

Some considerations about the Protohistoric Rock Art in the Iberian Peninsula and recent findings in the eastern Mediterranean

Fernando Coimbra*

Abstract

This article is divided in three parts: 1 – Rock art from the Hillforts Culture, with examples found in the interior of settlements; 2 – Filiform and “polissoir” rock art from Portugal, mentioning the main regions where this kind of art appears; 3 – A new emerging paradigm in protohistoric rock art: the North-East of Greece. Despite this region being far from the Iberian Peninsula, the work carried out at Philippi since 2005 by a Greek-Italian-Portuguese team contributed with important elements for a better understanding of the Protohistoric societies from the South of Europe, through the figures carved on the rocks.

Key words: Hillforts Culture, filiform, “polissoir”, Philippi.

Resumen

Este artículo está dividido en tres partes: 1 – Arte rupestre de la Cultura Castreña, con ejemplos encontrados en el interior de los poblados; 2 – Arte rupestre filiforme y a “polissoir” en Portugal, mencionando las principales regiones donde este tipo de arte aparece; 3 – Un nuevo paradigma emergente en el arte rupestre protohistórico: el nordeste de la Grecia. Independientemente de que esta región se emplaza lejos de la Península Ibérica, los trabajos desarrollados en Filippi por un equipo greco-italo-portugués, desde 2005, han contribuido con elementos importantes al mejor entendimiento de las sociedades protohistóricas del Sur de Europa, a través de los motivos grabados en las rocas.

Palabras clave: Cultura Castreña, filiforme, “polissoir”, Filippi.

INTRODUCTION

Speaking of protohistoric rock art from the Iberian Peninsula in a chronological way it's not an easy task, because some figures originate in earlier periods (transition from the Copper Age to Bronze Age) and others have subsequent developments with a survival beyond the change of era. That's what happens in some Hillforts from the North West of the Iberian Peninsula, where there are rupestrian manifestations of cultures prior to the arrival of the people from the Hillforts Culture and sometimes, survivals that go beyond the process of Romanization.

For example, in the area of Citânia de Briteiros (Portugal), there are prehistoric engravings consisting in concentric circles which are typical from the so called Atlantic Rock Art. Some of the rocks from this settlement were also used after Roman occupation to carve some inscriptions, a situation that happens in other Hillforts from the North of Portugal. That's why it's more correct speaking about rock art in the Hillforts and not about rock art from the Hillforts (Alves, Reis, 2009).

This article is divided in three parts: Protohistoric rock art from the Hillforts Culture (*Cultura de los Castros*, in Spanish); filiform and “polissoir” rock

* Visiting Professor. Master of Prehistoric Archaeology and Rock Art. Polytechnic Institute of Tomar. Instituto Terra e Memória. Centre for Geosciences. Portugal. coimbra.rockart@yahoo.com.

art in Portugal; a new emerging paradigm in proto-historic rock art - the North-East of Greece.

The rock art from the Hillfort Culture is still understudied, at least in some regions of Portugal. It would be important to start creating *corpora* of this kind of art, because it would help to understand better the mentality of the populations that lived in those settlements during Iron Age.

Regarding filiform and “polissoir” rock art, in the Congress *De Artis Rupestris*, held at Castellon, we presented examples from Portugal, Spain and Andorra. However, in order to develop this article, we are only considering the cases from Portugal, because analyzing the whole Iberian Peninsula would be a task for a bigger publication, not possible now. Indeed, in the last years, this kind of art has had an exponential level of discoveries in Portugal, Spain and Andorra, making difficult to establish updated inventories.

In what concerns the rock art from the North-East of Greece, despite this region being far from the Iberian Peninsula, the work carried out since 2005 by a Greek-Italian-Portuguese team, together with some recent discoveries, have been contributing with important elements for a better understanding of the Protohistoric societies from the South of Europe, through the figures carved on the rocks. That's why is useful to include the Greek examples in the present article.

PROTOHISTORIC ROCK ART IN THE HILLFORT CULTURE

During many decades the rock art that exists in the Portuguese area of the Hillfort Culture was understudied, mainly in the Provinces of Minho and Douro Litoral, where some rocks with cup-marks, among other figures, didn't deserve the attention of some authors that studied local protohistoric settlements. This negligence regarding those figures seemed to persist since a *corpus* about Portuguese Rock Art, elaborated by J. R. Santos Júnior (1942), where the author mentioned that he didn't report the carved rocks where only cup-marks appear.

Fortunately this situation is slowly changing, after the progressive discovery of new carved rocks in several settlements from Portugal and Galicia (Spain) and the publication of articles and monographies regarding some hillforts. However, a global view of the rock art from the Hillfort Culture is still missing.

It's not the task of this article to accomplish that aim, which would require the work of several colleagues from Portugal and Spain. The present

section also doesn't intend to be an inventory of the hillforts that have rock art manifestations, since its aim is rather to start understanding the typology of the engravings which appear in the area of these fortified Iron Age settlements. Furthermore, some particular cases of figures allow being aware of cross-cultural contacts, certainly made through sea trade, mainly regarding hillforts located near the Atlantic. Indeed, that kind of trade seems to have existed between the North of Italy and the Portuguese west coast, at least since the 8th century BC, based on the discovery of a bronze fibula, whose peculiar iconography is almost equal to another one discovered in the north of Italy and exposed today at the Museum of Copenhagen, having been both examples probably produced by the same artist (Coimbra, 2010).

Focusing now on the techniques and typology of the rock art from the area of the Hillfort Culture, most of the engravings are made by pecking on granite outcrops, with figures such as simple cup-marks, cup-marks with channels, footprints, serpentiforms, spirals, meanders, a hunting scene and symbols such as the Salomon Knot and the swastika. So far, we only know one example of each one of these two last symbols in the studied area, but figures such as spirals, serpentiforms, footprints and cup-marks are much more frequent in Hillforts from the North of Portugal and Galicia, being the last almost “omnipresent”.

In the Hillfort Culture there are also some filiform engravings made on schist, with motifs such as horses, fish, labyrinths, circles, net-patterns and opposite triangles, all found in 2009 at the Hillfort of Formigueiros (Samos), in the Province of Lugo (Meijide *et al.* 2009; Meijide, 2012). This amazing and important discovery enlarged, in a great extent, the typology of the rock art in the Hillfort Culture, which without these new themes wasn't much diverse.

We are not going to make developed interpretations about the symbolism of some of these figures, like we already did in other publications, in what concerns engravings such as footprints, the Salomon Knot, the swastika and the horse, because it would be necessary a methodological approach that is not an aim for the present article. So, let's start the analysis of the pecked engravings with the less frequent figures, such as the swastika and the Salomon Knot.

The first of these symbols is quite rare in the Protohistoric rock art of the Iberian Peninsula, but it appears on a stone found inserted on a wall of an Iron Age building from the Hillfort of Guifões (Fig. 1), near Oporto (Santos, 1963; Coimbra, 1999). Probably, like in the case of the mentioned fibula, the figure of this

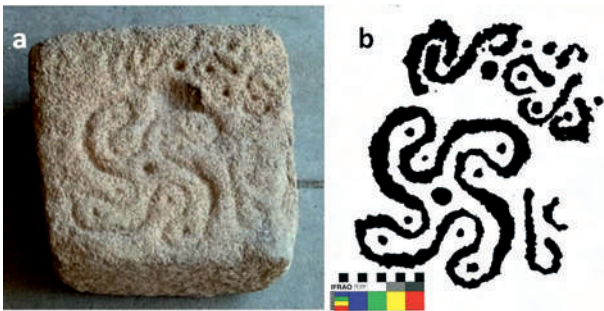


Figure 1. Swastika associated with nine cup-marks: a-stone from Guifões; b-tracing of the same engravings.

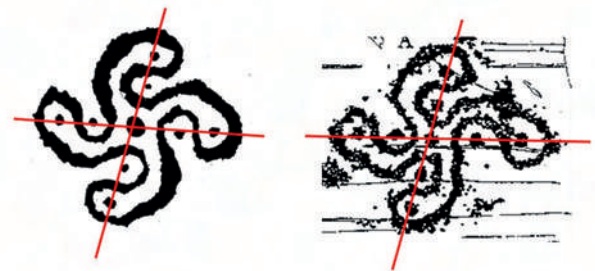


Figure 2. Swastikas from Guifões (left) and Giadighe (right), with nine cup-marks organized into a crossed system (tracing from Giadighe by Farina, 1998).

peculiar swastika associated with nine cup-marks arrived through sea trade, since its origin must have been Valcamonica, in the Italian Alps, where there are 16 examples of it (Farina, 1998), all carved on outcrops, being locally known as “Camunian Rose”.

There are also other cases of this swastika in Europe (England and Sweden) and in North Africa (Mali), but only one in each country, what makes sense to attribute its origin to Valcamonica.

Regarding the case from Guifões, a typological analysis shows that this swastika is very similar to the example found at Giadighe (Valcamonica), having the mentioned nine cup-marks a distribution into a cross shape (Fig. 2).

The Salomon’s Knot is also very unique in protohistoric rock art¹, but there’s a known example from the Hillfort of Santa Tecla, La Guardia, Pontevedra (Fig. 3). Unfortunately the location of this example is presently unknown, existing however some photos and a drawing of this figure (Martinez Tamuxe, 1987).

According to personal information from X. Martinez Tamuxe, it was probably destroyed during the enlargement of the road that reaches the top of the large hill, where besides a museum of the settlement there are several touristic facilities.

The same author refers that this Salomon’s Knot was found under a wall dated from the Roman period, being therefore of pre-Roman chronology (Martinez Tamuxe, 1987).

The representation of this symbol, either in rock art or on stones for including in houses from the Hillfort’s Culture, had certainly an apotropaic value, which seems to persist during the Middle Ages in the Eastern Pyrenees, both in rock art (Abelanet, 1990) and scratched on the walls of some churches (Coimbra, Tosana, 2010).

Regarding hunting scenes there’s an interesting example found at Citânia de Sanfins by E.

Jalhay, during the fieldwork of 1945 (Jalhay, 1947: 555, Fig.1), being possible to see a man on horse-back with a spear running after a deer with big horns (Coimbra, Oosterbeek, 2012: Fig. 1). Later on, these engravings were cut from the outcrop and carried to the Archaeological Museum of Citânia de Sanfins (Paços de Ferreira), Portugal), in order to avoid destruction by vandalism.

Meanders appear in a rock from Monte Mozinho (Penafiel, Portugal) and in the back of the stele from the ritual baths in Briteiros. Regarding the first example, in the middle of the meander is possible to identify a swastika turning left (Fig.4). These engravings are difficult to date, since they were removed from its original place, being ignored its exact location regarding the protohistoric settlement and the

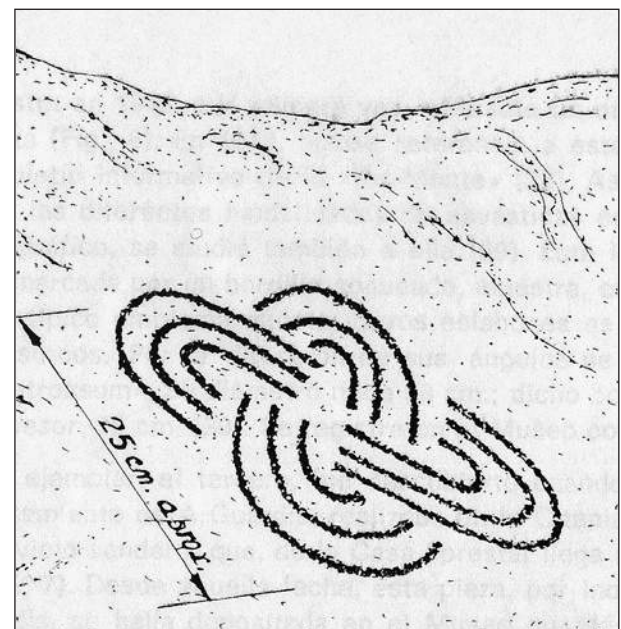


Figure 3. Salomon’s Knot from Santa Tecla (after Martinez Tamuxe, 1987).

1. In this article we mention only examples carved on rocks (outcrops) and not on stones used in architecture, where the Salomon’s Knot appears more often.



Figure 4. Meander and swastika from Monte Mozinho.

date when this stone was cut (Sousa, 1998). Presently it's kept in the Municipal Museum of Penafiel.

Spirals can be found in several hillforts such as Briteiros and Santa Tecla, but its dating can be difficult since this figure is also present in the so called Atlantic Rock Art, which predates the presence of peoples from the Hillfort Culture. However, a double spiral from Briteiros carved on a granite outcrop (Fig. 5) has probably a protohistoric chronology, due to the similarity with some patterns found on Iron Age pottery from the same culture.

Serpentiforms are the representations of snakes, probably done with a ritual meaning. They are present, for example, at the Hillforts of Baldoeiro (Torre de Moncorvo) and S. Jurge (Meda), both in Portugal, and at the Hillfort of Troña (Ponteareas, Pontevedra, Spain), besides other settlements from Galicia (Peña Santos, 1979). The dating of these figures can also be problematic, since they exist in the NW of the Iberian Peninsula before the appear-



Figure 5. Double spiral from Briteiros.

ance of the Hillfort Culture, like in the case of the serpentiform from Pedra da Beilosa, in the Province of Pontevedra (Peña Santos, 1979).

Footprints can appear with a different typology: only the contour of the foot or with the figure completely pecked, as it happens in Briteiros (Fig.6). Sometimes they can also be seen associated with cup-marks, as in the case of Rock 1 from the Hillfort of Roriz, in Barcelos (Coimbra, 2004: Fig. 15).

In most of the cases these figures seem to have used, as a model, the own human foot, naked or with a shoe (Gomes, Monteiro, 1977), with the aim of testifying the presence or passage of certain characters.

Cup-marks are the most frequent figure in the rock art that appears in the area of the hillforts. Sometimes they are interconnected with channels, as it happens in several cases from the region of Trás-os-Montes. In this Province, according to Alves and Reis (2009), some examples of cup-marks with channels are associated with archaeological remains of roman and/or medieval chronology. However, in the Hillfort of Santa Tecla (La Guardia, Pontevedra) there are cases of these kind of engravings located under the walls of several buildings from this indigenous settlement, whose largest development occurred in the beginning of the 1st century BC (Costas Goberna, 1988), having, therefore, the carvings an undeniable protohistoric chronology.

When simple cup-marks are represented isolated, without the association of other figures, they became difficult to date, because they can have been done during a period before the Iron Age settlement or they can be from Early Middle Age, since archaeological evidence shows that several hillforts from the North of Portugal were reused in the 9th century AD during the conquest of the territory against the Moors. However, rocks or stones with cup-marks sometimes appear in archaeological context, like for example a stone with 14 cup-marks found in the Hillfort of Guifões (Santos, 1962).



Figure 6. Footprints from Briteiros: 1-contour; 2-completely pecked.

Regarding the filiform figures from the Hillfort of Formigueiros, it was the first time that this kind of engravings was found in the interior of a settlement from the Hillfort Culture, despite the typology of motifs such as horses, circles, net-patterns and triangles having many examples in other regions from the Iberian Peninsula, but always outside protohistoric settlements. One exception is the recent extraordinary discovery of about 500 plaques with filiform portable Iron Age rock art inside a fortified settlement from the Sabor Valley (Portugal), with many representations of horses and geometric motifs and not yet published, being reported preliminary at the XVII IUPPS Conference, in Burgos, by Sofia Figueiredo, one of the archaeologists responsible for this finding.

Among the engravings from Formigueiros, some were found on the pavement of a small square made of schist slabs between two houses, consisting in one labyrinth (in the centre), two horses and three fish. In one of the houses there's a slab with a circle with ten rays, two opposite triangles and a labyrinth (Meijide, *et al.* 2011).

More engravings were found "on small stones, reused in the walls of the houses, and recovered during the process of excavation, some in situ and others within the debris from collapsed walls" (Meijide, 2012: 6), with figures such as net-patterns, a triangle, a fish and another labyrinth, more complex and elaborate than the others.

These engravings represented on the pavement and reused on the walls of some houses were not made for embellish them, since the labyrinth, the horse and the fish appear frequently in the symbolic ways of thought from the I millennium BC in several peoples from Europe, not only in rock art but also in pottery, jewellery and other artefacts.

FILIFORM AND "POLISSOIR" ROCK ART IN PORTUGAL

The so called filiform rock art is characterized by having very thin grooves, just scratched on the rock surfaces, being produced either by stone or metal tools, harder than the rock. However, some filiform figures are frequently found produced with larger and deeper grooves, after the use of a "polissoir" technique, being first incised on the rock surface and then polished with repeated movements (Coimbra, Garcês, in press). But, since the technique of production of these filiform and "polissoir" figures is an incision, being the typology of motifs

very similar, we decided to call this kind of engravings "incised rock art" (Coimbra, 2013a; 2013b), distinguishing between figures done with thin grooves (the true filiform engravings) and others produced with medium or thick grooves (the "polissoir")².

In Portugal, incised rock art is mainly schematic, with many geometric figures such as rectangles and squares of different typology, circles, opposite triangles, pentagrams, net-patterns, zigzags, cruciforms, scalariforms, "asterisks", parallel and convergent lines, among other examples. However, there are also many cases that can be considered naturalistic, like anthropomorphic figures, horses, deer, dogs, fish, tree like motives, huts and different kinds of weapons and tools (Coimbra, 2013a; Coimbra, in press).

We are not going to make interpretations about the symbolism of some of the incised engravings, since the aim of this section is to make some general considerations about the main Portuguese regions with this kind of rock art. It's also not an intention of this article to indicate parallels outside the border, despite existing in other areas of the Iberian Peninsula a group of figures that are very similar to the Portuguese examples. As a matter of fact, this striking similarity goes beyond the Pyrenees, reaching the French Maritime Alps, the north and the centre of Italy, besides other regions (Coimbra, 2013a; Coimbra, 2013b; Coimbra, in press).

Starting from North to South, there are three main Portuguese regions with incised rock art: Trás-os-Montes/Alto Douro, Beira Interior and Alentejo. In the Tagus Valley and its tributary Ocreza there are some cases of filiform engravings, but less important than the examples from the other regions and thus we don't consider them here.

In Trás-os-Montes/Alto Douro, which is the most important of the mentioned regions, appeared one of the first known rocks with this kind of engravings, Pedra Escrita de Ridevides (Alfândega da Fé), being most of the figures "polissoir", consisting in halberds (Fig. 7), arrow heads, ladders, cruciform motifs, parallel lines and net-patterns (Santos Júnior, 1963).

However, the biggest concentrations of incised rock art from this large region are located in the valleys of three rivers: the Douro, the Côa and the Sabor.

In the Douro valley, in 1982 was discovered a place called Vale da Casa, having 23 rocks with filiform engravings, unfortunately today under the waters of the dam of Pocinho. Besides some earlier figures there are many examples dated from Iron

2. See Coimbra, 2013a for the reasons regarding this terminology.

Age, with representations of horses, spears, curved swords and also a pre-Roman inscription, among other motifs (Baptista, 1983; 1986).

In June of 1995, some months after the discovery of the Palaeolithic engravings from the Côa Valley, a place called Vermelha (near the Douro valley) revealed interesting representations of Iron Age warriors in a duel, besides other figures, such as two rapine birds eating a fish (Abreu, *et al.*, 1999).

In the Côa Valley, an important complex of Protohistoric filiform engravings was also discovered, studied so far only in a preliminary way, since the huge quantity of figures makes difficult their research. Indeed, regarding only the area of confluence of the Côa with the Douro, there are 66 rocks with filiform engravings from Iron Age³, being the motifs included in four typological groups: geometric, weapons, zoomorphic figures and anthropomorphic figures (Baptista, Reis, 2008a).

The first group is characterized mainly by net-patterns, scalariforms, spirals, circles with rays, triangles and zigzags, among other motifs. Weapons appear often with depictions of spears, daggers, shields and curved swords (*falcatas*), being associated, in several cases, to warriors or horse riders, despite appearing most of the times isolated. Zoomorphic figures are constituted by horses, deer and some representations of dogs and rare cases of bovid. The last group is composed by depictions of warriors and horse riders, being one of the most interesting examples found on rock 6 from Vale do Forno (Fig. 8), depicting a warrior with a spear, shield and a dagger in the belt.

In the Sabor Valley, recently were discovered the already mentioned 500 plaques with filiform portable Iron Age rock art, that all the rock art researchers are looking forward to see published and



Figure 7. Halberd from Rocha Escrita de Ridevides.

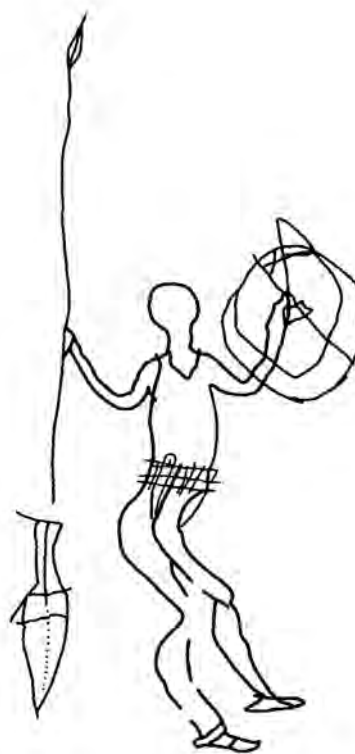


Figure 8. Warrior from Rock 6 of Vale do Forno (after Baptista & Reis, 2008b).

visible in a museum, because they constitute a new paradigm in European Iron Age rock art.

The region of Beira Interior, located in the inner centre of Portugal, has so far a small group of known rocks with filiform/"polissoir" rock art. Despite not having the exuberance of the anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figures from Alto Douro and the Côa Valley, there are some interesting engravings, which can be typologically included in the groups of geometric and weapons, proposed by A. M. Baptista and M. Reis (2008a; 2008b). However a few themes are new as we are going to see later.

Continuing the description from North to South, in the municipality of Tondela (District of Viseu), is located the rock Molelinhos (Cunha, 1991), constituted by six panels completely full of filiform figures in a kind of *horror vacuum*, being the motifs very diverse, such as net-patterns, zigzags (one of them double), cruciforms, parallel and convergent lines, arrow heads, spears, daggers, sickles, a tree-like figure a footprint, a pentagram and some possible pre-Roman inscriptions⁴.

Some kilometres to the south appears Pedra Letreira de Góis (municipality of Góis, District

3. In the Côa Valley and Alto Douro there are 225 rocks with this kind of rock art (Baptista, Reis, 2008b).

4. This rock was only traced once, in 1991, in a period where surveys with artificial light were not yet practised, being therefore possible that more figures may appear in the future and others may be more understandable.

of Coimbra), the first rock with filiform engravings discovered in this region (Barros, et al. 1959), with the depiction of two bows with arrow, several arrow heads, net-patterns and two possible shields. Also this rock should be studied with new technologies, since the only available publication is 56 years old.

In the municipality of Sertã (District of Castelo Branco), our colleague C. Batata discovered in 1995 one large schist outcrop, known as Laje da Fechadura, with many filiform and “polissoir” engravings, which were published only in a preliminary way (Batata et al, 2004). Some years later, in 2008 and 2009, we had the possibility of directing two fieldworks to make the integral study of this rock and of two more that meanwhile were discovered after a forest fire. Then, after these new examples we decided to rename Laje da Fechadura as Rock 1 from Figueiredo (the parish were the rocks are located), being the other cases designed respectively as Rock 2 and Rock 3 (Coimbra, 2013b).

Rock 1 from Figueiredo is the most interesting of this group, with an intense variety of filiform and “polissoir” figures. Among the first there are arrow heads, two pentagrams, a tree like motif, a zig-zag, a hut (?), several net-patterns, rectangles and squares of diverse typology, and groups of convergent and parallel lines. The “polissoir” consist in an axe without handle, a tree like motif, two opposite triangles, two pentagrams, several net-patterns, scalariforms, rectangles and squares, parallel and convergent lines. There is also a possible vulva, a possible shield and four inscriptions, being two of them pre Roman and the others from the Roman Period (Coimbra, Garcês, in press).

Another interesting figure from this rock is a filiform net-pattern with a “polissoir” kind of a handle

(added later?) resulting in what seems to be an incised “palette” (Fig. 9), a figure that usually appears produced by pecking.

Rock 2 from Figueiredo revealed filiform engravings such as zigzags (simple and double), a triangle, pentagrams, a bow with arrow, an “asterisk” and a cruciform anthropomorphic figure. It has also “polissoir” engravings: rectangles, scalariforms, cruciforms, parallel and convergent lines.

In the municipality of Proença-a-Nova (District of Castelo Branco), a rock known as Pedra das Letras (stone with letters) has several sets of “polissoir” parallel and convergent lines (Henriques, Caninas, 2009).

In this same District, according to personal information from M. V. Gomes, a new large rock with many filiform engravings was recently discovered, being still studied by that researcher, what is another contribute for the corpus of this kind of art in Beira Interior.

As mentioned before, despite the engravings from this region not having the beautiful examples of warriors, horse riders, weapons and zoomorphic figures from Trás-os-Montes/Alto Douro, there are some interesting motifs that don't appear in this last area: the sickles and the filiform footprint, that so far only appear at Molelinhos (Cunha, 1991); the axe without handle, a pre-Roman inscription where a swastika is used as a letter (Fig. 11) and the possible hut, all from Rock 1 of Figueiredo (Coimbra, 2013b); the cruciform anthropomorphic figure, done with multiple lines, from Rock 2 of Figueiredo, which can predate the protohistoric period (Fig. 10).

In the region of Alentejo the examples of incised rock art were discovered much more recently than in the other two regions. In fact it was during

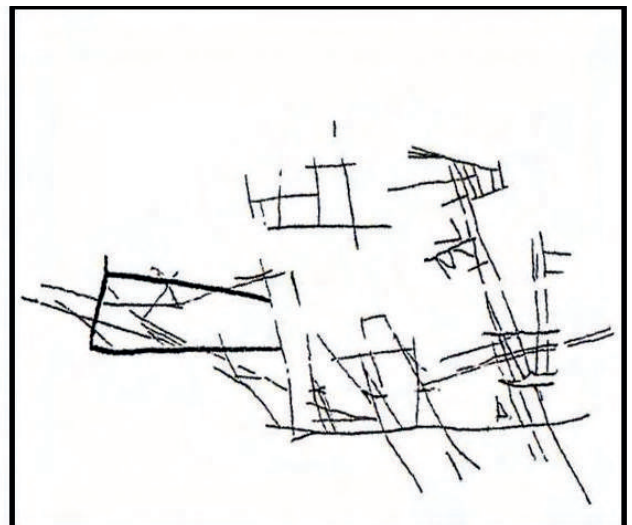
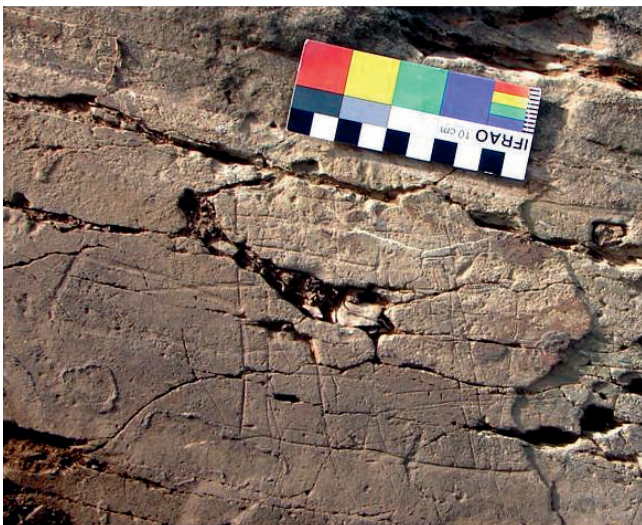


Figure 9. Filiform “palette” (?). Photo and tracing.



Figure 10. Anthropomorphic figure with multiple lines.

April of 2001 that the discovery of a large complex of rock art in the Portuguese part of the Guadiana Valley, with several chronologies was announced, both with pecked and incised engravings. Unfortunately, the construction of a dam in the area of Alqueva would submerge the whole complex, which had an important extension also in Spanish territory.

The studies in order to save the much information as possible regarding this new rock art complex started in may of 2001, resulting, so far as we know, in two publications (Baptista, 2002; Baptista, Santos, 2013).

Some years later, other incised engravings were found in the same region, in the municipality of Reguengos de Monsaraz, in the area of a protohistoric settlement “beneath the medieval town of Monsaraz” (Calado *et al.*, 2008: 119). Fortunately, these examples were not affected by the artificial lake of the Alqueva dam, seeming to have, some of them, a protohistoric chronology. Typologically, there are geometric figures such as squares, net-patterns, scalariforms and pentagrams, but also anthropomorphic engravings, which seem to have the representation of clothes (Calado *et al.*, 2008: Fig. 7, centre). So far, motifs such as weapons and zoomorphic figures were not found, appearing however these kind of engravings in the Alqueva.

Regarding the submerged engravings, Rock 1 from Beatas 1 reveals a filiform representation of deer (Fig. 12), which typologically are very similar to the representations of this animal found in the schematic art from Spanish Extremadura. Despite being chronologically previous to the period studied in this article, it is an extremely important example, showing that filiform rock art has cases which pre-date Bronze Age.

In what concerns the Iron Age rock art from the Alqueva area, one of the most important rocks is Mocissos 3, where some representations deserve



Figure 11. Pre-Roman (?) inscription with a swastika.

further comments. It is the case of a warrior, holding a spear and a shield, standing on the back of a horse. In the same scene there are three swans with open wings, which seem to move in the same direction of the horse (Baptista, Santos, 2013). Both animals appear with a psychopomp character in several mythological scenes from the I millennium BC, across Europe (Coimbra, 2013c), either in rock art examples or on other material such as pottery.

Typologically, the protohistoric engravings from the Alqueva, despite the predominance of geometric motifs, have some similarities with the examples from the Côa Valley with the same chronology, being possible to find cases belonging to the groups proposed by Baptista and Reis (2008a) for that northern region: geometric, weapons, zoomorphic and anthropomorphic figures.

Thus, in the Alqueva, regarding the first group there are net-patterns, pentagrams, scalar-

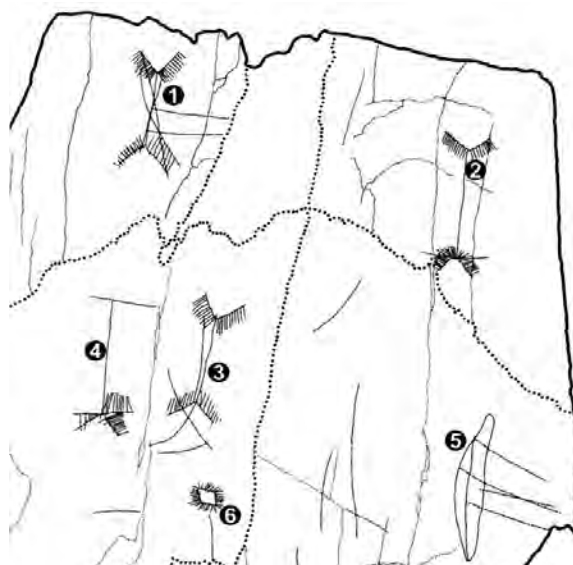


Figure 12. Schematic filiform deer from Beatas 1 (adapted from Baptista, Santos, 2013).

iforms, zigzags, spirals and squares. Some cases of weapons are present such as spears, trespassing, some of them, the bodies of deer. These animals are the most represented among the zoomorphic figures, besides two fish, the mentioned swans and the horse from Mocissos 3, among other particular cases (Baptista, Santos, 2013). In what concerns the forth group, the anthropomorphic figure from this last rock seems to be the only example so far discovered.

During the second half of the 20th century, open air incised rock art was several times considered to be from historical periods. Today this view is completely different, since there are examples of this kind of art since the Palaeolithic till the end of the Middle Age. In fact, the exponential discovery of filiform and polissoir rock art in several countries from Europe led to a better understanding of it, namely in chronological terms.

Indeed, figures such as net-patterns, zigzag, tree like motifs and others that were sometimes dated from the 1st or the 2nd centuries AD, appear also in several caves from Castilla y Leon (Spain), where is possible to find an archaeological context from about 3000 BC to 1500 B, being those engravings, according to J. L. Sanchidrián (2005), probably from the same period. Furthermore, in Escoural cave (Portugal), where the last occupation is dated from Late Neolithic, there's an interesting case of a net-pattern (Fig.13), appearing also this motif and zigzags carved on clay tablets from several Calcolithic settlements of the Iberian Peninsula, such as Vila Nova de São Pedro, in the centre of Portugal (Coimbra, 2013a: Fig.4; Coimbra, Garcês, in press: Fig. 13).

Besides these examples, in the rock art from the Iberian Peninsula there are unambiguous representations of Bronze Age weapons, such as the hal-



Figure 13. Net-pattern from the cave of Escoural.

berds from Peña Rayá (Cáceres, Spain) (Sevillano, 1991) and from Rocha Escrita de Ridevides, in the North of Portugal (Fig. 7), besides many cases of engravings dated from Iron Age.

Constant new discoveries of filiform and polissoir rock art in the Iberian Peninsula, unfortunately some of them still unpublished, show that there's still some work to do regarding the chronology of this kind of art.

A NEW EMERGING PARADIGM IN PROTOHISTORIC ROCK ART: THE NORTH EAST OF GREECE

As mentioned before, the rock art from the NE of Greece (Eastern Macedonia), whose findings have been growing along the years, contributes with important elements for a better understanding of the Protohistoric societies from Southern Europe. That's why it deserves a synthetic analysis in this article.

So far, the main rock art areas from this region are located at Mount Pangaion, at Evros, near Bulgaria, and at Philippi (sites of Prophet Elias and Mana), in the Province of Kavala. In the area of Philippi there are also some carved rocks in the hill of the old Byzantine castle, in Krinides, and a rock known as Tripia Petra (Coimbra *et al.*, 2011), but they are less interesting than the examples from Prophet Elias and Mana.

The rock art from Evros was discovered recently by our colleague Giorgos Iliadis and will not be mentioned here, since is part of his still unfinished PhD dissertation, such as the rock art from Mount Pangaion. This way, in the present article we will focus only in the rock art from Philippi (Fig. 14),



Figure 14. Philippi, in the map of Eastern Macedonia -Greece- (adapted from Koukouly-Chrysanthyky, Bakirtzys, 2006).

whose plain is determined by the natural limits of three mountains: Lekani (1296m), in the north-east, Falakro (2233m) in the west and Pangaion (1956m) in the south (Iliadis, 2007).

Despite previous punctual studies, the first integral research regarding the rock art from Philippi was started by Georgios Dimitriadis during 1998-2000, which in 2003 organized the *1st Workshop about Rock Art in Greece*. Some months before, G. Dimitriadis had founded the Hellenic Rock Art Center (HERAC), inviting us to be member of its Scientific Committee. At the end of the mentioned workshop a round table with the participation of experts from several countries⁵ established the guidelines for future projects regarding the rock art from Philippi.

Two years later, HERAC, together with Istituto Internazionale di Studi Liguri (Sezione Valbormida) and Associazione Lombarda di Archeologia, both from Italy, started the "Hellenic Rock Art Documentation Project", approved by the Greek Ministry of Culture and financed by the Municipality of Philippi.

Two field works were then organized (2005-2006), in order to document the rock art examples from Philippi, which at the beginning counted three rocks at Prophet Elias and only one at Mana. By the end of the works in 2006, two more rocks were discovered at this last site (Coimbra et al. 2011: 57-60) and two more at Prophet Elias (Rock 1A and Rock 2A), still unpublished.

Also in 2006, G. Iliadis started an individual research regarding the figure of the horseman in the rock art from Philippi, which resulted in his Master thesis (Iliadis, 2007), continued by the PhD project - *The emergence of complex societies in Eastern Macedonia (Greece): the figure of the warrior and the horseman in the local rock art*, which we are honoured to supervise.

In the summer of 2010 a new fieldwork took place at Philippi, under the scientific direction of F. Coimbra and G. Iliadis, using new methodologies such as night tracing with artificial light, a procedure that allowed discovering some new engravings, not identified before, in all the rocks from Prophet Elias. This fieldwork also contributed to a better understanding of an interesting hunting scene discovered at the end of the mission of 2006 on Rock 3 from Mana, which, then, had been only photographed⁶, because there was not time for tracing it⁷. The other results from the fieldwork of 2010 will not be mentioned here,

since they are part of G. Iliadis' PhD thesis.

Meanwhile, in order to understand better the rock art from Philippi it's necessary to make first some considerations about the archaeological context of the region. Thus, one of the most important sites is Dikili Tash, with occupation during the Neolithic (c.5000-3000 BC), Bronze Age (3000-1050 BC) and Iron Age (1050-700 BC). This prehistoric and protohistoric site is not far from the area of Prophet Elias (Coimbra, Iliadis, 2011). Between this rock art site and the area of Mana there's a big hill, which dominates the landscape, where a survey carried out during 2005 revealed Bronze Age pottery (Coimbra et al., 2011).

Further to the west, there's an ancient city founded by colons from the island of Thasos and conquered in 365 BC by King Philip of Macedonia, carrying since then the name of this ruler, father of Alexander the Great. Near this archaeological site is located a large hill with a Byzantine castle, where earlier certainly existed a Bronze Age settlement, identified by the presence of pottery with that chronology.

In terms of Geology, the area of Philippi is characterized by granite, diorite and mainly marble, being the engravings so far discovered done in this kind of rock, which is quite hard. The technique of execution is micro-pecking with a probable metal chisel.

Chronologically, the oldest engravings in Philippi seem to be the sun-like images on Rock 2 from Prophet Elias, considering the similarity with figures from other countries attributed to Copper Age. There are other carvings in Northern Greece



Figure 15. The landscape, view from Rock 3 of Mana. In the horizon, Mount Pangaion

5. This event was coordinated by G. Dimitriadis, and had the participation of Dario Seglie, Matteo Meschiari, Laura Leone (Italy), Fernando Coimbra (Portugal), Anitta Larsson-Modin (Sweden), Yannis Iliadis, Lazarus Chatzilazarides (Greece), Andres Tvauri (Estonia), Karen Tokathyan, Gohar Vardumyan and M. Galyan (Armenia).

6. The photo was published in Coimbra et al. 2011: 59.

7. The complete tracing from 2010 was published in Coimbra, Iliadis, 2011.

possibly with the same dating, such as the deer from Nea Fili, in the Province of Serres (Iliadis, 2007), which is very similar to the examples from the Calcolithic stele from Valcamonica. Still on Rock 2, there is an interesting image, a kind of anthropomorphic idol with a cylindrical body and open arms like large wings, which could also be attributed to Copper Age (Coimbra *et al.*, 2011).

Besides these earlier examples, in a general way the rock art from Philippi reveals a Protohistoric complex society, where the role of warriors had surely a strong influence, what can be observed by the depiction of horse riders holding several weapons at the same time (Fig. 16). Other engravings depict feathered helmets, like it happens at Rock 3 from Prophet Elias (Fig. 17) and at Rock 2 from Mana (Coimbra *et al.*, 2011: Fig. 37). Several horses reveal also the representation of saddles (Fig. 16; Fig. 17), which is an important detail for the discussion of the Eastern Mediterranean role in the origin of this kind of horse equipment⁸

Some horse riders reveal what it seems to be the representation of cuirasses, like for example in Rock 1 from Mana (Fig. 18) and in Rock 3 from Prophet Elias (Coimbra *et al.*, 2011: Fig. 29). Regarding the first of these carved rocks, the heads of the several horse riders were destroyed during the Turkish occupation.

In the rock art from Philippi there are also isolated representations of weapons, such as the axes on Rock 3 from Prophet Elias (Fig. 19) and on Rock 2 from Mana (Coimbra *et al.*, 2011: Fig. 37), among other examples not yet published.

Like it happens during Iron Age in other regions from Southern Europe, such as Italy, Spain

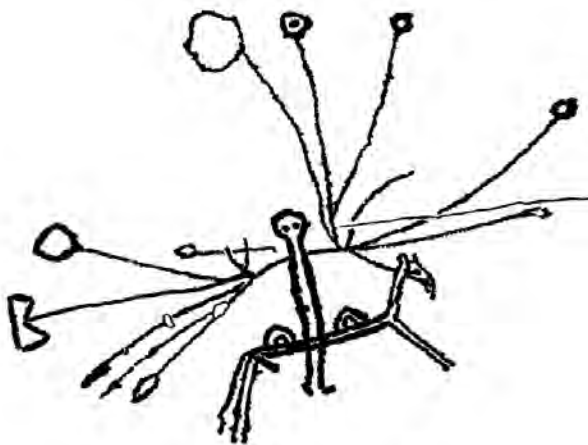


Figure 16. Horse rider with double axe, spears and other weapons (after Iliadis, 2007).



Figure 17. Horse rider with a feathered helmet spears and other weapons (photo I. Mailland).

and Portugal, the images of these warriors on horseback from Philippi seem to correspond to the representation of a true equestrian aristocracy, probably evoking, like J. I. Royo Guillen (2005) and V. Tirador Garcia (2011) mentioned regarding the Iberian Peninsula, the *heros equitans* – the hero horse rider – with the aim of justifying a mythical past and legitimate their social power.

Furthermore, in what concerns the Celtiberian area, these equestrian elites could even have used symbols to distinguish their members from the rest of society, as it seems to happen with the several bronze fibulae in the shape of horse and horse rider, which appear in that region (Coimbra, Oosterbeek, 2012).

In the NE of Greece, the Thracian horse rider had an unbreakable relation with his horse, going to battle as one unit, being the probable origin of the Hero-Horseman, his honourable death and after-life glory (Iliadis, in press).

It is not our intention to develop deeply the interpretation about the rock art from Philippi, but some cases deserve to be analysed:

One of them is a scene on Rock 3 from Prophet Elias, where it is possible to identify an abstract figure with body and arms in the shape of a “Y”, riding a horse intentionally depicted without head, next to another horse with a rectangular type

8. In Arxanes (Crete) a terracotta figurine of a horse rider with a large saddle was found, dated from about 1100-1000 BC, similar to other examples discovered in Anatolia and the Near East (Salimbeti, n/dated).

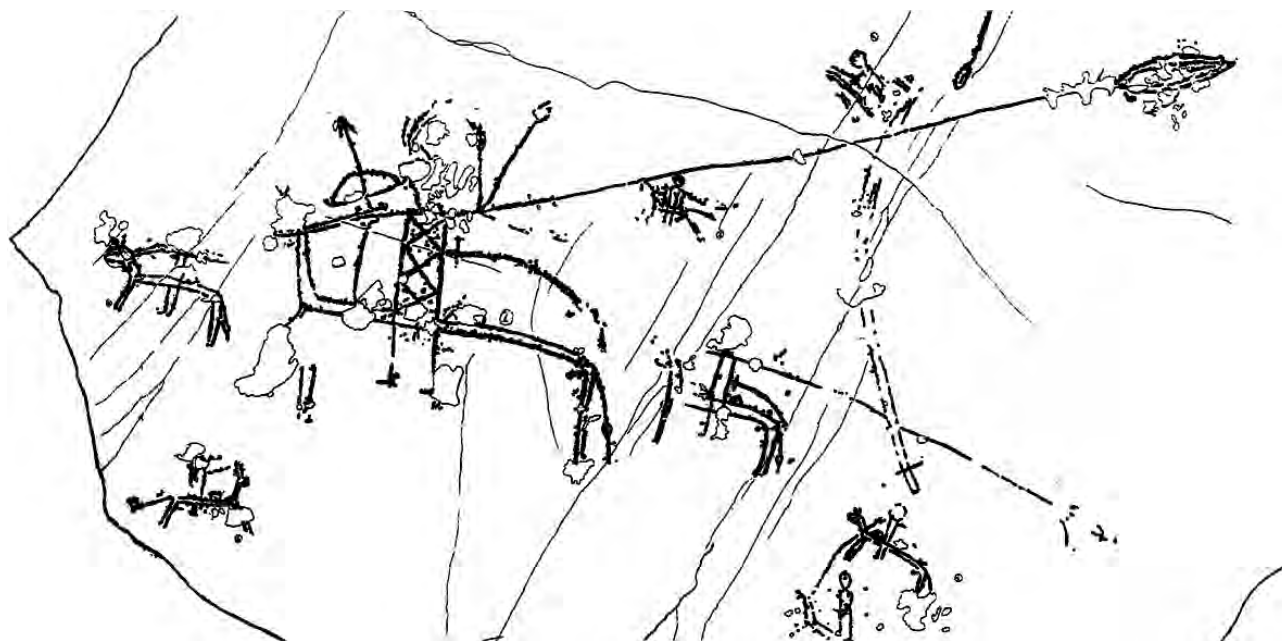


Figure 18. Horse rider with large spear, bow and arrow, other weapons and cuirass (after Iliadis, 2007).

saddle, associated with a shield and a bow with arrow (Fig. 20), constituting the depiction of the warrior's equipment, as it happens in some Late Bronze Age funerary stele from other regions. On previous articles we interpreted these engravings as a possible funerary scene (Coimbra *et al.*, 2011; Coimbra, 2013c), since the headless horse probably means that it's dead, having thus a psychopomp character (a guide of the souls in the afterlife), a value that's often attributed to this animal according to classical literature and archaeological evidence⁹.

Another case, also in Rock 3 from Prophet Elias, which is one of the most interesting examples



Figure 19. Axe from Rock 3 of Prophet Elias. Photo enhanced by software: F. Coimbra.

from Philippi, is the representation of a war scene: a warrior with an axe in his left hand is falling from a horse intentionally carved only with half of the body, since the two grooves which define the horse's body end on two small cup marks. Near the warrior's feet there's the depiction of a bow with an arrow. On the right side of these engravings another warrior, on horseback, shoots back an arrow in the direction of the previous horse rider, which is the reason of his fall. Between the half bodied horse and the second warrior there's the depiction of a palm branch, symbol of his victory (Coimbra, 2013c: Fig. 2).

We can't finish this short presentation about the rock art from Philippi without mentioning what we believe to be a rare horse hunting scene on Rock 3 from Mana, already published before (Coim-



Figure 20. Headless horse, ridden by a "Y" figure.

9. A developed discussion on this subject can be seen in Coimbra, 2013c

bra, Iliadis, 2011: Fig. 3). Indeed, many millennia after the Palaeolithic, people still used to hunt horses for their meat, as it happens, for example in the Botai culture from northern Kazakhstan during the IV millennium BC (Levine, 1999). In the same region, during Bronze Age, meat horse was eaten in mortuary rites (Outram *et al.*, 2012), happening the same situation at Atapuerca, after the information available at the Museum of Human Evolution, in Burgos. Furthermore, an unambiguous example of a horse hunting scene is depicted on a fresco from the Thracian tomb at Alexandrovo (Bulgaria), dated from the 4th century BC, in a region not far from Philippi, whose chronology is probably similar to the engravings carved on Rock 3 from Mana.

Regarding the whole complex of the rock art from Philippi, G. Dimitriadis (2008) argues that its chronological frame must be approached from a preliminary iconographic comparison study with the Bronze Age societies, when the commercial roots of the Mycenaean trade were well spread in Europe, connecting the North and the West with the South East of the Mediterranean.

Presently, despite the severe crises that have been striking Greece, the research at Philippi has been carried out by Georgios Iliadis, in the framework of his PhD project, which we hope that can come quickly to a successful end and that the results may be published in order to spread this important information among the scientific community.

FINAL STATEMENTS

In the sequence of what we wrote above, it's easy to understand that rock art is important for the archaeological and cultural information that it transmits and not only because of its beauty or antiquity. Thus, protohistoric rock art is not of less importance than the Palaeolithic cases, in the same sense that a small piece of pottery can contribute with more archaeological information than a precious golden jewel. For example, in Valcamonica, a site of recognized world significance, about 80% of the engravings are dated from Iron Age.

Some of the cases of protohistoric rock art presented in this article are real sources for the understanding of a period where writing wasn't yet known, allowing, for example, having some information about the symbolic ways of thought from the I millennium BC.

The structural similarity of some incised motifs allows even believe in the existence of cultural contacts between some distant regions of southern Europe, at least during Bronze Age and Iron Age, being an idea that makes more sense than the si-

multaneous creation, in each of those places, of figures such as scalariform, zigzag, net-patterns, pentagrams and others, which are found with a striking typological similarity in countries like Portugal, Spain, Andorra, France, Italy, Kosovo and Greece.

Indeed, archaeological evidence shows that contacts between the North of Italy and the south of the Iberian Peninsula occurred much earlier, during the III millennium BC, based on the discovery of fragments of pottery from Los Millares (Spain), which were found about five years ago in Liguria, according to drawings shown by Filippo Gambari, former Director of the *Soprintendenza Archeologica della Liguria* at the Conference "L'Arte Rupestre delle Alpi", held at Capo di Ponte in 2010. Furthermore, Neolithic axes from the V millennium BC, made of an Alpine greenstone were found thousands of kilometres away in Scotland

Finally, the rock art from the NE of Greece is a precious contribute for the understanding of the emergence of complex societies, which have similar characteristics in several countries from Southern Europe.

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