

Rock art of the Mediterranean basin on the Iberian Peninsula. From El Cogul to Kyoto

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ABSTRACT

Roca dels Moros in El Cogul is the first set of prehistoric paintings documented in Catalonia, and since its discovery in 1908 it has been a referent in prehistoric art on the Iberian Peninsula. Its existence garnered international attention on par with the bison of Altamira. The history of Roca dels Moros in El Cogul is the history of prehistoric rock art on the eastern side of the Iberian Peninsula.

Based on this site, this article is a synthesis of the results of a study on the post-Palaeolithic rock art of the Mediterranean basin on the Iberian Peninsula for over 100 years, along with a discussion of the public administrations' efforts to further the conservation and protection of this kind of archaeological site. These efforts have earned the rock art of the Mediterranean basin on the Iberian Peninsula a place on UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites.

Keywords: rock painting, rock art, Levantine art, schematic art, macroschematic art, engravings, Epipalaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic, Copper Age, Chalcolithic, management, inventory, World Heritage Site, UNESCO

“Even if one knows very little about archaeological studies, one can immediately guess that the composition described above belongs to a distant period and a rudimentary civilisation, if you will, almost totally unknown to us... But we can note the paintings in El Cogul as a beacon in the proto-history of Catalonia.”

Ceferí ROCAFORT¹

In 1908, an exceptional rock art site was discovered in Lleida. Ninety years later, UNESCO added the rock art of the Mediterranean basin on the Iberian Peninsula to its list of World Heritage Sites, which includes 757 sites with paintings in caves, shelters, grottoes, cliffs and isolated rocks in what are today the autonomous communities of Andalusia, Aragon, Catalonia, Castilla-La Mancha, Murcia and Valencia.

Traditionally, the earliest information on the existence of artistic expressions in this broad region was believed to date from 1868. That year, M. de Góngora reproduced the paintings from Cueva de los Letreros (Vélez-Rubio, Almería), along with their counterparts in Fuencaliente in Ciudad Real, which he identified as “an entirely new and unknown prehistoric script”.² Nonetheless, the first discovery actually occurred in Catalonia, even though it would take years for it to be properly assessed, as it was also mistakenly thought to be a kind of script.³ Indeed, a report that Fèlix Torres Amat forwarded to the Royal Academy of History in 1830 notes the existence of engravings, accompanied by drawings, “around 200 steps from the Llord estate on a cliff at the base of the mountain near Lladre Valley”.⁴ Years later, these engravings would be cited and reproduced in an inverted position by E. Hübnér in his work *Monumenta linguae ibericae*, stressing the resemblance of these drawings, which were still considered engravings, with the painted motifs in Fuencaliente. In 1909, M. Gómez Moreno concurred, stating that “they express simple concepts, coordinated or not, but in no way words much less sounds”. The manuscript by Torres Amat, on deposit at the Royal Academy of History, was consulted by S. Vilaseca. He then located these supposed engravings and saw that they were paintings; he traced them and described them in thorough detail.⁵ This is the

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Figure 1. El Portell de les Lletres (Montblanc, Tarragona).

set of rock paintings currently known as El Portell de les Lletres (Montblanc, Tarragona).

Given the above, we can state that Roca dels Moros in El Cogul is the first rock painting site recorded in Catalonia. It became a referent in prehistoric art on the Iberian Peninsula as soon as it was discovered in 1908, comparable to the fame attained by the bison of Altamira. The history of Roca dels Moros in El Cogul is the history of prehistoric rock art on the eastern side of the Iberian Peninsula. The opinions on its iconography, chronology, conservation and dissemination have guided the pathway of research into post-Palaeolithic rock art for over 100 years. Today, with almost 100 rock art sites in Catalonia, El Cogul still retains its hegemony in the literature on this topic.

EL COGUL, PARADIGM OF POST-PALAEOLITHIC ROCK ART ON THE IBERIAN PENINSULA

The presence of human and animal figures in the styles currently called Levantine art and schematic art have been found at Roca dels Moros in El Cogul alongside Iberian and Roman inscriptions. Levantine art is characterised by its naturalism and the accurate execution of its motifs, and animal and human figures predominate, sometimes isolated and sometimes joined to form scenes with varied con-

tent. In schematic art, however, animal and human figures are reduced to their basic lines – simple outlines to indicate the head, trunk and limbs – while abstract motifs abound. Technical differences can also be noted, since the well-defined outlines in Levantine painting contrast with the irregular and almost vague – squiggly – lines of schematic art. Subsequent discoveries have enabled us to identify diverse historic horizons painted or engraved on the eastern face of the Iberian Peninsula. The current record includes around 1,500 sites, many of them unreported or only partially reported. The presence of Iberian and Roman characters and their distribution on the stone necessarily imply that their authors were aware of – and respected – the existence of the previous paintings. Roca dels Moros in El Cogul is unquestionably the paradigm of what are today considered shared sanctuaries.

The different sketches also reflect the evolution in the techniques employed to reproduce prehistoric rock art. The earliest copies were made freehand and tended to select certain motifs. The earliest one was made by Ceferí Rocafort and Juli Soler using two colours in the lithograph published in the *Butlletí del Centre Excursionista de Catalunya*. This was a novelty in the art that had just been discovered, as was the differing intensity in the way some of the motifs were filled in or the lightness in the superimposition of two caprids. The same year, H. Breuil published a new sketch rendered by Luis Izquierdo, also in two colours. There are countless differences between both sketches, since Breuil's includes new images and scenes, corrects the size and proportions and pinpoints the location. In a later sketch, some of the figures were modified with the goal of supporting his chronological proposal of Levantine art.⁶ However, his drawings are “more graceful, more skilfully rendered, where you can see the artist's hand of this prehistorian, yet no more real”.⁷ Likewise, the custom of dividing the painted frieze into panels was introduced, which enabled certain details to be more accurately portrayed. In the sketch by J. Cabré, black and red are also used arbitrarily, the superimpositions are clearly indicated and changes are introduced into the shape and position of some of the figures.⁸ A new copy rendered by F. Font under the supervision of J. Colominas and P. Bosch Gimpera concludes a stage in the reproductions of El Cogul, all of them of vast patrimonial and historiographic interest, even though they also display major shortcomings. In all of these sketches – faithful testimonies to an epoch – certain motifs are ignored, perhaps intentionally, such as the Iberian and Latin inscriptions, and some figures are modified to support the different chronologies posited.

The study by M. Almagro Basch signalled a major shift from the earlier tradition. In addition to a general sketch, reproduced in a good size on a fold-out sheet, it includes two plates: men and cattle from the left of the frieze and the so-called phallic dance. These colour images have been deemed highly flawed and assessed as extremely poor reproductions by some authors,⁹ an opinion which we do not share given that they are the best sketches from that

period. Almagro introduces yet another new development which would take several years to become widespread: identifying each motif with a number in order to facilitate their description.

Three decades had to elapse to before we gained a new vision of the site. In 1985, the Archaeology Service of the Generalitat de Catalunya, as part of the Corpus of Rock Paintings of Catalonia project directed by J. Castells, assigned the team made up of A. Alonso, E. Sarrià and R. Viñas to exhaustively document the paintings and produce new sketches on a 1:1 scale. The critical revision of the existing sketches and the new documentation produced resulted in an entire series of corrections and the discovery of numerous motifs, most of them engraved, that had been unknown until then. All told, 42 painted figures and 260 engravings on rock were tallied. The new developments from this project include superimpositions and repaintings (red over black), a new interpretation of the animal species portrayed, details that were more deeply studied (lyriform cattle horns, accessories worn or carried by some of the women, including pendants and wands, and finally confirmation that the depiction of the eland antelope, according to H. Breuil, is actually a cervid, and that the controversial figure of the bison is more likely a wild boar) and new painted figures. This new image of El Cogul published in 1987 for the first time was widely disseminated as it joined a travelling exhibition organised upon the inclusion of the rock paintings in the list of World Heritage Sites and the publication of a colour poster to commemorate the centennial of its discovery.¹⁰

Perhaps like no other site, El Cogul reflects the deterioration of our rock paintings as well as the concern for their conservation and dissemination. From the very time it was discovered, the emphasis has been on the difficulty of seeing

the images, and water and a cloth were often used to moisten and rub the wall to revive the colours of the paintings, which barely stand out because of the roughness and tone of the rock.¹¹ Likewise, we can note an early concern with conserving these paintings. Indeed, after the news of their discovery spread, the Institut d'Estudis Catalans charged C. Rocafort, L. M. Vidal and J. Soler with not only performing any work they deemed necessary but also studying the measures needed to "preserve them from all danger of destruction". There were also attempts to buy the cave, and a stone wall with a gate was built to protect the paintings.

Despite the years that have elapsed since their discovery, the rock paintings in Roca dels Moros in El Cogul have never been cleaned or been subjected to any direct conservation intervention. Within the aforementioned Corpus of Rock Paintings of Catalonia project, the Archaeology Service of the Generalitat de Catalunya undertook and commissioned numerous studies on the state of conservation of the paintings and their alterations, and it also drew up an action protocol.¹² In September 2008, a campaign to clean and recover the interpretation of the painted panel got underway as part of the overarching project being conducted by the interpretation centre. Today, this vast enterprise – which included a change in the route of the pathway from Albagés to El Cogul, a study of the danger of flooding, an executive building plan, the expropriation of lands and the enclosure project – has come to an end and the only job left pending is the finalisation of the museographic project assigned to the Archaeology Museum of Catalonia.

Because of the novelty of direct intervention on a painted panel, we shall briefly discuss the project performed by Eudald Guillaumet with the assistance of Laura Ballester.

Based on its documentation in 1985, the Archaeology Service of the Generalitat de Catalunya determined the

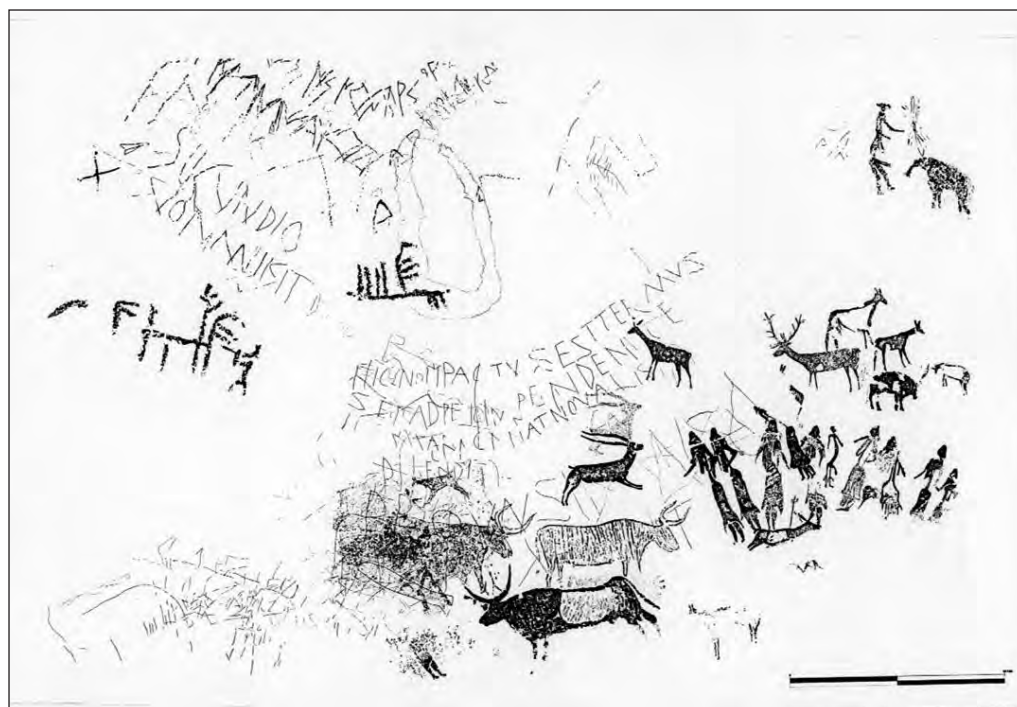


Figure 2. Sketch of the paintings in Roca dels Moros (El Cogul) made by the Corpus of Rock Paintings of Catalonia (1985).

need to perform a cleaning intervention – and consolidation or restoration, if necessary – at the site in order to improve the readability of the painted panel. The sound condition of the rock underlying the paintings and the experiences at similar sites (in Catalonia and at Valltorta in Castellón de la Plana, just to cite examples from the Mediterranean Levant), which were also difficult to see because of dirt yet where the results of cleaning were quite effective, led the administration to be certain about the success of the intervention, and the Archaeology Service commissioned tests to evaluate the possibility of eliminating the film of dirt in order to conserve the paintings. The surface deposit that conceals them is a factor in the development of microorganisms which may interact with the rock and trigger geobiological reactions, with the consequent pathologies that alter the surface. Likewise, experience demonstrated that cleaning always brings to light new elements in the archaeological study of rock paintings, including new figures, additional lines and the determination of painting techniques.

A core criterion always used in this kind of cleaning operation is minimal intervention. Action is only taken when it can be done without putting either the paintings or their supporting material at risk. The goal is to respect the original materials and their evolution over time while simultaneously restoring the aesthetic unity of the whole.

In the case of El Cogul, the cleaning tests performed in 2000 demonstrated that the film of dirt was totally soluble and that the paintings were solidly attached via the natural evolution of the rock. In 2008, the zones that had been cleaned showed no variations. All of these factors led to the 2008 cleaning operation aimed at recovering all the paintings. The result, as can be seen, far outstripped the original expectations. The paintings are once again visible and have totally gotten back their usual aesthetic interpretation without falsified effects via the application of water and computer processing of the image, which can make it visible but can never reproduce the natural tone of the paintings and the value of seeing them in their original setting.

The turn-off from the motorway, the redesign of the fences and the construction of the new interpretation centre will help to conserve the site and ensure that it can be properly disseminated.

Summarising the initial diagnosis, the paintings revealed the consequences of having been moistened, cleaned and rubbed with all sorts of liquids since their discovery, which led to the formation of a film of dirt that ended up totally covering them. However, there were no signs of major acts of vandalism, with the exception of several blows to the black goat, two of the female figures and the red deer in the same zone. The alterations mainly concentrated on the ceiling and south side of the aperture, while the zone containing the paintings showed no major modifications. In the fissures in the dance scene, water leakage had caused slight crystallisations of carbonates on the edges. On the peak and in the area above the schematic paintings, biological action had formed a black crust and flakes.

The methodology used in the intervention on the rock paintings in El Cogul matched what had been used in other similar shelters. The film of dirt that covered the paintings was eliminated while avoiding any changes in the morphological characteristics of the rock: using soft brushes, the surface dust was eliminated, which was turned into solution by applying bottled water with low salt concentrations using absorbent paper compresses. The insoluble salts, especially carbonates, made by precipitation on the edges of the fissures in the dance scene, led to a light white film that was not removed, since it is insoluble in water and deeply incrustated in the rock.

The result of this operation was wholly satisfactory: the cleaning intervention restored the visibility of the entire painting and the natural tones of both the rock and the pigments. Cleaning the figures of the goats and the pair of dark-coloured women on the left side of the dance revealed a series of minor manmade blows hidden under the dirt. The white tone of the exposed rock under these blows had led to an alteration in the accurate aesthetic interpretation of the figures. In order to attenuate this effect, the white points were lightly retouched with watercolour, bringing them closer to the patina around them. This intervention is not only completely reversible; it was also limited to the zones that had been altered and never reached the level of the painting or the patina.

EL COGUL AND LEVANTINE ART

El Cogul provided exceptional information on the techniques used to execute Levantine art, which is traditionally related to painting and here uses different tones of red and black. The engraving was extraordinary, and there were even doubts as to its existence.

J. Cabré called attention to the fine engravings that outlined some of the painted figures, just as they did in Calapatà. In addition to sharing J. Cabré's proposal, M. Almagro also noted the presence of new depictions of animals made with fine-lined engravings, the reason why "the ancient age is indisputable". A. Alonso and G. Grimal did not include these zoomorphic engravings, but they did note the presence of "many incisions of uncertain age, but clearly after the fact". The discovery of the engravings regarded as Levantine in Barranc Fondo (Castellot, Teruel) along with various sites with fine engravings in Castellón which are believed to date from the late Palaeolithic, some of which are reminiscent of the zoomorphic illustrations published by M. Almagro Basch, led to a necessary revision of their counterparts in El Cogul.¹³

In the study of Levantine art, a centuries-old "constant and routine" has been noted whose roots lie in the iconographic interpretation of the images. On this point, too, El Cogul is an exceptional referent. The different interpretations of some of the motifs conditioned the initial dates set forth. This is the case of the presence of a bison, an elk and two caprids whose knotted horns and antlers identified them

as *Ibex alpinus*. Based on these supposed images, H. Breuil dated the Levantine art from the Palaeolithic. In his first reproduction, the zoomorph that he describes as an elk can be identified as a deer, and the supposed bison resembled a bull, although in the article in *Anthropologie* he changed the sketch to make it resemble a bison. This identification, which H. Breuil always upheld, is rejected by all the researchers that consider it a bull or a boar, albeit not without reservations of their own. On the other hand, L. M. Vidal states that the shape of the caprids' horns could be explained by the ruggedness of the rock. Based on the study by M. Almagro, the presence of these cold-weather animals in Levantine art was discarded, just as E. Hernández Pacheco had done in his monograph on Les Coves de l'Aranya (1924), even though some authors such as Blanc, insist that "les Elans, le Chamois, le Saiga et les Bisons de Cogul sont certains".¹⁴

In the study of the contexts to support the chronological proposals, El Cogul would once again embark upon a pathway that would reach today. Indeed, Ramon Huguet, the rector of El Cogul and the person to discover the paintings, collected numerous flint tools near the shelter which he showed to the earliest visitors. At first, they were identified as being from Magdalenian or Upper Capsian culture, based on three half-moons that, though lost today, were sketched years later by J. Colominas and P. Bosch Gimpera. They also collected other pieces near El Cogul, some of which are considered Neolithic and are comparable to the ones collected in the caves and plateaus of El Barranc de la Valltorta. The suggestion of a Palaeolithic date for the stone industries recorded near the caves was later echoed by H. Breuil for other sites, including Cantos de la Visera (Yecla, Murcia), where he noted the presence of Solutrean blades, and Mola Remigia (Ares del Maestrat, Castellón de la Plana). However, H. Breuil also collected ceramic shards at the excavations he performed at the latter site. M. Almagro retrieved the materials from El Cogul that had been deposited at the Archaeology Museum of Barcelona and concluded that they dated from the Mesolithic. The makers had been "hunters whose lifestyle lasted for a long time, even when other peoples developed Neolithic culture". F. J. Fortea wholeheartedly discarded the relationship of these localised industries near the painted shelters with the Palaeolithic and insisted instead upon their dating from the Neolithic and primarily the Eneolithic and the Bronze Age. With regard to El Cogul, its materials are considered "common in the late Epipalaeolithic era in a largely ceramic period".¹⁵

With regard to the iconographic and iconological interpretation of Levantine art, a question that is difficult to tackle, El Cogul has become a benchmark in the repeated reproduction of some of its images and scenes. In a preliminary analysis, we should note that no archers have been found at El Cogul, with the exception of schematic motifs, nor the wild animals which were traditionally used to associate Levantine art with hunters from the Epipalaeolithic/Mesolithic or with peoples evolving towards the Neolithic. The women's gowns, which suggest the presence of fab-

ric, and the arm-rings which they seem to wear refer to Neolithic or later times, in F. Jordà's opinion.

The most famous images from El Cogul come from a "scene" made up of diverse depictions of women and one nude man. This is a characteristic accumulative scene in which, as M. Almagro noted, the women are portrayed – and were painted – in pairs, avoiding superimpositions. F. Jordà also stressed the execution process, noting the existence of two scenes: one reflects bullfighting while the other, made up of four pairs of women around the figure of the ithyphallic man, illustrates a celebration in honour of the fertility spirit.¹⁶ The different "interpretations" of the process of constructing the scene and the remaining images in the shelter should drive a profound revision of the site as a whole using the methodology proven valid at other sites. The intriguing proposal set forth by M. Almagro can unquestionably be improved upon, despite its importance. With regard to the scene's meaning, H. Breuil identified it as depicting the social life in those ancient times, and he related it to a dance of women around a man, similar to the dances performed by other primitive peoples. In contrast, in their study on the garments in Alpera and El Cogul, I. del Pa and P. Wernet claimed that it is the tribe's tribute to a prominent male. J. de Morgan echoed the theme of the women's dance, which he believed evokes the worship of Priapus. At the same time, he related the females depicted with the Cretans, which led him to reject the Palaeolithic dating that prevailed at that time and instead situate these paintings from El Cogul in the Neolithic or even later. This date was defended by F. Jordà.

EL COGUL AND SCHEMATIC ART

Schematic art is exceptionally well represented in El Cogul. Despite the small number of images, they are all of extraordinary interest in the record of this artistic expression that is so widely distributed around the Iberian Peninsula. However, it is not the only site in Catalonia with this kind of representation, as ever since the pioneering discovery of the site now known as Portell de les Lletres, many others have been found that document schematic motifs. The two volumes of the *Corpus de pintures rupestres* published by the Generalitat de Catalunya, as well as a few synthesis articles – from the classic ones by S. Vilaseca to the more recent ones by A. Alonso, A. Grimal, E. Sarrià and R. Vinyes, among others – all testify to the importance of these sites and the diversity of their motifs.

Similar to the earliest discoveries in the southern Iberian Peninsula – Cueva de los Letreros and Fuencaliente – these images in El Cogul are associated with hieroglyphics or ancient scripts, and popular tradition thus links them to the rock paintings with hieroglyphic inscriptions, which might be Iberian. In the case of El Cogul, it should be borne in mind that the presence of Iberian and Roman inscriptions likely exerted a major influence on the early explanations of the site. Despite this, from the start H. Breuil referred to

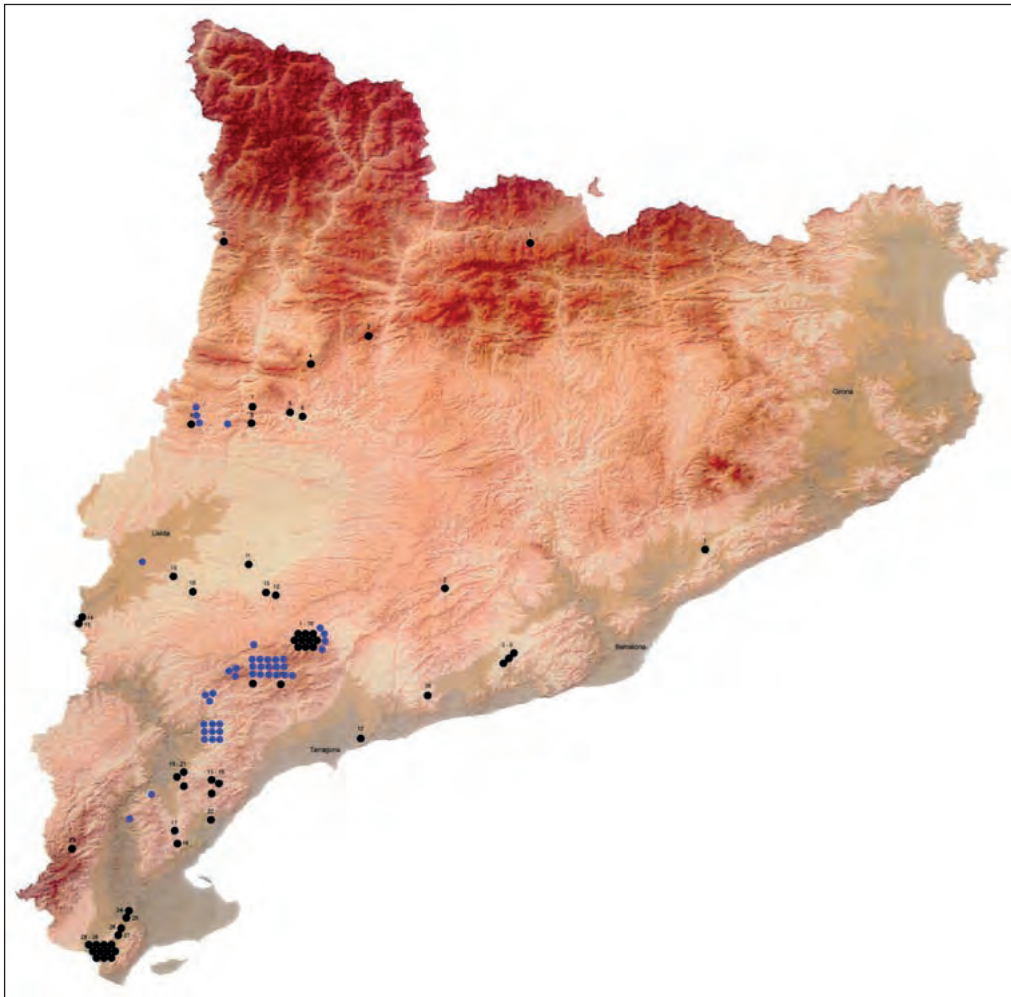


Figure 3. Location of the rock painting sites in Catalonia.

three schematic red figures which represented a deer hunt via “a drawing that is not at all artistic”, which could be included among the “proto-historic [schematic drawings] belonging to all barbaric epochs”. In his description, he questions whether the hunter pursuing a deer, identified by its branched antlers, is carrying a bow or a shield and dagger. J. Cabré chose the shield and dagger, while M. Almagro believed that it was a bow and arrow. A. Alonso and A. Grimal offer a new drawing in which the arms of the anthropomorph hold what appears to be a small bow and arrow shifted towards the upper end, with a central bulge that evokes the shape of a sword. However, they believe that this figure’s identification as a warrior bearing a shield and sword cannot currently be sustained. The question is not trivial, since it has clear repercussions on the dating of the painting.¹⁷ For the time being, we shall not venture to choose either option and instead advocate further study of these motifs, along with some other anthropomorphs which might be included in schematic art even though they have been identified as Levantine. This includes a male anthropomorph atop one of the bovids, and even the one associated with the bison/bovid/boar. The recent cleaning of the shelter will unquestionably furnish new information on the characteristics of these and other figures at this site.

EL COGUL AND IBERIAN AND ROMAN INSCRIPTIONS¹⁸

The existence of Iberian inscriptions engraved on the walls of El Cogul cannot be ignored in the debate on the nature of the site or even on the date of its paintings.

M. Almagro’s observations on the authenticity and spatial dispersion of the characters are extraordinarily important. He suggests an interpretation that has been accepted by linguists, albeit with a few variations. He notes the partial reading of the Iberian characters by M. Gómez Moreno, with a reference to Ildirda that he believes is clear. He dates the Latin inscriptions between the 2nd and 1st centuries BC and notes the relevancy of the text *SECUNDIO VOTVM FECIT*, which “unquestionably reveals that for some people during the Roman period the site was associated with magical cults, most likely related to phallic dances”.

The existence of Iberian inscriptions at other sites with rock art¹⁹ confirms the survival of these sites as hubs of social activities. Based on this information, we could reflect on the survival of the sites, of which El Cogul is the best example, over several millennia, if the chronologies proposed for Levantine and schematic art are accepted.

So far we have examined the discourse which began with the discovery of the Roca dels Moros site in El Cogul in Les Garrigues. However, one hundred years later, where are we? In the paragraphs below we shall try to examine the state of the interpretative hypothesis.

PALAEOLITHIC ART

New discoveries have expanded the record of Palaeolithic art. In the region of La Safor, the exceptional portable art from Cova del Parpalló (Gandia, Valencia) has been joined by the discovery of rock engravings in the same cave and in Cova de les Meravelles, in the same municipality.²⁰ In Castellón de la Plana, sites have been discovered with carved engravings of zoomorphs and geometric motifs – Abric d'en Melià (La Serra d'en Galceran), Gentsclar (La Serratella), La Belladona, Mas de la Vall and La Marfullada II (Ares del Maestrat), Mas de Serra Amposta (Culla) and Cova de Bovalar – which have been tentatively ascribed to the late Magdalenian period or the micro-laminar industries of the Epipalaeolithic, all grouped under the umbrella of late Palaeolithic art. These images have been used to elevate the original chronology of Levantine art. Their spatial distribution in the lands of Castellón and the absence of human figures and Levantine-style scenes led their discoverers to posit the hypothesis of the continuation of Palaeolithic rock art expressions during the early Holocene. However, in their opinion this chronological proximity did not necessarily imply a direct link between these late Palaeolithic motifs and their Levantine counterparts, “since each horizon is defined by stylistic and thematic conventions and different forms of composition and spatial distribution”.

MACROSCHEMATIC ART

The discovery of macroschematic art signalled major upheaval in the study of rock art in Mediterranean Spain, regardless of the position taken on its chronology and meaning.

Despite the time elapsed and the continuous prospecting, the initial record of 18 shelters located in ten sites has not been expanded, nor has their spatial distribution in the region of Alicante between the Aitana, Benicadell and Mariola mountains and the sea changed, although a peripheral area of “macroschematic influence” has been proposed. Nor has the suggested chronology changed, which was based on the stratigraphic position of the paintings in some shelters and the identification of portable art with cardial-style decorations.

In its cave variant, macroschematic art is characterised by its location in shallow shelters, the use of dense dark-red paint and especially a single, unquestionably symbolic theme depicted on a large scale, while macroschematic portable art reveals an iconography resembling the ceramic decorations of the ancient Neolithic.

In the zone that was once called “macroschematic territory”, there have been no new discoveries of rock art except for the some of the motifs related to the artistic horizon in Shelter I of Barranc del Bosquet (Moixent, Valencia), which were already included within the “Pla de Petracos style”,²¹ a name that was proposed to replace “macroschematic art” which some researchers still use. This fascinating site is located in the inner periphery of this region, as is Cova de la Sarsa (Bocairent, Valencia), from which ceramics bearing macroschematic motifs were found,²² more of which were added later.²³ Likewise, a new site was added to the initial record – Abric de la Falguera (Alcoi) – that is, if a tiny, non-cardial ceramic shard printed with an anthropomorph surrounded by serpentiforms/zigzags can be considered macroschematic.²⁴

The spatial distribution of the shelters containing art reveals a determined and well-planned control of the land and a careful choice of locations. Preference was given to smaller, shallower shelters, in some of which all the available surfaces are occupied by the same motif or an association of different motifs, as in Pla de Petracos. In the larger shelters, the centre of the wall is painted – in Shelter IV in Barranc de Benialí and Shelter II in La Sarga – or its most significant or prominent part is – as in Barranc de l'Infern – and, exceptionally, the painting is on the more regular surfaces, such as in Shelter I in La Sarga. Likewise, shelters located in the mid and upper parts of the ravine basin or the rocky walls were chosen to ensure that the sun's rays hit the paintings, or at least the shelter, at least a few hours a day. They all allow for some degree of visual control over the environs, although in several cases this visual field is not overly broad. However, none of them is located in a concealed site.

Nor have new themes been added to the ones originally proposed: anthropomorphs, serpentiforms, lines and thick points alongside other motifs, including an acephalous woman and the bull's head, which have been identified with some difficulty.²⁵ With regard to the anthropomorphs depicted in the caves, orants are the most famous, despite their scarcity, as only three figures – in Pla de Petracos, La Sarga and Barranc de l'Infern— have been identified, precisely at the sites with better visual control and with the possibility of more people gathering before them. These orants share certain conventionalisms – arms raised showing the fingers and round heads – while there are notable differences in the depictions of the legs, which are always tilted upward, and the trunk. Another noteworthy feature is the serpentiforms in terms of both their development and position and their composition, which in some cases seems to suggest the presence of an anthropomorph. Examples include the serpentiform motifs in Shelter I of La Sarga, which are reminiscent of a clearly anthropomorphic form in Shelter II at the same site. With regard to movable representations, orants are found exclusively in Cova de l'Or, while other anthropomorphs, albeit just a few of them, are present in the ceramic deco-



Figure 4. Shelters in Pla de Petracos (Castell de Castells, Alicante).

rations in Or, La Sarsa and La Falguera, where the X and double Y anthropomorphs are also associated with schematic art.²⁶

The chronology of macroschematic art is unquestionable. It is pre-Levantine, as proven by the direct superimpositions in Shelter I of La Sarga and their indirect counterparts in Shelter IV of Barranc de Beniali,²⁷ which virtually everyone accepts based on dubious photographs.²⁸ The portable supporting materials, always printed ceramics, both cardial and instrumental, enable us to date them from the early Neolithic, sometime after 6700 BP (5,600 cal BC), with an upper limit of 5500 BP (4358-4332 cal BC), when the first grooved ceramics appeared in Cove de l'Or. However, some researchers including Aparicio suggest an Eneolithic dating, or at least the survival of some of its themes in the ceramics from the advanced Neolithic in Malta and Italy.

The subsequent execution of Levantine paintings over their macroschematic counterparts in La Sarga would prove that the earlier forms were known. These superimpositions could be explained as the desire to eliminate the earlier symbolic referents or to retain the symbolic nature of the site by respecting images whose meaning had been lost in the new society but that still retained some validity. Or they could at least verify the site's continuation as a sanctuary. Consequently, the earlier motifs were not eliminated, as they were in the spectacular panel with anthropomorphs in Shelter II, among which the "sorcerer" and horizontal and vertical serpentiforms exclusively occupy the central part like a large-scale niche, while the Levantine

scenes are located on either end of the same shelter, just a few metres away. No less meaningful is the distribution of the deer in Shelter I at the same site; they are not located over the most important parts of the orant, such as the arms and head, or over the radial terminations of the serpentiforms.

Because of their characteristics and position in the shelter, the macroschematic images have a clear symbolic content which could also be extended to include the portable representations. In the case of rock paintings, their size, the thickness of the lines and the bright red colour, which often contrasts with the ochre yellow of the underlying rock, enable the paintings to be seen from a certain distance, in Pla de Petracos from the riverbed, just like the anthropomorphs in Barranc de l'Infern. In the sites with anthropomorphs, the paintings can easily be seen by more than 50 people at a time. The places where the paintings were located were chosen to occupy almost the entire surface area in the little shelters, while they cover the central or more visible parts of the larger shelters. There are two important examples of this. In Pla de Petracos, the small shelters with yellowish walls open to the grey of the rock are used as niches, including a central one located at the highest point, with two shelters on one side and one on the opposite side, although there might have been another one near the latter if we bear in mind the remains of red paint that crop up at some points along the wall, which is totally calcified.

This organised nature of the space, which mimics an altarpiece, is reinforced by the existence of a large stone with an upper face and flat sides, the only one of its kind at

the site; if viewed from the ravine bed it seems to form an axis with the central shelter, while the other shelters, both painted and unpainted, are located on either side. The twin orants in Barranc de l'Infern are located inside a shelter which, in turn, opens into another one, like a large arc in an impressive wall. Finally, in Shelter II at La Sarga, the large horned human figure and the vertical and horizontal serpentiforms next to the smaller and less complex anthropomorphs occupy the central, most visible space.

The sites where macroschematic portable art has been found are also considered to be sanctuaries, even though they may also have been used as dwellings and exceptionally for human burials, according to the documentation from La Sarsa. Cova de l'Or is unquestionably a unique example. Because of its location on the slopes of Benicadell 650 metres above sea level, it visually dominates the macroschematic territory. Its ceramics bearing symbolic decorations do not seem to have been used to prepare food, and many of the receptacles are small, with asymmetric handles to hang them. They also show remains of ochre inside. This was a site occupied by a privileged group of humans that stands out for its exceptional archaeological record which includes not only the symbolic ceramics but also a large and diverse range of personal ornaments.

The theme of the orant is related to the oldest images from the Mediterranean Neolithic, where they are regarded as female figures, either goddesses or priestesses. The macroschematic rock images do not indicate the sex of the figure, although the one in Shelter VIII in Pla de Petracos could be interpreted as female, while one of the twin figures in Barranc de l'Infern has been deemed female by A. Beltrán in view of its size. Open legs tilted upward are traditionally associated with female figures. In the portable representations, the only complete example is female, judging from the buttocks impression on the shell of the *Cardium edule* between the legs, standing in for her sex. These female images are usually related to the fertility of both the land and humans. Some serpentiforms seem to reflect an identical meaning, especially those that emerge from a variety of closed geometric motifs which may mimic seeds, while the stems, depicted by sinuous vertical lines, are topped with fingers that evoke the orants.

Based on these considerations, it is clear that macroschematic art is an artistic horizon with its own unique features dating from the Neolithic and with a heavy symbolic content related to agricultural rituals. However, it has been regarded as a "local trend" within schematic art, an opinion that only seems to be backed by the anthropomorphs in X, Y and double Y, which are typologically similar in both forms of artistic expression. However, there are significant differences in their technical prowess in terms of both the kind of lines and density of paint and the colour, which are more accentuated in the serpentiforms and zigzags of both styles.

In recent years, some parallel zigzag motifs which appear vertically in the shelters in the Xúquer/Júcar River

basin have been related to macroschematic art, just as an anthropomorph surrounded by zigzags in the Roser shelter (Millars, Valencia) was earlier, and more recently a similar composition in the shelter at Los Gineses (Bicorb, Valencia). In some cases, these zigzags often identified as schematic are layered under Levantine motifs, as in Cova de l'Aranya (Bicorb, Valencia), Barranc de la Palla (Tormos, Alicante) and the shelter at Tío Modesto (Henarejos, Cuenca). With regard to the relationship between serpentiform/zigzag motifs and Levantine motifs in Cueva de la Vieja (Alpera, Albacete) and Marmalo IV (Villar del Humo, Cuenca), there are different versions of sketches and descriptions. In Cantos de la Visera (Iecla, Murcia), the superimpositions proposed by A. Beltrán and F. J. Fortea have been rejected. Their geometric motifs are now considered schematic, even though they have also been associated with Palaeolithic art.

In the Xúquer/Júcar River basin, these geometric motifs and the human figures associated with them are unique examples of prehistoric art which cannot be identified with traditional schematic art, although they do resemble macroschematic art in the Alicante nucleus in terms of their typology and execution. Thus, it makes sense to include the paintings from Barranc del Bosquet (Moixent, Valencia) within macroschematic art and to reinterpret some of the motifs in Beniatjar which were previously regarded as schematic but must now be reinterpreted in view of the new discoveries; their characteristics and location between both territories would reveal the direction of this dissemination, which would be reaffirmed by the presence of cardial-style printed ceramics in La Cocina and even in Cova de l'Aranya.

In view of this evidence, it was suggested that the traditional territory of macroschematic art be expanded, or that a region of influence of macroschematic art be created, in order to include these shelters. This would come from a period of expansion in which part of the symbolic content has been lost or transformed, although the formal features are retained. We must now consider whether macroschematic art should be regarded as an independent artistic horizon and thus be given a name that may not be devoid of controversy, or whether we should use the existing name and just add an adjective to identify it. In this sense, it is sometimes associated with early schematic art, although this has not been fully defined and could include motifs, compositions and techniques that are not found in these shelters but are indeed found in traditional schematic art. This concept would be maintained by associating it with the new beliefs related to collective burials. However, it would be more accurate to associate it with macroschematic art. It does not seem logical to expand the central nucleus of macroschematic art, which shows unity within the macroschematic territory of Alicante, nor does it seem logical to propose a new name, which will always be controversial, as if it were an independent artistic horizon, at least until it is more fully studied. It could be considered a second phase in macro-

schematic art which would not necessarily discard the possibility of its coexisting in time with some of the Alicante shelters and their counterparts in the Xúquer/Júcar River basin in Valencia and Cuenca, and perhaps in other places as well where these serpentiforms appear as schematic art. When these shelters are fully studied and reported, we will then be poised to resolve their affiliation and propose a name. However, for the time being, we can only note their presence, the fact that they predate Levantine art, at least many of the shelters do, and their formal relationship with macroschematic art.

LEVANTINE ART

In recent years, the discovery of new sites and the re-examination of others have prompted major headway in our knowledge of Levantine art, even though many of the questions that were being asked a century ago upon the report of the extraordinary site in El Cogul are still far from being answered. These issues include their spatial distribution, their technical and iconographic characteristics, their chronology, their meaning and even their very name.

The error of the name Levantine art has been stressed repeatedly, as it obviously does not match its current spatial distribution. Then again, neither did the initial discoveries in Teruel and Lleida, as they were not located on the “Levante”, or east coast, of the Iberian Peninsula, unless the term Levantine was used to contrast with Cantabrian when H. Breuil identified the artistic expressions in both regions as Palaeolithic. Other names have been proposed, although no consensus has been reached, so the term Levantine art remains in use, although “it is not only ambiguous but also dangerously erroneous”, in Beltrán’s words. In this sense, we should recall that at the meeting in Barbastro (Huesca), it was agreed to maintain “the term Levantine art as a conventional concept that is still useful in defining all the paintings to which it is applied and to facilitate understanding among researchers,” as Baldellou recalls. However, E. Ripoll prefers to call them “Levantine facies with post-Palaeolithic art”.²⁹

The number of shelters with Levantine art has risen in all the autonomous communities, although unfortunately there is no updated record after the documentation assembled for the UNESCO application, whose list of names was published in the catalogue for the exhibition “Art Rupestre de l’Arc Mediterrani de la Península Ibérica”, with M. Creu Berrocal adding a few subsequent finds. In theory, the proposed territory has not been expanded, although there are doubts as to the Levantine ascription of several nuclei in Jaén, such as the ones in Sierra del Quesada (Cueva del Encajero, El Arroyo de Tíscar and Manolo Vallejo) and Aldeaquemada (Tabla de Pochico and Prado del Azogue), which are located on the periphery of the territory, due to the special features of their motifs, just as with some of the isolated discoveries in Castilla-La Mancha.

In contrast, new sites and shelters have been found isolated from the traditional “Levantine nuclei” which, established based on a variety of somewhat ill-explained geographic, iconographic and stylistic criteria and with internal contradictions, vary in name.³⁰ According to their distribution along the basins of the Segura, Xúquer/Júcar, Túrria and Ebre Rivers, J. Martínez García has proposed a tentative categorisation of the groups with Levantine paintings into four groups, which should be further examined in the future according to their spatial grouping and quantitative importance in the record. Category 1 would include the nuclei in El Maestrat/Maestrazgo (Castellón and southern Aragón) and the mid-to-upper Segura River basin (Murcia, Albacete and Jaén); Category 2 would include the nuclei in Albarrasí/Albarracín, the upper basin of the Xúquer/Júcar River, the central zone of Valencia and the northern region of Alicante; Category 3 would include the northern periphery (Catalan sites and the Vero River) and the southern periphery (county of Los Vélez and Quesada); and Category 4 would include the “shelters in located in between the aforementioned ones, usually isolated, although they may reflect gaps in the research”.³¹

In recent years, Levantine art analysed from the perspective of landscape archaeology has generated a variety of fascinating contributions, although they differ in their geographic scope, methodology and results. M. Cruz Berrocal’s findings encompass all of Valencia, which was subjected to an experimental approach based on an analysis of different geographic and archaeological-cultural variables coupled with the use of diverse sources of information with differing levels of precision, including the application submitted to UNESCO, the CPRL – Corpus of Levantine Rock Painting of the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) / Gil Carlés Archive – and limited fieldwork. In turn, S. Fairén³² focuses her study on the central-southern counties of Valencia and a comprehensive analysis of the territory, which is the home to all three post-Palaeolithic artistic expressions, dwelling sites and burial caves. This study concludes that all three show a similar “symbolic occupation of the space which reflects highly specific needs: maintenance of intergroup ceremony, as well as a gradual increase in territoriality as the Neolithic sequence advances (with shelters used to monitor movements and resources and local intergroup meetings).”

In this decade, new rock painting sites have been discovered in virtually the entire “Levantine territory” with the exception of the county of Los Vélez. Some of them have contributed new themes or sparked a reinterpretation of the traditional iconography, in which the abundance of animal and bow-hunting scenes has become a cliché. However, they are extraordinarily varied. The newest – and also the most debatable – include the ones that depict hunting by stoning, the capture of a live deer in Muriecho L and the use of boomerangs, which in the wake of the exceptional series of paintings in Cueva del Chopo



Figure 5. Barranc de la Valltorta. Visibility from Mas d'en Josep (Tírig); in the background, the La Saltadora shelters (Coves de Vinromà, Castellón de la Plana).

(Obón, Teruel) has also been identified in other shelters in Teruel, Alicante, Murcia and Albacete. With regard to other motifs, we could cite the scenes of clashing humans, male and female representations, a woman next to a man's corpse in Abric Centelles, the discovery of a new tree in La Sarga and the spatial distribution of certain animals, such as boars and bovids, which must be a continuation of other animal depictions. In a similar vein, restudying the human figure as I. Domingo Sanz did or some of the objects like arrowheads is also of vast interest. The most unique contributions are unquestionably related to the composition and internal structure of the scenes, and one example worth pursuing further is the studies performed in Cova dels Cavalls (Tírig, Castellón de la Plana), which stands out at the Valltorta site.

Likewise, some of the classic sites were revisited by making new sketches and/or restudying the old ones with the support of analogical and digital photography. In some cases, this has led to the identification of new motifs and the correction of others. Among those reported this decade, the most noteworthy are the sites in Cova dels Cavalls, Mas d'en Josep and La Saltadora (Valltorta), Cinto de les Lletres, Val del Charco del Agua Amarga, Cañaica del Calar and La Sarga. In Catalonia, the prominent ones include Shelter I of Serra de la Pietat in Ulldes (Tarragona).

The debate on the chronology of Levantine art has intensified in the past decade, when researchers have been divided between those who uphold an Epipalaeolithic dating, claimed even in the very titles of their articles, versus those who defend a Neolithic timeframe, following a discussion that dates back decades. On the other hand, there have been attempts to determine the absolute dating of some paintings, albeit with uneven results.

In some cases, the tests have revealed the absence of organic matter, as with the black paintings in La Saltadora which are made of manganese oxide. In Abric del Tío Modesto (Henarejos, Cuenca), layers of oxalates have been dated from between 5320-5010 cal BC and 4800-4610 cal BC.³³ However, we should accept these dates with reservations until the validity of the method has been proven and the dated layers have been precisely indicated. The tests performed in Ulldes (Montsià) at two different points in time and different laboratories have also been invalid to date.

For the supporters of the Epipalaeolithic/Mesolithic hypothesis, the iconography is the most important supporting argument. However, it has never been clearly explained, and some researchers believe that there is a relationship of continuity with art from the late Palaeolithic. In fact, this perspective has come to the fore since the discovery of the extremely thin engravings incised in Teruel and Castellón, especially the ones in Barranc Fondo. There are several major discrepancies among this group of researchers: while some believe that the roots of Levantine art lay in early Palaeolithic art, others accept the "existence of a clear evolution, which got underway in the engraved/painted portable art of the late Magdalenian/Epimagdalenian and the engraved/painted outdoor sites, which used the same graphic techniques in the Epipalaeolithic-Mesolithic, and the ones developed in the early neolithisation processes in the Levantine region".³⁴ This somewhat continuous relationship with Palaeolithic art, as expressed in the plaques in Parpalló, was also posited by R. Vinyes at the conference on Levantine art held in Murcia. In turn, A. Alonso still claims that Levantine art is a hunters' style which chronologically must have started at an imprecise time that she hypothetically situates in the 8th millennium and its later

stages, judging from the superimpositions in La Sarga, and throughout the 5th millennium on dates as yet undetermined. M. A. Mateo also stresses this Epipalaeolithic time-frame, as he repeatedly rejects the arguments in favour of a Neolithic chronology without indicating either the time or the motivations explaining its appearance in an undetermined period within the Epipalaeolithic. However, recently he suggested that there was no rupture with the Palaeolithic artistic tradition, which years ago he related to the geometric motifs in Cantos de Visera (Iecla, Murcia); he recently reiterated this by not “discarding a possible Palaeolithic affiliation owing to the zigzag lines, the reticula and perhaps the long-legged figures, for which we have no parallels in all post-Palaeolithic art”, although they have also been considered schematic. In the opinion of A. Beltrán, this is “post-Palaeolithic and pre-Neolithic art, without questioning its ties with the late stages of the Palaeolithic and the early stages of the Neolithic and even the Eneolithic”.³⁵

The post-Epipalaeolithic chronology posited by F. Jordà Cerdà based on his heterodox “reading” of the iconography was corroborated by F. J. Fortea with the identification of linear-geometric art and the new discoveries of rock and portable art in Alicante in the 1980s, dovetailing with better knowledge of the Epipalaeolithic and Neolithic in that region. The formulation of the “dual model” of neolithisation found new arguments in the art of at least Valencia and Aragon, at that time associating Levantine art with the “Epipalaeolithic en route to neolithisation” and macroschematic art with “pure Neolithic”. In the past 20 years, a variety of proposals have been put forth which first accepted a Neolithic chronology and then went on to shade, modify or reject it according to a different assessment of the local Mesolithic peoples’ process of neolithisation. P. Utrilla relates Levantine art to the “Neolithic peoples acculturated in the Epipalaeolithic tradition”, although she does not discard the possibility “that there might be Levantine art in the geometric Epipalaeolithic, and even in a previous period”. V. Baldellou stressed these same issues based on an analysis of the distribution of post-Palaeolithic art in Aragon, in which the Levantine art in Teruel is associated with Epipalaeolithic sites and late neolithisation. This possible Epipalaeolithic origin and its full development in the Neolithic is shared by other researchers, although always severing the ties with the origin of Palaeolithic art.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, and after a detailed analysis of the contexts, Levantine art has gradually been disassociated with early Neolithic and Epipalaeolithic en route to neolithisation or acculturated Epipalaeolithic by proposing a post-cardial chronology after the first quarter of the sixth millennium BP.

For more than 20 years, Levantine art’s Neolithic dating has been stressed based on the stratigraphic and typological arguments and its portable art. Numerous criticisms have been levelled at this, even though it is a hypothesis which when formulated was applicable to the “Levantine territo-

ry” in Alicante, and which we can now extend to at least the lands lying between the Segura and Xúquer/Júcar Rivers. In this sense, we should cite the superimpositions in La Sarga, which are unquestionable, as almost everyone seems to accept; several iconographic features, including the bracelets, also found in El Cogul, which cannot be rejected by a flawed interpretation of the sketches, as sometimes suggested; the arrowheads; and the presence of a tree in the portable art of La Sarsa which is reminiscent of the two that are painted in La Sarga. The rigorous studies on the regional Epipalaeolithic and the Neolithic and on the archaeology of the Neolithic landscape are major contributions to the contextualisation of the post-Palaeolithic symbolic expressions on the eastern face of the Iberian Peninsula which have gradually moved Levantine art away from the beginning of the Neolithic to instead situate it in the age when cultural dualism had disappeared. It no longer narrates the process of neolithisation, as once suggested. Now we have to attribute to its images “a lower narrative content and a higher symbolic, perhaps religious, content, as has been postulated several times. Perhaps the images described their ideal way of life, or they may have served as a territorial indicator, a signal of a passage or an emigration route, a meeting point, a means for exchanging information as a practice related to the consolidation of social networks and marriage, or a sanctuary.”³⁶

Numerous anthropological interpretations have also been made of many of the Levantine scenes linking them to totemism and shamanism, stressing their symbolic content with interpretations. Despite the risks inherent in this kind of analysis, it does open up new perspectives in the study of this artistic expression. Due to the naturalism of the figures and the abundance and diversity of scenes, this enables us to formulate different hypotheses as to their meaning.

SCHEMATIC ART

In recent years, the number of sites with schematic art in the Mediterranean basin has risen to such an extent that they now number more than 500. Many remain unreported, while just a few images have been reported, almost always the most complete and well-conserved ones. Better contextualisation paved the way for a new interpretation of their chronology and meaning through new proposals as to their spatial distribution on diverse scales.

Similar to Levantine art, the spatial distribution of schematic rock art is irregular, with major concentrations of shelters in certain zones, traditionally clustered around river beds, and the absence or scarcity of shelters in others. Isolated motifs are often cited, almost always simple bars or spots that are regarded as schematic, even though many of them were executed more recently or at least not prehistorically.

In recent years, only Catalonia has systematically documented the sites, and many communities have not per-

formed inventories, meaning that we do not have even a mere list of the schematic art found in the Mediterranean basin. In contrast, isolated sites of extraordinary interest have indeed been reported, some of which are located in areas that until recently had been empty or had few shelters, thus corroborating the need to continue to systematically prospect in both familiar territories and newer ones. The list of new shelters is extensive, although unfortunately their updated corpora have not yet been reported, as many of them, including the ones in Catalonia and in the province of Alicante, date back to the 1990s. In other communities, such as in Aragón and Murcia, we only have their percentage compared to Levantine art.

The repertory of familiar motifs has barely changed, and it is described following the typology developed by P. Acosta which, 40 years later, requires an in-depth revision. In contrast, the spatial distribution of virtually all the motifs has been modified, with the simplest geometric and some anthropomorphic motifs spread around the entire region, while other motifs are concentrated in given zones, and the area in which certain motifs, such as symbolic ones, are found has been expanded.

This “schematic symbolic system” cited by J. Martínez García,³⁷ with his three analytical levels – the macro scale (geographic space), the meso scale (shelters) and the micro scale (panels) – has had major repercussions in studies of regional schematic art, especially in studies examining spatial distribution and the kinds of shelters where it is found, and to a lesser extent in the three categories of panels: ambiguous, horizontal and vertical. The influence of the former can be noted in the studies on the region of Valencia, in which Martínez García’s spatial distribution proposal truly comes to the fore.

The chronology of schematic art seemed resolved by the end of the past millennium, since the identification of a series of movable objects – ceramics and bone idols – from Andalusia and the region of Valencia enabled it to be dated between the old Neolithic and the Eneolithic, without discarding the possibility that it extended into the Bronze Age.

In recent years, we have been able to pinpoint the chronology of schematic art and, not without some discrepancies, to posit its relationship with macroschematic and Levantine art, with which it shares territory, from new perspectives, based on better knowledge of the regional sequences, a reinterpretation of the spatial distribution on several scales of the shelters and their motifs, and a significant increase in the number and variety of their portable art – the so-called portable parallels. In this latter vein, we should cite the discovery of new sites added to the ones recorded more than 20 years ago, especially the more than 100 pebbles with the remains of red paint found in Cueva de Chaves (Bastarás, Huesca), on which geometric motifs have been identified – crosses, crosshatching, bars, convergent star-shaped lines, dots, circles – along with three variations of anthropomorphs, one resembling an orant and the others with triangular, *phi*-shaped heads. These

are no doubt some of the most fascinating archaeological finds in recent years owing to their uniqueness and precise dating from the early Neolithic, which would corroborate the Neolithic origin of schematic art as posited by Utrilla and Baldellou. On the other hand, we have extraordinary corpora of Neolithic ceramics with symbolic decorations similar to many of the motifs that are painted on the walls of the shelters. This has enabled us to date them with some degree of chronological accuracy, even though the long lifespan of some of them has prompted alternative proposals and sparked no dearth of arguments. This is true of the steliforms, ramiforms and several human types which have been recorded from the early Neolithic to the Bronze Age, while others, such as the oculate and bitriangular figures, are exclusive to the Eneolithic.

The spatial distribution of the schematic rock paintings and their relationship with the other post-Palaeolithic artistic expressions, with which they often overlap in territory, shelter and even panel, has been the subject of particular attention in recent years. Even though some themes – anthropomorphs in Y, inverted Y, double Y and X – are similar to schematic art themes, they differ in the kind of line and the colour of the paint, and especially, for the remaining macroschematic motifs, in both typology and size.

It is unquestionable that portable schematic art existed during the early Neolithic, as evidenced by the printed ceramic decorations – both cardial and instrumental – and the painted pebbles in Chaves. It is more difficult to pinpoint whether schematic rock paintings from that time definitely existed, which would explain the existence of early schematic art in the early Neolithic, which would be contemporary with macroschematic art or immediately after it, as well as Levantine art in some areas judging by the schematic works superimposed over Levantine art and, albeit fewer in number, the Levantine art superimposed over schematic works. The schematic motifs found on the portable art include steliforms, ramiforms, anthropomorphs in Y, double Y and X and a variety of geometric motifs based on different combinations of bars. There are examples of all of these in the shelters located in the lands lying along the Mediterranean basin. Today, there is unanimous acceptance of the early Neolithic roots of schematic art, which is associated with the pure Neolithic peoples in Huesca, while in the region of Valencia an early form of schematic art has been identified which should be fully described in the future as new sites discovered in Valencia are reported and we better define what on other occasions has been associated with the “expansion” or “influence” of macroschematic art. What is a fact is that other schematic themes in the portable record from the old Neolithic – steliforms/soliforms and ramiforms – cannot be found in macroschematic art, so they must necessarily be related to schematic art, even though there is no solid documentation that would permit the soliforms and rock ramiforms to clearly be ascribed to the early Neolithic.



Figure 6. Schematic art. Barranc de Carbonera (Beniatjar, Valencia).

In fact, through their association with other motifs, some of these motifs date from later, which would also corroborate the portable record from the late Neolithic and Eneolithic.

The set of motifs that might fit within this early schematic art would include bars, horizontal and vertical zig-zags, human figures in X, Y, inverted Y and double X and steliforms-soliforms and ramiforms. These same motifs, or at least some of them, remained in later periods, so that right now it is impossible to assign a given shelter or motif to either phase. In this sense, the anthropomorphs from Cova de la Sarsa on the wall near the double Neolithic burial are particularly interesting, as they may in fact be associated with occupation of the cave during the early Neolithic. The zoomorphic motifs come later in post-cardial periods, with the exception of two fragments with engraved instrumental decoration from Cova de l'Or showing a caprid, a bovid and a cervid. At one time they were associated with Levantine art but are now considered schematic, as suggested by some researchers. The other fragment from the same cave, this one with three incomplete zoomorphs – caprids or cervids – is unquestionably schematic.

The survival of schematic art until the Chalcolithic, and with some reservations and in some areas until the Bronze Age, is equally unquestionable. Idols are the only images that somehow enable us to confidently identify a late Neolithic/Chalcolithic date for schematic art, since the presence of the remaining motifs may be traced back to various periods within the Neolithic, at least in their portable ver-

sion. For the southern stretches of the Mediterranean basin lying between the Segura and Xúquer/Júcar River basins, there is currently a record of rock and portable motifs that were traditionally considered idols. Among them, oculates are the most plentiful and the most widespread, although anchoriforms, plaques and barbells have also been recorded following the traditional typologies. However, the identification of some of them is somewhat debateable. Some of the most interesting discoveries from this decade include those that expand the initial area over which the oculates were found, such as the ones painted in Abrigo de los Oculados (Henarejos, Cuenca), which are reminiscent of another in Cantos de la Visera, and the portable bone artefacts from Cueva de Las Mulatillas (Villagordo del Cabriel, Valencia). Likewise, we should also mention two exceptional pieces retrieved in the excavations at Glorieta de Sant Vicent in Llorca (Murcia). One of them, which was part of the goods found in an individual trench burial dating from 4075 ± 30 BP, corresponds to the scapula of an animal with red painted decoration consisting of two eyes with pupils and dots around them. The other, now lacking context, is a small triangular limestone object, one of whose sides had a black painted ramiform with two circles resembling eyes on the upper edge, resembling the rock art in Abric de l'Esperit Sant in Valencia.³⁸

Having accepted schematic art's Neolithic roots and its presence at least until the Chalcolithic, this seems to be the same artistic horizon to which new images were added, others were modified and a different spatial distribution emerged on territory, shelter and panel level. In this

sense, J. Martínez García's proposals for the internal analysis of the panels are interesting in that they distinguish between "ambiguous panels" which date from the initial period – cardial and epicardial – and "vertical panels" whose images are grouped into vertical lines, which is identified with social inequalities and would be situated in the late Neolithic/Chalcolithic.

Numerous proposals regarding the meaning of Levantine paintings have also been set forth, stressing their religious content which is related, as it is in Levantine art, with shamanism or totemism or with the archaeoastronomic content found in the paintings in Barranc de Biern, in Tarragona.

ROCK ENGRAVINGS

All the autonomous communities which participated in the application for the rock art of the Mediterranean basin on the Iberian Peninsula to be included in UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites must still document, study and add to the record, if needed, the sites with rock engravings. Today, none of the autonomous communities has conducted – or at least revealed – the inventories of the sites with rock engravings, although a certain interest in cataloguing and studying them, albeit not widespread, has been noticed in recent years.

Technically speaking, there is a total predominance of engravings using the pecking method, most of them continuous, in which the points of impact form grooves of differing depths, widths and shapes, although exceptionally there are discontinuous examples where the impact points are thick, isolated and often shallow. The majority of these engravings are located outdoors, taking advantage of rocky outcroppings and loose stones, and they are thus affected by a wide range of natural agents – rain, snow, sleet, wind – and colonised by lichen and fungus. Many of them are poorly conserved, so many natural formations have been identified as engravings. Based on the signals left by the impact points, it is often difficult to determine the kind of instrument used to execute the engravings and the existence of abrasion, although there seems to be some.

The incised engravings show vast technical and formal diversity. In addition to the fusiforms, whose numbers have not increased in the past decade, there also exist thin, superficial engravings, many of which are only perceptible via oblique light. Sometimes they appear in isolation while other times they are clustered together like surface scratches.

A large percentage of the pecked engravings comes from historical periods, if we bear in mind the themes depicted, especially the cruciform motifs and animal figures, although some of these crosses have also been associated with prehistoric schematic anthropomorphs. The analyses of the typology of these cruciform motifs, along with their location and their parallels in portable objects and murals, have

enabled us to date them from the Middle Ages onward in Aragón, Castellón de la Plana and Catalonia, although others from Catalonia are considered prehistoric and have been associated with schematic art. Due to their themes or proximity to archaeological sites, some of these engravings are considered Iberian because of the presence of horses and riders; or prehistoric, from the Neolithic and Eneolithic, because of their formal relationship with schematic painting; or from the Bronze Age, the proposed dating of the ones from Cerro del Cuchillo (Almansa, Albacete) and Monte Arabí (Yecla, Murcia), in which the location of the basins and conduits seems to reflect rituals related to water and the fertility of the land. However, not all the bowls and conduits date from the same period or share the same meaning, even though the majority of them were used to gather rainwater. Most of these bowls are manmade, but natural ones are also plentiful – such as the ones called "caps d'olla" in Murcia – which the shepherds and hunters often enlarged or transformed so their animals could drink from them.

Also historical are the very thin incised engravings that represent triangular-bladed knives, stars, chessboards and games or crosshatching, resembling the murals in mediaeval and modern constructions, in which the same themes are often repeated.

THIRTEEN YEARS AFTER KYOTO: THE STATE OF THE MATTER

On the 2nd of December 1998, at its meeting held in Kyoto, UNESCO added the rock art of the Mediterranean basin on the Iberian Peninsula to its list of World Heritage Sites. Thus concluded a lengthy process in which experts from six autonomous communities – Andalusia, Aragón, Castilla-La Mancha, Catalonia, Murcia and Valencia – had thoroughly documented all the sites containing rock art known at that time. The seeds of the proposal lay in Levantine art, since in the mid-20th century it was regarded as the most vivid testimony of all the expressions that had reached us from Europe's prehistoric peoples. It also included sites with other kinds of artistic expressions from the same region, and even the same shelter or panel, as Levantine art.

At UNESCO's suggestion, and through a joint decision by all six autonomous communities, the Council of Rock Art of the Mediterranean Basin on the Iberian Peninsula – CARAMPI – was created, whose charter³⁹ stated that it was charged with monitoring the World Heritage Site declaration; updating the inventory; proposing intervention models in the documentation, protection, conservation, signage and dissemination of rock art; and drawing up reports and organising technical and/or scientific gatherings. Likewise, the Council suggested that a journal be published, entitled *Panel*, to cover not just research but also the protection, conservation and dissemination of rock art. This journal – the first of its kind in the Spanish-

speaking world – reflected the Council’s spirit and generated high expectations, which were soon deflated, however, since only one volume has been published to date. This first and thus far only issue (a second one shall be published shortly) reports on the management and latest discoveries of rock art in each of the autonomous regions and the travelling exhibition which would successfully shed light on the most important sites. It also includes a series of monographic studies, reviews of publications and the bibliography on rock art in this region between 1997 – the date the document concluded – and 2000.

Prior to that, in 1997, a project got underway to develop a joint exhibition that would be held to publicise the candidacy for the list of World Heritage Sites.⁴⁰ In an attempt to reproduce the content of the dossier submitted by the six autonomous communities, 18 panels were developed, each of which was devoted to a single site – three from each region – plus five panels which included brief notes on the meaning of the paintings, their essential features, the geographic distribution of the sites, other regions included on the list of World Heritage Sites and a reflection on the future.⁴¹ The exhibition was accompanied by a catalogue in which each autonomous community contributed a chapter that provided information on their own rock art and their management model. In Catalonia, on the occasion of the unveiling of the exhibition in Girona and Vall d’Aran, a literary competition was held for students aged six to sixteen with the theme of “Tell us a Story: Make History”, which resulted in the production of a moving, original book.⁴²

The most significant contribution in recent years is unquestionably the addition of a new and highly trained generation of researchers who have forged new pathways in the study of prehistoric art in Mediterranean Spain by expanding, fleshing out or correcting some of the opinions that had been deeply rooted in our scholarly literature for decades. New pathways have been cleared in the entire research process, both in prospecting – which has clearly benefitted by the significant rise in the number of researchers and the development of the so-called management archaeology – sketching and reproduction, and in its study on multiple levels. The technological advances in photography and information technologies and their “democratisation” through declining prices have enabled direct sketches or sketches with frames – the latter only used here – to be replaced by digital sketches, which should continue to be fine-tuned, especially when they are subsequently reproduced. Likewise, the technical quality of the publications has significantly improved the reproduction of the images, and new methods and analyses have been applied to the study of colour and material supports.

In terms of studies of the sites and shelters, the most interesting methodological contributions have come at the “micro” scale – analysis of the irregularities of the material supports and their relationship with the images – and the “meso” scale, with the study of the panels’ composition. Likewise, there are now numerous catalogues of

rock art in practically all the autonomous communities and diverse – and often contradictory – proposals to contextualise these artistic expressions. Finally, the interest prompted by the archaeology of the territory and the landscape thanks to advances in geographic information systems has enabled us to examine the environs of the rock art sites from novel perspectives and on more objective grounding, albeit at times with conflicting results.

In the past thirteen years, the list of 757 sites included in the World Heritage Site application in 1998 has been boosted by an uncertain number of shelters – perhaps totalling more than 1,500 sites – just a handful of which have been extensively reported; for some of them only their presence has been noted, while the majority remain undocumented.⁴³ In Catalonia, just to cite an example, 43 new rock art sites and two sites with engravings have been discovered in less than a decade.

Once again focusing on such important topics as direct interventions in the shelters and improvements in the interpretation of the painted panels, and centring our attention on Catalonia, we should note that in view of the success of the interventions in El Cogul and Uldecona, in 2010 the Archaeology Service decided to embark upon a major intervention at the Cabra Feixet site (El Perelló, Baix Ebre), since some of its figures seem to have been the victim of aggressions. The action extended over two financial years. In 2010, the existing fence, which allowed easy access to the figures, was replaced by a new one far from the painted wall, which is much more effective and environmentally-friendly, and in 2011 the entire site was cleaned.

The paintings in Cabra Feixet were acknowledged as prehistoric in 1922 during the second expedition conducted to the area by the team led by P. Bosch Gimpera and J. M. Colominas from the Institut d’Estudis Catalans, and in 1988 they were exhaustively documented as part of the Corpus of Rock Paintings of Catalonia project. The figures are grouped into three areas, and when they were documented a total of thirteen representations were tallied, although not all were clearly identifiable. It also seems clear that some of the tiny concavities nearby had been painted, since remains of paint remain, although their size makes them impossible to identify.

The intervention covered the entire site, and the new discoveries came in the first group of paintings. In theory, it began with a scene made up of six representations which reflected three caprids, a deer, an archer and the remains of pigment. The colours of the figures range from chestnut – a dark reddish tone – to red. The entire upper part of this first group of paintings conferred a deep red colour upon the rock which appeared *a priori* to be pigment. The cleaning intervention uncovered part of the body of the caprid located higher up and the rear legs of an animal, a possible human figure and the head of another animal on the lower right-hand side of the panel. Also truly spectacular is the recovery of part of the archer: the entire left forearm was revealed from the elbow to the hand, where



Figure 7. Painted panel in Cabra Feixet before and after the cleaning intervention.

the fingers can be clearly identified, as well as the entire string of the bow he is holding.

With equal success, in 2010 an intervention was carried out to recover the paintings in Shelter IV of Ermites de la Serra de la Pietat (Ulldescona, El Montsià). The side walls of the cavity were totally covered with graffiti, while the central and deeper parts showed a dark grey and black film caused by anthropic and natural agents, which conferred an unpleasant picture of filth, neglect and disregard of the shelter. The intervention successfully eliminated practically all the graffiti.

The intervention on the panel containing the paintings received special treatment which uncovered four figures: two goats, the head of a third goat and a zigzag line. Today any visitor can spot these figures from the base of the shelter. Another of the goals of the intervention was to identify the substance of the ochre colour that covered part of the left wall. Its entire extent was delimited and the presence of paint over this layer was confirmed. It is currently being analysed in order to confirm whether it is a preparation for the wall prior to painting the motifs and to determine an accurate date.

Now that we have discussed the documentation of the new sites, the cleaning projects, the direct interventions, the discovery of new motifs and the installation of new fences, to conclude our survey of the most important interventions performed in Catalonia in recent years we must now mention the “Dating Rock Art” conference.

As part of the events to celebrate the tenth anniversary of UNESCO’s addition of the rock art of the Mediterranean basin on the Iberian Peninsula to its list of World Heritage Sites (Kyoto, 1998), the Archaeology and Palaeontology Service of the Generalitat de Catalunya held the

conference entitled “Dating Rock Art: The Peninsular Mediterranean Basin between the Absolute and the Relative” in order to share and debate the advances made in dating this kind of expression and site (theoretical approaches, methods, results, etc.). The scholarly meeting was held from the 17th to 19th of June 2009, and the participants included 103 researchers from both Catalonia and other points on the Iberian Peninsula, Europe and the other side of the Atlantic.⁴⁴ We shall not delve too deeply into the content of the talks and debates because the proceedings will shortly be published by the Department of Culture.

More than 100 years have elapsed since the extraordinary discovery of the Roca dels Moros site in El Cogul, which enabled us to identify Levantine and schematic art, as well as the earliest Iberian rock inscriptions. The interest that this discovery sparked signalled the start of a pathway which, despite its ups and downs, is still being trodden today and affects all the rock art sites in the Mediterranean basin on the Iberian Peninsula. El Cogul was the pioneer in being studied and in the conservation and dissemination of this rock art. Now we must continue along this pathway since some of the questions which remain obscure may well be answered by a “reinterpretation” of the images. We must also determine the road to be taken in the conservation and dissemination of rock art. With the Institut d’Estudis Catalans’ interest in rock art since 1908 and the continuation of this interest in the Archaeology Service of the Generalitat, with the outstanding documentation effort that got underway more than two decades ago and with the more recent cleaning projects in the sites in Vall de la Coma (L’Albi), Segarullis (Olèrdola), Abrics de la Serra de la Pietat (Ulldescona) and Cabra Feixet (El



Figure 8. Poster of El Cogul published to celebrate the centennial of its discovery.

Perelló) as part of the Corpus of Rock Paintings of Catalonia project, the only one of its kind on the Iberian Peninsula, Catalonia embarked upon a pathway which all the other autonomous communities have followed, albeit to uneven success.⁴⁵

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- [37] J. MARTÍNEZ GARCÍA. "Compartir el tiempo y el espacio: pinturas rupestres postpaleolíticas del levante peninsular". In: R. MARTÍNEZ VALLE (coord.). *Arte rupestre en la Comunidad Valenciana*. Generalitat Valenciana, Valencia 2006, pp. 179-193. J. MARTÍNEZ GARCÍA. "La pintura rupestre esquemàtica com a estratègia d'ocupació del territori". *Cota Zero*, no. 16 (2000), pp. 65-87; J. MARTÍNEZ GARCÍA. "Pintura rupestre esquemàtica: el panel, espacio social". *Trabajos de Prehistoria*, no. 59.1 (2002), pp. 65-87.
- [38] Regarding the survival of schematic art until the Chalcolithic and, with some reservations and in some zones, until the Bronze Age, see: G. GARCÍA ATIÉNZAR. "Occupazione e sfruttamento del territorio nel Neolitico: l'alto e medio bacino del fiume Serpis (Alicante, Spagna)". *Bullettino di Paleontologia Italiana*, no. 96 (2005-2007), pp. 17-36; M. S. HERNÁNDEZ PÉREZ. "Arte esquemático en la fachada oriental de la Península Ibérica". *Zephyrus*, no. LIX (2006), pp. 199-214; J. MARTÍNEZ GARCÍA. "Pintura rupestre esquemática...", *op. cit.*
- [39] Vélez-Rubio (Almería), 27 November 1998.
- [40] Curated by J. Castells, director of the Corpus Project of Rock Paintings of Catalonia (CPRC). In order to make the show more travel-friendly, two versions were made, one in Spanish and another bilingual one in Spanish and Catalan.
- [41] The exhibition also included monitors where visitors could check the database of sites included in the UNESCO application. Catalonia expanded the exhibition with three new panels which showed all the sites with rock art included in the World Heritage Site list according to the geographic division used for their documentation and inclusion in the Corpus: the Segre River valley, the central and southern area and the lands of the Ebro River. The show, which was designed by the company Calidoscopi, began its travels in the Museum of Jaén on the 22nd of April 1999 and was on display for more than two years in around 30 towns. Along with the events planned

to commemorate the centennial of the entry of the rock paintings of El Cogul in the bibliography, in 2008 the exhibition began a new tour around Catalonia.

- [42] *Explica'ns un conte, fes història. Concurs literari per a escolars de 6 a 16 anys. Condà-mos un conde. Hè istoria. Concurs literari entà escolars de 6 a 16 anys.* Department of Culture of the Generalitat de Catalunya, Barcelona 2008.
- [43] In the case of Catalonia, the inclusion and documentation of new sites followed this time sequence: 2002. Two sites: Abric de la Figuera/Lleonàs (Torres de Segre) and Abric de la Diva (les Avellanès); 2006. Seven sites: Solà de l'Ànima (Coll de Nargó), Abric del Britus III, Abric del Britus IV, Abric de la Daixa, Abric de la Baridana III and Abric del Mas de l'Arlequí (Montblanc), and Abric del Biern (Vilanova de Prades); 2008. Thirty-one sites in the Prades, Montsant and Llaberia mountains: Barranc de la Vall I, II, III, IV and V (Capçanes), Barranc de la Parellada I, II, III and IV (Capçanes), Barranc de l'Àguila shelters I, II and III (La Morera de Montsant), Barranc de Cavaloca shelters I and II (Cabacés), Shelters I, II and III at Grau dels Masets (Cornudella de Montsant), Abric del Grau del Tallat (Cornudella de Montsant), Abric del Coll de la Vaca (Cornudella de Montsant), Abric dels Covetes (Cornudella de Montsant), Shelters I, II, III, IV and V at Barranc de Fontscaldes (Cornudella de Montsant), Abric de la Trona (Cornudella de Montsant), Abric del Mas de la Noguera (Cornudella de Montsant), Abric del Racó del Carletes (Cornudella de Montsant), Abric del Gran de l'Esteve (Cornudella de Montsant) and Balmes de l'Esquirola I and II (Cornudella de Montsant); 2009. Rock paintings in two new sites: Cova

de l'Arç (Cubells, Noguera) and Cova Negra de Tragó (Os de Balaguer, Noguera); 2010. Abric dels Porxos (Fígols, Berguedà). Two sites with engravings were also documented in Cubells (Noguera): Cova de l'Arç and Coll de Xera.

- [44] We should note the participation of first-rate international scholarly institutions such as Texas A & M University (Pro Marwa M. Rowe) and the National Prehistory Centre (Catherine Creta), as well as the talks by the Universities of Oviedo (Marc de la Rajola), Alicante, Alcalá de Henares (Rodrigo Balbín, Primitiva Bé), Castilla-La Mancha (Juan F. Ruiz), UNED (Antonio Hernanz) and other institutions such as the Government of Aragón-LAIBC Laboratory (Ramiro Alloza, Vicenç Baldellou), the Research and Analysis Centre of the Andalusian Institute of Historical Heritage (Julián Martínez) and the Archaeology and Palaeontology Service of the Generalitat de Catalunya (Gemma Hernández).
- [45] This article includes part of the text published by Mauro S. HERNÁNDEZ PÉREZ. "Arte Rupestre Postpaleolítico en el Arco Mediterráneo de la Península Ibérica. Balance de 10 años de descubrimientos y estudios". In: *El arte rupestre del Arco Mediterráneo de la Península Ibérica, 10 años en la Lista del Patrimonio Mundial de la UNESCO, Actas IV Congreso*. Generalitat Valenciana, Valencia 2009, which was written as part of the HAR Research Project 2009-13723: "VIII-IV milenios cal. BC: Arte rupestre, doblamiento y cambio cultural entre las cuencas de los ríos Júcar y Segura", financed by the DGICTYT of the Ministry of Science and Technology.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Gemma Hernández is an archaeologist. She worked at the Archaeology Service of the Generalitat de Catalunya from 1981 to 2005 on inventorying, documenting and protecting the archaeological heritage. Since 1987, part of her work has focused on the Corpus of Rock Paintings of Catalonia project, and she has published several studies on this topic. As a representative of Catalonia, she was part of the team to draw up the application for inclusion of rock art in the Mediterranean basin of the Iberian Peninsula on UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites. She has directed the Department of Knowledge and Research at the Directorate General of Cultural Heritage since 2005, and from 2008 to late 2010 she was in charge of the Archaeology and Palaeontology Service, where she provided a new impetus to the Corpus project by conducting new documentation campaigns, fencing, tests and dating programmes, celebrations of the centennial of El Cogul and sponsoring conferences and publications, among others.

Mauro S. Hernández is a Professor of Prehistory at the Universitat d'Alacant. He has studied the rock art of the Canary Islands, where he drew up the corpus of rock engravings, and the former Spanish Sahara. Since 1980, his research has focused on the recent prehistory in the region of Valencia and Albacete and on cataloguing and studying the rock art of the region of Valencia and Castilla-La Mancha and their portable parallels. He has reported on his findings in numerous monographs and articles and at national and international gatherings. He is currently also a professor in the university's Master's in Professional Archaeology and Heritage Management. Part of this study was conducted under the research project 2009-13723 HAR "VIII-VI millennia cal BC Rock Art, bending and cultural change between the basins of the rivers Júcar and Segura", funded by the DGICTYT of the Ministries of Science and Technology and Economy.