

LIMITLESS ART

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VERDE

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The background of the entire page is a dark grey color, overlaid with various black, hand-drawn or etched lines. These lines are irregular and somewhat abstract, resembling ancient rock art or schematic drawings. Some lines are straight, while others are curved or zigzag. There are also some small clusters of dots or short, parallel lines scattered throughout the composition. The overall effect is that of a textured, historical surface.

**BETWEEN SPAIN AND PORTUGAL.
SCHEMATIC ART IN THE MIDDLE AND LOWER DOURO BASIN**

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BASIC ASSUMPTIONS: PERIOD AND TERRITORY CONSIDERED IN THIS TEXT

As requested by the editors for this catalogue – the schematic art of the middle/lower Douro basin developed from 10,000 BCE, i.e., from the beginning of the Mesolithic period – we will now outline the territorial profile and the chronological and cultural parameters addressed in this text.

For the time being, we only have archaeologically reliable evidence of graphic expressions in this region from ca. 8000 BCE. Although there are various traces from the early Mesolithic period, especially engravings, the discussion of which would be beyond the scope of this article, however.

In any event, we will say that schematic art, in its temporal and stylistic development, is certainly part of a period that, in this region, in solar calendar years, extends from the Mesolithic period to the Early/Middle Bronze Age, i.e., from ca. 8000 to 2200-1700/1500 BCE. It would therefore cover the Mesolithic/Early Neolithic (8000 to 5500/4500 BCE); the Middle/Late Neolithic (4500 to 3200 BCE); the Chalcolithic (3200 to 2200 BCE); as well as the Early Bronze Age (2200-1700 BCE) and the Middle Bronze Age (1700-1600/1500 BCE); this chronology is based on the authors' methodological approach, applied to this study.

Given that the administrative border between Portugal and Spain is a recent phenomenon (nearly nine centuries old), having been preceded by several 'borderlines' – or the absence of them – during this span of several millennia, the exhibition organisers also requested a text with a joint vision from both sides of the middle/lower Douro basin that would make it possible to observe historical (prehistorical) and artistic phenomena from an integrated perspective. That is what we are going to try to do, in a very concise way.

In defining the territorial or geographic profile, we used the valleys of the Rivers Côa and Águeda as the epicentre, defined in the middle/lower Douro

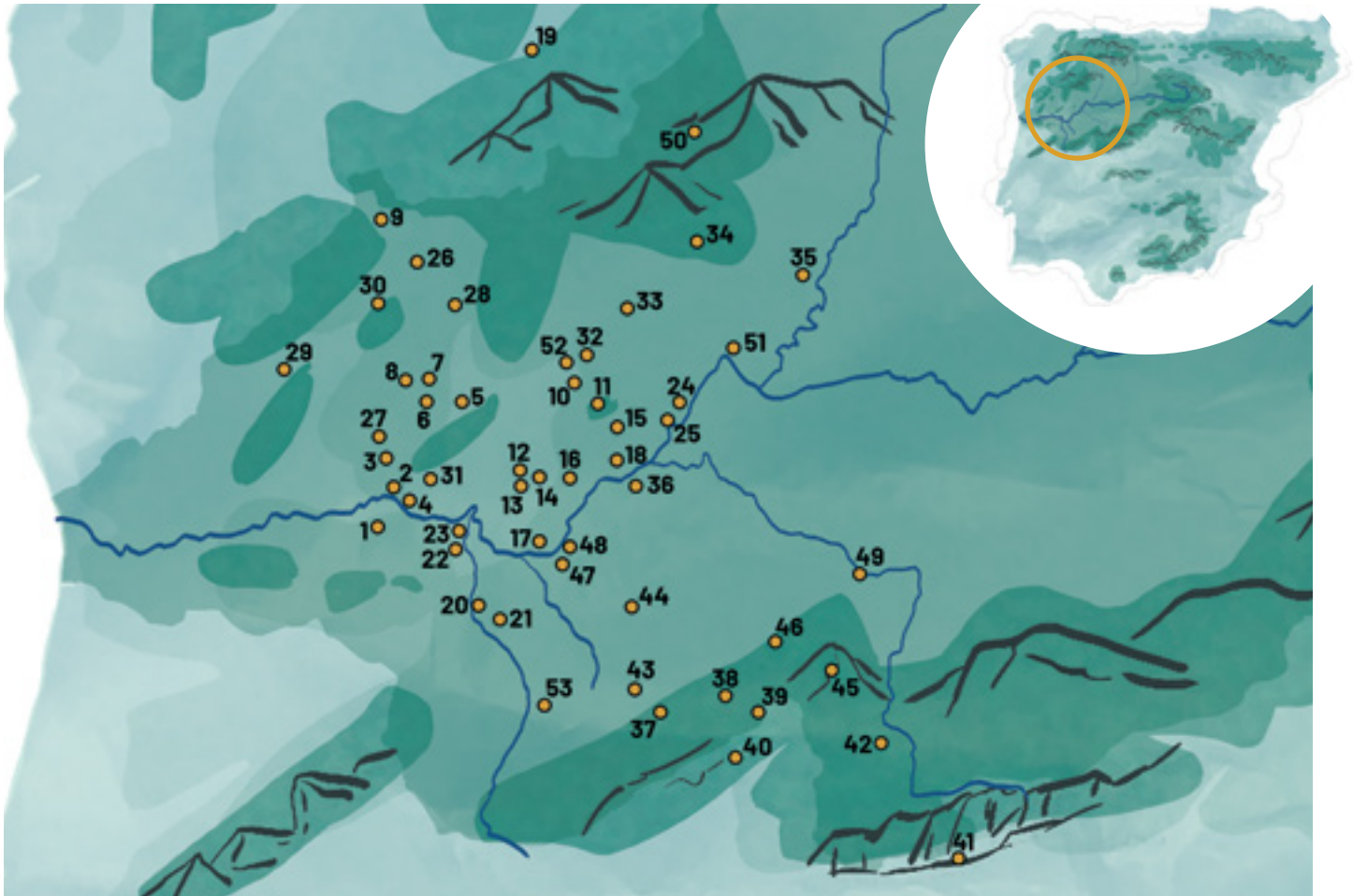


Fig.1. Schematic rock art main sites: painted rock (P); engraved rock art (G) and both techniques rock art sites (P+G).

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|
| 1 Fraga d'Aia (P); | 13 Fraga do Fojo (P); | 24 Solhapa (G); | Batuecas/ Peña de Francia y Valle de Lera (P), an ensemble which 40/50 rock shelters; Valle del Cabril (P); Valle de Belén (P); Valle de las Esposadas (P); |
| 2 Rock-shelter of foz do Tua (P); | 14 Parada (G); Ribeira do medal-Rocha 2 (P); Abrigo da Ribeira do Resinal (P+G); | 25 Passadeiro (G); Fragas da Lapa (G); Fraga do Puio (G) | 41 Risco de la Zorrera (P); |
| 3 Pala Pinta (P); | 15 Pala do Triquinho (P); | 26 Tripe (G); | 42 Risco de Santibañez (P); |
| 4 Cachão da Rapa (P); | 16 Fonte Santa (P); | 27 Botelhinha (G); | 43 Abrigo del Acueducto (P); Matahijos (P); |
| 5 Serra de Faro (P) | 17 Ribeira do Mosteiro (P); | 28 Fragão (G); | 44 Cerro de San Jorge (P); |
| 6 Serra de Passos/Sta Comba/Garraia (P), an ensemble of 40/50 rock shelters/panels, which include: Regato das Bouças 2, Regato das Bouças 3, Regato das Bouças 15, Regato das Bouças 11, Abrigo 6 da Ribeira de Pousada; | 18 Fragas do Diabo (P+G); | 29 Lamelas (G); | 45 Peña de Santa Cruz (P); |
| 7 Abrigos Ribeira Lila (P); Fraga das Passadas (G); | 19 Casaio (P); | 30 Outeiro Machado (G); | 46 El Castillo (P); |
| 8 As Portas (P); | 20 Faia (P+G); Lapas Cabreiras (P); Ervideiro (P); Mioteira (P); | 31 Fraga das Ferraduras de Belver (G); | 47 La Malgarrida (P); |
| 9 Penedo Gordo (P); Penedo do Gato (P); | 21 Colmeal (P); Poço Torto (P); | 32 Fraga Escrevida (G); | 48 La Procesión (P); |
| 10 Forno da Velha (P); | 22 Canada do Inferno (G); Vale de Videiro (P); Namorados (G); Vale de Figueira (P+G); Ribeira de Piscos (P+G); São Gabriel (P); Ribeirinha (P); Gamcoal (P); Penascosa (G); Quinta da Barca (G); Vale de Cabrões (G); Ribeira da Cabreira (G); Vale d'Arcos (P); Cascalheira (G); | 33 El Pedroso (G); | 49 El Marín (P); |
| 11 Penas Roias (P); | 23 Vale da Casa (G); | 34 Sierra de La Culebra: Portillon y Melendro (P); | 50 Pozo Recebros I y II (P); |
| 12 Ribeira do Xedal (P+G); Vale de Figueira (G); | | 35 El Castellón y Portal de Juanote (P); | 51 Fonfria (P); |
| | | 36 Palla Rubia (P); | 52 Fraga dos Fusos (G); |
| | | 37 Bonete del Cura (P); | 53 Ribeiro das Casas (P). |
| | | 38 Peñas del Gato (P); | |
| | | 39 Valle de la Palla (P); Abrigo del Castil de Cabras (P); | |
| | | 40 Núcleo do Valle de las | |

basin and its mountainous headwaters, on the western edge of the Northern Plateau, having considered, from the Portuguese side, the adjacent area that is most identified with it in geomorphological and climatic terms. To sum up, in general, and excluding the Portuguese coastline, the area covered lies within a circle with a roughly 100–140-km radius, the epicentre of which are the prehistoric artistic groups of the Côa Valley and Siega Verde. This is justified by the relative mobility of the communities we are interested in and the inclusion of two of the highest concentrations of schematic painting in the Iberian Peninsula: in the Sierra de Francia mountains and Las Batuecas valley, in the mountainous¹ south-west of the Spanish plateau, and Serra de Passos/Santa Comba-Garraia in northern Portugal (which have around fifty painted rock shelters each). Although the entire area has rock shelters that are either isolated or found along the course of the rivers, never before have such concentrations been seen as there are in these two mountain ranges². In political and administrative terms, this area mainly coincides with the provinces of Zamora, Salamanca and Ávila in Spain, although in some aspects we generically refer to the central and western areas of the provinces of Castilla y León, and also the Trás-os-Montes and Beira Alta/Beira Interior regions in Portugal.

THE RESEARCH BACKGROUND: A CONTRIBUTION TO BE RESPECTED

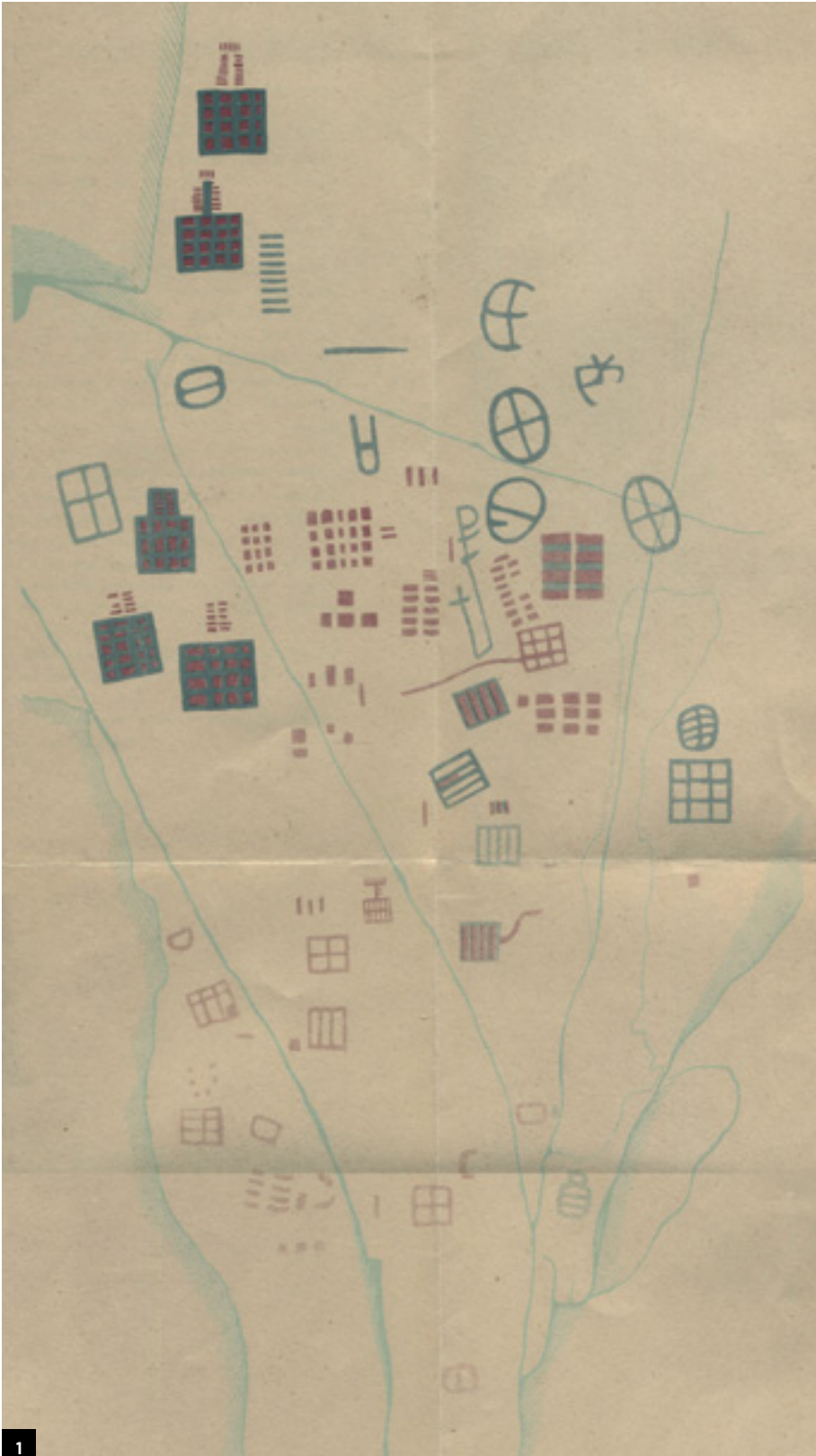
The first reports about the unquestionable existence of post-Palaeolithic painted art – later called schematic painting/schematic art – occurred almost simultaneously on both sides of the border thanks to the writings of cultured enthusiasts. In the 18th century, the Las Batuecas rock shelters, or Cabras Pintadas, were reported and described (Vicente Paredes alluding to Antonio Ponz: 1778), as was the Fraga Pintada do Cachão da Rapa (Cardoso 1747). There were also other reports and reproductions of schematic painting in the 18th century in present-day Spanish territory (for example, La Batanera and Peña Escrita in Fuencaliente, Ciudad Real), having been published, along with Vélez Blanco (Andalusia), in the mid-19th century.

In Portugal, there was a popular legend, picked up by Cardoso, about the place known as Cachão da Rapa or Curral das Letras – the rock face of ‘Letters, painted red and black’ – that said this rock face was ‘enchanted’ because as some paintings aged, others got brighter. There is also a fantastic baroque illustration of the site from this period, published by Contador de Argote.

Referring solely to the area of study of this text, we can say that there was an increase in exploration, visits and information gathering mainly from the early 20th century until around 1940, all done very sporadically but encouraged by the

1 In this text, the group “Las Batuecas-Serra de Francia” is the general name of the relatively concentrated group of panels and shelters in the Southwest of the Central System, which in the archaeological literature can appear with detailed names. In the map of Figure 1, they correspond to numbers 39 and 40.

2 Another important concentration is located in Sésamo (Vega de Espinareda, León), where important prospecting and registration work has been carried out, where important prospecting and registration work has been carried out, still unpublished.

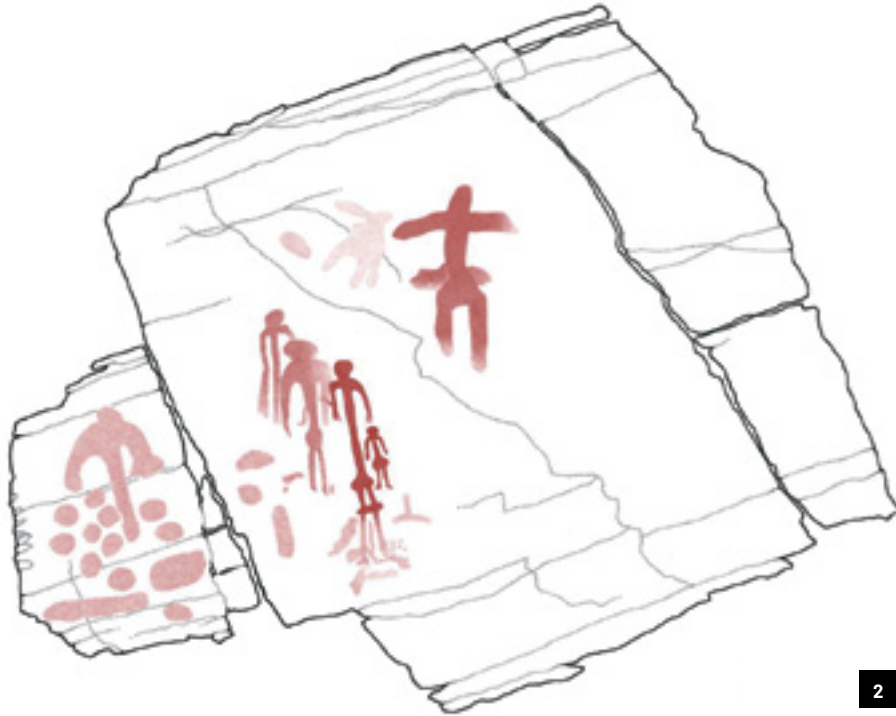


discoveries of Palaeolithic art in the Franco-Cantabrian region, where discoveries and studies of Palaeolithic art took place. In this case, and from the outset, there were prominent records from Cabré, Breuil and Hernández-Pacheco at Las Batuecas (from 1910 to 1922); Padre Morán about Palla Rubia (1933); Horácio de Mesquita in Pala Pinta (1922), with Santos Júnior going back, in 1933, to Cachão da Rapa (Fig.2-1), regarding which he left us a magnificent record, while today the rock shelter is quite damaged.

This research background is very interesting from the perspective of the creation and historical development of paradigms, in other words, what is 'asked' and 'answered' about the schematic art document. That is not the specific aim of this short text, although we would like to note that this regional research was being carried out, starting in the 1970s, by one of us (JBP) in his undergraduate and doctoral theses (University of Salamanca). For the region of Castilla y León, there are also important works from that decade and the next by María Rosario Lucas Pellicer, Ramón Grande del Brio and Antonio Gómez Barrera, among others. With regard to the Portuguese territory this text focuses on, in addition to the authors (MJS and JCT), we must mention the research by Mila Simões de Abreu, Sofia Figueiredo, Lara Alves and Beatriz Comendador after the turn of the millennium.

Today, some of these authors have sought to exhaustively document the rock art using new recording and absolute dating techniques that, together with the archaeological ex-

Fig. 2. 1 - Cachão da Rapa (as per Santos Júnior, 1933);



2



3

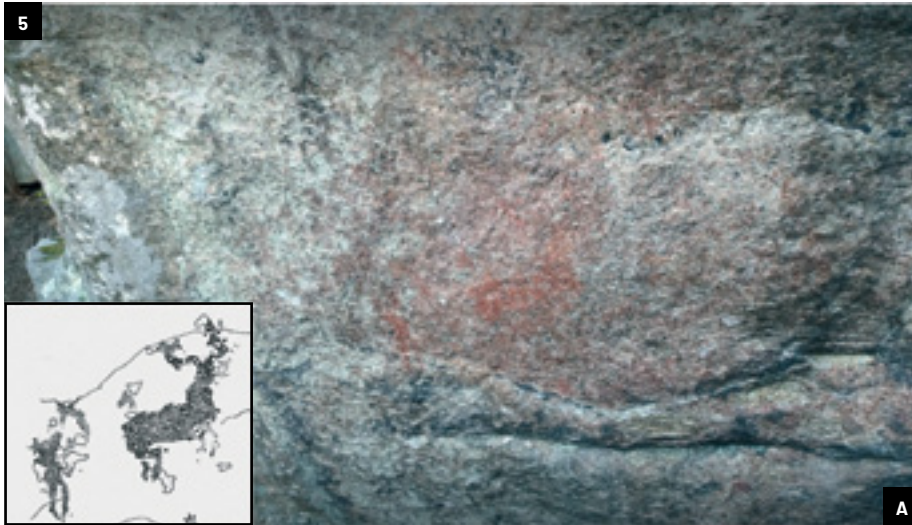
Fig. 2. 2. Rock paintings from the Fonte Santa rock shelter, panel A (tracing by Fernando Barbosa; CÔa Parque Foundation); **3.** Rock paintings from Penas Róias (tracing by Fernando Barbosa; CÔa Parque Foundation)

cavations at the sites, are laying essential foundations for establishing reliable chronological contexts and precisely delimiting the evolutionary sequences of the different 'styles' over time.

The map in Figure 1 provides the most expressive set of known sites in the region that we delimited above.



4



5



RECENT PERSPECTIVES ABOUT HOW SCHEMATIC ROCK ART CAN BE INTERPRETED

As regards rock art, and particularly schematic art, efforts were made from early on – at least since the 1960s – to answer the questions we pose today: when was it made? (timing/chronology); which peoples or individuals made it?; how did they live?; were they hunter-gatherers, farmer-herders or metalworkers?; what are the origins of these peoples or groups—native to the Iberian Peninsula or from abroad (from the coasts of the far eastern Mediterranean?), or mixing both populations? And, moreover:

- a) What did they draw/paint: their everyday lives? Their myths? Their tools? Their gods?
- b) In artistic and plastic terms and regarding the techniques and quality of the drawings, what are the representations that, as discoveries emerge, are shown stylistically to move away from the naturalism of the Upper Palaeolithic, especially animals, and tend more towards geometric drawings?

Fig. 2. 4. Rock engravings from Lamelas (tracing by Maria de Jesus Sanches); **5.** Rock paintings from Fraga d'Aia (photographs and tracings by António M. Baptista and Maria de Jesus Sanches).



The research background thus has a much greater scope than can be given by simply listing discoveries, as the various authors respond to the explanatory paradigms they propose; this dynamic is seen more on the Spanish than the Portuguese side, though, because (i) 'inland Portugal' was cut out of the research field in universities until the April 1974 revolution; (ii) in Spain, the wealth of Palaeolithic art 'moved' the research all over the country, leading, from very early on, to the definition of artistic cycles: Palaeolithic art (glacial period), Levantine art, schematic painting and, finally, macro-schematic art (post-glacial period). In Portugal, however, megalithism and the art in the chambers and corridors of its dolmens are major topics that will also bear fruit over time, given that the post-glacial artistic expressions in painting and engraving will be expressed simultaneously in different archaeological contexts, i.e., in the different areas of community life (which in many regions include burial mounds, dolmens, caves and villages, simultaneously).

On the other hand, it will not only be portable art – plaques, idols, etc. – that will make it possible to date the rock art, in its simple or compound version with painting and engraving, but rather it is the absolute dating of the dolmens that, through the pioneering works of Bueno and Balbin (followed by others), will make it possible to also establish absolute chronologies for schematic art.

Art is thus a supreme indicator of the prehistoric people and their settlement, not only because it tells us about the use of 'drawings' authorised by the community, i.e., very formalised or standardised drawings – and, therefore, art accepted by the community institutions of each period – but also because it helps us to understand how these communities value their landscape, which is a source of different resources, with an emphasis, in the case of schematic art, on the resources associated with the river valleys and mountains, as that is where it is found. Taking this into account, to us, this art is really 'writing in the landscape', because myths are recorded in an enduring way in these community meeting places, myths that, incidentally, were accompanied by complex ceremonies that are impossible to reconstruct today. In reality, this art is constructed around their cosmovisions, their ways of life. Indeed, with our current ontology, which separates the sacred and profane; economics, society and politics; animate and inanimate beings; and even puts animals, plants and people into different categories, it is often difficult for us to imagine other ontologies, other ways of organising the world, where the rules are different, and where, for example, and as anthropology tells us, humans, non-humans and mythological creatures can coexist as equals, in the same category, and in a very well-regarded way, or humans and mythological beings can coexist in specific places in the territory, as seems to happen in rock art panels, and in particular in schematic art.

Nevertheless, considering the archaeological data, as we will see below (point 4), it is not narrative art. And the different motifs – schematic and/or abstract, very formalised – as well as the compositions – or simple additions over the period during which the spaces were in use – lead us, again and again, to classify this art as a markedly conceptual means of expression, with prehistoric communities using rock shelters, rocks and panels as a way to express and discuss their eschatology and metaphysics. Ultimately, they use



A

Fig. 3. A. Decal of the left sector of the Canchal de las Cabras Pintadas, made by Breuil, 1933 (Fig 2).

it to convey their ideology through the memory of occupying these places and the meaning acquired by each motif or combination of motifs. In this sense, these images are an element of material culture where the motifs – precisely because they are not predominantly artefacts of the tangible world, but ‘artefacts of the metaphysical or ideological world’ – can be easily manipulated so that sociopolitical life can continue. These ‘artefacts of the metaphysical or ideological world’ are thus those that are expressed in very conventional ways – the motifs – whose similarity with the real world we only suspect. Therefore, the fact that we repeatedly find many simple motifs in schematic art does not signify a stability of meaning either over time or in space, but only that this form of expression is adapted to the ideological and socioculture transformations of Neolithic (and Chalcolithic) societies that start and develop the agropastoral economy, with all the territorial negotiation and organisational structure (political economy) implications that come with it. These conceptual representations – with the look of beings and situations that they can express for the narrative – represent a means through which the socio-economic and socio-organisational structure of the different groups can be made more complex.



BETWEEN PAINTING AND ENGRAVING: SCHEMATIC ROCK ART

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

There were initially two poor relatives in post-glacial art, which warranted less attention due to their distance from the realism and naturalism typical of Palaeolithic art and (Spanish) Levantine art. First of all, 'schematic painting', filled with many abstract or geometric-abstract, elements and secondly, 'schematic engraving', with the former being initially considered by Breuil (1935) as a 'decline in art'. In the case of engraving, it was always understood that it was 'schematic' or 'abstract-geometric' in its way of conceiving figures, but it was only worthy of studies and explanatory theories in the north-west of the Iberian Peninsula, the Atlantic region, going by the name of petroglyphs or Galician-Portuguese art, among others.

Fig 3 B. Reproduction of the naturalistic set with goats in red and fish in white from the Canchal de las Cabras Pintadas made by Breuil (1933, Lam XIV). **C.** Photograph of its current state (taken by J. Bécares)



Fig. 3 D. Canchal de las Cabras Pintadas, reproduction of the deer hunting scene, in white, made by Breuil (1933, Lam. XV).
E. Photograph of its current state (taken by J. Bécares)

There are no compositions belonging to Galician-Portuguese art in the region we are interested in, so we will focus on the main characteristics of schematic painting and engraving – schematic rock art. After all, one of the lessons from studying the Côa Valley and Siega Verde, but already foreshadowed by others in megalithic and open-air art, is that we can only separate painting and engraving for methodological reasons: studying contexts, compositions, superimpositions since, in some cases, the combination of both techniques is confirmed not only in the same panel, but also in the same figure. The appearance of painted walls and rock shelters is also confirmed, with a very telling quantitative insistence, next to engraved rocks, rock shelters and walls, with very similar themes and styles.

With this observation, we do not want to say that the painting and engraving have always been done for the same purpose, as there seems to be a consistency in the predominance of painted compositions and panels in some places and of engraved panels in others. We only propose that the empirical studies have made it possible to abandon the assumption that painting and schematic engraving were uniform sets of techniques that would necessarily correspond to different human groups (in the ethnological sense) or to different chronologies, thus forming different art cycles.

These observations are of the utmost importance when it comes to studying and approaching schematic art, which is produced, as mentioned above, in connection with the characteristics of the regional population of each period, becoming not only a mode of communication, but also an agent of change.

DEFINITION OF SCHEMATIC ROCK ART. TECHNIQUES, MOTIFS AND EVIDENCE

Schematic rock art, and schematic painting in particular, is widespread throughout the entire Iberian Peninsula. However, it was involved in discussions about origin and evolution from early on, mainly because it appeared simultaneously both with Palaeolithic art as well as with the rich (naturalist, subnaturalist and narrative) Levantine art, which shared a geographical distribution with it, being established within the Huesca/Lérida–Murcia/Alicante arc. Although it is ‘not comparable’ given its (apparent) lack of iconography, it sometimes shared (in that region) the same panels (e.g., Tío Modesto I, Cogul, Torrudanes, among other rock shelters). It was thus necessary to define, first of all, the different motifs, techniques, colours, etc. in schematic painting, which was done, with great merit, first by Breuil and then by Pilar Acosta (1968). Based on Breuil’s proposals, this author created a nomenclature and a summary table of motifs that are still used today, naturally with the adaptations always added by the regional studies when they report specific realities. This is the case of the table of motifs for the region we are interested in, which was organised in detail by one of us in 1983 (JBP), or the one of Gómez-Barrera regarding the Salamanca/Zamora area. In terms of Trás-os-Montes, we have the adaptation by Sofia Figueiredo (2013) and several works by the other authors of this text (MJS and JCT) between 1990 and 2016. (Figure 4)

We should add that we will not discuss here whether the term ‘schematic painting’ is the most appropriate; the origin of this term, as mentioned above, lies in the need to distinguish it stylistically from Levantine art. This discussion has already and will continue to generate rivers of ink, although in our opinion it is mainly an abstract art. However, by ‘schematic rock art’, we mean, in the region we are examining here, two groups that we consider to be chronologically, and even culturally, interconnected: a) the group of paintings that share stylistic/formal similarities and techniques with those defined by Pilar Acosta and later authors; b) the group of engravings that also share formal similarities with those found in the paintings, without dismissing other motifs/drawings that seem to emerge or have greater representation in engraved contexts. Both groups are marked by the repetition of motifs, however. For functional reasons, we excluded from this text the art from dolmens (in their structures or portable art elements), not because it could not be included, but because we chose to focus only on contexts lit by sunlight: those formed by rock shelters/rocks – where the predominant method is painting on vertical or subvertical panels of quartzites of various shades, quartzite schists and, very rarely, granite, as well as uncovered rocks, where the engraving appears mainly on predominantly horizontal or subhorizontal panels of granite and, to a lesser extent, schist blocks. In painting, horizontal panels are atypical and they are always combined, in the same space, with vertical panels, as is the case of the extraordinary painted surface of the roof in rock shelter 3 at Regato das Bouças-Serra de Passos/Santa Comba. Vertical or subvertical panels are rare in engraving, and they are almost always the result of adapting to the morphology of the medium, which is never totally horizontal, especially in granite. As an exception, in engraving, we have the El Pedroso rock shelter—in semi-darkness and on subvertical panels—and Vale de Figueira, on a vertical panel.

In schematic rock art painting, one of the most striking characteristics of the motifs is their small size, which for the most part ranges from 10 to 15 cm (but may reach 25 to 30 cm), and the colours in which they are painted: flat paintings in predominantly reddish colours, which vary from wine red to blood red or light red, followed by oranges and yellows. In the cases in which compositional analyses were done, these colours reveal the use of different types of haematite, but also of goethite. More rarely, there are even blue/black figures, done (possibly) with manganese oxide or charcoal-based water-based inks. Exceptionally, red and bluish-black are combined in the same figure (Serra de Passos, rock shelter 6 at Ribeira de Pousada; Cachão da Rapa), while sometimes only white is used (Canchal das Barras) or it is used in combination with red, such as in the naturalist fish at Canchal de las Cabras Pintadas in Las Batuecas. In fact, in some ensembles, the colour white may have been common. However, taking into account the particular conservation issues, nowadays it is more unusual. In other instances, albeit exceptionally, there are ensembles of motifs painted in black (Risco de los Altares and Zarzalón).

Broad strokes are predominantly used, around 1 cm in thickness, which may have been made using wide brushes or even directly with a finger. Nevertheless, while in a large number of motifs there seems to be a lack of special care with the finishes – many even seem ‘blurry’ – others show not only the use of very fine brushes, but also great manual control, due either to the small size, the design of details in such small figures or even the sureness of the line and sophisticated combination of two colours. In short, these aspects indicate a specialised technique. This is the case, for example, of the large group of eye idols (or ‘oculados’) and other geometric figures in Serra de Passos and Cachão da Rapa (scalariforms/rectangles/‘plaque idols’) and some subnaturalist (ibex, red deer) and even naturalist (fish, red deer) animals from the Las Batuecas/Peña de Francia ensemble (Fig. 3). It can also be seen in the ‘headdresses’ of some anthropomorphic figures (Figs. 4 and 5). Schematic painting thus combines a ‘messier’, quicker and more immediate design with motifs created in a very refined and laborious way, where a lack of precision in the line would endanger the configuration of these complex motifs.

We will not discuss the lexical origin of the terminology used for each type of motif, although we will say that the ‘types’ of motifs that have been established in archaeological terminology come from different sources: some from the assumed similarity with the designs from Palaeolithic art (tectiforms, for example), some from the similarity with archaeological artefacts (plaque idols, idols, croziers, faces, for example), and also some related to the similarity with real-life objects or beings: animals (zoomorphs or quadrupeds); humans (anthropomorphs); sun, moon or stars (soliforms, stelliforms); weapons and instruments (bow, arrowpoints, daggers, dumbbells, combs/pectiforms). However, given that these motifs are very schematic, the motifs of each region, although similar to those of other regions – they thus show recognisable formalisations, recognized by archaeologists (!) – always have their own particular regional characteristics.

In the motif typology, we therefore have a large ensemble of schematic anthropomorphs, often reduced to cruciforms or straight vertical lines, with

arms and/or legs in very stereotyped positions, sometimes finished off with schematic headdresses or 'plumes'/'headdresses' in different shapes (called, for example, anthropomorphs in Greek Phi, in double Y, in X, with arms in a jug handle position, in T, etc.). Some of these sometimes have tunics/garments with a trapezoidal or bell-shaped design, from which short feet emerge. There are also radiated circles (solar or stellar figures?), arboriforms/ramiforms, figures derived from rectangles or squares ('tectiforms' with complex internal divisions) sometimes complete with a 'head' and/or eyes (idoliforms) and imitating engraved plaques from funerary contexts. The rows of parallel bars and pectiforms are, along with the anthropomorphs, the most common motifs. There are also circles that are complete or incomplete, with or without a dot in the middle. Animals are rarer. These are often so schematic that they are called zoomorphs/quadrupeds. But there are exceptions because small details, such as the antlers of the male red deer, can identify this animal, as can the horn shape in the case of ibexes. Birds, fish and snakes are very rare; hence it is worth pointing out the uniqueness of the Las Batuecas/Peña de Francia ensemble, which includes ibex, fish and red deer with a naturalist tendency (and others that are already schematic). The Passos/Santa Comba ensemble, on the other hand, is worth highlighting for the large number and variety of large-eyed/masked 'faces', going beyond different anthropomorphs, or linking together, in the apparent representation of masks, the other elements of the body that are represented (clothing/necks; arms with hands, etc.) (Fig. 5). The Las Batuecas-Peña de Francia ensemble is also worth mentioning for the large number and variety of anthropomorphs.

We have roughly the same motifs in engraving, although they are usually a bit larger, which, in our opinion, is due to the fact that they are executed on granite or schist using the pecking technique (Fig. 5-4).

CHAOS? NARRATIVE COMPOSITIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

The number of motifs per panel and their arrangement varies enormously: there are panels with one motif, while others, more rarely, reach eight or nine dozen; we cannot say there is an average.

It is, however, common to find panels with around 10-20 motifs. Nevertheless, in all cases that contain more than a single motif, the panels may include elements executed at different times.

This issue necessarily leads us to the need for a close investigation, panel by panel, observing the superimpositions or additions of details to certain motifs – which up to now have turned out to be very scarce – as well as understanding possible structured compositions. In other words, the need for a close investigation of motifs that are positioned in an associated way in the representation space – in horizontal, vertical or circular sequences, for example – as if to evoke an event (even if mythical) or even 'to narrate it mythographically', composing or restructuring a message that will remain there, captured on the rock, i.e., seeking timelessness, as seems to occur in the composition at the Pala Pinta rock shelter (Trás-os-Montes), Bonete del Cura (Ciudad Rodrigo) or Covacho del Pallón, among others. In fact, schematic art is mostly made up of small compositions,

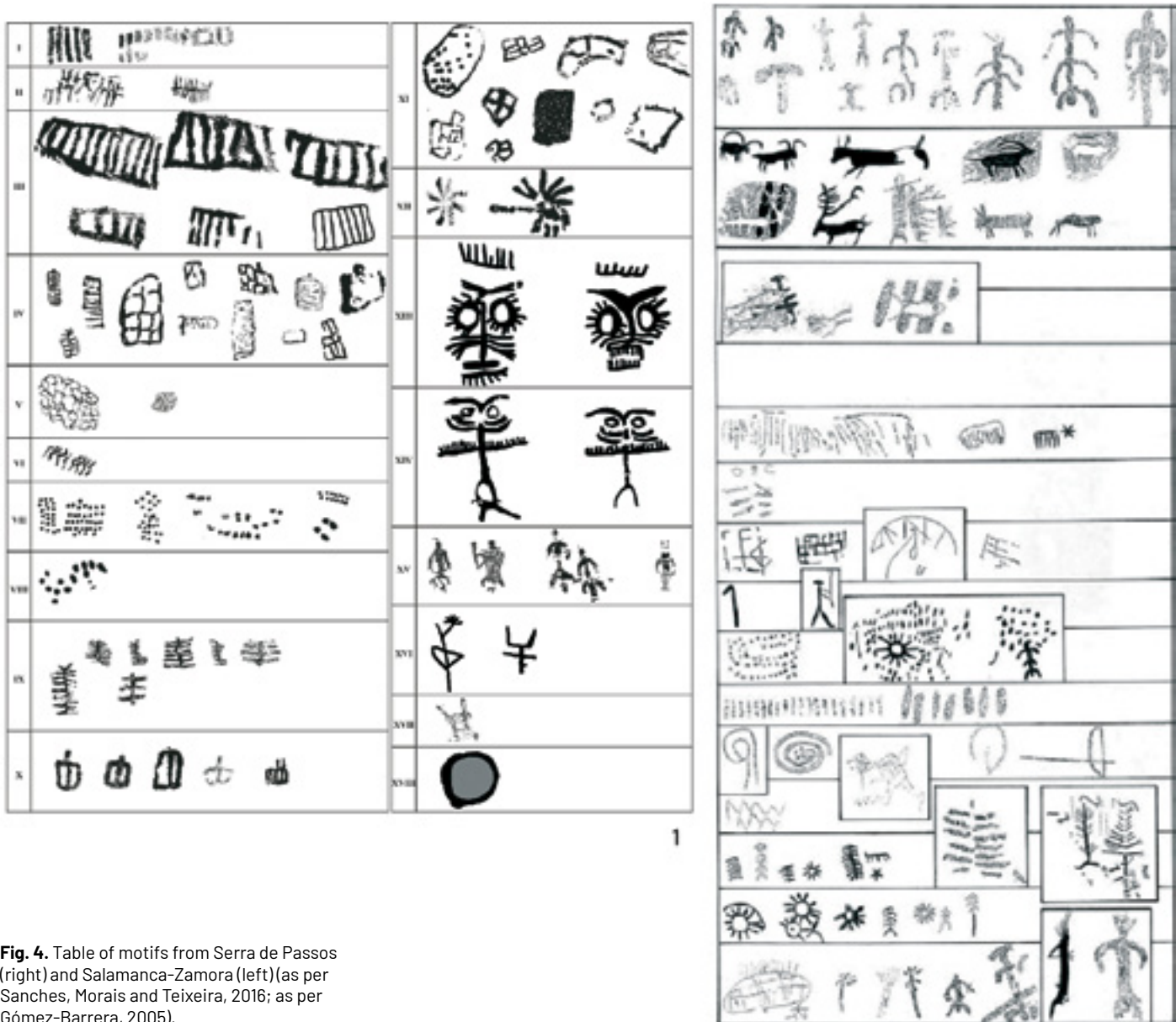


Fig. 4. Table of motifs from Serra de Passos (right) and Salamanca-Zamora (left) (as per Sanches, Morais and Teixeira, 2016; as per Gómez-Barrera, 2005).

with the larger ones resulting, in many cases, from the continuous addition of motifs over time (Regato das Bouças 3, Botelhinha, Lamelas), while it is that superimpositions are rarely seen, which indicates a respect for what 'is already there'. These larger compositions tend to contain many repeated motifs, mostly anthropomorphic, subquadrangular and subcircular, dotted or dimpled clouds (painted and engraved, respectively) and bars (in painting).

But it is also worth noting that, despite this not being a narrative art, i.e., not translating into 'scenes', as we mentioned above, there are some suggestions

of scenes, especially in the association of anthropomorphs with one another – with or without headdresses, sometimes with weapons or tools, or even solar figures – in Bonete del Cura, Risco de los Altares and Fraga do Puio, or in the spatial connection between anthropomorphs and arboriforms and/or animals (in Canchal de las Cabras Pintadas). Anthropomorphs also appear arranged in a frieze/line (Regato das Bouças 2; Fraga d’Aia; Penas Roias), and there are anthropomorphs with spatial arrangements that suggest scenes and an ‘apparent vanishing point’ in the Fonte Santa rock shelter and Risco de los Altares.

If, nowadays, it is easier to identify these suggestions of mythographic narrative when there are anthropomorphs (albeit in the form of anthropomorphised arboriforms), we suspect that in other compositions or groupings, nothing has been included there by chance, and the apparent chaos with which schematic art representations are associated is mainly down to the significant lack of awareness of the organisational codes of these figures in the past.

GEOGRAPHIC AND TERRITORIAL DISTRIBUTION

The distribution map of the rock shelters and panels that resisted erosive agents shows, particularly, that they are revealed according to the emphasis on research in each region. Even so, with the data we have, on a broad scale of analysis, there is a very close correlation between rock art and the existence of its ‘rock medium’: a more ‘uniform’ distribution in the more mountainous Portuguese territory; a more ‘concentrated’ distribution on the hills and cliffs near waterways on the Northern Meseta. Thus, in the Spanish case, it is worth noting the gap in the sedimentary basin of the Douro, where there are few or no rocks.

On a smaller scale, we can say that there are concentrations in some mountains that have gorges or escarpments, as is the case of Serra de Passos/Santa Comba-Garraia (prominent in the centre of Trás-os-Montes), Sierra de Francia-Las Batuecas (in the middle of the Central Mountain System, connecting the Douro and Tagus basins) or the nearly unprecedented ensemble of rock shelters in Sierra de la Culebra-Zamora/León, in the Galician-Leonese Mountains.

River valleys sometimes offer a high density as well, such as the Sabor, Côa, Cabril and Lera valleys, while in other cases there is only one rock shelter, such as Palla Rubia (Pereña), which dominates two impressive waterfalls. There are also isolated outcrops overlooking the landscape, such as Penas Roias or Penedo Gordo, although the majority of sites seem to be located by streams and rivers.

In the case of engraving, up to now, there are no concentrations to the same extent as with painting, although there are some hills with a marked concentration of a high number of rocks (Tripe, Botelhinha, Fraga das Ferraduras de Ribalonga, for example), along with isolated rock shelters, engraved on the inside (El Pedroso, Solhapa, Parada and Passadeiro) or the outside (Fragas da Lapa). There are isolated rocks, sometimes large in size (Lamelas, Outeiro Machado, Fraga das Ferraduras de Belver). Some stretches of rivers or streams are also



Fig.5. 1. Rock paintings from Serra de Passos/ Santa Comba-Garraia, detail of rock shelters 11 **(A)** and 15 **(B)** (photographs by Joana Teixeira); **2.** Detail of the engravings at rock 2 of Namorados, Vila Nova de Foz Côa (photograph by Manuel Almeida; Côa Parque Foundation); **3.** Detail of the rock paintings at Pala Pinta (<https://palapinta.wordpress.com/>).

worth mentioning – in the Sabor and the Côa – with painted or even engraved vertical panels (Rocha dos Namorados), along with the engraved vertical panel at Vale da Casa (Douro valley).

Ultimately, the concentration and dispersion in the landscape of rock art show more similarities than differences, which has been explained based on the different dialogues the communities establish with parts of their territory. In other words, with the categorisation of this territory, assuming that, in the cases of higher concentrations outlined above, these are not places where everyday life took place, but were instead special gathering spaces for the com-



munities that lived in the vicinity and were politically and ideologically united by strong ties of kinship. Rock art is thus not a single symbology, but rather a powerful agent in the establishment and transformation of social relationships not only within the group, but also with neighbouring groups, who may live in relatively extensive areas.

Fig. 6. A, B and C: Main panel at Covacho del Pallón (Las Batuecas, La Alberca, Salamanca). **D and E:** Paintings at Palla Rubia (Pereña, Salamanca). **B and E,** images processed using the DSTRETCH program. (Photographs and tracings by Julián Bécares)

REGIONAL CHRONOLOGY OF SCHEMATIC ROCK ART

We will begin in the present day, with the feeling that we owe a great deal to the researchers who came before us.

Approaching rock art from the population's perspective makes it possible to closely correlate its characteristics, its absolute chronology and its artefacts. Alongside the absolute chronology is the chronology that, to a lesser extent, has been provided by excavating the sites themselves, whether or not they have absolute dates. And, of course, there are the motifs and/or compositions, their techniques, styles and superimpositions in the engraved or painted space. The result is that at a site, or on a panel, we can see different 'moments' of execution and use.

As we cannot discuss the justification for the chronology of each site or panel in detail here, we will deal with the whole as a summary. Thus, in methodological terms, we would admit a long period for the entirety of the schematic art of this region, divided into three subperiods:

SP1 – Subperiod 1, the oldest, which would include the Mesolithic and Ancient or Early Neolithic, covering the start of the Holocene until approximately 4500 BCE.

SP2 – Subperiod 2, which includes the Middle and Late Neolithic and the Chalcolithic, from ca. 4500 BCE to 2200 BCE.

SP3 – Subperiod 3, the most recent, attributable to the Early and Middle Bronze Age, ca. 2200 BCE and 1600 BCE since, for the time being, the research does not make it possible to discern which engravings can be positioned between 1600 and 500 BCE, i.e., during the Middle and Late Bronze Age.

Naturally, these boundaries are 'artificial', methodological and non-absolute in their historical being, as they show continuities and local variability. However, the different subperiods seem to show sufficient formal, conceptual and even quantitative (number of sites) unity, meaning we can indicate the dominant characteristics in them.

The main characteristic of SP1 – subsequently expanded and reiterated in SP2 – is that the art clearly shows cosmogonies that give priority to social and cultural life, in their connection with the places. Human communities stand out in this social and cultural life, translated into anthropomorphs and anthropomorph series, as well as a multitude of geometric-abstract motifs that are repeated ad infinitum. These are entities, some with an anthropomorphising tendency, created ideologically and culturally, that are introduced into the core of the human communities and become an integral part of them. Animals tend to become rarer, gradually becoming almost absent in the majority of the rock art ensembles.

However, from SP1 to SP2, both the style of the rock art as well as the way of life, social organisation and cosmogonies of the communities transform substantially.

Because it has absolute dates, the Fraga d'Aia rock shelter, with its two painted panels, one with a red deer hunting scene and the other with a frieze/procession of anthropomorphs and animals, can be considered as the most reli-

able example from this subperiod (Fig. 2-5). It is likely that some animals from Canchal de las Cabras Pintadas, in particular the subnaturalist white deer, lying down, and other goat-like animals, fall within this older phase.

This subperiod would thus document, we repeat, the diversity of Mesolithic and Early Neolithic communities in this region, who possessed a diversified universe of drawings, still rooted in some Azilian parameters (motifs and formalisms). They are also connected with other peninsular communities since, already at the end of the 6th millennium BCE, that show, for example, pottery with various decorations (punto y raya/boquique; cardial and other plastic impressions and drawings), in imagery that owes a great deal to the networks of reciprocal relationships and exchange with the outside world (neighbouring communities). The art from this period is interpreted as one of the characteristics of these regional hunter-gatherer societies that were undergoing slow change, gradually becoming more anchored in smaller territories than in the previous period, and where the first crops and stockbreeding begin, although these 'economic options' might remain a strategy that is more supplementary or even ritual, that some groups adopt and others do not.

In the Middle/Late Neolithic and Chalcolithic (SP2), there seems to be an exponential increase in these sites with rock art, representing, together with the dolmen and menhir art (from the 4th millennium BCE) – not dealt with in this text – one of the periods of greatest graphic vitality that will be demonstrated in almost the entirety of the territory.

It corresponds to what is traditionally called 'typical' schematic art, i.e., to the group of motifs dominated by schematism, geometrism and even abstraction, along with anthropomorphs of different kinds (but very formalised) and anthropomorphic figures (trees, plaque idols, eye idols, etc.). Besides the painting, the engraving is also very expressive in the open-air rock shelters or rocks that are distributed across nearly all the spaces where there are rocks that may be used as a support, but they do not appear above 1000-1200 metres in altitude and, therefore, in the high mountain, they are far from the highest levels.

The occasional zoomorphic/quadrupedal animal may appear in some places, mainly deer-like animals, which is surprising as these are communities with proven pastoralist activities. They eat domestic animals – goats/sheep, cows and pigs (pig/wild boar) – as well as hunted or captured animals (rabbits, foxes, red deer, birds).

This Subperiod 2, as a whole, shows a gradual transformation of the mythographs (or eschatological and metaphysical narratives) based on the animal world—where the animal communities will definitely tend towards an autonomous existence—towards mythographs focused on very conceptualised entities or beings. These are non-human, non-animal entities that coexist closely with the community or that, ontologically, are even part of it, and that effectively adapt to new forms of socialisation and new forms of sociopolitical management. In our opinion, they express the fundamental characteristic of 'Neolithic being'.

Moreover, in some places, there are panels with a reasonable number of animals – as is the case of Canchal de las Cabras Pintadas – which sometimes suggest hunting scenes where humans and animals coexist. Since we do not have the space here to discuss this matter, we will say that these are the excep-

tion, and they do not necessarily have to be older, since graphisms, as cultural artefacts, can always endure or be used recurrently in specific situations, when the particular needs of the sociopolitical management require it.

It is likely that the schematic motifs, especially the less complex ones, are more versatile when it comes to creating new meanings, but, as each panel or composition seems unique to us, we suspect – without being able to confirm it – that behind the use of ‘drawings’, or the vocabulary of very similar shapes, an intense cultural life may have taken place. This is what this research seeks to explain.

Furthermore, as regards the periodisation, we will say that it is still not absolutely certain that schematic art has lasted from the second millennium onwards, but it is probable that it has, hence Subperiod 3. However, the engraving of weapons, as is the case of the vertical panel at Vale de Figueira – a halberd and dagger – or the main ‘scene’ (painted) in the El Portallón rock shelter – possibly a sword hung/crossed over the body of an anthropomorph – seems to reflect ideas that, in the middle of the second millennium, gradually move away from the ideological world of the Neolithic and Chalcolithic pastoral-agrarian communities. Nevertheless, in some areas, some schematic art formalisms and motifs—subrectangular/reticulated figures, schematic anthropomorphs, circles and radiated figures—continue to be used during the Bronze Age, but not without formally acquiring other styles at the same time. Podomorphs (in Tripe, Fraga das Passadas and other sites in Valpaços) overlap with the SP2 figures, sometimes occupying entire rocks.

From the quantitative perspective, the representations in Subperiod 3 are not comparable with older ones, and this is likely to be due, in part, to the inability of the archaeology to distinguish them, which is also seen in the lack of exhaustive population studies in the region considered in this text.

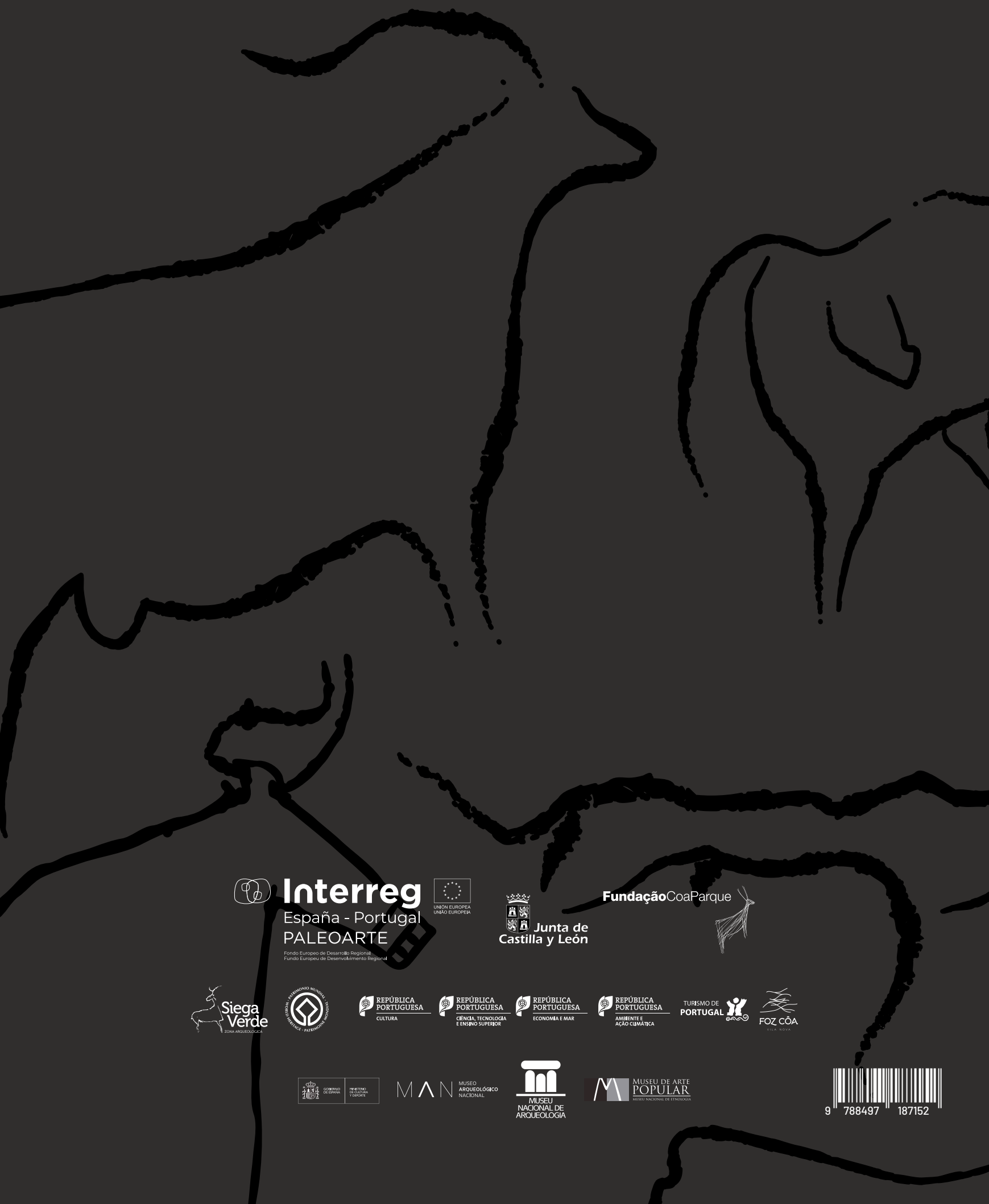
TWO FINAL NOTES

We would like to thank the organisers of the exhibition *Limitless art: Côa and Siega Verde* for having had the foresight to understand that the schematic art of this region could not be forgotten as it is connected historically, in the context of regional settlement, with both the art of the Upper Palaeolithic/Azilian and that of the Bronze Age/Iron Age.

Nonetheless, despite the similarity between the groups of schematic art in the border region, there are still no collaborative projects, in either research or dissemination, that transcend the administrative border between Portugal and Spain. We hope this text and this exhibition will be a starting point for collaboration between the University of Porto and University of Salamanca in particular, as well as cooperation between other institutions in both countries.

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