

Fig. 1 (A) Iberian Peninsula map with the São Romão's Mount, in Guimarães, North-west Portugal. (B) Atlantic Rock Art's localization on São Romão's Mount, Guimarães, on the Portuguese Military Chart No. 71, scale 1: 25.0000 (IGC).

Speaking of its long-term history, we know that the site was occupied in the first millennium BCE (Early Iron Age); however, its zenith takes place between the 2nd Century BCE and the 1st century AD (what North-western Iberian archaeologists designate as Late Iron Age), according to the main ruins, much of which are still visible (Fig. 2A and 2B). It was also occupied after the integration of North-west Iberia during the Roman Empire, from the 1st and 2nd centuries and from the 3rd century to the Low Empire when

the hill was inhabited. This was at a time when the region was in political turmoil, especially between the 8th and 10th centuries (Lemos and Cruz 2011).

From several archaeological programmes involving surveys and excavations, made inside and outside the hillfort of Briteiros, a set of engraved outcrops was found, included in the Atlantic Rock Art Tradition. Some of these places have been noticed in the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries (Sarmiento 1903, 1905a, 1905b, 1933, 1992), but they were only more recently entirely studied and published (Valdez and Oliveira 2005/2006; Cardoso 2015)¹.

¹ see Cardoso (2015)

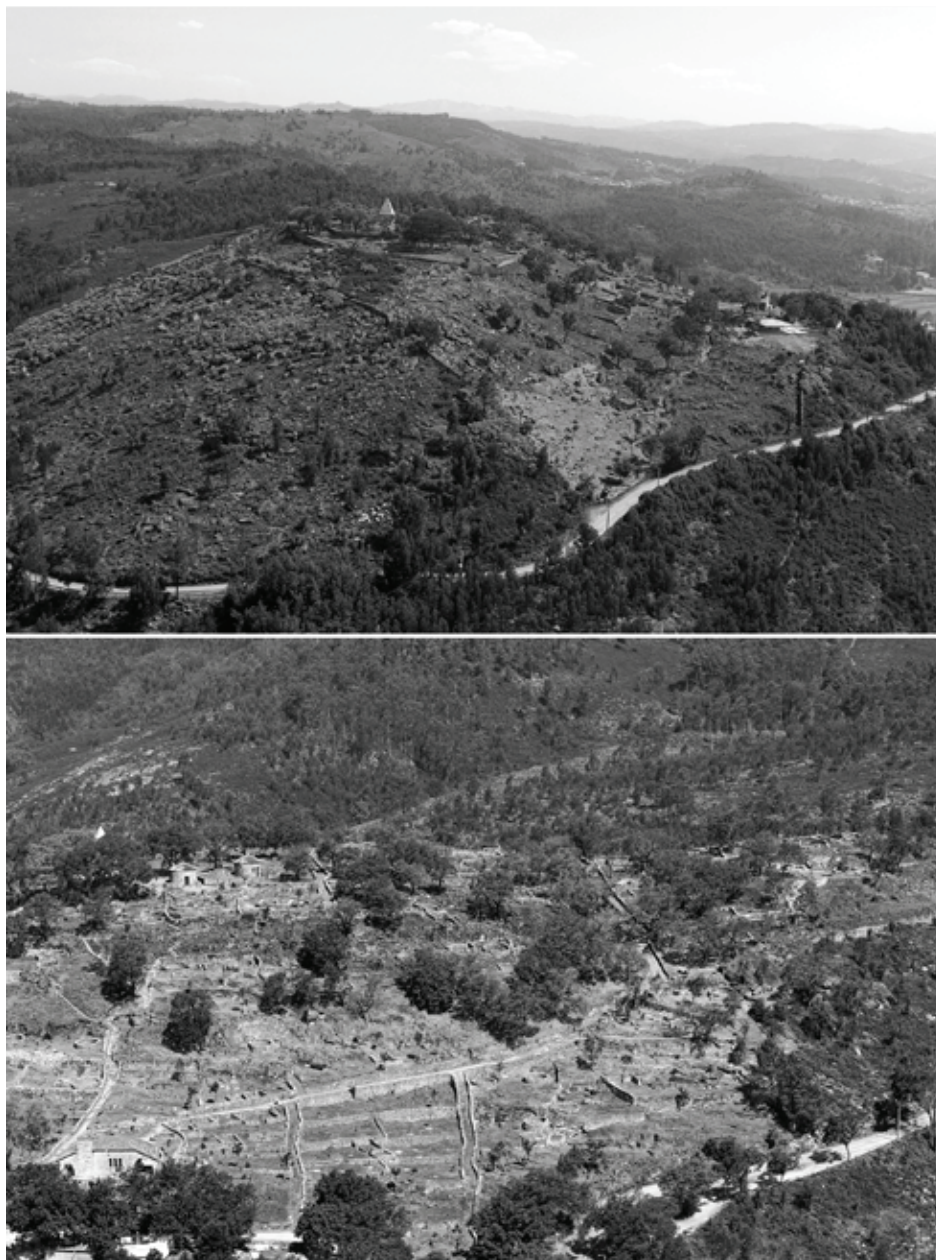


Fig. 2 (A) Aerial view of the summit and upper slopes of São Romão's Mount. (B). Aerial view showing the summit of the Briteiros hillfort.

This set of chronologically-distinct materialities - which inhabit the same physical space raises some questions - which are the main goals of this research:

What was the interrelationship between people who occupied the hillford of Briteiros and those who engraved most of the rock carvings?

Had there been respect for ancestral markers?

Have all signs of the Atlantic Rock Art tradition been recognized with equal importance within the inhabitants of Briteiros?

Did a symbolic appropriation exist there?

In this case, how was this appropriation made and with which socio-political underlying objectives?

The data

Recent research undertaken by one of the authors (Cardoso, 2015) has focused on the substantial rock art assemblage that is scattered over much of the hillside of São Romão, including the intermediate slopes and summit of the hill (Figs. 3A to 3D).

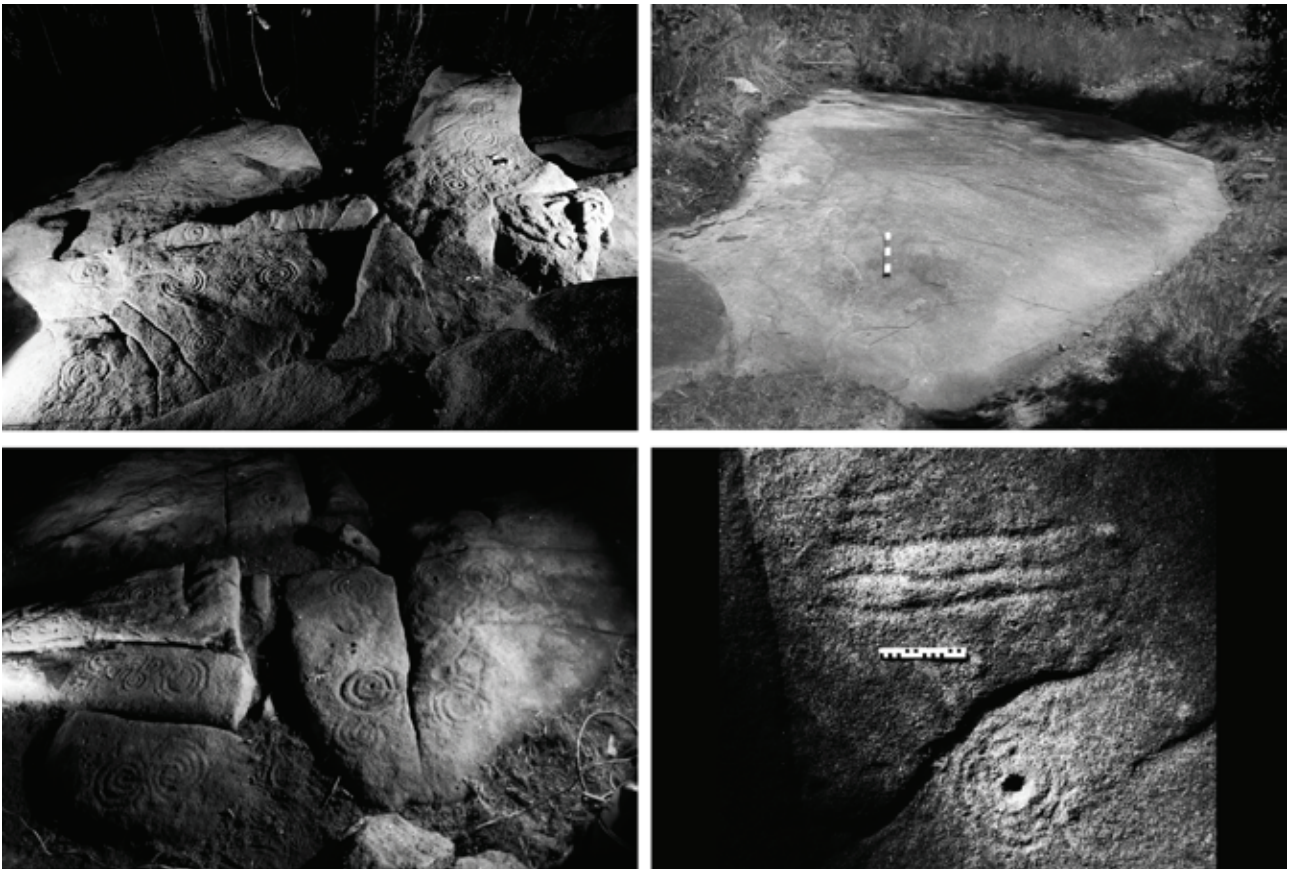


Fig. 3 (A) General view of Panels 1, 2 and 3 of Quinta do Paço 1. (B) General view of Penedo dos Sinais outcrop. (C) General view of Bouça da Miséria outcrop. (D) Detail of the engravings in Bouça da Miséria outcrop.

This rock art assemblage within the curtilage of the upper section of the hill numbers 10 sites; its repertoire comprising mainly abstract motifs, such as circular forms, concentric circles, semi-circles, wavy lines, labyrinth shapes, spirals, composite signs, grooves, cup marks, limited anthropomorphs, reticulated pictures, footprints and a possible boat (Cardoso 2015) (Fig. 4). The majority of this imagery can be assigned to what

is termed the Atlantic Rock Art tradition, a tradition that is common from the North-western Iberia (from Vouga Valley, Portugal to Galicia, Spain) and the Atlantic façade (Bradley 1997; Alves 2003; Nash 2012). Other motifs, such as footprints, a boat(?) and inscriptions, appear to have been made during the Bronze Age, Iron Age and the Roman Period, that is, partially during the lifetime of the settlement.

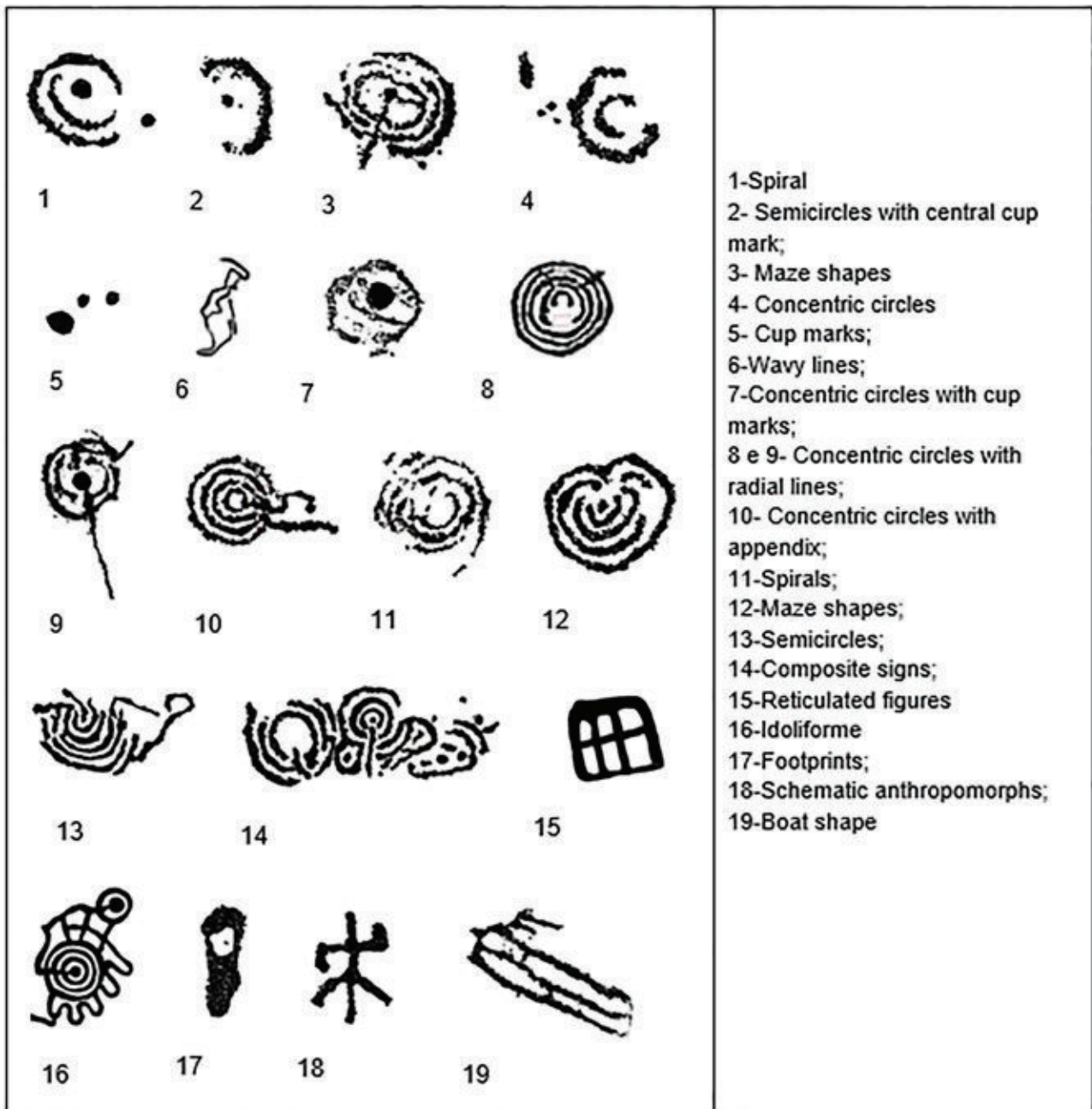


Fig. 4. Types of motifs that are present on the summit and intermediate slopes of São Romão Hill. 1) São Romão Rock Nos. 2; 2 and 3) São Romão Rock No. 6; 4) São Romão Rock No. 10; 5) Quinta do Paço; 6) Penedo dos Sinais; 7) Bouça da Miséria; 8) Quinta do Paço; 9) Bouça da Miséria; 10 to 14) Quinta do Paço; 15 and 16) Penedo dos Sinais; 17) Quinta do Paço; 18 and 19) Bouça da Miséria.

The Atlantic Rock Art of São Romão's hill

In terms of understanding the spatial context of the Atlantic Rock Art of São Romão, Cardoso (2015) have promoted the following criteria:

- The Atlantic-style São Romão's rock art could reveal a collective importance of the cosmogony that is associated with this mountain site, which may have its origins extending back to the late 4th millennium and

part of the 3rd millennium BCE when the site was not inhabited.

- That the most monumental engraved outcrops with the greatest number of motifs are found on the mount's medium slopes, and that the outcrops with a smaller number of motifs are located on the hilltop.
- The various rock engravings, which are probably interconnected, would have possessed different meanings, and may or may not have been fully understood by all members of a prehistoric society. It is important

to note, “... the fact that they were entirely abstract could have protected their meanings from strangers, conveying certain messages to the appropriate people and restricting their availability to others” (Bradley 2009, 119).

- Arguably some of the rock art located on the top of the hill, probably in less accessible awkward places and as a result such locations, would have been restricted to certain members of a community. These people would have known the meaning of all the engraved motifs, but seeing a part of them, and the power it retained. In our view, this knowledge would have been in the control of a hierarchal society.
- Many engraving sites are incorporated into natural pathways or in places where pathways intersect (between the valley, the intermediate slopes, and the mountain summit or, metaphorically-speaking, between the earth and the sky). These defined landscape features are in association with the cosmogony of the communities who visited this site during the Later Prehistory.
- From the spatial context and semiotic observations, here we discuss that water resources and the seasonal changes that would have had a significant effect on communities using this site in Later Prehistory.
- Analysis of the motif types (e.g. concentric circles and spiral compositions) and the effects of light/dark during the passage of the day and time in general, a

tendency towards the importance of the proposed concept of world circularity. We suggest that this must have been significant on the mindset of the people engaged in the act of engraving.

The Atlantic Rock Art of São Romão’s hill and the inhabitants of the Iron Age/Roman Period of the Briteiros hillfort

Much of the Atlantic Rock Art tradition must have been located on the outcropping within the curtilage of the settlement and as a result it was destroyed or buried. However, evidence suggests that there were some engraved outcrops with limited motifs that were maintained inside the settlement to be seen and experienced by its inhabitants or to be incorporated into the buildings that were constructed during the Iron Age and Roman periods.

As examples of the first case raised above, we would like to consider an engraved granitic outcrop on the top of the mount (São Romão’s Rock No. 2) located between several round houses and in the access area of the Iron Age “communal house” (Figs. 5A and 5B). Here, the inhabitants of the settlement were concerned with the maintenance of the rock art, in particular a spiral motif. Note that the block of stone on which it is engraved was broken but it was maintained present, as well as the cup marks.



Fig. 5. (A) Context of the Rock No. 2 inside the hillfort of Briteiros, where we can see the “council house” at the bottom. (B) Tracing of Romão Rock No. 2

Also incorporated into settlement section of the hill, within the area of the summit is Rock No. 6, placed on the top of the summit of the hill where the settlement stands and partially covered by a rectangular house, typical of the Roman phase (Fig. 6A). This outcrop has two semicircular engrav-

ings with a central cup mark and a labyrinth shape, perhaps of Atlantic-style origin. (Fig. 6B) On the same panel there is a Latin inscription engraved, related to *Camal*. This textual engraving was made during the Roman phase of the settlement (Fig. 6C).

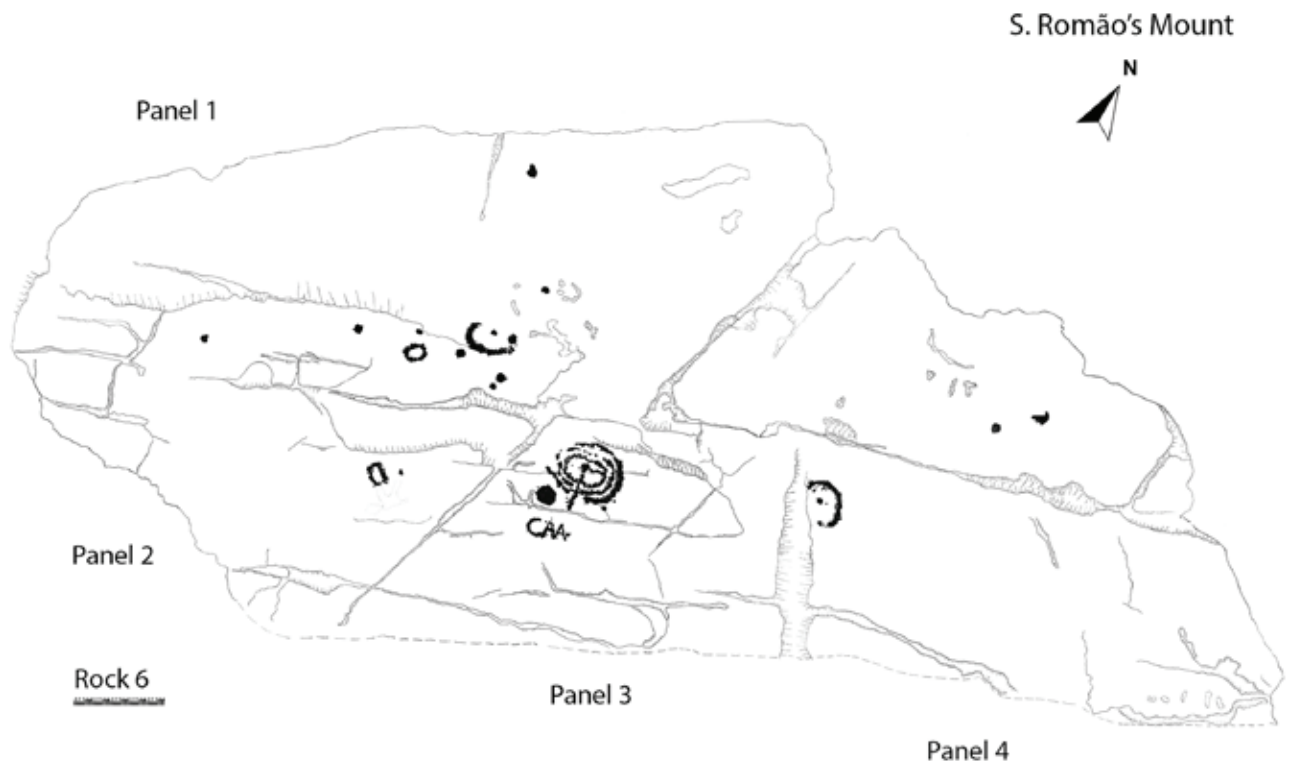
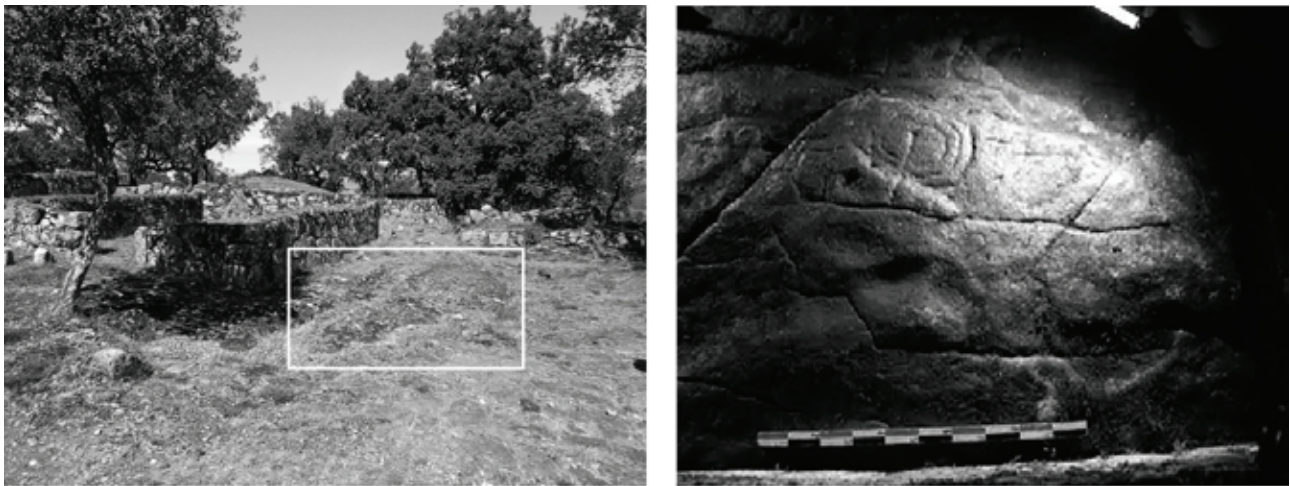


Fig. (A) Outcrop partially overlapped by pictures. (B) Detail of Rock No. 6. (C) Tracing of Rock No. 6.

It should be noted that during the Iron Age this would be a communal area and the engraved outcrop would have been clearly visible. That is why we believe that maintaining the rock art was an intentional act.

As examples of the second case study (incorporation of ancestral signs into buildings) we consider that a spiral was engraved on an elongated stone block, probably cut from a known outcrop.

This block was found in the floor of an atrium of a house and was probably incorporated into the wall as a lintel of a door, which dates to the 2nd century BCE (Fig. 7). Clearly, the builders were concerned with inserting ancestry into the house construction. This addition to the house may have had spiritual and supernatural qualities based on a particular ancestral cult.



Fig. 7. Out of context block, probably part of the “Spiral House”.

We also observe that inside and outside the settlement there are several outcrops that display possible later imagery. Several of these are isolated and some were added to the earlier engrav-

ings. For example, footprints (Figs. 8A and 8B), a double spiral and Latin inscriptions, suggesting a chronology that extends over at least 1000 years of artistic endeavour.

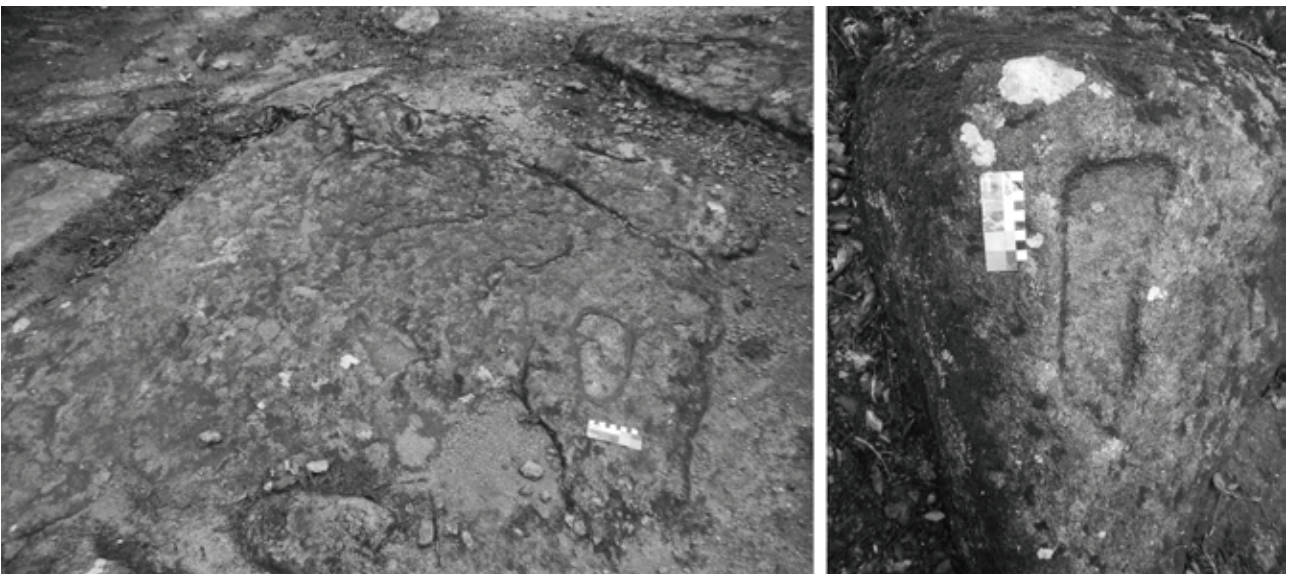


Fig. 8. (A) Footprint of rock No. 4. (B). Footprint of Rock No. 11.

The different types of footprints, however, possess their own chronology and are considered later than the rock art of Atlantic tradition and also earlier than the Roman period of the North-west of the Iberian Peninsula (i.e. after the 1st century AD). It is considered that at least one outcrop containing footprints may date to a time when early settlement activity is ongoing (Cardoso 2015).

The spatial distribution of footprint motifs was curiously found at the base to the summit of São Romão.

Within the area of the summit is Rock No. 4. The site is located in front of one of the houses of the settlement (Fig. 8A), the building associated with the “Camal” through a Latin inscription; probably a prestigious person associated with the house during the Iron Age phase. This footprint representing a right foot is oriented towards the lower slopes of the mount.

Between the 250 and 280 m contour-range there is a profusion of Atlantic-style rock art. Included within this repertoire are two further engraved footprints; one is incorporated into a stone pathway, which once provided access to the southern bathhouse of Briteiros settlement and located along the 270 m contour-range. The rock outcrop that contains the footprint - Rock No. 11 - is heavily fractured, probably the result of the initial construction of the pathway. The pathway is more than likely to be Roman in date and is contemporary with other structures across the site. This footprint representing a left foot is also orientated towards the lower slopes of the hill (Cardoso 2015) (Fig. 8B).

Another engraved footprint is also found within the Quinta do Paço outcrop, incorporated into a peripheral position of a panel that also contains Atlantic-style motifs (Cardoso 2013b, 2015) (Figs. 9A and 9B).

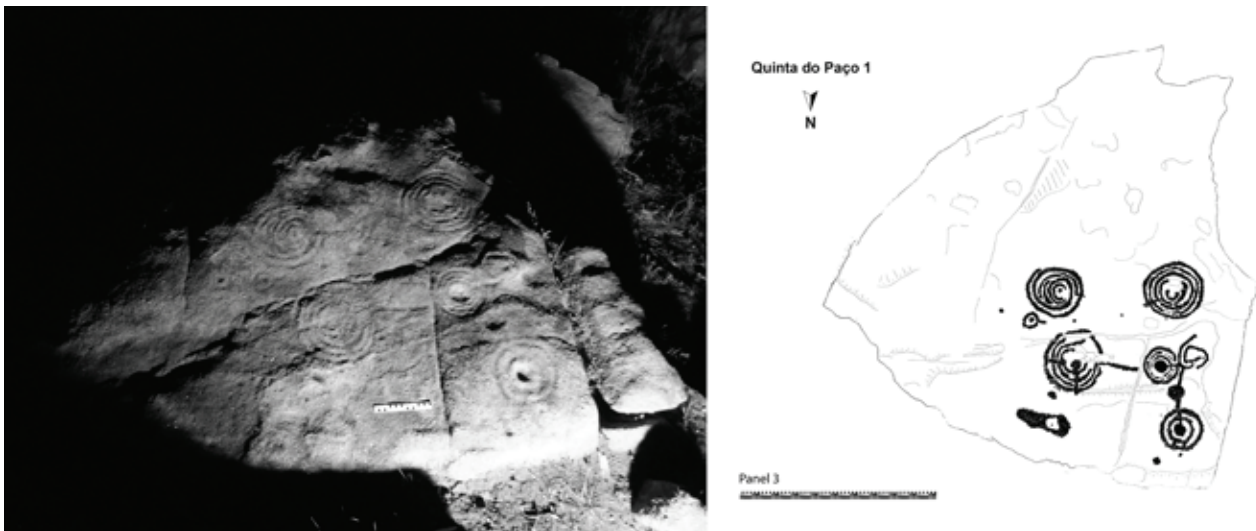


Fig. 9. (A) General view of Panel No. 3 of Quinta do Paço. (B) Tracing of Panel No. 3 of Quinta do Paço.

Interestingly, it is similar in form to the footprint on Rock No. 11 but it is oriented towards the top of the mountain.

In general, we can say that all footprints metaphorically suggest real or mythical paths going up and down the mountain at a time when the summit and the intermediate slopes were considered to be sacred. Moreover, footprints and their orientation may have acted as directional landmarks for would-be pilgrims processing through such a landscape.

From the Iron Age, we can also consider the significance of the double spiral, present on San Romão's Rock No. 5. This panel is located within the settlement area, on top of the summit. We consider this particular motif to be different in style and technique and thus possible later than those engraved motifs that establish the Atlantic rock art tradition (Figure 10). However, we are aware that this type of motif is found within a later prehistoric context and therefore, we cannot rule out the possibility that the motif may have its origins in the Late Neolithic (Shee-Twohig 1981).



Fig. 10. Detail view of the engraved double spiral on Rock No. 5

Bearing in mind that the Atlantic-style rock art tradition is separated from the Iron Age activity on the hill by at least 2000 years, we wish to propose a number of questions concerning the relationship between these different expressions of communication within this place. We are concerned about why have Iron Age inhabitants were allowed certain engraved motifs to remain intact; some of which have been incorporated into their buildings? Moreover, was there an understanding and respect, either as ancestral markers or as socio-political devices between the Iron Age inhabitants and the Atlantic-style rock art?

Finally, we ask the fundamental question of the distribution of certain rock art styles. The Atlantic-style rock art, motifs that include concentric circles, cup-and-rings and cup marks occupy the intermediate slopes and are below the settlement line. Did these large exposed panels provide successive generations of community with a focus and later a boundary in which to ritualise and cohabit? The backdrop for the various phases of rock art present is an entangled complexity that is directly interwoven with at least 3000 years of human agency.

Towards an interpretative outcome

In order to provide the reader with some plausible answers to these questions, we wish to consider the potential col-

lective and symbolic importance of the hill of São Romão. The site clearly has an earlier history, probably extending back to the Neo-Calcolithic (4th/3rd millennia BCE) (Cardoso 2015). During this period, the Atlantic façade had become the backdrop for generic forms of Atlantic-style rock art; the panels at São Romão are no exception to this rule. Based on previous research by the authors, later rock art, probably Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman in date also occupy the site.

It would appear that successive occupants of the site (namely in the Iron Age and Romanization period) respected earlier engravings, not only leaving them isolated and away from the main settlement but also incorporating them into the urban sectors of the site. One could consider that an ancestral cult may have been in operation. Between the initial engraving episodes and the site becoming a hilltop settlement, successive communities would have changed the landscape, with much of the original appearance being radically altered from the “wild” hilltop to the “tamed urban centre”. They must have persisted during the Late Bronze Age through additions or alterations, materialized by a deposition of a palstave. What we are witnessing on Mount São Romão are a number of narratives that extend over a long period of time; each narrative expressing a new world view. This plethora of stories which were passed from generation to generation, over a 3000 year period, would have developed around static immovable objects

such as rock art and natural topographic features within the immediate landscape. In this sense, it is probable that some of the imagery of the past were left intact or reused during the Iron Age and/or Romanization of the buildings, especially those that were similar in style to those used in earlier periods. These semiotic images from the past may have been reinterpreted in a new socio-political order, even though the actual engraving remained unaltered or superimposed (Bradley 2012). It should be noted that during the Roman phase indigenous communities would have maintained their ancient ideological beliefs and that these may

have been tied into the rock art. Based on this concept, Bradley (2003, 226) states ‘*the remaking of the past in the past was both a creative act and an interpretation*’.

As an example, we would like to mention the concentric circles that were made during the Iron Age and later Romanization of important (civic) buildings (such as the bathhouse), (Fig. 11A) ceramic containers (Ribeiro and Sampaio 2008) and metallurgy artefacts (Figs. 11B and 11C), which possess motifs that are similar to the oldest Atlantic, rock Art.

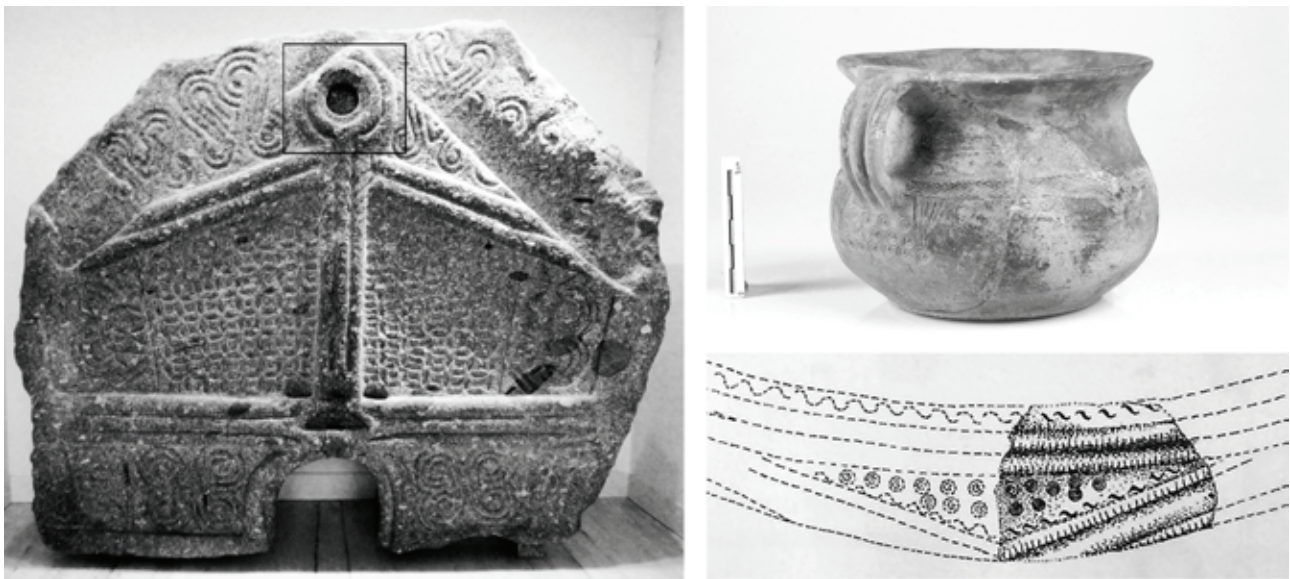


Fig. 11 (A) Pedra Formosa (cf. Nash *et al*, 2013). (B) Iron Age ceramic from Briteiros hillfort (Source: SMS). (C) Citânia de Briteiros helmet fragment (cf. Silva, 2007).

Jones also considered that: “*By reading natural fissures and cracks as ancestral traces and responding to them with repetitive production of images people were temporally situating themselves in a landscape perceived as timeless*” (Jones 2007, 219). This being so, the existence of ancient engravings of Atlantic rock art reused in paths or buildings of the Iron Age or the Romanization of the site could signal another way of incorporating the ancestral symbolism of the hill for later communities. In this respect, the meaning could have been lost or enhanced or elaborated upon. This interaction between ‘ancient’ symbol and later communities would ensure its survival. This scenario possibly occurs on the top of the hill, especially when one considers Rock No. 6. Engraved on this rock is a labyrinth, which is constructed from a series of incised small semicircles and cup marks. This engraved is superimposed by text - *Camal* - “*the patriarch of an extended family, polynuclear, but united by ties of consanguinity*” (Redentor 2011),² associated with settlement’s steam bath, located within the southern section of the site. Using this perspective, could it

be considered if it is relevant to make a distinction between these motifs (or signs) as ancestral ritualised markers? Or can we consider them as socio-political points within the landscape? It is probable that such motifs invoke power and prestige as they gain a history, similar to the exchange valuables and their respective networks within the Kula Ring (Weiner 1983). One can even consider that motifs such as those dispersed over the intermediate slopes and summit of São Romão Hill are ‘*visual traces of past activity to draw attention to features of past and future significance*’ as suggested by Jones (2007, 219).

Although archaeologists have excavated and recorded much of the hillside of São Romão, we still have a limited knowledge of the early history of the site. However, evidence does suggest that the hill was a special place both in prehistoric times and in the Iron Age/Romanisation, with different ways of life and world perceptions. It is probable that elements of the earlier landscape were considered important to the generations of the community who lived and worked the slopes of the mountain during the Iron Age and later periods; the testament of this is the survival of

² see Redentor (2011)

its unique rock art assemblage. The ancient heritage of this site is further enhanced by the presence of the various Christianised symbolism that occupy the summit. The people responsible for constructing, say, the church, may have

had a similar mind-set to the people who initially signed the same landscape, some 2500 years previously (Figs. 12A to 12C).



Fig. 12 (A) São Romão's Medieval Chapel Ruins (top left) (Source: SMS). (B). Present day São Romão's Chapel (top right) (Source: SMS). (C) Procession in São Romão's honor (side) (cf. Cardoso, 2015).

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