

Archaeology in the River Duero Valley

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Edited by

Jose Carlos Sastre Blanco,
Óscar Rodríguez-Monterrubio
and Patricia Fuentes Melgar

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Translation and proofreading coordinators:
Óscar Rodríguez-Monterrubio (orodmon@gmail.com)
Jose Carlos Sastre Blanco (josesastreb@hotmail.com)

Preliminary proofreading:

Sara Davies, *Chapter 1*

Miglar Chávez Solenova, *Chapter 2*

Katie Sullivan, *Chapters 3 and 4*

Anna Katherine Pinto Campos, *Chapter 4*

Miguel Sanz Jiménez, Julie Beven & Naomi Beven, *Chapter 5*

Sara Casamayor & Rodrigo Portero, *Chapter 6*

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Beatriz Martin Alonso, *Chapter 8*

Rachel D. Brewer & Eva González Miguel, *Chapter 10*

Nuria Tuda, *Chapter 11*

María Eugenia Franco Martínez & Iván García Vázquez, *Chapter 12*

Gregg MacIntosh: *Chapter 13*

Professional proofreading:

Sue Morecroft (suemorecroft@hotmail.co.uk)

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INTRODUCTION

Latest Archaeological researches in the Duero river valley (Iberian Peninsula mainland) have confirmed the existence of new settlements since prehistoric times to the medieval period. A step forward has been made with the use of new technologies and methodologies applied in fieldworks and laboratories during the last decade of investigations.

Duero river valley is located in the Iberian Peninsula mainland, at the central and north-western part of the Spanish and Portuguese geography. It is an enormous sedimentary basin drained by the river Duero and its tributaries, a basin which covers the geomorphological unit known as the *Meseta Norte* (Northern Plateau). Administratively it extends from the Spanish region of *Castilla y León* and the northern Portuguese regions of *Tras-Os-Montes*, *Alto Douro*, *Douro Litoral*, *Bieira Alta* y *Bieira Litoral*.

This volume is a compilation of papers written by archaeologists and researches who have been collaborating and contributing with the Scientific and Cultural Association *ZamoraProtohistorica* since 2011 when the first meeting of junior researchers of the Duero river valley took place in the city of Zamora, headquarters and seat of our organization. These last five years, the meeting of junior researchers has been celebrated in other cities within the limits of the valley such as León (2012), Salamanca (2013), Segovia (2014) and more recently Valladolid (2015). The main goal of these meetings is to find a common place for archaeologists and historians who develop their careers and investigations in the Duero region to share their discoveries.

The papers published here are among the most outstanding works concerning the ancient settlement of the Iberian Peninsula inland territories. They cover a large gap of time presenting a complete slide of the past in these regions in different periods of its existence: Neolithic, Chalcolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age, Romanization, Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages.

The authors give different perspectives of the most significant moments, outstanding artefacts, remarkable samples of art and relevant facts occurring in the region during the ancient times. As example of it, we can

outline the papers on the Schematic Rock Art, about the Megalithic monuments, focused on the prehistoric funerary rituals and burying customs, on the Iron Age fortifications, about the complex and diachronic phenomenon of the Romanization or the specific features of the Late Antiquity a period in a halfway between the classical world and the Medieval Age. It is important to mention the space reserved for the use of the new technologies in Archaeology.

Finally, with this collective work, we would like to contribute to widen what we knew about the Duero region, a territory between the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, a key land to understand social and cultural dynamics in the past. The last investigations provide us with a broader and more accurate point of view of the evolution of this important region.

The editors,
Patricia Fuentes, Óscar Rodríguez-Monterrubio & José Carlos Sastre
(Scientific and Cultural Association ZamoraProtohistórica)

PREHISTORY

CHAPTER ONE

SCHEMATIC ROCK ART IN THE CENTRAL AREA OF RIVER DUERO VALLEY, IN THE PROVINCES OF LEÓN, ZAMORA AND SALAMANCA

FELICIANO CADIerno GUERRA,
FRANCISCO JAVIER MOLINA HERNÁNDEZ
AND PATRICIA DE INÉS SUTIL¹

Abstract

The objective of this article is to provide a brief résumé of post-Palaeolithic rock art in the western area of the Castilla and León region. In the following paper, we will look at the main features of rock art in the provinces of León, Zamora and Salamanca.

We divide the treatment of rock art into the two main techniques used to realize it, painting and engraving. Other interesting aspects depicted in this paper include the environments in which the rock art appears. Each province has its own characteristics making the region rich in diverse rock art; however, the various sites also share similarities that reflect a common cultural base.

The chronology of schematic rock art is very difficult to establish. In this paper, we make approximations to create an orderly and objective framework for the rock art chronology in the study area.

¹ Patricia de Inés Sutil (Universidad de Salamanca): patriz_23@hotmail.com,
Feliciano Cadierno Guerra (Universidad de Valencia):
felicianocadierno@hotmail.es, Francisco Javier Molina Hernández
(Universidad de Alicante) jammonite@gmail.com.

We hope the brief contribution presented here will provide useful information to increase current knowledge about the schematic rock art of this region.

Key Words: Rock art, rock shelter, Neolithic, Bronze Age, engraving, paintings

1. Zamora and Salamanca

1.1. Introduction

The provinces of Zamora and Salamanca are in the west of the Castilla and León region in Spain. Zamora occupies an area of 10,561 square kilometres and Salamanca 12,350 square kilometres (see Figure 1.1).



Figure 1.1.

Study of the rock art in this area commenced with the research of Abbé H. Breuil and J. Cabré who made an expedition to Las Batuecas (Salamanca) in 1910 (see Figure 1.2). Here they observed a set of rock shelters with schematic art and prepared a publication of those representations (Breuil 1918 to 1919 and Cabré 1922). Other researchers, such as Morán (1933), contributed to the rock art research of this area in the first decades of the 20th century and in 1927 Gómez Moreno made the first description of Prehistoric Art in Zamora in his work on the El Pedroso engravings.



Figure 1.2.

1.2. Characteristics and Distribution

Schematic Rock Art (SRA) in the provinces of Zamora and Salamanca is made with simple lines, usually as thick as a finger, and is painted with the

technique of spot colour. The most common colour to be found is red, with ochre, black, white and yellow tones appearing only occasionally.

The main representations are bars and points, followed by anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figures, with a smaller proportion of tectiforms and solar-forms. In some cases, the figures demonstrate some naturalistic details; this is most often in the zoomorphic and anthropomorphic figures. Other common designs, usually made in rock shelters, are crosses, horseshoes, cups and geometric forms.

In the province of Salamanca there are over 60 SRA stations located in the south of the Central System. Among the most notable is the site of Las Batuecas (La Alberca), studied by J. Bécares (1974, 1991 and 1992). The Duero prehistory manifestations are far fewer; some examples of these are La Peña del Gato (Careceda de la Sierra), Bonete del Cura (Rodrigo City) and Pala Rubia (Pereña).

In the province of Zamora there are three cores of SRA (Sastre 2006). In the Sierra, de La Culebra exist two sites with schematic paintings, Covacha Portillón and Canchal Melendro, known as the Linarejos Group, and the engraving sites of El Pedroso (San Martín del Pedroso), Pedra Beneita (Nuez de Aliste) and Pedradas Ferraduras (San Ciprian de Hermisende). The next SRA core is in the western part of the same mountain system (in the valley of the river Esla). These sites include the rock shelter of El Castellón (Santa Eulalia de Tábara) and the Portalón (La Granja de Moreruela). Finally, there is the area of Sanabria-La Carballeda which has engraved representations made close to the hill fortress of Peñas de la Cerca (Rionegrito of Sanabria) and Peña Caceta (San Martín del Terroso).

In the northern Duero, the main areas can be distinguished by rock art made with various techniques and styles or depicting differing subject matter. In the south for example, the rock art appears to be related to watersheds. This has been attributed to a way of life based on pastoral livestock and the important control of natural paths which connect the different areas (Gomez-Barrera 2000, 505).

We are aware that supports may have been chosen per lithology or geomorphology and may appear in territories with abundant resources for human settlement. This point is developed in later sections.

1.3. Holders

Lithology is prominent in the choice of technique used to make rock art representations. Quartzite or limestone is used for painting because these materials offer suitable conditions (smooth substrate); and granite is used for engraving since it is a very hard igneous rock (Corchón et al. 1989, 15). In the province of Zamora for example, schematic representations are realized on Armorican quartzite, where engravings are made on granitic batholith (see Figure 1.3). In Salamanca, however this relationship is not as uniform (see Figure 1.4) as schematic paintings can be found on Hercynian Granite in Pala Rubia (Pereña) (Bécares 1991, 71) and in Siega Verde slates are used as support for engravings.

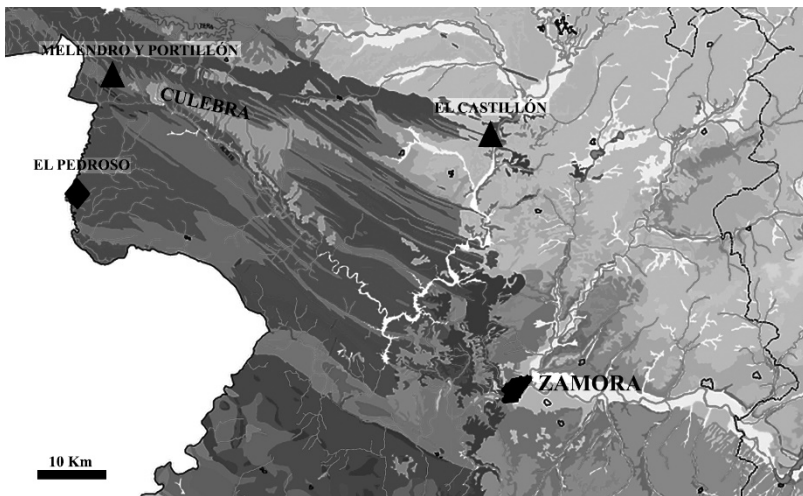


Figure 1.3.

It is important to note that plutonic igneous rocks are more abundant than quartzite in this region and there is therefore an unequal relationship between support and technique. This is perhaps manifested in the predominant use of quartzite supports for pictorial manifestations, although it is not clear whether this relationship is due to a preference for this type of rock over others. Indeed, other factors such as geomorphology may also have an influence.

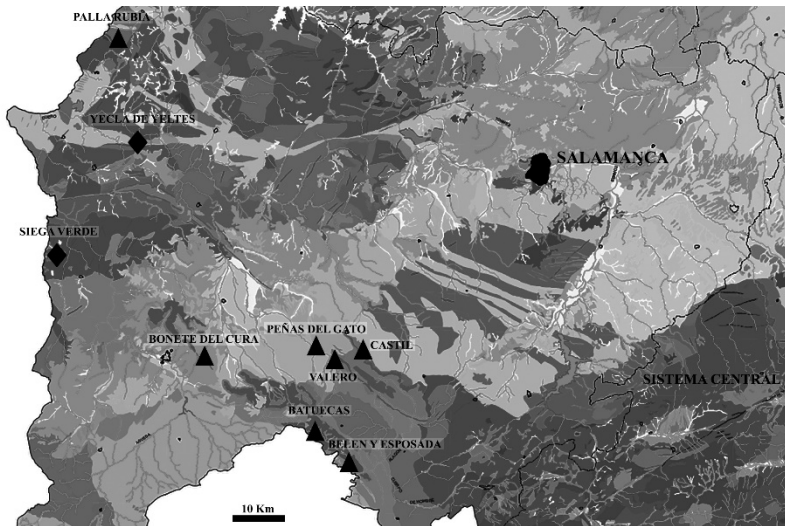


Figure 1.4.

1.4. Relationship between Schematic Rock Art and the Archaeological Record

Considering the chronological data of the principal investigators of the ARE in the plateau (Esparza 1990, 137; Delibes 2000-2001, 299 and Gómez-Barrera 2000, 374-375), we can date the first stage of rock art in Zamora and Salamanca within a broad window, spanning from the Final Neolithic to the Middle Bronze Ages. Three further divisions can also be established following A. Bellido Blanco (2004) and I. García Martínez-de-Lagran (2011), these are the Chalcolithic/pre-Bell Beaker; the Bell-Bronze Age and Middle Bronze to Early Iron Age.

The SRA stations in the Chalcolithic phase could comprise designs in the anthropomorphic naturalistic style. Some of these have decorations on their heads and are zoomorphic without a high degree of schematization. Other representations possibly to be included in this first period are solar-forms, curved lines and three-forms. Indeed, some of these representations served to legitimize a Chalcolithic dating for Batuecas (Gómez-Barrera 1993) and furthermore, the representations in El Pedroso (Esparza 1977) which are attributed to the same chronology are very close to the Chalcolithic village bearing the same name.

In the Bell-Bronze Age the SRA has been aligned mostly with agricultural resources. In this period the engravings associated with the megalithic phenomenon, both outdoors and in the megaliths of the dolmens (Balbín and Bueno 2000 and Gómez-Barrera 2004), are more relevant than painted representations. In this period, we can see a progressive distancing between stations with SRA and inhabited areas. In the first Bronze Age, there is evidence of settlements growing whilst maintaining the same pattern of spatial distribution: an outdoor habitat in areas with potentially exploitable land next to rivers and possibly also other naturally occurring resources such as in the case of salt in the area nearby Villafáfila. It is possible that the anthropomorphic idols, eye idols and zoomorphic figures with marked schematization correspond with this second phase.

Finally, the Middle Bronze-Iron Age shows the same dynamic as the Bell-Bronze Age; albeit with a greater distance between areas with SRA and settlements along the rivers. During this period, the rock art representations made by engraving can only be found in outdoor sites. This aspect of engravings mirrors the previous stage but with the incorporation of new kinds of representations. In these SRA engravings the main themes consist of anthropomorphic figures, cruciform, horseshoes, cups and geometric lines. In our region of study few sites have been documented that can be clearly attributed to this period; these include Yecla de Yeltes (Martín 1973 and 1983) which is associated with a proto-historic hill fortress and other stations in the area of Sanabria.

1.5. Conclusions

It is difficult to make a diachronic study of the SRA of this region due to the fact that permanence and overlap exist in the various motives and techniques utilized in their realization. Some kinds of representation may have their origins in the Early Neolithic period such as the solar-forms, anthropomorphic figures and zoomorphic figures with a trend towards naturalism. Other motifs appear towards the end of this period, such as the eye idols of Risco de los Altares (Batuecas) for which we have clear parallels in the small sculptures of Vaso de los Paradores (Castrogonzalo) (Delibes 2006, 81).

In the final stages of Prehistory and Early History we have new kinds of representations such as weapons and different signs. At the current time, we have only a slight understanding of the evolution of the SRA on the plateau, although knowledge of the rock art in this region has increased in recent years due to the discovery of new information in archaeological

finds and the use of new techniques in documenting SRA in rock shelters and in megalithic monuments.

2. León

2.1. Introduction

The province of León is in the north-west of Castilla and León. León is the seventh largest province of Spain in terms of landmass at 15,581 square kilometres. At its limits are: Asturias in the north, Valladolid and Palencia in the east and south-east, Zamora in the south and Galicia in the west (see Figure 1.5).



Figure 1.5.

Geographically, León is a region of great contrast between mountains and the flat surface of a plateau. The western part of the province consists of the region of El Bierzo which is composed of a central depression surrounded by mountains. Most of the mountain range exceeds a height of 2000 metres above sea level. Although geographically this region does not belong to the Duero basin but the Miño-Sil basin, it is included in this paper because it falls under the administration of the Castile and León region. It is also included in this paper because 90% of all the rock art in the province of León is in this area.

The Rock art of León is like that of the neighbouring regions. Anthropomorphic figures with paint omitted from the centre of the head are characteristic of rock art found in Peña Piñera (Sésamo) and are also

evident in the cave of San García (Santo Domingo de Silos) and the "cave do demo" in Boal (Asturias). It is also important to mention the idol of Tabuyo, like that of Peña Tú (Asturias) or the idol of Outeiro do Corno (La Coruña), and the vast quantity of cups that are so common in the Iberian Peninsula. The rock art in the province of León has a post-Palaeolithic chronology with no sign of Palaeolithic rock art. We can divide it into two large groups according to the techniques used in making it: the painting technique and the engraving technique.

2.2. Paintings

In the province of León, we have 10 rock shelters spread over five sites. In total, there are currently 1,377 prehistoric painted motifs catalogued which are scattered over different sites. Half of them are concentrated in the large site of Peña Piñera. The sites with cave paintings are: Peña Piñera (Sesamo), Boudela las Peñas (Fabero del Bierzo), San Pedro Mallo (Toreno del Bierzo), Librán (Toreno del Bierzo), and Castrocontrigo.

2.2.1. Peña Piñera (Sesamo)

The site of Peña Piñera is the only one with a published monograph (Gutiérrez and Avello 1986). Peña Piñera is a large rocky cliff composed of quartzite and is approximately 900 metres long and 15-20 metres high. The cliff is oriented to the NE and SW, with a height ranging from 650-1,075 metres above sea level. This large, rocky cliff is in a position of control over the territory due to its great visibility across the adjacent area. In total, there are 698 rock paintings here, distributed in different groups which can be divided into panels and figures.

We have catalogued several new figures in the known groups as well as three new groups with different pictorial panels. This raises the total number of paintings from 351 to 698. This increase has been possible thanks to the use of various computerized analytical tools used for modifying digital photographs which have allowed us to view pictorial remains that are invisible to the human eye (see Figure 1.6).

Through this technology, we can also see that overlays are very common as are instances of repainting. This reveals the very long period in which humans have occupied and used this site (Gutiérrez and Avello 1986 and Cadierno 2015).

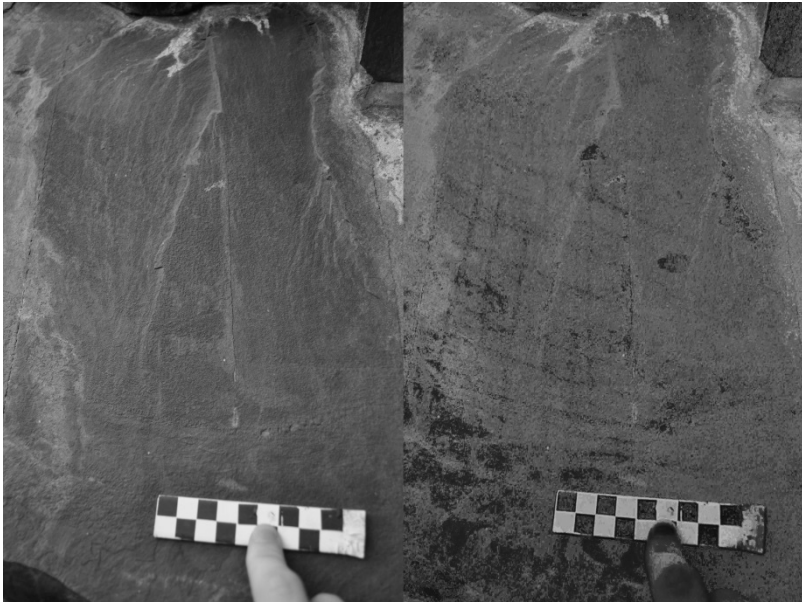


Figure 1.6.

2.2.2. Boudela las Penas (Fabero del Bierzo)

The site of Boudela is a small rock shelter at the bottom of a deep valley, next to the river Cúa. This rock shelter can only be reached by surmounting steep slopes and ravines. The conservation status of more than 140 figures is, in general, very good.

The paintings can be found on the outer wall as well as on an internal panel. The most common type of figure is anthropomorphic with the arms held in a handle position (see Figure 1.7). Here we can also find a kind of eye idol made up of small points.

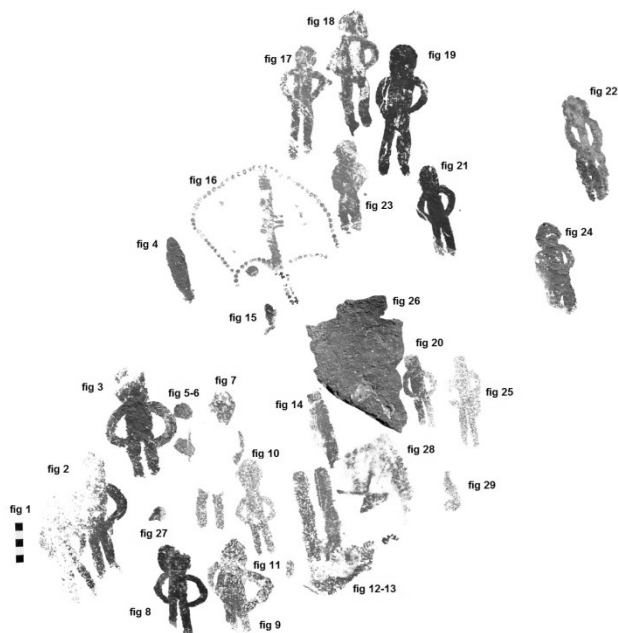


Figure 1.7.

2.2.3. San Pedro Mallo (Toreno del Bierzo)

In the village of San Pedro Mallo, there are three rock shelters with prehistoric representations. Generally, the paintings found here are few and in poor condition. Only one of the rock shelters has been the subject of scientific research. The sites are all on the same side of the mountain, and on the opposite side, in the nearby town of Librán (Toreno del Bierzo), different representations can be found. Some of these paintings have been included in a brief published article (San Román 2006).

2.2.4. Librán (Toreno del Bierzo)

In the Canyon of the Primout River, a tributary of the Sil, there are four rock shelters with cave paintings. The canyon is eroded between quartzite rocks and the vertical walls and numerous caves were used by prehistoric

men to realize their paintings. Some of these representations have been published (San Román 2006).

In total there are 211 paintings, the most important being the archers of princes and the solar-form of Buracón de los Moros.

2.2.5. Castrocontrigo

The Castrocontrigo cave paintings are situated in two sites, separated by 200 metres. These sites have a large visual capacity including good views of the upland areas. The first rock shelter contains four anthropomorphic figures, including one with a cane. There are also two finger prints. The condition of the figures is very poor.

The second site has 10 paintings, featuring a solar-form and a small-horned anthropomorphic figure. The current state of these figures is, again, poor and computer software has had to be used to view the paintings.

2.3. Engravings

There is only one engraving site which has been featured in a scientific publication. This is the site of Peña Fadiel and Peña Ferrada (Corton et al. 2011). There have been a dozen sites with cups and linear engravings discovered by amateur archaeologists who should be commended for doing such work and publishing their findings. We count on two examples of engravings in the area of León: Peña Fadiel in Lucillo and Los Ancares.

2.3.1. Peña Fadiel (Lucillo)

Of all the engraving sites in this region the site of Peña Fadiel is the most important, due to the volume and quality of its rock art. The site was discovered in 2008 by Juan Carlos Campos, a plumber by profession with a passion for archaeology. In the last eight years Carlos has undoubtedly made a great contribution to archaeological research in the region of León. The site of Peña Fadiel contains five labyrinths and hundreds of cups and grooves forming groupings and alignments (see Figure 1.8). The engravings are on two horizontal rocks in an area with high visibility and panoramic views, directly facing the Teleno peak, the highest peak in the Montes de León range, with an elevation of 2188 metres above sea level.



Figure 1.8.

2.3.2. Petroglyph from Los Ancares Leoneses

In the Eastern area of Los Ancares (in the province of León), sites are important as far as their abundance is concerned. These sites comprise seven groups on seven different peaks and we owe the research of these sites to another amateur archaeologist, José Anglés, a native of Fabero del Bierzo. The petroglyphs here are located at the highest elevation of anywhere in northern Spain, more than 1800 metres above sea level, with the Cuiña peak at the summit. Generally, the seven sites are in *brañas* (like meadows, zones with abundant water and traditionally used by shepherds in the summer as fresh pastures for their flocks).

The representations are reduced to cups and grooves, but exist in great abundance, sometimes shown in alignments and groupings.

With regard to chronology, the representations must be placed in the long period between the Neolithic and the Bronze Age because this is a time when such representations proliferated. It seems that there may also be an element of symbolic appropriation of the landscape entailed in these portrayals.

The other representations made by the technique of engraving in the province of León lack the spectacular labyrinths seen elsewhere. Almost all the sites contain cups and grooves, except Castro Colorado (Valderrey), where representations consist of anthropomorphic figures from the Iron Age.

2.4. Conclusions

The coexistence in northwestern Spain of schematic paintings and the famous Galician petroglyphs is hotly contested. With regard to the distribution of petroglyphs, a line of distribution tends to be drawn outside of which there is no schematic cave painting. Thanks to new discoveries, such as the appearance of the petroglyphs of the Maragatería region, clearly related to the Galician ones, with labyrinths, crosses and cups, this paradigm cannot be the rule. The existence of paint on some Galician dolmens like Dombate, suggests that it is only a matter of time before rock shelters with schematic paintings are found in the traditional area of Galician petroglyph distribution.

Currently, we have 1377 schematic paintings in the province of León, but more than half of these are concentrated in the site of Sesame, with Vega de Espinareda containing 698 paintings. The rest are no more than half of the hundred at Librán, or the deposits of San Pedro Mallo and Castrocontrigo with fewer representations, and with not even a maximum of 10 in any one of those groups. The example of Boudela Sorrows can be taken as a case in point, where slightly more than one hundred representations can be found.

It must also be pointed out that there are hundreds of cups and linear prints distributed throughout the province of León which are very difficult to date. Although it seems that many of them are prehistoric there is also the possibility that this rock art is from the Iron Age or is proto-historic (Royo Guillén 2009).

The wide dispersion of paintings and engravings is not accompanied, so far, with the same dispersion of habitat sites of the Neolithic period and Bronze Age, although there are hundreds of settlements from the Iron Age and this could explain the diversity of sites recorded. The only archaeological site in the León region studied with a timeline that fits the rock art is the cave of the Las Tres Ventanas (Torale de los Vados), with a chronology of the final transition to the Neolithic Chalcolithic (Fernández

Manzano et al. 1999), in which the pottery has triangular and linear decorations.

The main uses of the rock art sites could be multiple; perhaps they were used as places of worship, assembly and social cohesion or as indicators of passing. Perhaps even all these reasons at once.

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