



# Côa Symposium

Novos olhares sobre a Arte Paleolítica  
*New perspectives on Palaeolithic Art*

Coord.: Thierry Aubry, André Tomás Santos e Andrea Martins  
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# From Mazouco to Foz do Tua and Passadeiro. Continuities and changes in hunter-gatherers and early farmers of the lower Douro river basin (Portugal) revealed through rock art

Maria de Jesus Sanches<sup>1</sup>, Joana Castro Teixeira<sup>2</sup>

1. University of Porto-Portugal: Faculty of Arts and Humanities; Transdisciplinary Research Centre “Culture, Space and Memory” (CITCEM). E-mail: msanches@letras.up.pt.

2. University of Porto-Portugal: Faculty of Arts and Humanities; Transdisciplinary Research Centre “Culture, Space and Memory” (CITCEM). E-mail: joanacastroteixeira@gmail.com.

**Resumo:** Este artigo centra-se na arte rupestre pré-histórica e na pesquisa arqueológica na bacia do baixo Douro (Portugal), entre o Paleolítico Superior e o início do Neolítico. Começará com uma breve referência à primeira descoberta, em 1981, de uma rocha com arte rupestre do Paleolítico Superior – no sítio de Mazouco – e à inusitada circunstância da interrupção das pesquisas arqueológicas regionais dedicadas ao Paleolítico Superior, o que, a não ter acontecido, poderia ter evitado a surpresa da descoberta do valioso conjunto do vale do Côa. Em seguida, debruçamo-nos sobre a contextualização cronológica e cultural da arte figurativa, esquemática e abstrata – com particular destaque para as “unhadas do diabo” – atribuída a um período entre o final do Tardiglacial e o neolítico antigo regional. Está implícito na nossa discussão o pressuposto que durante este período cronológico (c. 13.000 / 12.000 - 6500/6000 cal BP; 11.000 / 10.000 - 5000/4500 cal BC) as comunidades de caçadores-recoletores, independentemente de terem adotado a agricultura e a pastorícia por volta de 6500 aC (4500 aC), “não sabiam” de antemão o que aconteceria a seguir ou como se iria alterar a sua atividade económica e as suas relações com a paisagem, os animais e as plantas. No texto defendemos que a arte rupestre deste período e desta região, mesmo que mostre semelhanças gráficas com outras regiões da Península Ibérica e do Sudoeste da Europa – especialmente na morfologia de zoomorfos e antropomorfos – possui especificidades, particularmente evidentes no esquematismo e abstracionismo das gravuras de tipo “unhadas do diabo e motivos lineares finos”, que devem ser valorizadas. Estas especificidades devem ser entendidas dentro da teia de relações identitárias entre as comunidades de caçadores-coletores e a paisagem em que viviam.

**Palavras-chave:** Baixo Douro; arte rupestre; unhadas do diabo e motivos lineares finos; Paleolítico Superior; Mesolítico; Neolítico Antigo.

**Abstract:** This paper focuses on the prehistoric rock art and the archaeological research on the lower Douro river basin (Portugal), between the Upper Palaeolithic and the beginning of the Neolithic. It will begin with a brief reference to the first discovery, in 1981, of a rock with Palaeolithic engravings – on the site of Mazouco – and to the unusual circumstance of the lack of continuity of the regional Palaeolithic archaeological, which might have prevented the surprising discovery of the valuable rock art complex of the Côa Valley. Next, we will discuss the chronological and cultural contextualization of the figurative, schematic and abstract art – especially of the devil claw engravings – which is assigned to a period between the end of the Late Glacial and the regional Ancient Neolithic. Implicit in our discussion is the assumption that during this chronological period (c. 13,000/12,000 – 6500/6000 cal BP; 11,000/10,000 – 5000/4500 cal BC), the hunter-gatherer communities, regardless of whether they have adopted agriculture and animal husbandry around 6500 BP (4500 BC), “did not know” beforehand what would happen next or how their economies and relationships with the landscape, animals and plants would change. In the text, we defend that the rock art of this period, and of this region – even if it shows graphic similarities, especially in the design of zoomorphs and anthropomorphs, with other regions of Iberia and Southwest Europe – has an idiosyncrasy, evident for instance in the schematism and abstractionism of the engravings of “devil claw & thin linear motifs” that should be taken into account. This idiosyncrasy must be understood within the tissue of the identity relationships between different hunter-gatherer communities and among each other and the landscapes where they dwell.

**Key words:** Lower Douro basin; rock art; devil claw & thin linear motifs; Upper Palaeolithic; Mesolithic; Ancient Neolithic.

## 1. Mazouco: the discovery of open air Palaeolithic rock art in Portugal in 1981

The discovery of the Mazouco Palaeolithic open air rock art site in Freixo de Espada-à-Cinta in May 1981 is part of the history of the paradigms and methods used to “certify” Palaeolithic art as such, and paradoxically resembles the circumstances of the “discovery” of the Altamira Cave – at the end of the XIX century – and of Côa, in the last decade of the 20th century. In fact, in those three cases the academic and scientific circles had difficulty in dealing with the implications that the discovery itself, if recognized, would have had in terms of breaking current paradigms. The major issue was the chronological question, and it should be noted here that, regardless of the political and / or economic implications that Altamira and Côa carried, all the three cases witnessed the way the hard sciences denied, in one way or another, the ancient chronology of their rock art. In fact, it was the argumentation of human sciences, and in particular of the typological methods of archaeology, the one responsible for supporting its ancient chronology. Only later the hard sciences, or the methods that resort to them, come to corroborate the previous assumptions – in the cases of Altamira and Côa – especially through absolute dating and archaeological excavations. In this context the site of Mazouco, while being recognized early on by renowned researchers such as Jordá Cerdá<sup>1</sup> and A. Moure Romanillo<sup>2</sup> as having undoubtedly Upper Palaeolithic typology art, could not count on, from the beginning and as deserved, an adequate investment in regional research work – for reasons that we will refer to below. It was only later that rock art of Mazouco becomes a part of the argument for the settlement of the regional Upper Palaeolithic dwelling, developed through the open air rock art of Siega Verde (Balbín & *alii*, 1991), in the neighbouring Águeda valley and, later (in 1995), that of the Côa valley (Santos, 2019).

To this extent we would like to briefly express how the archaeological studies in Siega Verde and in the Côa Valley – for whose commemorations of the 20th anniversary of the Classification as World Heritage of the Palaeolithic art of the last region this text is being written – have been framing other discoveries in this region. In fact, “to discover” is to find out historical sense and meaning in what we are facing in the archaeological record.

In the Lower Douro basin, Palaeolithic studies began, as it was mentioned above, with the research of Mazouco, which was precisely the first open air site to be found in Portugal. One of us (MJS) took part in that study, integrated in a team led by Susana Jorge, Vítor Jorge and Carlos A. Ferreira de Almeida (Jorge & *alii*, 1981)<sup>3</sup>.

From its early study it was recognized that the presence of Mazouco’s Upper Palaeolithic art was evidence of the settlement of the Upper Palaeolithic in the region, as it was remarked in its first publication. However, the archaeological surveys that we carried out, on foot and by boat, during the Carnival season of the following year, in 1982, made it clear that the remaining engravings of Mazouco’s group were likely to be submerged under the Spanish Saucelle dam. The excavations that were

1. Of particular note is Jordá Cerdá, to whom Mazouco’s team asked for an opinion. In a personal letter, he communicated the resemblance of the main horse of Mazouco to specimens from Asturias and the Northern Central Peninsular area, having no doubt that it was Palaeolithic rock art in an “outer sanctuary”. Regarding its chronology, he related it to the style IV of A. Leroi-Gourhan, that is, mid-recent Magdalenian (Jorge & *alii*, 1981; 1982).

2. In a footnote of: Martín Santamaría & Moure Romanillo, 1981.

3. Even though one of us (MJS) was still a finalist student of the degree in Art and Archaeology at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Porto, Mazouco – for me – meant the beginning of the enthusiasm in studying rock art; thus, it had a major part in my training as an archaeologist and has marked me for life because that was in Mazouco that my interest for prehistoric art study began.



made there unfortunately revealed nothing of the ancient sediments, just as it happened in many other cases of rocks excavated in the same region in subsequent years (Jorge & *alii*, 1982). Then, it took us more than a decade to discover the amazing Palaeolithic art of the Côa Valley under the circumstances that are well known to all.

Meanwhile, what happened?

The attraction for archaeological works within this region was still weak despite the obstinacy of some FLUP<sup>4</sup> archaeologists to work in the Douro region. That was the case of the works done in the north of the Douro region by one of us (M.J.S.); and, in the south, the works of S. Jorge, V. Jorge and S. Monteiro-Rodrigues. It is relevant to notice that, until very recently, to work in this interior territories of Portugal meant to be about 4 to 5 hours away, by car, from the great urban centres. We would like also to point out that, due to various circumstances, these studies focused mainly on aspects of the Holocene settlement, although it should be noted that several indicators, mostly given by C14 dating, have since the mid-1990's pointed to a very ancient regional settlement, starting in the Upper Palaeolithic. Briefly, the Ancient Neolithic occupation of the Mirandela / Vale do Tua region is attested by the stratigraphic content of Buraco da Pala and several C14 dates of the 5<sup>th</sup>- mid 4<sup>th</sup> mill. BC (Sanches, 1994; 1996a; 1997, vol. I, pp. 41-58, 111-118, 146-158); Mesolithic and Ancient Neolithic occupations are attested in the region of Foz Côa – S. J. Pesqueira, by archaeological material and C14 dates from the sites of Prazo (Monteiro-Rodrigues, 2010; 2012) and Fraga d'Aia<sup>5</sup> (Jorge, Baptista & Sanches, 1988; Sanches, 1995, vol. I, pp. 148-151); earlier occupations from the Upper Palaeolithic are testified not only by the sites of the Côa Valley, of Sabor, of Mazouco and of Foz Tua, attributed to ancient phases of the Upper Palaeolithic (e.g. Santos, 2019), but also by the Gravettian, Solutrean and Magdalenian occupations of Medal (Gaspar & *alii*, 2016) and, possibly, of the Azilian, as testified by the rock art site of Pedra de Asma 7 (Figueiredo & *alii*, 2014) and by some “devil claw & thin linear motifs” (Sanches, 1996; Gomes, 2002). Mesolithic occupations are also documented in Medal (Gaspar & *alii*, 2016).

In any case, the isolated documentation of Fraga d'Aia and of the Eastern Trás-os-Montes region in the 90's, which indicated regional occupations of the Mesolithic<sup>6</sup> and Ancient Neolithic, could only be truly reevaluated in the 1990s (Sanches, 1997), and in later periods (Monteiro-Rodrigues, 2010). Indeed, the effective advance of research regarding the knowledge of the hunter gatherer communities of the Upper Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Ancient Neolithic of this region and simultaneously that of the peninsular hinterland, is largely based on almost two and a half decades of systematic and multidisciplinary studies in the Côa Valley, as well as in the Águeda Valley region. This is due not only to what these studies have revealed as being totally new, but mainly to the possibilities they offered in establishing regional analogies and in formatting settlement frameworks. Research in widespread areas of river valleys where hydroelectric dams (in Sabor and Tua rivers) were built was also a significant contribution to the understanding of these communities and their art (Figueiredo & *alii*, 2014; Teixeira, 2017). Contrary to these planned researches, Passadeiro rock shelter was a casual discovery (Sanches & Teixeira, 2014; 2017), as casual as it was

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4. Faculty of Arts and Humanities of Porto University.

5. Fraga d'Aia also displays a painted panel of this period.

6. In this text, we will avoid the use of the “Epipalaeolithic” term due to the confusion that it is attached to it (Aubry & *alii*, 2017, p. 404), its use being nowadays almost restricted to some rock art texts, probably due to the influence of Anati. As such, we consider Azilian as the last chronoculture of the Upper Palaeolithic (Aubry & *alii*, 2017), which is followed by Mesolithic, being the transition between the two periods the passage from the Pleistocene to the Holocene (Zilhão, 1997; Araújo, 2016).

the discovery of Mazouco. It is the set of these studies (Balbín & *alii*, 1991; Alcolea & Balbín, 2006; Aubry, ed., 2009), along with those we have developed in recent years (Sanches & Teixeira, 2013; 2014; 2017; Teixeira & Sanches, 2017) that are the basis of this synthesis that should be regarded as a work in progress. In fact, this paper calls for a review of the exposition and detailed discussion of the circumstances of the chrono-cultural reinterpretation of the abstract rock art when considering the devil claw and thin linear incised motifs that are associated with it in the context of sub-naturalist, schematic and abstract /non-figurative rock art of the period between the Late Upper Palaeolithic and the regional Ancient Neolithic. This discussion seems also to be pertinent at a time when, once again, the recent publication of the Fari-seu and Cardina portable art (Aubry & *alii*, 2017; Santos & *alii*, 2018) highlights, in a certain way, the chronology we have been pointing out to “the devil claw and thin linear incised motifs”, by showing the use and repetition of a graphic linear grammar in association with the figurative art from the Azilian. It also reveals the existence of some painted motifs ascribed to that same period that were traditionally attributed to the Neolithic or Chalcolithic. This obliges us to rethink the chronological attribution of some graphic entities of this type, which, like the painted panel of the Foz do Tua rock shelter, could be connected with devil claw/thin linear motifs.

## 2. Rock art between the end of the Upper Palaeolithic and the Ancient Neolithic in the Lower Douro Basin: the main archaeological questions

The territory mainly focused by this work corresponds to the province of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro, in Portugal. However, it also includes some sites of northern Beira Alta and of the province of Salamanca, in Spain (Fig. 1).

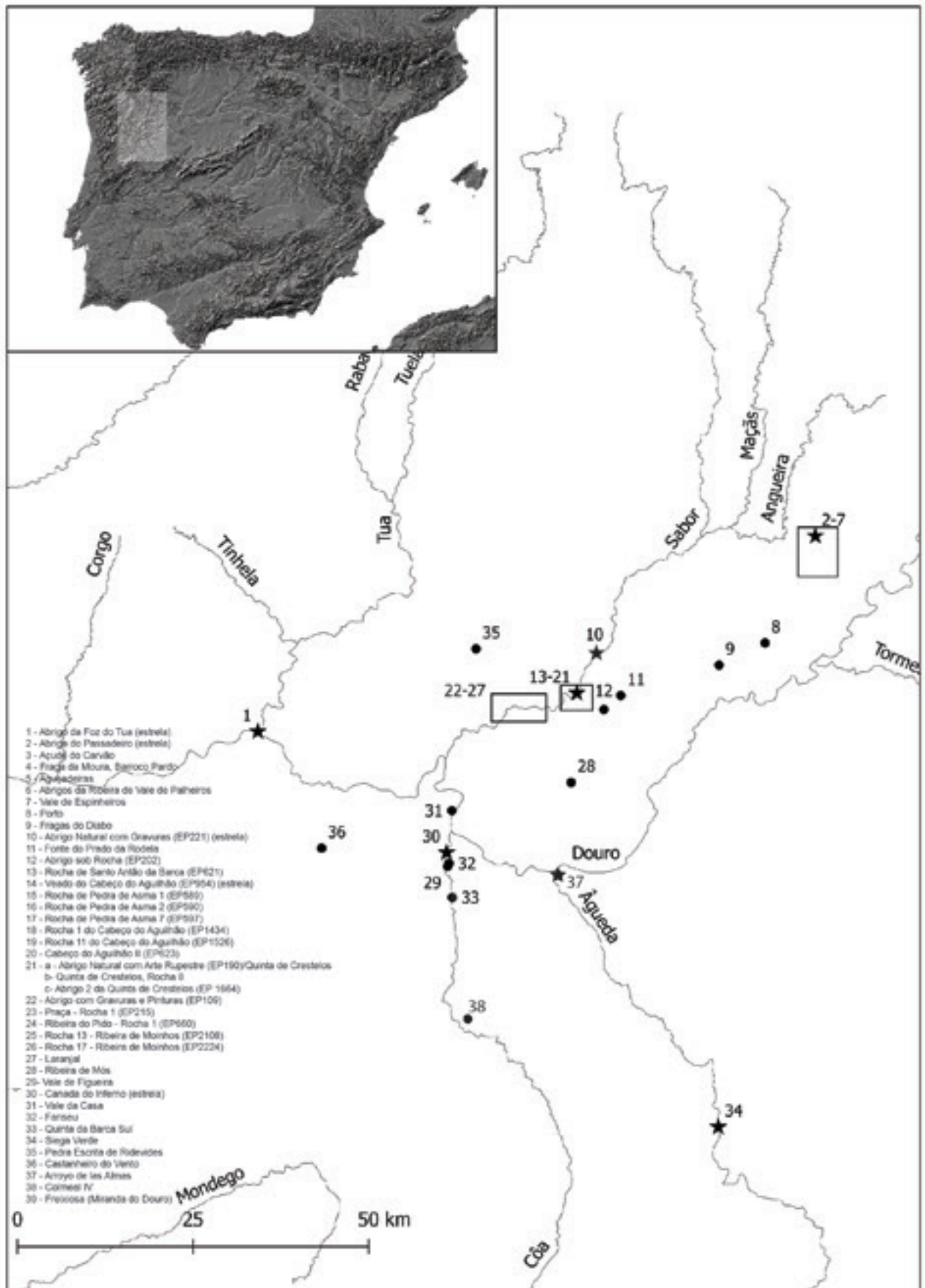
The time period in focus is situated between the Azilian, during which a rupture relative to the precedent periods was noticed in rock art in terms of themes and style (e.g. Santos & *alii*, 2018), and the beginning of the Ancient Neolithic.

If we assume, as it will be shown later, that devil claw engravings associated with thin linear motifs acquires particular regional expression during this period, along with several pecked images traditionally attributed to the “Epipaleolithic”, we may say that the most significant traits of the rock art of the region during this period are: 1) the coexistence of sub-naturalist and semi-schematic representations of zoomorphs, mainly of red deer and ibex and, in lesser numbers, aurochs, horses and fish, with the sporadic occurrence of anthropomorphs; 2) there is also a great diversity of “signs” or linear / abstract figures, in sets where – if considered in terms of sites, panels and even geographical distribution – abstract art dominates over the subnaturalist or semi-schematic one. This disproportion is, however, mainly due to the unusual number of sites and panels with devil claw engravings associated with thin linear motifs, which, roughly counting, is in the order of four dozen sites, corresponding to more than 150 panels (Figs. 1, 2, 3).

In Côa Valley, the rock art of the period that we are focusing has not yet been fully documented but we point out that in the azilian portable art of Fari-seu (and Cardina) (Santos *et alii*, 2018), and in the azilian rock art of the region (e.g. Santos, 2019) the dominance of abstract / non-figurative art over the subnaturalist one is attested, although in these series it is of note that there is no trace of the deeper engravings of a devil claw type, which are, likewise, rare in the Côa Valley. In fact, this kind of art only sparsely appears in four open-air sets of panels scattered along the river mouth of the Côa and its tributaries (see cited bibliography in Teixeira & Sanches, 2017; Reis & *alii* 2017, fig. 10) (Fig. 1). This fact can emphasize a chronologic

→

Figure 1: Devil claw & thin linear motifs-type engraved art and subnaturalist art from the ends of the Late Glacial/Early Holocene in the Lower Douro Basin (Trás-os-Montes / Alto Douro-Portugal, and Salamanca-Spain). The stars mark the places where Devil claw & thin linear motifs occur in association with figurative art (with the exception of Siega Verde, without deep Devil claw). 27 and 36 are rock blocks re-used in more recent constructions: of the Chalcolithic, in Castanheiro do Vento; and from the Roman-Contemporary Age Period in Cilhades. 39 is a portable art artefact.





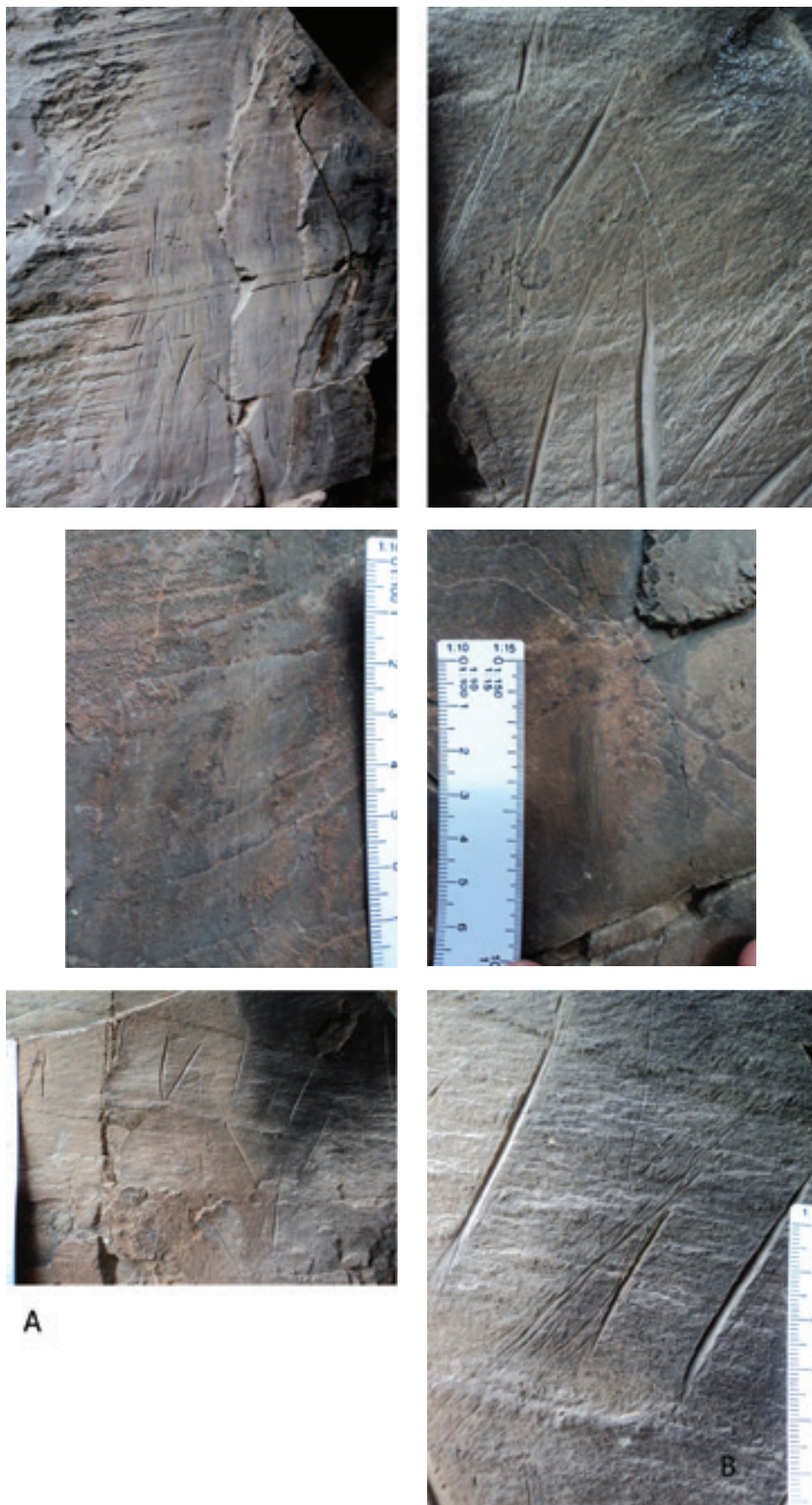
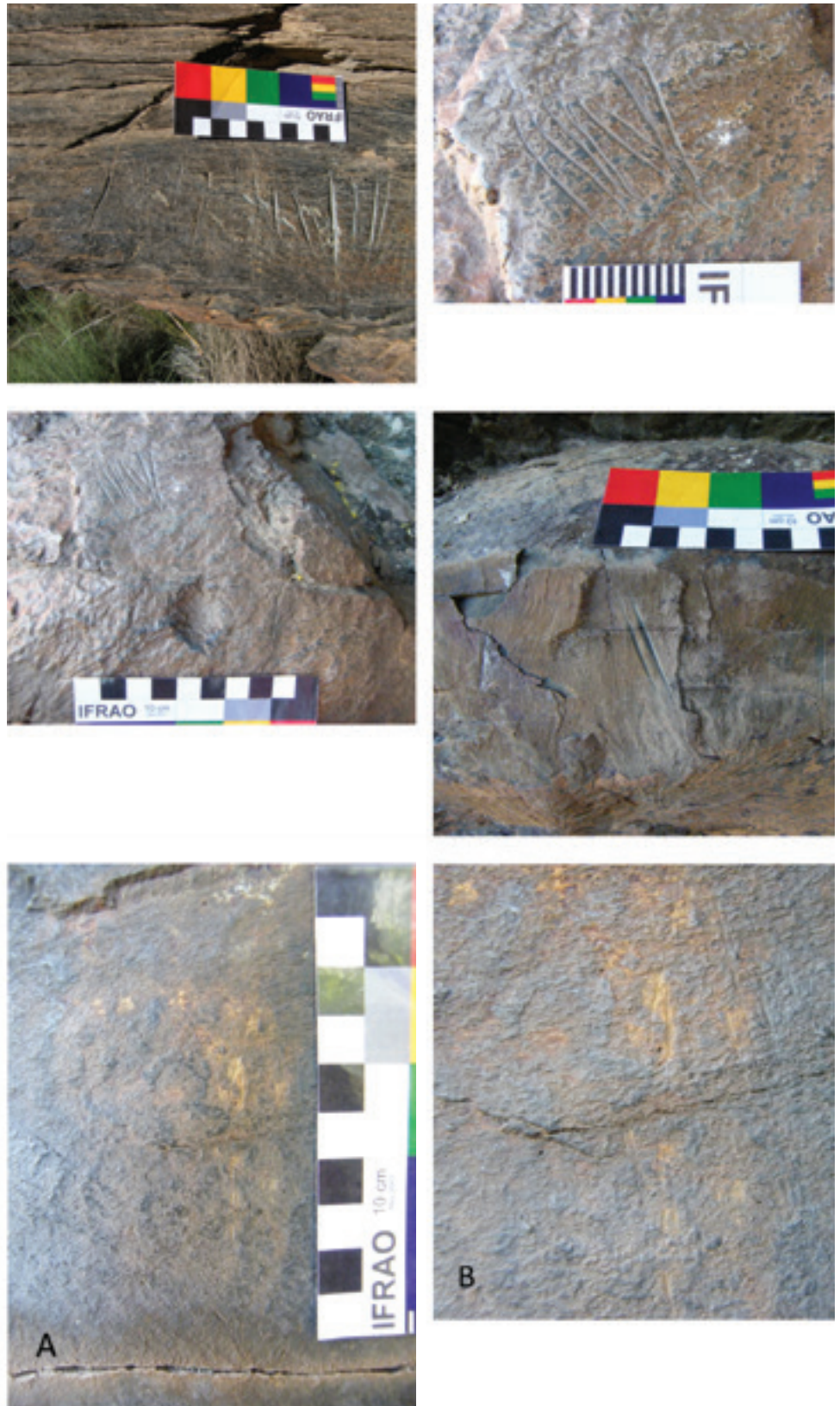


Figure 3: Fragas do Diabo rock shelters. Examples of some configurations that devil claw & thin linear motifs assume on different panels. B is a detail of A and it is intended to show that thin linear motifs are difficult to see with the naked eye, especially when the rock surface is already covered with “biofilms” and mineral concretions.





difference between the azilian rock art and the devil claw design or the coexistence of two rock art traditions in which devil claw seems to have more expression in the northern Douro region.

The lack of interest in the study of devil claw engravings and its proper appreciation as a relevant graphic expression, particularly in the region we are dealing with, is due to several reasons. On the one hand, there is the fact that these motifs do not “represent” artefacts, beings (human, non-human or otherwise), or formalized “schemes” characteristic of post-glacial art – whether Schematic, Atlantic, or Levantine –, or even of the Upper Palaeolithic – where, with some exceptions, the rich representation of zoomorphs overshadows other simpler motifs. On the other hand, the majority of researchers have argued that this art was not dated from prehistoric chronologies, although some rare exceptions should be noted (Santos Júnior, 1963; Gomes, 2010). Even presently, after several texts we have written about the subject, we understand the difficulty in its comprehension by the scientific community, so we find it useful to insist, through the publication of texts in different platforms, on the methodological and scientific parameters that support the framework of our interpretation. Supporting the attribution of its chronology to the Pleistocene to the Holocene transition or to the Early Holocene, both the contextual study of all the engraved and painted panels of the Foz do Tua rock shelter (Alijó) – along with the figurative stratigraphy of some of them – such as the figurative stratigraphy of panel 1 of Passadeiro rock shelter (Miranda do Douro), as well as the interpretative revision of other sites (some known for long and others registered in the context of the construction of the hydroelectric dam of Sabor) were taken into account.

Besides, as we have pointed out in previous publications, devil claws have unmistakable roots at the beginning of the Upper Palaeolithic, like it was demonstrated by data from other peninsular regions. As such, they may have accompanied, to a greater or lesser extent, all Palaeolithic rock art. However, we emphasize that they seem to have developed quite peculiarly from the Late Upper Palaeolithic forward in the region that is the subject of our study. Our chronological proposal, already advanced in 2013 (Sanches & Teixeira, 2013), has now been reinforced by the thematic association of the Arroyo de las Almas site (Águeda River mouth area, Salamanca), discovered in 2015 (Vásquez Marcos & Reis, 2019, Fig.5) – where, in nucleus IV, azilian zoomorphs occur in articulation with devil claw & thin linear motifs<sup>7</sup> – but above all due to the excellent graphic study and total publication of the Fariseu portable art (Santos & *alii*, 2018), of which we have absolute chronology, as we mentioned earlier, although there are no evidence of the deepest engravings, of a devil claw type, as we mentioned above. Naturally, the reasons why devil claws designs have such a strong presence in this region remains open to interpretation, but we will return to this subject later.

We will now focus on the sites of the province of Trás-os-Montes, that are crucial to the chronological attribution of the art of the period we are focusing in the text. We will characterise what we call the devil claw & thin linear motifs type, their operative chains and compositions. We will also focus our discourse in the discus-

7. In the article of 2019 the authors don't use the term “devil claw” engravings, but refer to them as linear motifs associated with very narrow incised lines – and those figures occur in association with the Late Glacial early Holocene zoomorphs that the authors consider to be superimposed by the linear ones (Vásquez Marcos & Reis, 2019, p. 140). In a previous article (Reis & Vásquez Marcos, 2015) not also the term “devil claw” is mentioned as it is published a photo (Fig.5) of a panel with a “classic” devil claw composition, similar to those found on Foz do Tua, Passadeiro, Fragas do Diabo and other sites of the Douro region and Trás-os-Montes. Therefore, the interpretation of the contextual association of the devil claw engravings & thin linear incised motifs with zoomorphs is our sole responsibility.

sion of its thematic diversity and of the roles of the sites in a network of paths and local stays, communally learned by routine life. Thus, the repetition or addition of the engravings will be a significant part of the “embodiment” of the landscape.

### **3. Rock art between the end of the Upper Palaeolithic and the Ancient Neolithic in the Lower Douro Basin: reinterpretation and new insights from recent data**

#### **3.1. Exposition and discussion of Foz do Tua rock shelter’s archaeological data**

Foz do Tua rock shelter was a turning point in the regional rock art research for the reasons we will put forward in a synthetic way.

It stands out for its location, at the confluence of the rivers Tua and Douro, which is an indicator of the value that the valleys of rivers and streams have in territorial marking since the Upper Palaeolithic. But it mostly stands out for its long duration of use, testified by almost half hundred engraved panels and another one – physically separated from the previous – presenting not engravings but some painted motifs. Almost all of the panels display combined motifs of an abstract trend in which devil claw & thin linear incised motifs are dominant. Only 3 panels have a more realistic or naturalistic character, which are precisely the ones that most immediately allowed us to establish the long duration of use of the rock shelter. Panel 31 is attributed to a pre-Magdalenian moment, panel 7 to a late Magdalenian/ Azilian moment, and panel 1 (the painted one), possibly to a pre-Neolithic moment, although we have previously attributed it to the Neolithic.

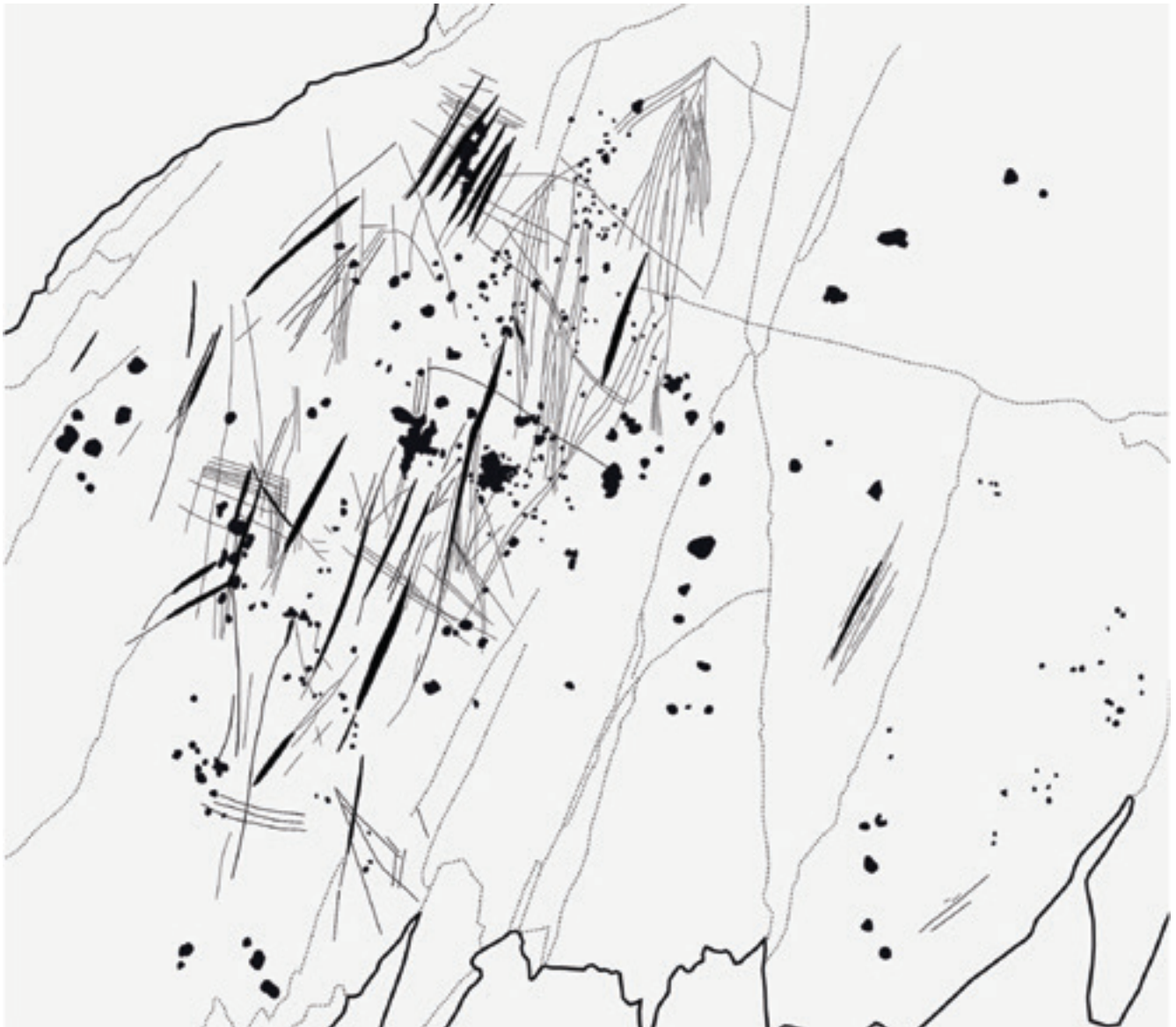
Curiously, considering the predominant thematic of the whole rock art site, these panels, on which we base the proposed chronologies, stood as exceptions. In fact, in almost all of Foz do Tua panels (about 94%) we can only observe devil claw & thin linear motifs. These are, like all abstract art, harder to date, at least while its chronological framing can only be established by comparison and analogy.

Panel 31 stands out, either by its naturalism and by its ancient chronology and it has been the subject of several publications. In the context of this text, we highlight the combination of naturalist and abstract art that it displays. We can observe in it two red deer. One is part of an “animated” figuration – the head of a male red deer superimposes the head of a horse overlapping a previous head of an auroch – to which are associated linear graphical units that A. Santos classifies as belonging to keys IXb, XIa and XIb (Santos, 2019, p. 747). The composition is attributed, due to its techno-morphological traits, to the earliest phase of the Côa valley art, i.e. to the Gravettian or Solutrean period (see stylistic parallels and chronology in Sanches & Teixeira, 2013, p. 3; Teixeira & Sanches, 2017, p. 11), prior to c. 23,000 BP, but it may even be as old as 30,000 BP. So, the rock shelter would have been transformed into a landmark at the confluence of the rivers Tua and Douro at the beginning of the Upper Palaeolithic.

Panel 7 also contains semi-naturalistic and abstract drawings, but of different nature and proportions (Fig. 4). At least 3 fishes are identified there, which have been composed and / or suggested by a technique of bundling linear incisions (often referred to as a striated body), which integrates them into a larger composition dominated by narrow linear incisions. The composition also contains some deeper incisions, of a devil claw type<sup>8</sup>.

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8. Several authors, from Santos Junior (1963) to M. Varela Gomes (2010) and one of us (Sanches, 1992) have described this type of narrower incisions as well the deeper, spindle-like ones – which are named here as devil claw type –, according to the sites each of them studied. We refer this description and discussion to a text we have previously published (Teixeira & Sanches, 2017, pp. 20-23).



According to our interpretation shallow and deeper lines are part of the whole composition in the panel and it should be noted that it is precisely the deepest of them – i.e. devil claw type engravings – that highlight some lines of fish and other “schemes”, e.g. one sub-rectangular figure. This sub-rectangular figure fits into the set of similar figures, dating from the end of the Late Glacial (and simultaneously attributed to style V) of Siega Verde and Côa, although in these last two cases the composition does not contain devil claws. A group of 6 parallel devil claws is also part of the composition and contributes, together with the fish and the orientation of the traits, to emphasize the dynamic character of this panel 7.

Ancient patinated peckings (also called isolated pecked marks) accompanies, in this and other panels, the devil claw & thin linear motifs – often emerging in groups, as we will later see in Passadeiro’s panel 1 (Figs. 6, 7 and 8-A) – and just as it was found to be so usual in the portable art of Fariseu where pecking marks are so common that sometimes they are the only motif represented on one side of the piece (as is the case e.g. of pieces 7 – obverse, and 9, reverse), or even on both sides (e.g., pieces

Figure 4: Approximate view of the engraved area of panel 7 of the Foz do Tua shelter (the image has approx. 55 cm wide).

5 and 9) (Santos & *alii*, 2018, pp. 14-15, figs. 4 and 5). It should be stressed, however, that because of the close relationship that pecking has to linear motifs in most pieces of Fariseu and the fact that the pieces with isolated pecking are broken, the authors put forward the possibility that incisions could have existed in the disappeared parts of these pieces (Santos & *alii* 2018, p. 49).

Single lines and linear motifs arranged according to very simple schemes are equally noteworthy, both in panel 7 and in other panels, and have been organized by us into a Table (Fig. 5). In fact, it is this type of “non-figurative graphic units” – organized in “keys” / formal schemes” by André Santos and collaborators (Santos & *alii*, 2018)<sup>9</sup> –, which appears in a very high number on the Fariseu pieces (where they occupy eighty-five surfaces spread over seventy-five pieces). It should be underlined here that, according to those authors, c. 86% of those in Fariseu are straight lines (of key XI), and 7.5% are what we can call angular V signs (of key IX), in addition to other units / keys that are also present, but with low statistical frequency. If on many pieces, these linear / key motifs accompany zoomorphic (and more rarely anthropomorphic) motifs, with which they are closely associated, in a large number of them, non-figurative graphic units are the only motifs on one or both sides (e.g. pieces 12, 15, 21, 45), which leads the authors to insist on the high weight that linear compositions have on portable art not only from Iberia, but also from South-western Europe (Santos & *alii*, 2018, p. 48).

Moving a little ahead of all the other panels of the Foz do Tua rock shelter that only offer compositions in the scope of devil claw & thin linear motifs, combined or not, with pecks and cup marks, we currently came to realize that this very repetitive rock art, of linear tendency, is better compared – in its thematic and particularly in its abstract trend – with portable art than with the animalist rock art of the same period. However, in the Arroyo de las Almas nucleus IV open air rock site – particularly in Rock 1: panel 6 (Vásquez Marcos & Reis, 2019, fig.5) – the link between devil claw & thin linear motifs and zoomorphs seems to be made, according to our interpretation, in the same way as in panel 7 of Foz do Tua (or even in the case of Passadeiro), that is, in these cases, there is a clear tendency of abstract / linear representations to have more statistical (and visual) weight than zoomorphs.

Returning to panel 7 of Foz do Tua and considering the style of the engravings, we have proposed a chronology that we can now detail as Azilian<sup>10</sup>, being this hypothesis sustained mostly by the stylistic similarities between these motifs and some of the fish and bundle representations of the late Pleistocene rock art of the Côa valley – recorded, for example, in Vale de José Esteves 16, Canada do Inferno 14 and Penascosa 10 (Baptista 2009) –, and of Siega Verde, particularly its panel 48 (Bueno, Balbín & Alcolea, 2008, p. 267). In Siega Verde those small animalistic figures are grouped by those authors in the so-called Style V (Bueno, Balbín & Alcolea, 2007; 2008), which dates from the end of the Late Glacial. We also admit that panel 7 belongs to this style, thus agreeing that there are graphical continuities coming from Leroi-Gourhan style IV, but also differences especially in the way in which animal bodies are conceived, as Siega Verde’s research team has shown.

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9. The authors follow the table of Sauvet and Włodarczyk, which was expanded to accommodate forms not present in that first proposal (see Santos, 2019).

10. We have proposed then an attribution to a transitional moment between the Upper Paleolithic and the Epipalaeolithic (Teixeira & Sanches, 2017, p. 13). Taking into account what we have said earlier regarding the use of the term “Epipalaeolithic” and the placement of the Azilian inside the Paleolithic, we decide to rephrase that chronocultural attribution.

Linear motifs associations (some examples)		Description
		Line pairs in a parallel arrange
		Lines in an angular configuration: vertex convergent lines or in a convergent inclination; line converging to the half segment of another line (lambda or "y" configuration)
		Groups of parallel tending lines configuring, in many cases, a band like motif.
		Bundles of lines
		"H" like variations: two vertical axis connected by a perpendicular line.
		Other configurations

Figure 5: Examples of devil claw & thin linear motifs structured groups found at Foz do Tua rock shelter. Those line arrangements are also usual in other rock art sites and in portable art of this region.



### 3.2. Exposition and discussion of Passadeiro rockshelter's archaeological data

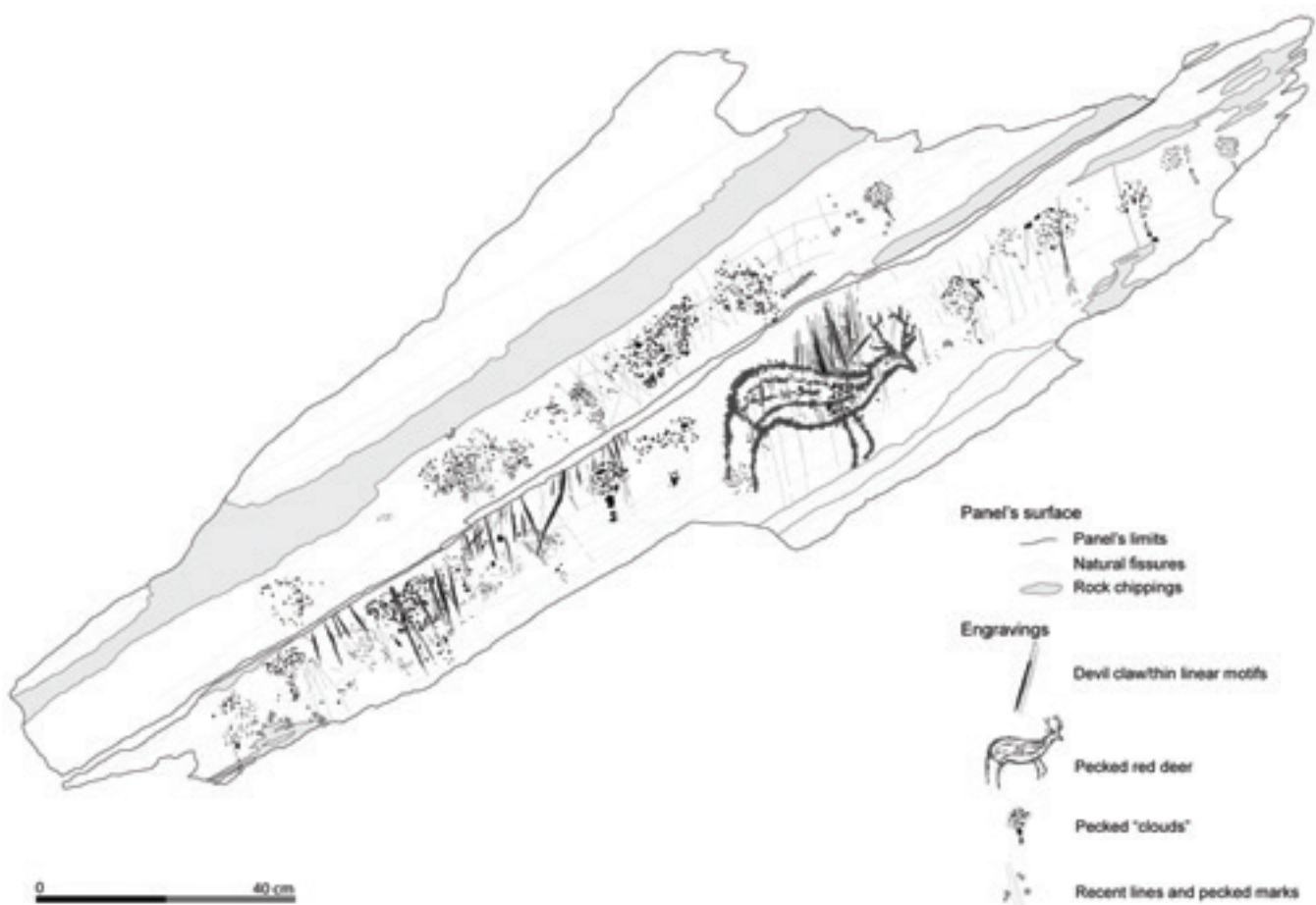
The small Passadeiro rock shelter (Palaçoulo, Miranda do Douro) is of crucial importance for the relative dating of devil claw engravings (Fig. 4, 6-above).

Although it is located in a geographical area where a high number of rock shelters shows deep linear motifs of the devil claw type – combined with thin linear ones and, frequently, with pecked marks and sometimes with cup marks –, (see Map of Fig. 1) this is the only one that also combines a zoomorphic motif in its panel 1. The remaining 4 panels display exclusively abstract art. Panel 1, thus, presents a figurative stratigraphy and association between old patinated motifs, some engraved by abrasion, and others by pecking: (i) devil claw type & thin linear incised motifs and pecked marks organized into clusters – what we refer as “pecked clouds”, most of them presenting a kind of lower vertical appendix –, (ii) some scattered pecked marks, and (iii) a pecked sub-naturalistic red deer.

Like in the case of the Foz do Tua rock shelter, in Passadeiro we do not formally or chronologically dissociate the devil claws from the thin linear motifs connected to them – which sometimes occur in a form of denser bundles – as, we repeat, we consider that both correspond to similar technical and cultural gestures. We should also note that sometimes it is difficult to perceive in Passadeiro's panel 1 the superimpositions between non-continuous pecked motifs (like the pecked clouds) and the deep linear motifs, mostly due to the depth of the latter and, thus, figurative stratigraphy can only be verified directly in the area occupied by the red deer, and in relation to it (Fig. 6, 7 and 8-A). Here we have found devil claw & thin linear motifs which are superimposed by the cervical-dorsal line of the pecked red deer and are prior to its recording. The red deer was, then, overlaid by the pecked clouds (perceived in the animal's front part), and finally, all of the motifs were superimposed by the more recent pecked marks and thin incised lines (the latter without patina and so distinguishable, in this case, from the ancient ones).

Figura 6: The red deer of panel 1 of Passadeiro in its graphic context.





A



B

←

Figure 7: Tracing of the panel 1 of Rock shelter of Passadeiro. Below, in B, is the photo of the area of the Passadeiro's red deer.

Given this sequence we have been admitting two possibilities relating to two temporal interpretative sequences of the engraving of panel 1 (hypotheses A and B) both starting by the engraving of devil claw motifs.

Hypothesis A assumes that the zoomorphic motif was made in isolation and therefore engraved in a moment before that of the depiction of the pecked clouds; or – Hypothesis B – taking into consideration the similarity in technique between the two motifs, it is possible that the red deer and the pecked clouds could have been conceptually associated from the beginning, and therefore would represent a single moment in the engraving of the panel.

Hypothesis B thus assumes that all the ancient motifs are conceptually related, the whole panel being a single composition (Fig. 7). This is emphasized by the rhythm of the distribution of the pecked clouds all over the panel's area, with the more complex composition of motifs occupying the central area. In fact, there seems to be a close complementarity between the red deer and the devil claw & the thin linear incised motifs group that occupies the central area of the panel, simulating association. If so, as we are inclined to think, then it becomes easier to understand the reason for the placement of an apparently overlapping isolated devil claw on the back of the animal<sup>11</sup> (Fig. 8-A).

This panel, especially in the area of the red deer and its spatial surroundings, is close, in represented themes and composition, to some of the Fariseu pieces, in particular to ns° 48 and 66 (reverse), where narrow-line linear motifs also dominate. The figurative stratigraphy is also similar, so that in both cases there are abstract linear motifs intercepting zoomorphic figures. Accordingly, the authors of the Fariseu text, describe plaque 66 (Fig. 9-B) as follows (Santos & *alii*, 2018: 38, Fig. 13): "... incised female deer, with triangular bent head... and pointed muzzle..." is "... practically superimposed by, and superimposes a dense concentration of incised traces"<sup>12</sup>. The description goes on to state that the incised engraved non-figurative linear units are distributed throughout the surface of the piece – keys Ia, IIc, VIIa, IXa, XIa, XIab, IXb, XIa, XIb –, plus a pecked unit belonging to key XIIc, which in this text we have been calling pecked concentrations/ pecked clouds.

←

Figure 8: A – Passadeiro's red deer; B – detail of the artefact of Freixiosa- Miranda do Douro.

It is clear to us that the "figurative stratigraphy" of both Passadeiro and of other panels engraved with devil claw & thin linear motifs can ultimately correspond to one or more operative chains carried out in a short time, as well as to sequences developed in a long time. In both of the cases we would like to underline the "unfinished" and "changeable" nature of these compositions – open to successive recording and to transformation. This seems to be a striking cultural feature associated to this sites, as we have argued.

In turn, the sub naturalistic red deer of Passadeiro has several stylistic parallels in and around the region of the lower Douro basin, all of which are attributed to a chronological period centred on Mesolithic<sup>13</sup>, but which may, in some cases, go back to the Azilian or reach the Ancient Neolithic.

In fact, the depicted animals of this extended period, although presenting some variation, show a very peculiar geometrizing aspect. They are characterized by a sub-naturalistic tendency, by having sub-rectangular, trapezoidal, oval or sub oval shaped bodies and triangular heads (often having a pointed muzzle). Their legs are always schematic – in some cases having only one leg per pair –, without hull and some

11. Although this overlapping is not absolutely clear.

12. The translation into English is of our own responsibility.

13. Some authors attribute these motifs to the Epipalaeolithic. However, the reading of their texts clearly shows that they are referring to what we have named Mesolithic in this article (e.g. Baptista & Gomes, 1995, p. 378).



anatomical details, such as horns, which are indicators of the species. In some cases, the body has internal segmentation, like the one in Passadeiro. Sometimes these animal figures take on a truly schematic appearance in such a way that – in the absence of anatomical details or positions in ethological behaviours typical of their species (such as the rut period in stags) –, it is impossible to identify the species and, as a result, many are named only as zoomorphs or quadrupeds.

In the north of the Douro region, in the lower Sabor basin, and therefore geographically very close to Passadeiro, the red deer of the open air sites of Cabeço do Aguilhão – a stag simulating being in rut and inserted in a cloud of pecked marks –, and of Santo Antão da Barca – a group of what appears to be red deer specimens and their offspring (Figueiredo, 2013, pp. 76, 82) – are the nearest parallels to the Passadeiro red deer. We can add to those cases the *cervidae* and *caprinae* of Parada which has the particularity of simultaneously containing two groups of devil claw motifs, however in a separate panel. In the south of Douro basin, it is in the basins of Côa – particularly the red deer of rock 33 of Canada do Inferno (Baptista, 2009) –, and Águeda – nucleus IV of Arroyo de las Almas (Vásquez Marcos & Reis, 2019, Fig. 5) –, that we find the closest parallels to Passadeiro. However we may not discard the reference to a (painted) panel of the rock shelter of Fraga d'Aia in the River Távora that displays what seems to be a hunting scene of a sub-naturalist red deer (**Fig. 9-C**).

Here, we must underline, nevertheless, that in formal terms, and regarding the internal segmentation of the animal's body, it is in the Tagus Valley that the closest parallels to Passadeiro's red deer are found, among them the zoomorphs of the rock of Fratel 155 and of one of the zoomorphs of Rock 1 of S. Simão Rock (Gomes, 2010, Anexo I, pp. 72-74).

The mentioned rock art sets have been mostly attributed to the transition period or the Mesolithic, as we have exposed and discussed in other texts (Sanches & Teixeira, 2017; Teixeira & Sanches 2017)<sup>14</sup>, with the following cautions: on the one hand, the graphic traditions of the hunter gatherers of this region (and others) seem to have remained for long periods and, thus, only the identification of these type of motifs inside sedimentary stratigraphies can help us to contextualize and detail the chronological emplacement of this graphic representations. This is extensible to all the period ranging from the end of the Palaeolithic to the Ancient Neolithic and, to this extent, the study of the portable art of Fariseu has an exceptional regional value; on the other hand, this is a long-lasting period of about 5 or 6 millennia, marked by various climate changes occurring between the last millennium of the glacial period (Late Glacial) and the early Holocene – between about 11,000/10,000 and 5000/4500 BC –, where there is time for a large number of socio-economic and ideological transformations to take place. It is reasonable to admit, as it is suggested by regional data, that the art of this period, although stylistically connected to the one of the Glacial period, would have had specific developments in some regions and / or in different human groups. It is, therefore, expected to be heterogeneous. Such heterogeneity would naturally include markedly regional stylistics, as seems to be the case with this markedly abstract art, based on devil claw & thin linear incised motifs, whose graphic expression is so striking that we can even consider it a techno-style related to a restricted geography of hunter gatherers from the lower Douro basin.

This linear art would have mostly been expressed in rock art, but its presence in portable art may yet to be discovered. In fact, in the University of Porto's Museum there is an oblong schist artefact discovered in Freixiosa-Miranda do Douro (**Fig. 8-B**) that is engraved by incision on both sides with a series of small devil claw &

14. Although, in this referenced texts we were still using the term “Epipalaeolithic”. See note 8.

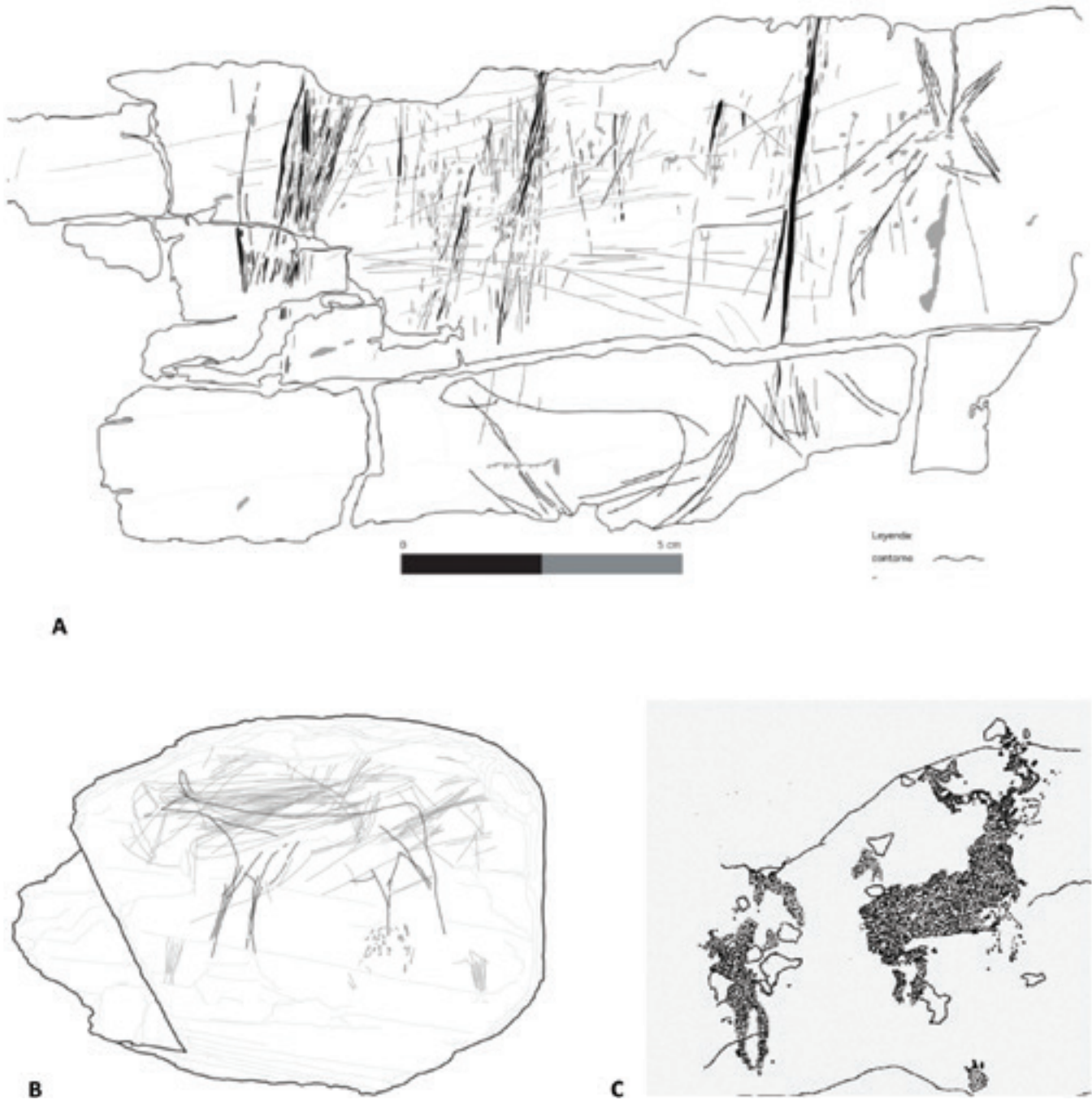


Figure 9: A – Arroyo de las Almas: Nucleo IV-Rock 1, Panel 6 (acc. to VÁSQUEZ MARCOS & REIS 2019: Fig. 5); B – Plate 66, reverse of Fariseu (it has 14,2 cm wide) (acc. to SANTOS et alii 2018: Fig. 13); C – Fraga d’Aia painted panel with the “hunting scene”(acc. to JORGE et alii 1988: Fig 6) (the stag has approx. 22 cm wide).

thin linear motifs, in an extremely complex composition<sup>15</sup>. On one side it also has wavy lines that, as we now know, are also present in Fariseu. It is worth noting that, in addition to the series of parallel deep lines, it also has drawings shaped like a “V”, lambdas and barbed signs – these, for example, present in pebbles 53 and 67 of Fariseu (Santos & alii 2018, pp. 33, 38, Fig. 11, 12) –, and that, as a whole, characterize the abstract rock art of this period in this region.

<sup>15</sup>. This is an ancient find whose context is unknown. Although it is still under study by the authors of this text, we have, meanwhile, published a preliminary text about it (Sanches & Teixeira 2020).



### 3.3. Some remarks about Fraga d'Aia rock shelter's archaeological data and about the painted panel 1 of Foz do Tua rock shelter

The reinterpretation of the archaeological data set of Fraga d'Aia has long been made by one of us (Sanches, 1997, pp. 148-151). In its earliest occupations, this rock shelter is dated by C14 as belonging to the Ancient Neolithic and has been cited by several authors as an argument for the existence of an occupation, or occupations, of the Ancient regional Neolithic, being the oldest from the end of the 6th, or the passage of the 6th to the 5th mill. BC. But in Fraga d'Aia we also find sub-naturalist rock art painted in red over two panels, being worthy of noting, given its style and theme, a rather faded hunting "scene" where an anthropomorph seems to hold a probable bow, being located behind a deer with long antlers and a very powerful robust body. The whole composition expresses dynamism (Fig. 9-C) (Jorge, Baptista & Sanches, 1988). In what concerns to Fraga d'Aia painted motifs we should also pay special attention to the hidden and well preserved panel where a small zoomorphic figure, heavy body shaped, occur in articulation with some anthropomorphic figures positioned in a semi circle. Those figures are similar to the ones found in Faia in the Côa Valley, being the zoomorphic figure similar to the painted bovines of Faia 1 and the anthropomorphic ones to those in Faia 1 and Faia 3 (Baptista, 1999, pp. 158-160).

While considering the chronology of the ancient Neolithic, to which both Fraga d'Aia panels may actually belong, we must take into account the fact that the stratigraphy revealed by the site excavation and its associated artefacts – microlithic pieces and ceramics of Neolithic typology –, seem to reveal several discontinuous occupations throughout the Ancient Neolithic. Those occupations were also responsible for material mixtures, and sedimentary amputations and mixtures (some of these are, however, most likely, due to taphonomic phenomena). In this context, (i) given the chronology of the Mesolithic occupation of the neighbouring site of Prazo – ranging from the Late Upper Palaeolithic to the mid-7th millennium B.C (Monteiro-Rodrigues, 2012), (ii) the presence, in Fariseu, of pebble 86 – painted with a linear anthropomorph to which a heavy body quadruped is associated (Santos *et alii*, 2018: 56) – and (iii) the existence of occupations in Cardina radiocarbon-dated of the 9th millennium BC (Aubry & *alii*, 2018, p. 406), we should perhaps look more carefully at the two oldest dates from Fraga d'Aia, centred in the second half of the 8th millennium B.C. Because they result from charcoal collected from the geological soil, at the base of the stratigraphic sequence, and although in 1997 they drew our attention to the possible relationship with the panels, they could not properly be valued at that time because, as we argued, regional data should be expected to integrate them, or not, into a more coherent chrono-cultural framework (Sanches, 1997, vol. I, p. 149, footnote 278).

Similarly, in Foz do Tua rock shelter, although it is quite faded, we find two friezes of elongated schematic red anthropomorphs, with arched arms and legs, the latter at times very long, and also anthropomorphs with their body in X, along with shapeless spots (Teixeira & Sanches, 2017, fig. 14).

Although this type of anthropomorphs has good morphologic parallels dated from the Neolithic (e.g. in dolmens) and Chalcolithic, its resemblance to the above-mentioned Fraga d'Aia's anthropomorph led us to hypothesize that they could also be attributed to the Ancient regional Neolithic (6th-5th millennium BC) or even to the Mesolithic (8th millennium BC) (Teixeira & Sanches, 2017, p. 19).

This older chronology is, of course, open to debate, but given the aforementioned parallels not only with the anthropomorph of pebble 86 of Fariseu – which appeared in a context dated by TL, OSL and 14C of a period between 12,500 and 11,500 cal BP (Aubry & *alii*, 2009, p. 405) – but also with other figures attributed stylistically

to the same period (e.g. anthropomorphs of Faia's rocks 3 and 5 (Bueno, Balbín & Alcolea, 2007; Santos & *alii*, 2018), it is quite possible that this painted panel may be contemporary of other panels of the same rock shelter, like the ones displaying devil claw and thin linear incisions. According to this hypothesis, the painted panel of Foz do Tua might be dated from a period closer to the one of the engravings than what we have initially thought.

When discussing the painted figures of pebble 86 (and also 85) of Fariseu and the chronologies of some of the painted art of Vale do Côa, the authors made reference to the rocks 3 and 7 of Vale de Figueira where painted anthropomorphs and zoomorphs similar to the ones already mentioned share the same rock formation with a devil claw engraved panel and also a panel displaying a striated deer (Santos & *alii*, 2018, p. 56). Looking to the photo of Vale de Figueira site (Figueiredo & Baptista, 2013, p. 309, fig. 4), the resemblances of its location, close to the river, and of the shape of the outcrop, with Foz do Tua rockshelter or even Passadeiro, are evident.

In fact, if painting in this period seems to be rarer than engraving, this may have been motivated by the poor conservation of paintings as they are preserved in schist and granites only when located in areas protected from water percolation. We know that both techniques coexist in the same regions (as in Côa valley) so, in the Foz do Tua rock shelter both modes of expression should be considered as possibly coeval.

#### 4. Final Remarks

In a region where the isolated discovery of Mazouco marked the beginning of prehistoric rock art and archaeological research on the lower Douro river basin, between the Upper Palaeolithic and the beginning of the Neolithic, data from this period have been in more recent years, specially after the boost that the Côa discovery represented, continuously increasing. After a few paragraphs devoted to the discovery of Mazouco's Palaeolithic animal panels, attributed to the Magdalenian (1), this text is devoted to the chronological and cultural contextualization of the abstract-linear rock art of the Lower Douro basin, and of its relation with the figurative/sub-naturalist art (3.1, 3.2, 3.3), having as case studies the rock shelters of Foz do Tua, Passadeiro and Fraga d'Aia. Additionally, it alludes to a case of portable art, still under study – the oblong object of Freixiosa-Miranda do Douro – denoting that portable art must have closely followed rock art in the northern Douro basin (3.2.).

Briefly, we have advanced or defended the main ideas throughout the text, some of which may now be explored in further directions.

Given the high number of sites and panels with devil claw & thin linear motifs that match about four dozen sites – corresponding to over 150 panels, concentrated in a very restricted geographical area of the Douro basin (Fig. 1) –, this graphic expression cannot remain “in the shadows” of archaeological studies, traditionally more devoted to the appreciation of naturalistic, sub-naturalistic or semi-schematic figures. In fact, we cannot just pay particular attention to schematism / abstractionism only when it is combined with the naturalism or sub-naturalism of other figures, as it has been predominantly done in Palaeolithic rock art studies. Nevertheless, we are not neglecting the contribution of the approaches relating portable and parietal art to the appreciation of abstract motifs. In fact, we have acknowledged along the text the new insights to the interpretation of the sites we are discussing that were made possible by the regional studies of the Azilian portable and parietal art in which both figurative and non-figurative motifs were taken into account (e.g. Santos, 2019; Santos & *alii*, 2018).

Although the coexistence, in the same panel, of devil claw & thin linear motifs with sub-naturalistic or schematic motifs occur as exceptions – such as in Foz do Tua (panel 7), Passadeiro (panel 1), or Arroyo de las Almas nucleus IV (Rock 1: panel 6) –, the operative chains, the compositional nature and the “time” of the engravings of these panels should be regionally considered as a cultural characteristic. Indeed, and as we have already discussed elsewhere (Teixeira & Sanches, 2017, pp. 22-23), we should understand these panels, above all, as “places” of interface between the human gesture and the rock<sup>16</sup>, instead of assuming them as mere surfaces on which ideograms are laid. This attitude will necessarily value the dynamic relationship between the rock surface and the different cultural traditions in affirmation or in undergoing change, a fact to which several Palaeolithic art researchers have also drawn attention to, when explaining overlaps sometimes concerning longer chronological periods. However, we want to stress out that this art – and perhaps all the schematic tradition after the end of the Late Glacier – is characterised by a certain prevalence of the gesture over the representation, even if it does not exclude the latter. After all, we identify formalized and repetitive groups of lines among devil claw & thin linear motifs. In fact, the same type of each of these groups, simple as they may be, are found both in different panels of the same archaeological site and in places geographically distant from each other (Figs. 2 to 7). Our approach, then, tries to underline what seems to be an important characteristic of this graphic expression dominated by abstractionism: that of “something unfinished”, of the unfinished panel, necessarily changeable, open to the next gesture and, therefore, open to new stays of the human group in each place. It seems also to have been open to continuous engraving, even if the additions and reconfigurations – noticed in the deepening of some lines, but also in the making of new incisions and pecks –, may have been subject to culturally well-defined norms, and may have intrinsic, but intangible, meanings for us. Hence, these sites are places of continued experience and are nodal in the structuring of the landscape of these hunter-gatherers communities. Rivers and streams appear to play a crucial role here (see below).

Let us now clarify the chronology that supported us.

If we have considered, as early as 2014, that deep elongated motifs of devil claw-like type started to appear alongside thinner linear motifs at the beginning of the Upper Palaeolithic in northern Iberia<sup>17</sup>, having accompanied it throughout its chronology – as it is evident from many of the published texts – it seems, nowadays, that it would have been at the end of the Upper Palaeolithic or the beginning of Early Mesolithic that this tradition would have gained a stronger expression in this region of the Lower Douro basin. In fact, there are no solid arguments that it is older than that in this region.

This assumption is based on the fact that devil claw-like type figures appear on the schematic and semi-schematic composition of panel 7 of Foz do Tua, whose fishes and bundle of risks bore direct resemblance to the portable and rock art of Côa and Siega Verde, attributed to the Azilian (Santos & *alii*, 2018), a chronocultural attribution that is in accordance with its classification as style V by Bueno, Balbín and Alcolea (2007). This last text is very important because, for the first time, and in a clear way, it was argued that there was a continuity of regional – and peninsular –, settlement between the Late Glacial Period and the beginning of the Holocene (Early Mesolithic), without glimpses of occupation gaps. Similarly, from a stylistic point of view, style V in the Douro Basin is characterised by animal figures with sub-naturalistic

16. M. V. Gomes, on the subject of linear art, has already clearly defended this idea (Gomes, 2010, p. 478).

17. As it is demonstrated by the absolute dates of the sites of El Conde and La Viña (Fortea Pérez, 2000-2001).

and semi-schematic traits and by an increasing importance of linear and abstract art in the compositions. Fish figures become more frequent, and although there are other animals, red deer seems to be dominant among the other animal motifs (e.g. Santos & *alii*, 2018). If the morphologic traits of animals and the higher importance of linear designs are common to all Southwestern Europe (e.g. Roussot, 1990; D'Errico, 1990; Guy, 1997)<sup>18</sup>, it is worth noting that the dominant represented themes are not the same across Europe. It will be important to investigate if different traditions can have existed in the Iberian Peninsula.

Such traditions, having existed, may have due their continuity to strong inter-communal ties, and it should be noted that climate improvements in the Pre-Boreal/Early Mesolithic, with the availability of new and more frequent plant and animal resources, are often pointed as the main responsible contexts in linking hunters to more restricted territories.

Could the sites of which we have spoken earlier be part of one of these traditions, in this case restricted to our region of study, and be characterised by the high importance of the devil claw & thin linear motifs, sometimes combined with sub-naturalistic motifs, as it is the case of the Passadeiro rock shelter (Figs. 6, 7 and 8-A), or even that of Parada (Alfandega da Fé, in the Lower Sabor)?

The long tradition of using the same sites is evident both in the Foz do Tua rock shelter – panel 31, from the beginning of the upper Palaeolithic –, as well as in Parada where the striated-type figurations of panel 5 as well as the red deer and ibexes of the site, evokes the phase 4 of engravings of the Côa Valley, dated by A. Santos to the Azilian (Santos, 2019).

Naturally, our attention is drawn to the fact that in the Côa and Águeda Valleys, in the south of Douro, there is an inverse ratio of sub-naturalist and devil claw schematic art to that of the north of the Douro – in the valleys of rivers, Tua and Sabor –, and this fact may have several explanations. One is a chronological explanation: devil claws – starting to appear sporadically during Azilian and widspreading during the Mesolithic – are later than phase 4 figures (Azilian) and from a time during which human occupation in the Côa and in the Águeda was less intense or the Valley lost symbolic relevance. In support of this explanation, we highlight the small number of sites in the region with Neolithic and Calcolithic rock art, which contrasts heavily with the previous periods. The other explanation, which does not exclude the former, privileges the identification of those motifs as an ethnic mark of a human collective located north of Douro. This is compatible, as mentioned above, with the warming of the clima during Pre-boreal. Concomitantly, however, there may be other hypotheses that we currently cannot glimpse.

In any case, the location of devil claw rock shelters points to a very strong landscape/territorial marking, always in close relation to the water (rivers or smaller watercourses), within places of passage, and, more rarely, located in headlands overlooking the valleys. This relation with the landscape/territory seems to be related with the identity construction of the communities that dwelled in the region and not only with socio-economic reasons.

From the end of the Late Glacial to the Atlantic period, hunter-gatherer communities have certainly undergone many transformations, both in their intra-community relations and in the intrinsically heterogeneous relationship with animals and plants and this should not be understood in a simplistic way. Similarly, relationships with the landscape, and with what it contains, should not be evaluated solely in terms of resources, since the relationship between people and plants, but especially with

18. Let's not forget that style V was conceptualized in France by Alan Roussot (1990).

animals, is also an emotional and a cultural relationship, where the imitation/replication or interpretation of their sounds and behaviours may also constitute a part of routine life and perhaps may also be engendered in the communities' mythography.

In fact, the art of this period mainly represents red deer, some ibexes and fish, as well as anthropomorphs, and a large number of abstract schemes and incised linear motifs in varying compositions and multiple overlaps. However, the possible Fraga d'Aia's "hunting scene" (Fig. 6-C), as an exceptional representation in the regional and peninsular context, is equally likely to belong to both the Ancient Neolithic – in this case, from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> millennium BC – as to the Early Mesolithic (mid 8<sup>th</sup> millennium BC).

If the first indicators of animal domestication and cereal cultivation appear, in this region, around the mid-5<sup>th</sup> millennium BC<sup>19</sup>, the transformation of the socio-economy and ideology of communities did not take place in a linear way, and it is probably much more complex than what is possible to us to evaluate in archaeological terms.

In short, the human groups that have dwelled in this region in this long period are mainly hunter-gatherer communities that, unlike us – researchers who know what have become of them later on – did not know that their ecosystems would still suffer from various climate changes, nor that they would in the long term adopt agriculture and pastoralism as the dominant way of life.

In this context, it is less important for us to discuss the question of when they adopted cultivating or herded domestic cattle than to discuss the ways they dealt with the territory and the vicissitudes of routine life or how they invented themselves as cohesive communities, the very ones that ensured the continuity of the regional settlement until our days.

Thus, the development of future research alongside the study of more archaeological sites of this period will constitute the only solid basis for our interpretive hypotheses.

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19. See discussion in Teixeira, 2017.



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