

IMAGES OF DEER IN THE ROCK-ART OF PORTUGAL

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SUMMARY

This paper presents an up-to-date review of the study of rock-art images of deer or cervids in Portugal. They are among the most common representations of animals throughout all regions of the country and discerned in all periods. There are two major areas: the Côa Valley in the north, where a large number of the deer figures have Palaeolithic features and the Tejo/Tagus rock-art complex, attributed to the Epi-Palaeolithic, Neolithic, and Chalcolithic periods, that is now mostly under the Fratel Dam reservoir.

RIASSUNTO

Questo articolo presenta una revisione dello stato dell'arte sullo studio delle raffigurazioni di cervo o cervidi nell'arte rupestre del Portogallo. Questo soggetto è il più diffuso fra le raffigurazioni di animali, è presente in tutte le regioni del paese e compare in tutti i periodi cronologici.

Il soggetto è presente soprattutto in due aree geografiche: a nord, nella Valle del Côa, dove un gran numero di figure di cervi sono state incise in stilo Paleolitico e nel centro del paese, nel complesso arte rupestre del Tejo/Tago, con una cronologia che va dall'Epipaleolitico, al Neolitico e al Calcolitico. Purtroppo la maggior parte di queste figure sono oggi celate sotto il lago artificiale creato della diga di Fratel.

Deer is the generic word used to refer to members of the *Cervidae* family (WILSON & REEDER 2005). Red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) are still quite common in Portugal (Fig. 1). If visiting the rock-art site of Cachão de São Simão, Montalvão, council of Nisa in the Tejo (Tagus) Valley, one should not be surprised to see one or more deer crossing ones path. There is also an abundance in the northeast, especially in the Natural Park of Montesinho in the district of Bragança,

Today, even if it is only sport and not subsistence, deer are still the most prized trophy among hunters. Bones of red deer are found in archaeological contexts at many sites all over the country (DAVIS 2002; DAVIS *et al.* 2007; VALENTE 2004). They were not only source of food, but also of other useful materials – bones, antlers and skin (Fig. 2).

In the north, engravings of deer or cervids can be found at Chã das Carvalheiras, “Lage” das Fogaças, Lanhelas (JALHAY 1926; VIANA 1929; SILVA & ALVES 2005) and Breia, Cardielos (EIA - IC28), both in the district of Viana do Castelo (Fig. 3 A-B). Some authors like Ana Bettencourt (2009) and Ana C. Santos, see several zoomorphs, including deer, among the many engravings of Lage da Churra (Rua da Cachoila, Paço) Carreço (see Fig. 4). Fernando Lanhas (1968, p. 10) saw deer among the zoomorphs engraved at the beach of Montedor, Carriço, Viana do Castelo (Fig. 4), but they could actually be horses (see Fig. 5). Reference is made to an image of a deer near Levada Velha, Talhas, Macedo de Cavaleiros.

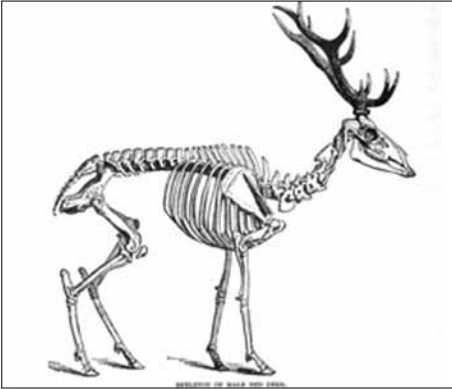


Fig. 1 - (A) Stag red deer (Drawing by Richard Lydekker. 1893-96. Royal Natural History Volume 2 (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:RedDeerSkelLyd2.png>) (B) Pair of male and female deer (Photo by Miguel Bugalho for Naturalink (<http://naturlink.sapo.pt/RecursosUser/Fichas/Ficha%20do%20Vead05.jpg>))



Fig. 2 - Portugal, Tomar, Caldeirão Cave, perforated first and second phalanges of red deer, but it is not clear if the perforations are man-made (Davis 2002, p. 48 fig.13)



Fig. 3 - Minho, Viana do Castelo. (A) Caminha, Lanhelas, Chã das Carvalheiras, Lage da Fogaças, figures of deer (Silva & Alves 2005, p. 173). (B) Carreço, Lage da Churra, possible figure of cervids (Photo Bettencourt)

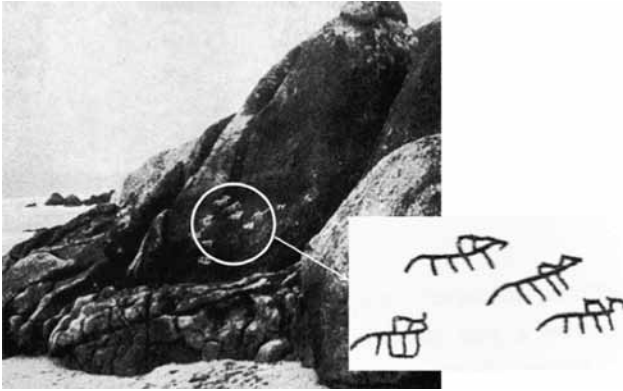


Fig. 4 - Minho, Viana do Castelo. (A, B) Carricho, Montedor, group of possible cervids (Lanhas 1968, p. 8)

A single animal image is known to be pecked by the bank of the river Sabor at Cabeço do Aguilhão, both are in the district of Bragança (Fig. 5 A).

South of the Douro river, excluding the Côa Valley and surrounding area, there is a possible deer figure at Poeiros, Quinta das Olas, council of Tábua, and another at Aldeia Velha, Colmeal, council of Góis, both in the district of Coimbra (RIBEIRO 2008, Fig. 5 B).

Several figures of deer were identified in the area affected by the Alqueva dam, in the Alentejo (BAPTISTA 2002; 2009). At Porto Portel, a beautiful filiform profile of a male cervid shows a clear Palaeolithic style and a group, also scratched, at Mocissos, is probably from the late Iron Age (see Fig. 5 C). Many of these figures are not very clear and have very few details, so it is quite difficult to distinguish what kind of cervids they really represent.

As noted before, they are most probably, *Cervus elaphus*. Other types of deer like fallow deer (*Dama dama*) were only introduced in Roman times. The absence or presence of antlers in images is usually used to distinguish male from female. Many zoomorphs without antlers could really be female deer, but may well be males during autumn and winter.

There are two main clusters of cervid figures in Portugal (Fig. 6)

- the Douro and Côa Valleys—in the north (Fig. 7 A).
- the Tejo Valley—in the centre (Fig. 7 B).

Until now, there are twenty-six sites with images of cervids in the Douro-Côa zone. One of the incomplete figures at Mazouco, Freixo de Espada à Cinta, in the international Douro, district of Bragança could well be a deer and likewise with another image at Pousadouro in the Sabor Valley, council of Bragança (BAPTISTA 2009).

Two surfaces—rock 16 of Vale José Esteves and rock 1 of Vale de Vermelhosa rock—have more than ten cervids each. They are mainly engraved using the filiform technique. Most of them are small, but very well drawn and naturalistic. Many are male, but several, like Vale de Vermelhosa rock 1, are clearly female (Fig. 8 A-B). These images show many anatomical details such as fur, ears, and sometimes, even eyes (ABREU 2012).

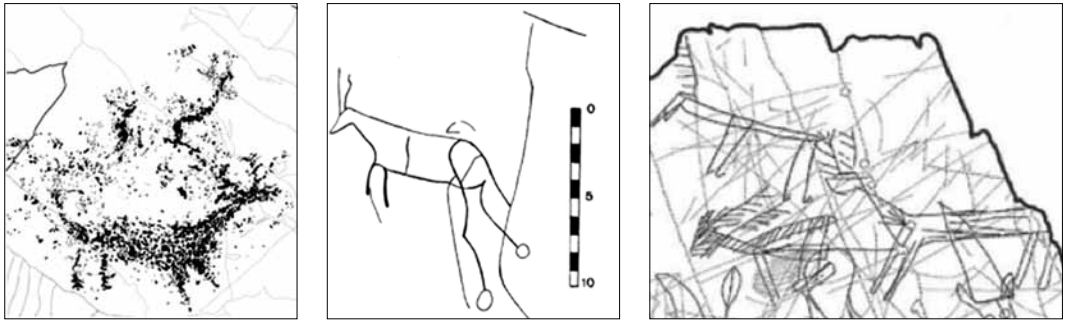


Fig. 5 - (A) Sabor Valley, Aguilhão, pecked deer resembling the Tejo Valley ones (tracing Fernando Barbosa/CNART); (B) Coimbra, Góis, Aldea Velha, Colmeal, possible engraved figure of deer (Ribeiro 2008, p. 47, fig. 8.4); (C) Alentejo, Reguengos de Monsaraz (?), area of the Alqueva dam area. Mocissos, scratched schematic figures of deer (adapted from Baptista 2002, 163 fig. 8)

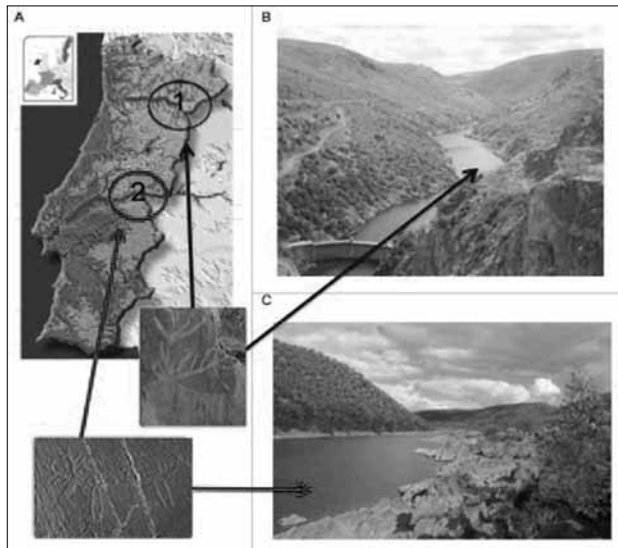


Fig. 6 - (A) Map of the two main areas with engravings of cervids in Portugal. (B) Landscape in the Côa Valley area. (C) Landscape in the area with rock-art in the Tejo/Tagus Valley. (Photo archive "Gravado no Tempo" Project)

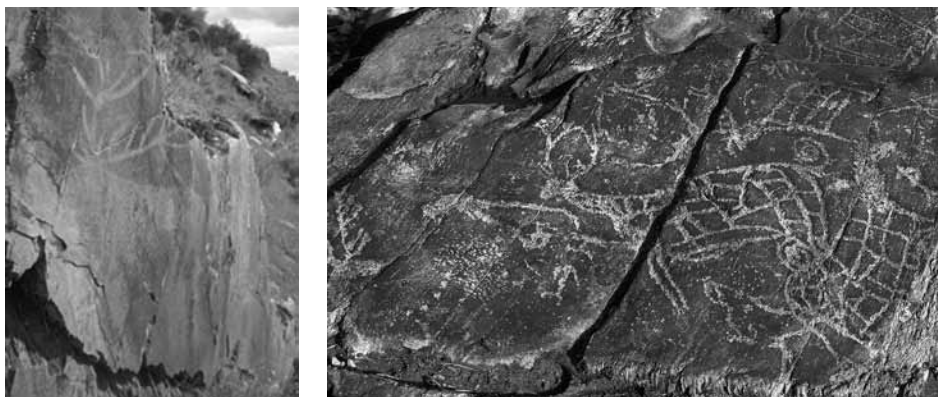


Fig. 7 - (A) Côa Valley, Penascosa, rock X (MSA Archive MSA/LJ). (B) Tejo/Tagus Valley, Fratrel Rock 155, deer figures, now flooded by the Fratrel dam reservoir (Photo E. Anati, CCSP archive)

The style is very similar to the rest of the imagery found in the Côa Valley and in European cave art; however, these filiforms seem more recent than the large pecked Figures and most of them were made, in all likelihood, in the Magdalian context—15,000–10,000 years ago (Fig.8 A-B). In various, cases the deer are clearly overlapped by much later Iron Age Figures, as on rock 1 of Vale de Vermelha (Fig. 8 B). Some Douro-Côa Figures may even represent a similar animal with very large antlers—the extinct *Megaceros* (ABREU *et al.* 1996; ARCA 1996), but they are most probably very old male deer (Fig. 8 C).

Such representations are usually isolated and are not part of any scene. Very few look as if they are being hunted. In Vale de Cabrões, a spear pierces the body of a deer (Fig. 9 A) the style resemble the Figures of the Tejo in the South of probably Epi-palaeolithic Age (ABREU 2012); a hunting scene was found in Vale da Casa, Pocinho (BAPTISTA 1983) and another on the plaquette of Paço (Fig. 9 B). All from Vila Nova de Foz Côa and the last ones clearly belonging to the Iron Age.

In the area of the Tejo basin (Figg. 6 and 7 B), all the deer are pecked. They are the most common animal depicted and exist, at least, at 6 sites—Alagadouro, Fratel, Cachão do Algarve, Cachão de S. Simão, Chão da Velha, Vale de Rovinhosa (ABREU & GARCÉS 2010).

Most of them have the body made in contour, often with one or two lines across it (Fig.10). These two trace the belly and might represent a change in fur colour. They give Figures a certain “volume” and even some three-dimensionality. Some authors call it, “the line of life” (GOMES 1989; 2007). The neck is fully pecked in numerous cases, an important characteristic of what I call the “Tejo style” (Fig. 11 A-B). In some cases, as at Fratel rock 155 (BAPTISTA 1981), the animal is engraved in a “X-ray” fashion with the body divided by lines (Fig. 11-B). This way of representing the animals can be found all over the world, from Scandinavia to Australia and has been interpreted as the desire to show

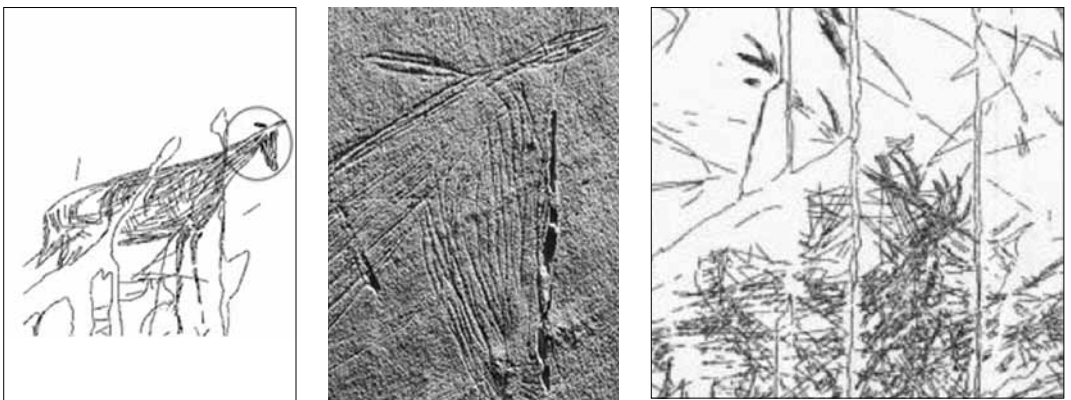


Fig. 8 - (A) Douro valley, Vale da Vermelha, Rock 1, small female deer. (B) The fur is represented by multiple parallel lines. Detail of the head with representations of ears. Raider overlapping deer figure. (C) *Megaceros*-like figure, Upper Palaeolithic (Tracings and photo Projecto “Gravado no Tempo”)

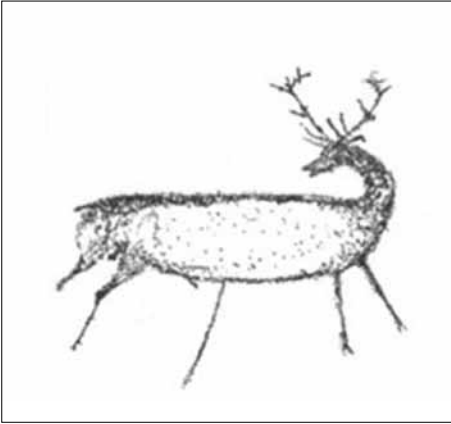


Fig. 9 - (A) Douro, Vale de Cabrões R1 1 Epi-Palaeolithic (Tracings Projecto "Gravado no Tempo" Team); (B) Côa valley, Paço, plaquette, Possible hunting scene, Iron Age (Photo Fundação Parque Côa)

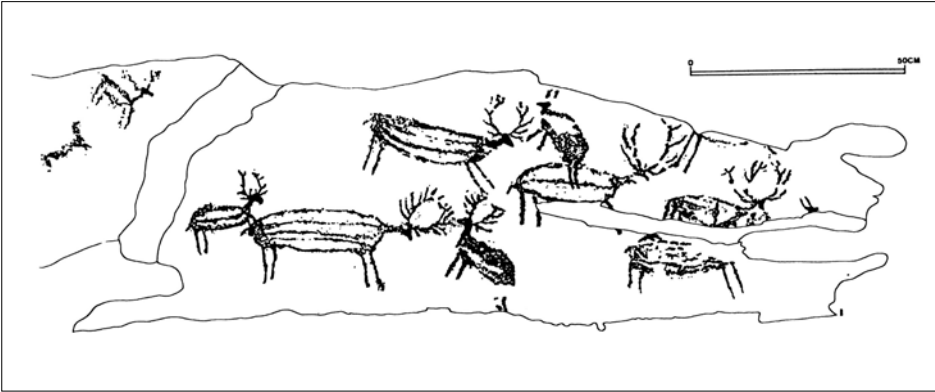


Fig. 10 - Tejo/Tagus Valley, Fratel, Rock 49 (Gomes 1987, p. 31, fig. 22)

the inner organs of the animal. Most of the deer images in the Tejo have large antlers. Taking in to account the number of tines and crown tines shown, they must represent old adult males (Fig. 12 and Fig. 13).

Does or hinds are much less frequent. The absence of antlers could indicate, as noted before, an animal in the autumn or winter or even a young male. At least one Figure seems to depict a fawn (Fig. 14 A). Most of the engravings are isolated, even though they can often be found overlapped or overlapping others. Even if rare, several assemblages of images seem to represent real scenes (Fig. 14 B): groups of animals grazing, as on rock 49 of Fratel, or even mating, as on rock 4 of Cachão do Algarve and rock 150 of Fratel Some scenes could be of hunting. Mário Varela Gomes sees one on rock 3 of Chão da Velha and two others at Fratel, on rock 150 (GOMES 1987, p. 24 - Fig. 15 A) and rock 175. One of the most revealing scenes of the Tejo is that on rock 11 of Cachão de São Simão (formerly rock 158), where a man holds a dead deer above his head. The image is particularly powerful, persuasively evoking an associated narrative (Fig. 15

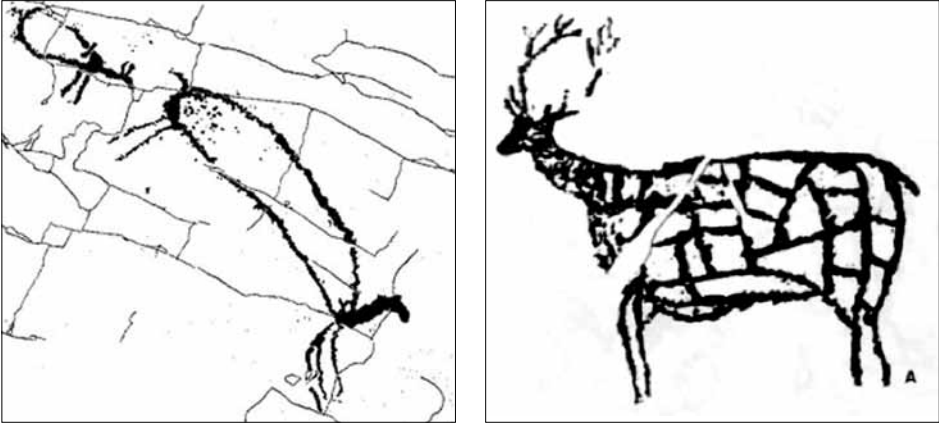


Fig. 11 - Tejo/Tagus basin. (A) Ocreza, Rock of the zoomorphs showing the fully-pecked neck characteristic (Tracing Linda Bossoni, Archive Museu de Arte Pré-histórica de Mação). (B) Fratel, Rock 155, "X-ray" deer (Gomes 2007, p. 98, fig. 10)

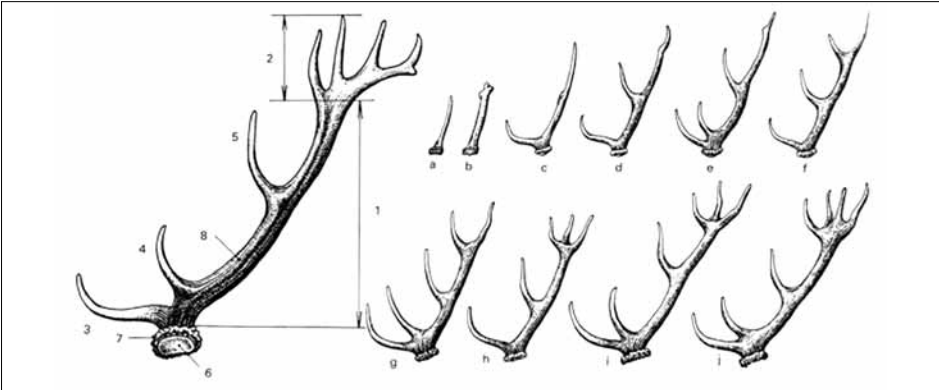


Fig. 12 - Types of antlers according to age, showing tines and crown (From apaginadomonteiro <http://www.apaginadomonteiro.net/evoveado02.jpg>)

B). These engravings of hunted deer are among the very few still above water.

Latex casts made in the 1970s are irreplaceable, but the information is very fragmented. Many important elements have been lost, such as proximity to water of the river, position on the rock and relationships with other figures. As now, herds of cervids would have roamed the river area and must have been one of the main sources of food of ancient people. They were engraved very close to water or even in usually submerged areas, suggesting these figures may be connected with times of crisis. Dropping river levels or a dry riverbed would happen during spells of drought—less water, less deer, less food. Emmanuel Anati, who visited the zone in the 1970s before the construction of the dam, noted that they could be a kind of "ex-voto" (ANATI 1975, p. 60).

Most of the area is now flooded, so very few archaeological works are still possible. Important Palaeolithic sites in the archaeological context of the zone show that human occupation starts a long time ago. When Anati visited the site, he proposed the existence of an archaic group in a sub-naturalistic style


























































Longa simples		Longa ramificada								Curta simples	Curta ramificada	Inexistente	
													
													
													
													
													
													

Fig. 13 - Tejo/Tagus rock-art complex, details of engraved cervid heads published (Garcês 2009)

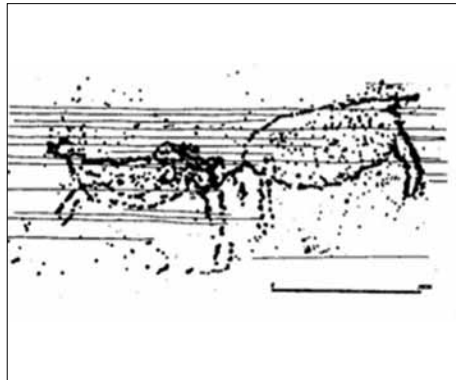
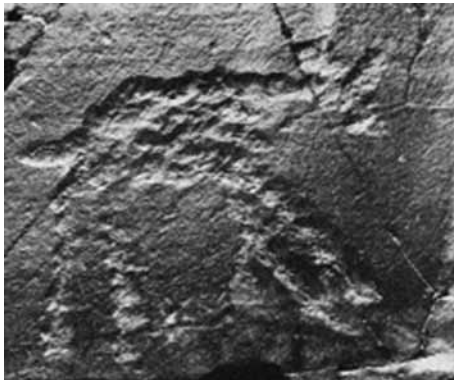


Fig. 14 - Tejo/Tagus. (A) Possible fawn? (SERRÃO 1973, fig. 13). (B) Cachão do Algarve, Rock 4, mating scene? (Gomes 1989a, p. 58, fig. 5)

(ANATI 1975). These animals are less naturalistic than images of the Palaeolithic tradition, but still very realistic (ANATI 1974). They are usually larger than the others, made in contour, like those on rock 155 of Fratel (BAPTISTA 1981; GOMES 2007). They have parallels with the Proto-camunian Figures of Valcamonica (ABREU *et al.* 1989; FOSSATI 2007), the large deer of Galiza (ANATI 1968a; 1968b) from the Epi-palaeolithic. Already then, Anati saw some resemblance with the plaquettes of Parpalló (VILLAVARDE 1994) and the paintings of La Pilleta, Malaga (BREUIL 1933), both in Spain. After the discovery of the Palaeolithic-style horse of Vale de Rovinhosa, Envendos, council of Mação, the proposed presence of a group of “artists” from the Palaeolithic gained ground. Most of the figures

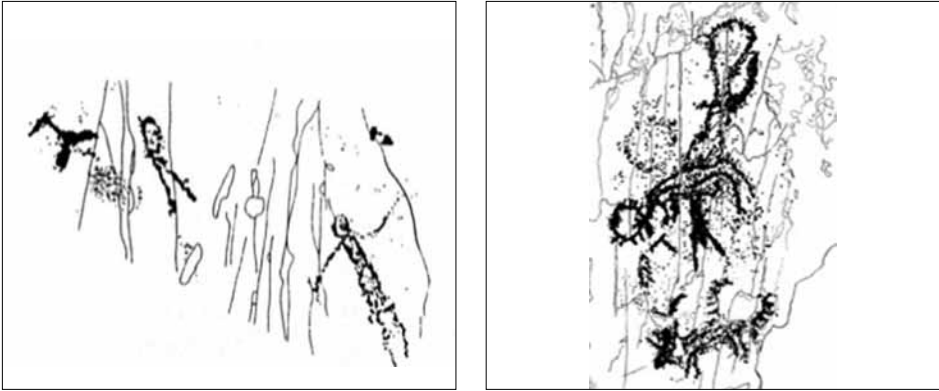


Fig. 15 - Tejo/Tagus. (A) Fratel, Rock 150. Possible hunting scene (GOMES 1987, p. 24, fig. 33). (B) Cachão de São Simão Rock 11, formerly Rock 158 (Tracing Maphar team for the RUPTEJO Project)

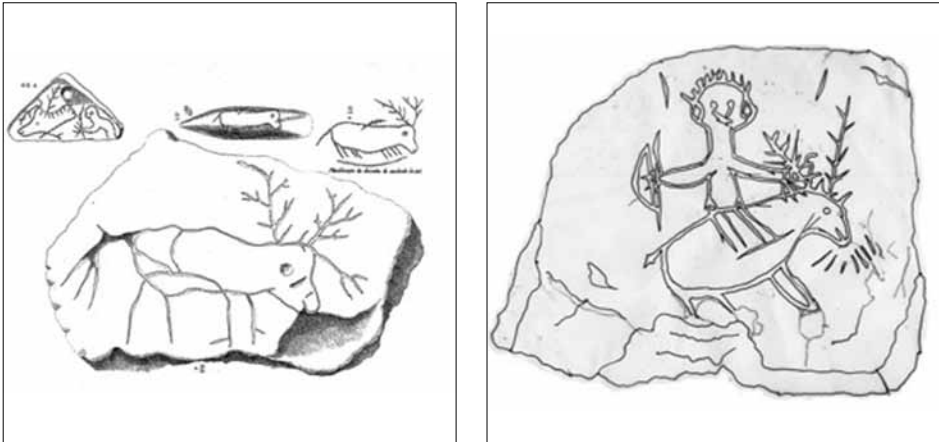


Fig. 16 - Vila Real, Vila Pouca de Aguiar, Serra do Alvão. (A) Some of the “stones” with deer figures (drawings BRENHA 1903, est. XXXVIII). (B) Stone with the engraving of a deer rider, Iron Age, now in the Museu de Arqueologia e Numismática de Vila Real (Tracing MSA/ AF - Unidade de Arqueologia - UTAD)

of deer in the Tejo/Tagus were made after the Palaeolithic or Epi-palaeolithic. Most were probably made in the Chalcolithic and have a style reminiscent of the representations of deer on the statue-stele of the Alpine Arc (CASINI 1994). The antlers in some engravings on the stele are transformed in solar figures and vice-versa. In some of the images of the Tejo, the antlers almost “close” to form circles that look very similar to solar figures with rays. As a figure, they are often associated with spirals—solar animals surrounded by circles on water?

In many cultures, cervids are, from the point of view of symbolism, animals of the “other” world. For the Celts, they were “fairy cattle”, supernatural animals fed by fairies. The “Kernunos God”—a human like figure with antlers, a



Fig. 17 - Portugal. (A) Barcelos, Roriz, Oliveira, Monte do Facho, Iron Age deer engraved on the back of the statue of Roiz, scale 1:16, Museu Diogo de Sousa, Braga (Silva 2007, p. 689, Est. CXXVII, 3). (B) Palmela, Casal do Pardo, schematic "pecked" Chalcolithic deer on 29.5cm bowl, Museu Nacional de Arqueologia, Lisbon (Alves 1989. p. 42).



Fig. 18 (A) Viseu, São João da Pesqueira, Fraga D'Aia rock-shelter. Hunting scene (adapted from Jorge et al. 1989, p.118, fig. 8); (B) Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo, Malhada Sorda (Photo Manuel Almeida © CNART)

torques and a snake – was one of the first "European" gods, known all over the continent, from Italy to Denmark (FOSSATI 1991).

In Portugal, the image of deer is not very common in prehistoric times. Some of the so-called "Pedras" (stones) of the Alvão (Fig. 16 A-B) have figures of deer (BRENHA 1903). These polemic objects were found in the late nineteenth-century in the dolmens of the mountain of Alvão, between the council of Vila Real and Vila Pouca de Aguiar. The discovery by Father José Brenha and Father Rafael

Rodrigues (BRENHA 1903; RODRIGUES 1895a; 1895b) astonished the world because, besides deer, the stones had letters—the alphabet of Alvão—in a Megalithic context. Together with my colleague Artur Abreu Sá, I had the occasion of studying some of those stones and images (ABREU & SÁ 2000). The origin of the support is local, from around Vila Pouca de Aguiar, and in the case the deer ridden by a hunter (Fig. 16 B), the engraving was produced using a metal object. They are probably all from the Iron Age and were placed in the dolmens in a later period. The images from Alvão are similar to deer engraved on the boulder or statue of Roriz, Monte do Facho, Barcelos (SILVA 2007 - Fig. 17 A) dated to the late Iron Age. A very schematic pecked deer decorates a bowl from the Chalcolithic found in Casal do Pardo, Palmela (ALVES F. 1989, Fig. 17 B).

Most images of deer in the rock-art in Portugal are engraved. Painted cervids are much more rare. In the rock-shelter of Fraga D'Aia, São João da Pesqueira (JORGE *et al.* 1989), there is a stag being hunted (Fig. 18 A). The zoomorph of Malhada Sorda Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo council, could be a doe (Fig. 18 B).

In conclusion, representations of cervids in Portugal are present in both the so-called traditions: “Great Tradition of the Schist” and “Great Tradition of the Granite” (ABREU 2012); however, they are more frequent in the first. The most important areas in terms of number of figures are the Côa valley, where the deer are dominant in the Magdalenian horizon and in the Tejo Valley, where they belong to the second oldest phase, with many examples probably of the Epi-palaeolithic period. As a typology, they form part of the “Deer Tradition”, assemblages of figures with the geographical distribution that has been already presented.

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