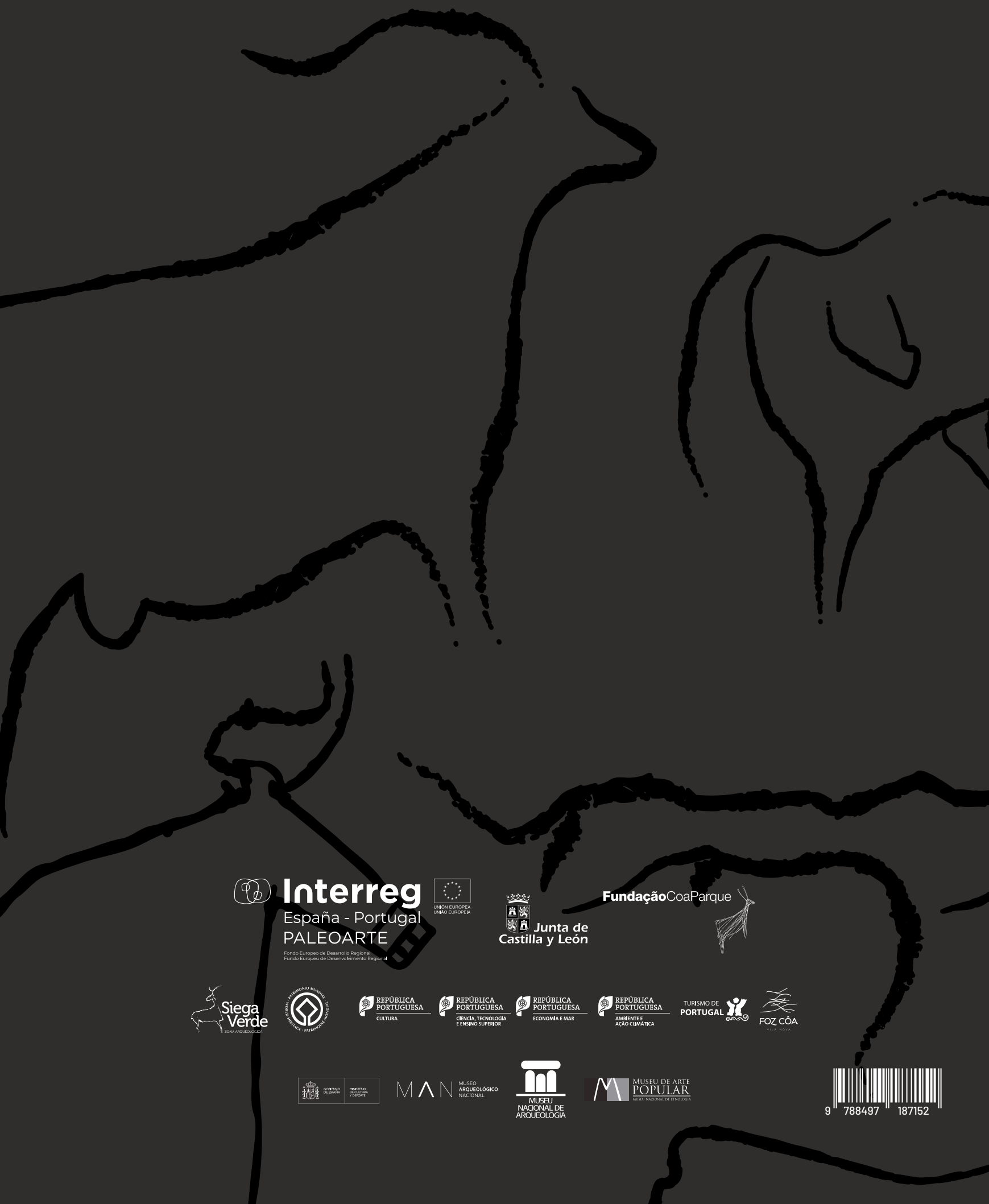
Fig. 8. Maltravieso Cave. Detail of the hand in negative from the GSII-3 panel in Galeria de Serpiente. © Hipólito Collado Giraldo. Department of Libraries, Archives and Cultural Heritage. Regional Government of Extremadura

of Palaeolithic art than those conserved in caves; indeed, they can be found in open-air sites, and of course, there are also associated examples of portable art. Their discovery and characterisation have been possible thanks to the growing number of research programmes, including both survey as well as the excavation of Neanderthal and the first modern human sites. A very different scenario from that previously described, and which increasingly points to the similarities between the occupation of peripheral and inland territories.

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