



# Grabados rupestres de la fachada atlántica europea y africana

## Rock Carvings of the European and African Atlantic Façade

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# A CONTEXT FOR THE GALICIAN ROCK ART

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*I don't know where  
Confused about how as well  
Chasing cars (Snow Patrol)*

*RESUMEN: Generalmente el arte rupestre se muestra singularmente remiso a informarnos sobre el tiempo de su producción, su empleo o significado y ello es especialmente cierto en el caso de los petroglifos galaicos. No obstante, a través del análisis interno de las propias representaciones, se establece para el núcleo duro de estas representaciones un marco temporal que se ciñe al III milenio y los inicios del IIº cal BC. Este encuadre no es desmentido por las eventuales asociaciones espaciales con lugares de ocupación que se han observado en ciertos lugares. Estudios de tipo paleoambiental apuntan a la existencia de cierta presión sobre el medio causada por la consolidación del sistema agropastoril y coadyuvada por la existencia de episodios de recrudescimiento climático que parecen tener lugar de forma simultánea. Probablemente, los factores culturales y medioambientales tienen efectos bastante diferentes según las áreas de que se trate y es posible que su incidencia haya sido mayor en las comarcas más meridionales del Noroeste. En cualquier caso, parece bastante claro que la ejecución de por lo menos el segmento más característico de los petroglifos galaicos tiene lugar en un momento en que los iniciales procesos de diferenciación interna adquieren carta de naturaleza y conducen a cambios en las prácticas funerarias, reorientadas en un sentido más individual que en la etapa megalítica y también a modificaciones en las pautas de ocupación del territorio, de lo que dan buena muestra los abundantes asentamientos con cerámicas Penha o, más tarde, campaniforme. Algunas de estas ocupaciones, en el sector más meridional, adquieren un carácter más defensivo, no sólo por su ubicación en puntos estratégicos y con buen dominio visual sino, en casos muy puntuales, por la erección de estructuras murarias.*

*PALABRAS CLAVE: PETROGLIFOS GALLEGOS, CRONOLOGÍA*

*ABSTRACT: The art of NW Iberia was studied for years almost exclusively from a descriptive perspective and, in practice, sheltered or open-air engravings and paintings were treated as mere artistic objects, just compiling their motives and trying to establish their sequence, forgetting that these manifestations expressed the thought of specific societies in the past. That 'splendid isolation' is graphically reflected in a synthesis about Galician prehistory (VV. AA., 1979), where Galician petroglyphs are dealt with in an independent chapter, thus separated from the great cultural divisions in which the prehistoric past was analyzed. Such a reductionist perspective starts changing during the 90's with a new focus on the social background of the art that tries to understand it in the light of the patterns of subsistence and the strategies of exploitation/appropriation of the territory. A number of works have been produced, dealing with the underlying ideological framework (Vázquez Varela 1997), the location of the carvings close to the boundaries of site catchment areas during the III and II millennia BC ( Peña & Rey, 1993 and 2001; Concheiro & Gil, 1994; Rodríguez et al., 2006), as well as a series of research projects adscribed to the Landscape Archaeology (Bradley et al., 1994a and 1995) that, originally centered in the study of the Galician engravings, have been later extended to the schematic manifestations of northern Portugal (Sanches, 1996; Sanches et al., 1998; Bradley & Fábregas, 1999). Recent works about the Schematic Art of other regions of Iberia have echoed this approach, pointing out their deliberate location, as well as the eventual relations with Neolithic or Chalcolithic sites (Bueno et al., 1998; Martínez, 1998).*

*KEY WORDS : GALICIAN PETROGLYPHS, CHRONOLOGY*

Truly, when dealing with open-air art such as that of Galicia, it is very difficult the establishment of its chronology and that explains, if not justifies, the late scientific efforts towards its contextualization. The local environmental circumstances are not a great help, since the adverse effects on the rock surfaces of abundant precipitations must be added to the generally acid and eroded soils. We can consider two types of contextualization of the art: an internal one, related to the remains left by human activities, accidentally or deliberately, in the same decorated places

(deposits, bonfires, abandoned artefacts) and another external, revealed by the analysis of the settlement evidence arguably linked to the carved rocks.

Any attempt at describing the socio-cultural framework in which the Galician rock art was elaborated, requires the establishment of a few chronological yardsticks, an endeavour that for several reasons it is far from being accomplished to everyone's agreement (i.e. Santos, 2005; Costas et al., 2006). I shall follow roughly the chronological

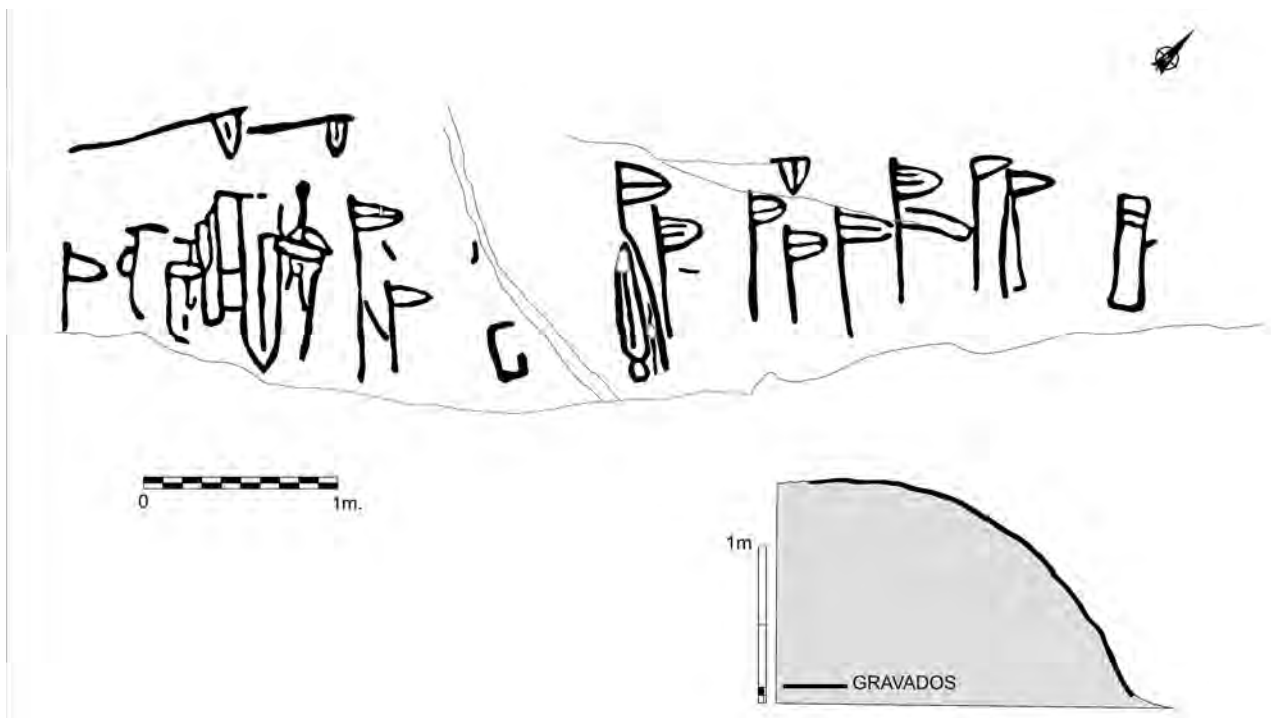


Fig. 1.- Petroglyph of Coto das Laxas (Rodeiro, Pontevedra). After Fábregas et alii 2008b.

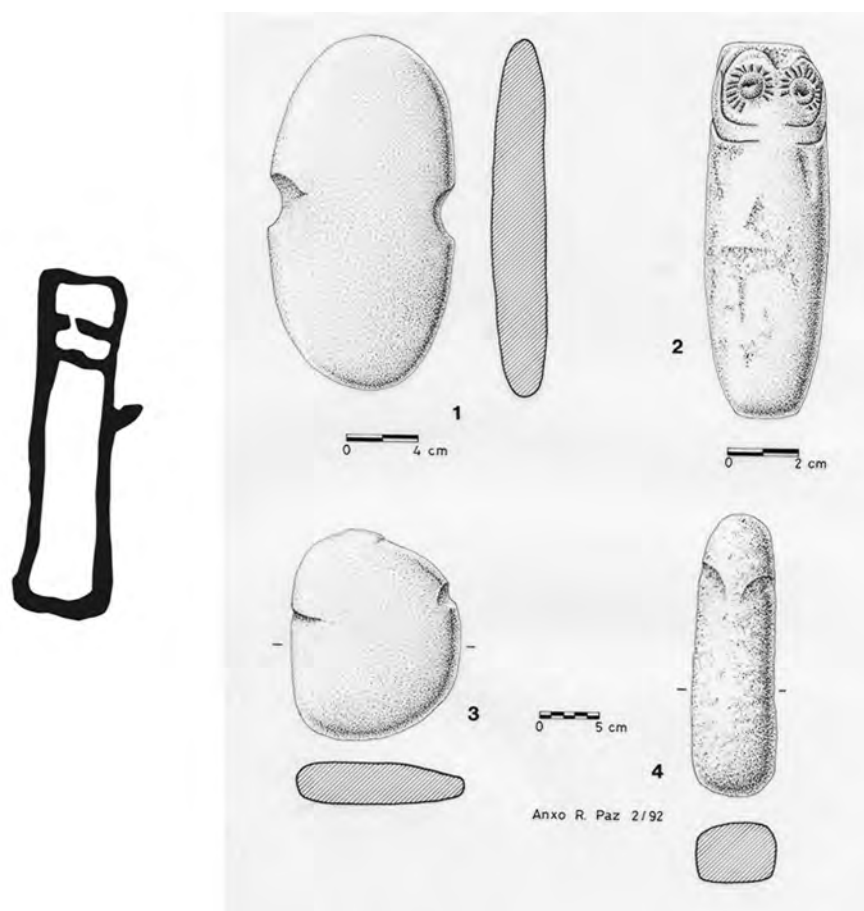


Fig. 2.- Antropomorphic representations from Southern Iberia (1,2), Galician passage-graves (3,4) and an idol-like motif from Coto das Laxas (see fig. 1).

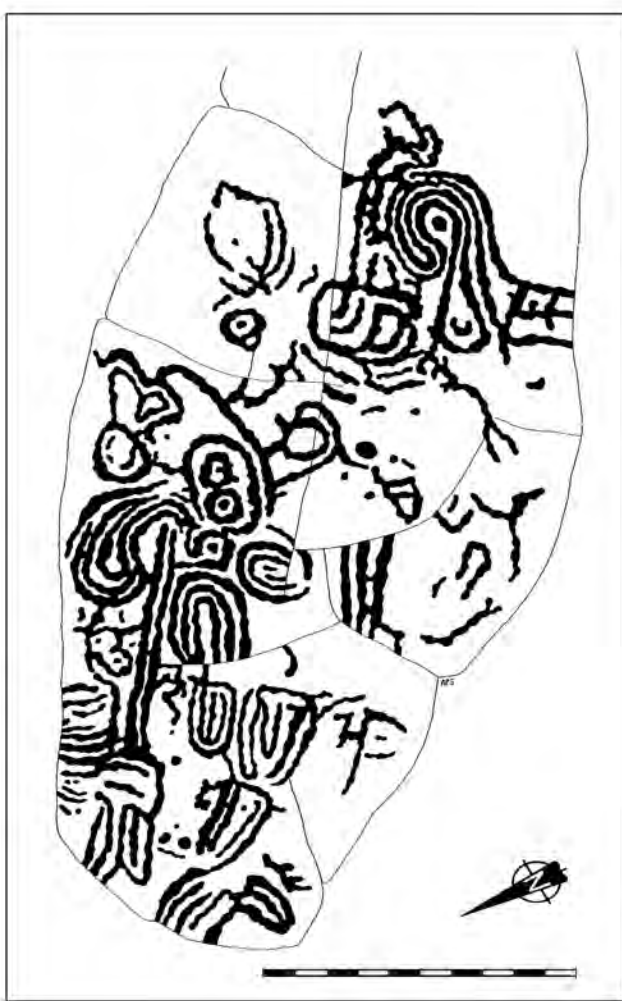


Fig. 3.- Petroglyph of Coto Ventura (Poio, Pontevedra). After Peña 2005.

proposal of Peña and Rey (2001: 119) that places the Galician carvings in the III millennium BC, taking as a reference such naturalist motifs as the cylinder-idols, daggers and halberds, which have dated counterparts in the archaeological record (Figs. 1 and 2). An older chronology could be suggested in some exceptional sites like Porto Ventura (Poio) (Fig. 3) or Coto da Braña 3 (Cotobade), given their iconographic bonds with the megalithic art of Gavrinis, Knowth or Newgrange (Sartal, 1999; Costas & Pereira, 2006), the same could apply to certain motifs such as the reticulates or at least a part of the very ubiquitous cupmarks, due to their frequent association to the tumular burials. On the other hand, some scarce and spatially restricted themes, such as the three recorded ships in Oia, could span the existence of the engravings to the central centuries of the II millennium BC (Costas & Peña, 2006). To sum up, even agreeing with Peña and Rey in that the core of Galician petroglyphs belongs to the III millennium, we consider the possibility of a temporal extension, maybe into the middle of the II millennium BC and, backwards, up to the central part of the IV millennium, if we follow the proposal of Vilaseco (2004: 19) about the idols of Dombate, the only ones C-14 dated in the Northwest (Fig. 4).

It has been a common place since the 20's (i.e. López Cuevillas & Bouza, 1929), the notion of ties between the Galician rock art and that from other south-western regions of Europe (namely the British Islands and Ireland). The PhD Thesis of MacWhite (1951) further established that hypothesis and gave a definitive boost to the notion of Atlantic relations. More recently we have revised this question (Fábregas & Bradley, 1999), stating that, in spite of the noticeable difference that represents the presence of zoomorphs in the Galician art, there are remarkable coincidences about the abstract group and its internal organization in the panels. As to their disposition in the landscape, all agree on the usual rejection of the more conspicuous outcrops and the generic link with the patterns of occupation and exploitation of territory, but

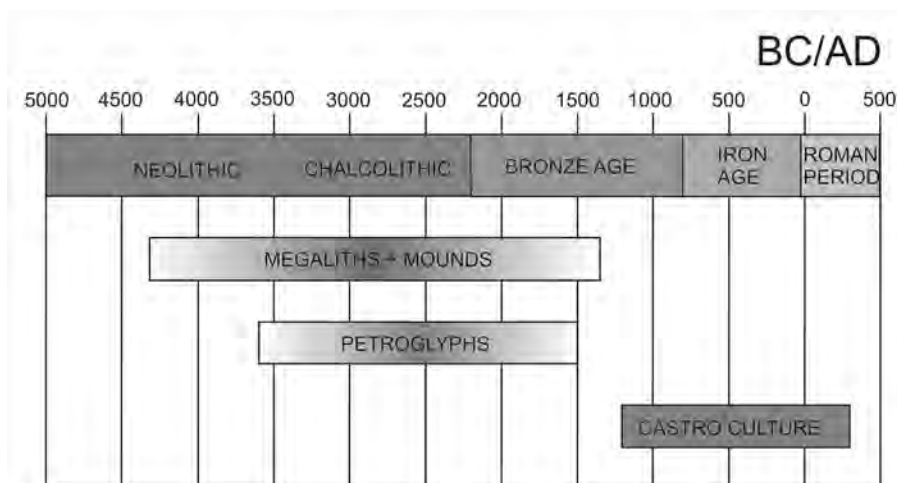


Fig. 4.- A general chronology of the Galician petroglyphs.



*Fig. 5.- Distribution of the chisels of Lagor type (stars), considered imitations of the alpine axes. Inset: chisel from the Illade 0 mound (As Pontes). Modified after Petrequin et alii 2007.*

while in Galicia the most elevated areas, where the tumular monuments are concentrated, have the simpler art, in British lands is just the opposite. To sum up, a similar grammar underlies the rock art of these Atlantic areas, but its factual expression takes very different courses in each one.

The mentioned convergences might be understood in a framework of Atlantic relations developed in the end of the III millennium BC, whose existence has been defended for a long time, and that are reflected in metallic items, such as the Palmela arrowheads, the halberds, certain types of daggers or in the jewellery (Peña, 2003: 70-72). The coincidences in the material culture are neither limited to some metallic artefacts nor exclusively restricted to

the transition between the III and the II millennium BC, for recent research has unearthed scores of sites (either domestic or funerary) containing Bell Beakers, (14 recorded just in the area of O Morrazo – Méndez & Rey, 2005; a partial relation in Prieto, 2001: 10). Among this ware occurs very conspicuously a variety significantly called Maritime that is present along the Atlantic façade of SW Europe since the middle of the III millennium BC.

We have mentioned the existence of certain links between Galician petroglyphs and the megalithic iconography, at the same time with extra-peninsular projections in some cases (i.e. Cassen & Vaquero, 2000). Thenceforth, we might wonder if the Atlantic relations we have just mentioned



Fig. 6.- Distribution of the butt-perforated axes of Cangas type (black triangles), considered imitations of the Breton Tumiac pieces. After Petrequin et alii 2007.

during Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age times are detectable in previous moments and what evidence, beyond certain formal coincidences, can be gathered about. One preferential candidate to sustain this kind of links (among elites?) is claimed to be the perforated ground tools -mace heads, double adzes and hammer-axes or bipennes-, whose chronology (weakly established in Galicia) would correspond to the first half of the III millennium BC. Recently, de Blas and Carretgé (2001) have pointed out the concentration of this type of pieces in Galicia, the more remarkable given its virtual absence from other Iberian regions, as well as the Galician provenance of the raw material of the double pick of Marabiu (Asturias). All this leads them to propose that the Galician focus, beyond echoing European fashions has a personality of its own and may have acted as a producing centre of this sort of artefacts.

But the flow of ideas and raw materials from or to the Iberian northwest has deeper roots, traceable to the IV millennium or even before: the chemical analysis of green beads located in several Breton megalithic sites such as Kervilor or Josselière has identified variscite from the Spanish province of Zamora (Herbault & Querré, 2004; Querré et al., 2008). This discovery gives a new perspective to the studies carried on about the European distribution of the axes made on Alpine rocks, that led to the find in Galicia of several examples of Lagor-type chisels, considered a local imitation of the Alpine pieces (Fig. 5). In the same way a number of axes with proximal perforation (Cangas type) would be copies of the Breton Tumiac type (Petrequin et al., 2006; 2007), an example of the latter recovered in the north of Galicia (Vilapedre, Lugo – P. Petrequin p. c.) (Fig. 6).

Going back to the Galician territory and to the generally



accepted period of execution for the petroglyphs, we can observe that, once and again, the research projects dealing with the Later Prehistory in Galicia and North Portugal (i.e. Baixa Limia, Serra do Babelo, area of Chaves, O Morrazo peninsula) (Jorge, 1986; Criado et al., 1991; Eguileta, 1999; Méndez & Rey, 2005) show, from the end of the IV millennium, a development of the domestic sphere, patent in the number and surface extension of the sites. These tend to abandon the high plateaus, where the megalithic burials were previously located, and clustering in the middle of the slope, quite often in the vicinity of fertile valleys. Some of them are located at points with a visual command of the surrounding territory, even if the best farming terrains are situated a bit further. A few of them, finally, have defensive structures of variable complexity, from a simple stone enclosure or talus (Sola, San Lourenço) to more or less imposing fortified circuits (El Pedroso, Crasto de Palheiros, Castelo Velho).

Furthermore, most of the settlements show a richer material culture than that of the preceding periods, underlined by the spread of incised or impressed vessels, like the so-called Penha, with a distribution concentrated in west Tras-os-Montes, coastal Minho and the SW Galicia, and a characteristic metoped decoration that sometimes recalls that of the Chalcolithic in the Portuguese Extremadura. It is not the only evidence indicating certain degree of interaction with southern regions: determined types of idols (Bueno et al., 2003), the more general presence of flint and other alloctonous raw materials and also the introduction of copper metallurgy and goldsmith clearly show the expansion of the exchange in this period.

The subsistence base widens during the III millennium, as deduced from the increase in the finds of cultivars, including not only cereals such as wheat and barley but also some pulses such as broad beans or lentils. The livestock, poorly represented in the record for taphonomic factors, includes both bovine and ovicapridae and some suidae. Due to its location in the Rías Baixas, the shell midden of Guidoiro Areoso (Vilanova de Arousa, Pontevedra) can be especially relevant: bovidae, ovis and suidae are present in it, with malacofauna centred in two bivalvia – mussel and oyster- and scarce remains of ictiofauna (Méndez & Rey, 2005).

Hunting is badly recorded at most sites, except for those in areas with rough relief and maybe less human impact such as Cueva de las Tres Ventanas (El Bierzo, León) (Fernández et al., 1999) or, specially, Pala da Vella (Ourense) (Fernández, 2000). The development of the productive economy is reflected in an indirect way in the pollen spectra, with the decrease of the arboreal taxa and the abundant presence of synanthropic species, as well as in a direct way by the appearance of big storage vases and, in some cases, storage pits (v.g. Buraco da Pala). On the other hand, in the biggest settlements (Castelo Velho, Crasto de Palheiros, El Pedroso) are concentrated certain transforming

activities such as the elaboration of textiles, the metallurgy or the manufacture of arrowheads and ground-stone axes. While such works could be addressed to a purely local demand, in some instances they reach such a scale (for example the manufacture of arrows in the settlement of El Pedroso, in the province of Zamora) (Delibes et al., 2002) that they would be seemingly related to the needs of a political economy.

It is a paradox that, in this context of growing complexity, the funerary sphere should be so opaque to our eyes and once the passage graves are closed at the beginning of the III millennium, only few tumuli have provided pottery or other items matching those recovered from the settlements, generally located in the middle of the slopes (Os Consellos – Nigrán-) (unpublished excavation by M. A. Vidal, ref. Vilaseco, 2000) or even in the valley bottom (Vilafría – Porriño) (unpublished excavation by M. Rey, ref. Fábregas 1992). In a few other cases there is evidence of the continuing use of Neolithic cemeteries (mounds of Lousada 5 or Cotogrande 5) (Vázquez & Gabeiras, 1993-1994; Abad, 1995) (Table 1).

Most of the III millennium recorded sites are located in the southern part of the NW, a pattern largely caused by the higher intensity of the surveys both of amateurs and professionals. If we observe, however, the location of the settlements with a defensive vocation -those located in watersheds or ridges surrounded by steep slopes and with visual command of the surroundings area (whether they have fortification works or not)-, we will find that nearly all are found within the Mediterranean phytogeographic province. Those outside the latter are in a region that nowadays is distinguished by its marked summer aridity. All these areas are characterized by the early adoption of agriculture (not a great surprise given the Mediterranean origin of most cultivars), as indicated by the pollen regional sequence and the exceptional and diversified collection of cereals from the V millennium levels in the Buraco da Pala rock-shelter (Sanches, 1997).

Taking profit of the good conditions of humidity and temperature of the Holocene Optimum, it is quite probable that the early development of agriculture in the southern reaches of the NW would allow a demographic increase sustained along the IV millennium BC or rather, reversing the direction of the causal chain, the higher vegetative growth induced by a more sedentary way of life would demand an intensification in the productive processes. When the climate started to deteriorate in the transition of the IV-III millennium (Martínez & Moares, 1995; Fábregas et al., 2003: table 1), the associated erosive processes will hit harder the thinner soils of the highlands, otherwise specially affected by the colder and drier conditions. Hence, the tendency to occupy usually less exposed areas, located halfway of the slopes and close to water courses, a trend observed everywhere. It is quite possible that the new conditions imposed by the Neoglacial would have affected

Site	C-14 result	CALIBRATION
V. da Soutilha: UGRA-133	4650 ±150 bp	3700-3010 BC (.97)
V. da Soutilha: UGRA-178	4370 ±140 bp	3375-2620 BC (.99)
<i>Cotogrande 5b: GrN.19566</i>	4390 ±50 bp	3120-2900 BC (.88)
<i>Cotogrande 5a: GrN-19565</i>	4065 ±45 bp	2700-2475 BC (.81)
Monte dos Remedios (circular hut): UA-33140	4240 ±40 bp	2920-2740 BC
Monte dos Remedios (hearth): UA-33143	4150 ±40 bp	2880-2620 BC
Requeán: CSIC-898	4200 ±50 bp	2820-2630 BC (.72)
B. da Pala I: weighted average of 3 dates	4113 ±41 bp	2795-2573 BC (.74)
B. da Pala I: GrN-19101	3955 ±25 bp	2570-2433 BC (.85)
Sola I: ICEN-1007	4060 ±110 bp	2890-2335 BC (.98)
Lavapés: CSIC-1532	4000 ±36 bp	2590-2460 BC (.97)
El Pedroso (Upper terrace): Wk-13799	4022 ±47 bp	2680-2460 BC (.94)
<i>Agro da Nogueira: Beta-231718</i>	3930 ± 40 bp	2495-2295 BC (.92)
A Lagoa P.A. 45.04: CSIC-899	3900 ±70 bp	2500-2200 BC (.91)
A Lagoa P.A. 45.04: CSIC-1000	3800 ±30 bp	2310-2140 BC (.96)
Poza da Lagoa (O Viveiro): UtC-5217	3673 ±34 bp	2140-1950 BC
<i>Tomb 1 from Vale Ferreiro: Ua-19728</i>	3635 ±50 bp	2140-1885 BC
<i>Outeiro de Gregos 1: CSIC-772</i>	3620 ±50 bp	2140-1880 BC
<i>Outeiro de Gregos 1: CSIC-771</i>	3360 ±50 bp	1760-1515 BC
<i>Fraga do Zorro: CSIC-1201</i>	3438 ±43 bp	1880-1625 BC
Sola Ila: CSIC-1139	3450 ±37 bp	1885-1680 BC
Sola Iib: weighted average of 4 dates	3333 ±21 bp	1685-1530 BC
<i>Valdavara 2: weighted average of 2 dates</i>	3260 ±28 bp	1615-1490 BC (.91)
<i>Agra de Antas: weighted average of 2 dates</i>	3028 ±40 bp	1405-1190 BC (.95)

Table 1.- A selection of C-14 dates for NW Iberian sites ranging from the Final Neolithic to the MBA (italics: funerary contexts). Calibrated with CALIB 5.01 (Stuiver & Reimer 1998). It is given sometimes a range corresponding to a specific degree of probability (value in brackets).

to a greater extent the agricultural production in most of the north of Portugal, due to the Mediterranean tendency of its climate, that towards the East would increase the dryness of the period (aridity that would hit too, though to a lesser degree, the SW coast of Galicia). The crisis would be the more noticeable in these two areas given the earlier acquisition of agriculture and the relevance that seems to have in comparison with other areas of the Iberian Northwest.

The fact of seemingly sustaining the highest pressure induced by the climatic change will lead some populations with a stronger socioeconomic system to the adoption of a process of agropastoral intensification, that appears in its sharpest form in the meridional areas. The mentioned option is not without problems in the middle term, for it would favour the erosive processes and the consequent exhaustion of the soils, while in the short term would increase the competition for the lands with the adequate characteristics –considering both the new environmental conditions and the changes in the exploitation patterns–. That tension is well attested in the own material culture of the settlements: the occurrence of metallic weaponry in some sites, but mainly the pervasive presence of lithic arrowheads, better explained in a warring rather than in a hunting scenario, as, on the other hand, has been interpreted in other parts of Iberia (v.g. Uerpmann, 1995: 41 for Portuguese Extremadura). To the same diagnostic points the general increase of deaths by arrow shots in the burial record of that time in other Peninsular regions (v.g. Vegas et al., 1991: 443 or Andrés, 1998: 98 for the Ebro basin).

It is in that increase of group competition where the emerging elites will find a ground for their affirmation and development, through the practice of the warfare and their exclusive or preferential control of certain productions (metallurgy, textiles) and artefacts or raw materials obtained through the exchange networks at regional or interregional scales (pottery, metallic tools, silex, ornaments). The scenario par excellence of these activities is constituted by the fortified settlements that, considering their still recent discovery, will demand further efforts to define their function, because the discovery in Castelo Velho of ritual structures with burials associated – significantly- to loom weights (Jorge 1998) questions the simple dwelling character of this kind of sites. The changes in the funerary norm equally express the new statu quo, with the disappearance of the big collective burials, substituted - among other solutions – by more modest tumuli that, nonetheless, sometimes contain rich grave goods, deposited for a presumably smaller number of deceased, besides.

We must, nonetheless, take into account that some fortified settlements, due to the combination of a large superficial extension with the mediocrity of their defences (Sola) or the scarce evidence of occupation in such a spacious enclosure (El Pedroso), would be tactically useless and they should be understood more in a ceremonial dimension

and symbolizing the control over a territory than in the purely defensive: we have in Castelo Velho an additional proof in the fact that the area with the easiest access for an hypothetical attacker is precisely that with the weakest fortification works (Jorge, 1998: 284).

On the other hand, the existence of some sort of settlement hierarchy seems to be quite plausible in places like the western tip of the O Morrazo peninsula (Fábregas, 2001: 94), where a very extensive site, located in a plateau with a broad visual domain (Mesa de Montes) shares the same material culture – characterized by the Penha-type pottery – with two open settlements much smaller (Lavapés and As Forçadas – the latter with some Beakers too), located well inside the 60' isochrone. The different vocation of these three sites is apparent: Lavapés and Forçadas are close to arable lands while Mesa de Montes has not any within the 30' isochrone. Furthermore, the pollen record confirms the practice of agriculture in Lavapés (Peña & Rey, 1993).

Along the 90's several researches agreed on interpreting the petroglyphs in the framework of the strategies of appropriation of the territory (Peña & Rey, 1993). On a more general scale, Bradley et alii (1994b: 337-338) proposed the existence of a correlation between the larger densities of rock art (basically in the SW corner of Galicia) and the existence of areas of great bioclimatic potential, though subject to sharp local variations. That particular circumstance would demand short distance displacements, thus increasing the potential conflicts for the exploitation of strongly compartmented natural sources. This hypothesis, based on actualistic observations, acquires more credibility under the light of the commented archaeological and palaeoenvironmental data: the differential socioeconomic development of the Galician SW and the environmental stress caused by this and the climatic deterioration would lead to an increase of intergroupal conflict (not always nor necessarily traduced in violence) and the imperious need of defining exclusive rights about key areas because of their resources or its character of echotones. While the exercise of a more or less organized violence could be a means to achieve such a goal, another strategy would turn to the petroglyphs as a way of "continuing the war by other ways" (we do not mean, of course, that all the III millenium rock-art would be reduced to such a secular role). It is interesting, on the other hand, that another area where a similar bioclimatic variability was observed (Barbanza peninsula) has provided since then a remarkable series of discoveries of rock art (amounting to nearly 200 sites, with a high proportion of animal representations, besides -Fábregas et al., 2008a).

In between the mentioned Chalcolithic cultural manifestations and the MBA takes place the expansion in the NW of the Bell-beaker, whose chronology and typological sequence are still badly defined, either from the scarcity of methodical excavations or from the haphazards of the C-14 calibration curve during the 2nd half of the III

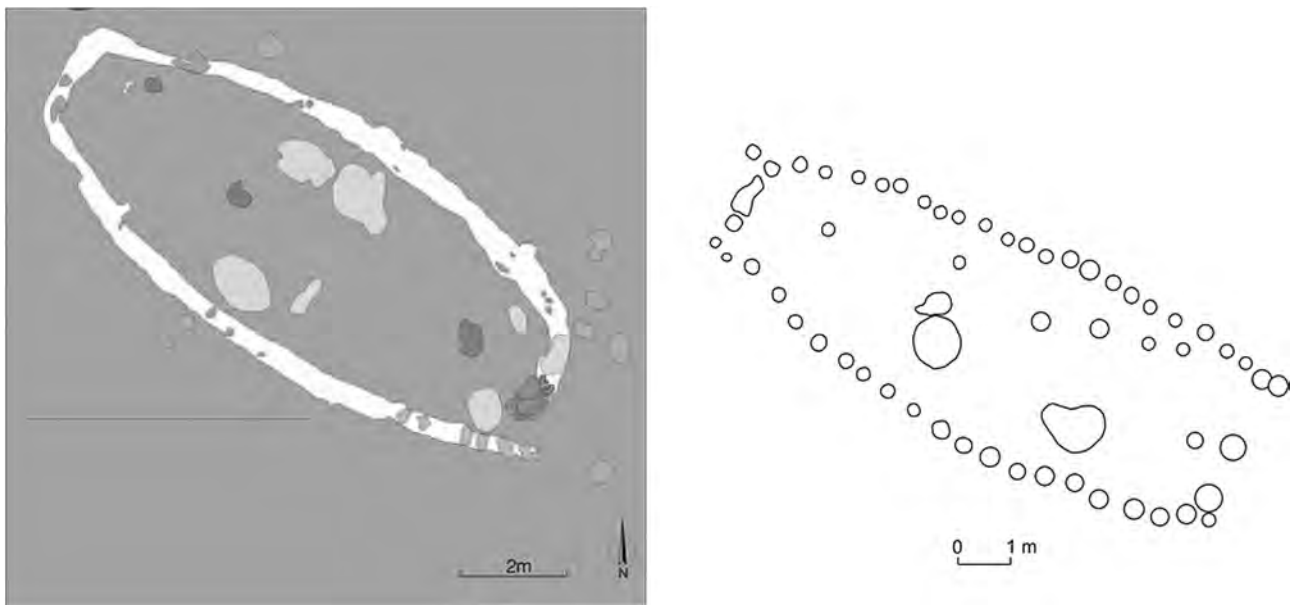


Fig. 7.- Plan of two elongated houses, associated to Bell-beaker pottery: O Fuxiño -Piñor, Ourense- (left) and Setepías -Cambados, Pontevedra- (right). After Vidal, 2008 and Fábregas, Bonilla & César, 2007, respectively.

millennium, a period when, grosso modo, that pottery firstly occurs, but whose local varieties last into the first centuries of the II millennium BC. The adoption of Bell beakers does not imply a significant cultural break and in this way we observe its appearance in recent levels of previously existing sites (Pastoría, As Forcadas, Monte dos Remedios among others), without causing a structural modification of the fortified settlements (v.g. El Pedroso) and even in some (Crasto de Palheiros) it coincides with the extension of the walled circuit. According to this evidence we can say with S. Jorge (1986), that the Bell-beaker phenomenon has more an additive than substitutive character in the NW and these pots become just another prestige item in the chain of inter and intra-group relationships.

There is a feature, however, that seems to advance later patterns: a renewed interest for the plateau areas, as shown by the frequent reuse of the megalithic mounds and the eventual construction of new -usually smaller - tumuli nearby. Also open sites are often recorded in the vicinity of the mentioned monuments or, as it happens in Monte Penide (Fábregas, 2001), in a more peripheral situation regarding the necropolis of the plateaus (Eguileta, 1999: 313; Villoch, 1999: 181). New research in the area of O Morrazo further underline the spatial diversification of the settlement along the Late Chalcolithic and EBA (Méndez & Rey, 2005). At a smaller scale it is noticeable, too, that current excavations in Bell-beaker sites are illustrating the appearance of elongated-plan houses (different, thus, of the well-known circular design) of huge size (up to 12 m in one case) in As Pías (Cambados), O Fuxiño (Piñor) and maybe Monte dos Remedios, among other examples (Fábregas et al., 2007: 42; Vidal, 2008) (Fig. 7). This could be interesting insofar as, putting aside the departures from the traditional

design, would imply a reformulation of the domestic space and the activities associated to it.

The opacity that the archaeological record seemed to suffer during a considerable part of the II millennium BC after the Bell-beaker episode starts to be alleviated by an increasing flow of domestic, funerary and palaeoenvironmental data. Starting with this last ambit, the pollen analysis point out the persistence of the forest clearance along the II millennium, leading into the so-called “cultural steppe” (Ramil, 1993). The palaeobotanic observations are consistent with the results of the soil analyses made in Coto da Fenteira (Redondela – Martínez et al., 2000), the speeding up in the formation of peat bogs recorded in Serra do Bocelo (Aira et al., 1992) and, finally, with the persistence of fires affecting vegetable communities already degraded by the human activity in the area of Campo Lameiro (Pontevedra - Kaal et al., 2008: 2140).

As to the domestic sphere, the increasing availability of C-14 dates clearly reveals the persistence of settlement throughout the NW, continuity equally appreciated in some of the most emblematic sites of the 3rd millennium such as Crasto de Palheiros, Castelo Velho, Sola or Monte dos Remedios, although all of them show constructive changes or different uses of the former defensive structures. The apparent dispersion of the settlement from the end of the III millennium (a phenomenon that we suggested for Monte Penide) is coupled in zones such as the Baixa Limia, Bocelo or O Morrazo (Eguileta, 1999; Criado et al., 1991; Méndez & Rey, 2005) with that renewed interest for the higher lands, in appearance less exploited during most of the III millennium.

It is in the funerary sphere where, perhaps, the research has made most significant progresses during the last years (Fábregas & Vilaseco, 1998), demonstrating beyond doubt that the alleged absence of burials in the NW from the MBA was more a methodological problem than a properly contrasted reality. In fact, during the Late Chalcolithic and EBA there are a number of burials beneath tumuli (cairns or other variants) or excavated into the ground (stone cists) that contain individual inhumations (sometimes cremations). The corpse is accompanied by more or less lavish offerings, consisting of copper weapons, jewels or Bell-beaker pots. The later 'disappearance' of identifiable burials is only an apparent phenomenon, mainly caused by shifts in the burial norm for elite tombs (it must be noted that next to the 'rich' cists and cairns, the recent excavations record other burials with scarce or no grave goods). Thenceforward, funerary mores seem to rule out the funerary deposition of metallic weapons or jewelry, usually substituted by plain pots. Our interpretation is based on the already large collection of excavations and radiocarbon dates, that clearly suggest the existence of a burial continuum along the II millennium BC, characterized by the variety of structural solutions (cairns, cists with and without tumuli, pits dug in the subsoil, reuse of megalithic monuments) and in the treatment of the corpse (cremation and inhumation plus diverse options of secondary burial) (Bettencourt A) (Table 1). However, within the mentioned heterogeneity some common characters may be detected: the more or less complete loss of visibility of the burials, their individual character, the almost total absence of metal among the grave goods and the frequent presence of ceramic shapes of regional origin and distribution, namely the so-called 'wide rim vases', whose absolute chronology place them in the MBA and LBA – circa XVIII-IX cc. BC (Cruz & Gonçalves, 1998-1999). Recent examples of the complexity (and interest) of the funerary domain of the II millennium are found in A Devesa de Abaixo (Moaña, Pontevedra), a Bronze Age site where we find a diversity of burial structures and signs of ceremonial activities (Vázquez Liz, 2005). Also, the sector 2 of Valdavara (Becerreá, Lugo) where in a minuscule fissure the remains of three children (dated towards the XVI century BC) have been recovered, without any grave goods (Vaquero et al., A).

In the course of the II millenium, the combination of a climatic improvement and a possible reorientation in the subsistence strategies had as a result a more effective use of the available territory, including not only the small basins and river beds but also the higher and most eroded lands, that could be used for extended cattle farming. The importance of the latter at this time is suggested by direct and indirect evidence, including the consumption of milk products (Fábregas, 2001: 79-80; Prieto et al., 2003). The decrease of the pressure over the best lands would help to a parallel reduction of intercommunity conflict, at the same time making easier the group fission, thus curbing the incipient attempts of establishment of supra local hierarchies that we perceived during the III millennium

BC. The social exhibition, formerly appreciable in the domestic ambit and – mainly- in the tombs through the manipulation of prestige items (symbolic pottery, Bell-beakers, metal) goes away, too. However, more parochial elites would survive, with the ability to muster the resources for the continuing improvement of the metallic production and the maintenance of the exchange networks to obtain the necessary raw materials. The keeping of the exchange networks explains also the widespread presence of such objects as the 'wide rim' pots, so often found in sites –specially funerary- from the upper river Miño to the Douro valley. In spite of this and the generalization of the individual burial, with all its formal heterogeneity, the privileged members inside the communities of the II millennium seem to be intent on fostering the (apparent) equality before the death, departing from the striking discrimination in the funerary customs that was still perceptible in the EBA. The proscription of the metal in the funerary sphere contributes to that appearance of equality, maybe because with its generalization and technical improvement started to acquire a more practical meaning than before, or simply its social manipulation was displaced to other arenas (terrestrial or aquatic hoards, for example).

The investigation of the last decade has contributed to effectively demolish the "splendid isolation" in which the rock-carving sites seemingly were in relation to the lives of their authors. In truth, the faint evidence we had in the mid 90's about the relationship of the petroglyphs with certain areas more suitable for settlement or farming has been confirmed throughout their distribution. Once and again the surroundings of humid basins (sometimes occupied by bogs) or heads of watercourses show the spatial coincidence of petroglyphs and artefact scatters, often assigned to the Bell-beaker chalcolithic or to less precise moments of the Bronze Age. Other times that link is more oblique and the petroglyphs are disposed in relation to the natural pathways among areas with settlement evidence or with a potential economic interest. These observations have been made in zones such as O Barbanza (Concheiro and Gil, 1994), the Deza (Fábregas et al., 2004: 51) or, in the core area par excellence of the rock art: Campo Lameiro (Méndez, 2008) and Tourón –Pontecaldelas- (M. Rey García p.c.) and close by the well known Auga da Laxe (Gondomar, F.J. Costas Goberna p.c.). In Monte Penide (Redondela) we have a particularly well documented case in Poza da Lagoa (Fábregas, 2001: 30) since in a radius of 200 m. around a humid zone, three lithic and ceramic scatters are found, together with several petroglyphs, among them a panel with daggers and halberds (Fig. 8). A charcoal sample taken amidst one of the artefact clusterings gave a result in the transition of the III/II millennium, in good agreement with the date attributed to the actual metallic correlates of the halberds represented in one of the surfaces (Fig. 9).

It is appropriate that, after doing a generic tour around the world of the Galician petroglyphs, we make a short reference to the attempts done to give context to the engraved rocks,

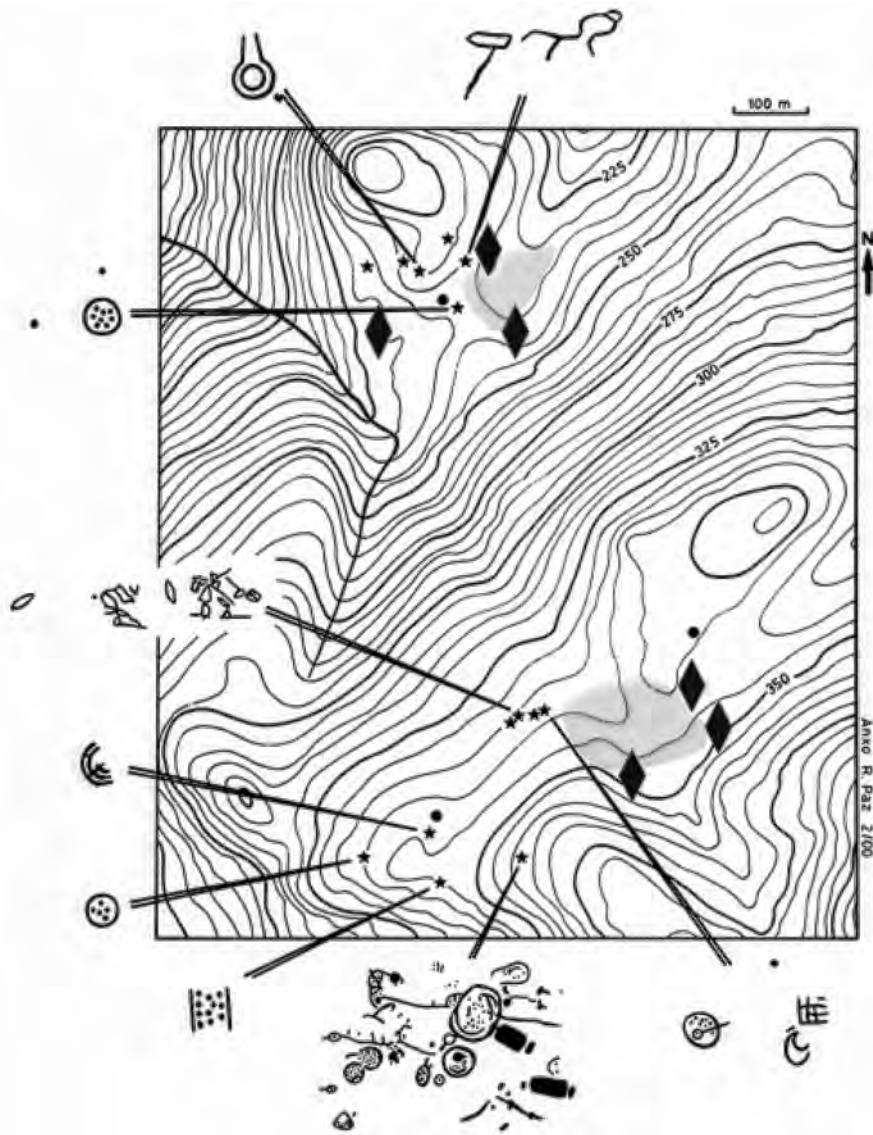


Fig. 8.- Site distribution in Poza da Lagoa: carved rocks (stars), those unshown consisting of single cup marks; mounds (circles); artefact scatters (lozenges). Shading indicates humid areas.

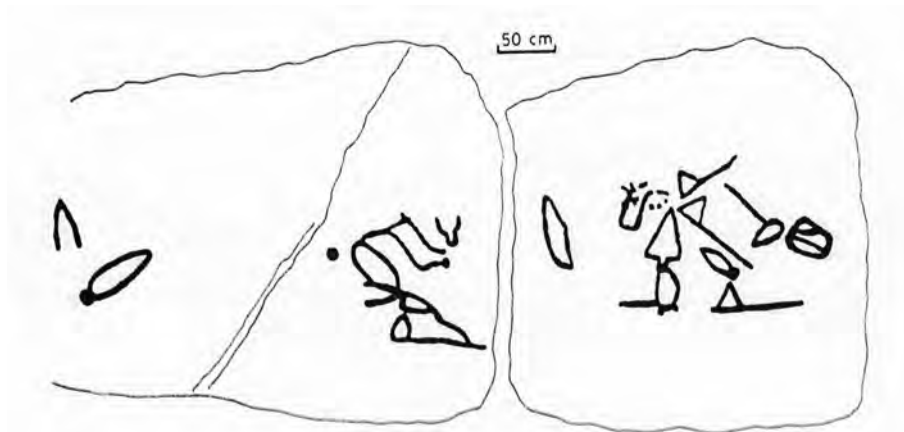


Fig. 9.- Drawing of a rock in Poza da Lagoa depicting daggers and halberds. After F.J. Costas Goberna.

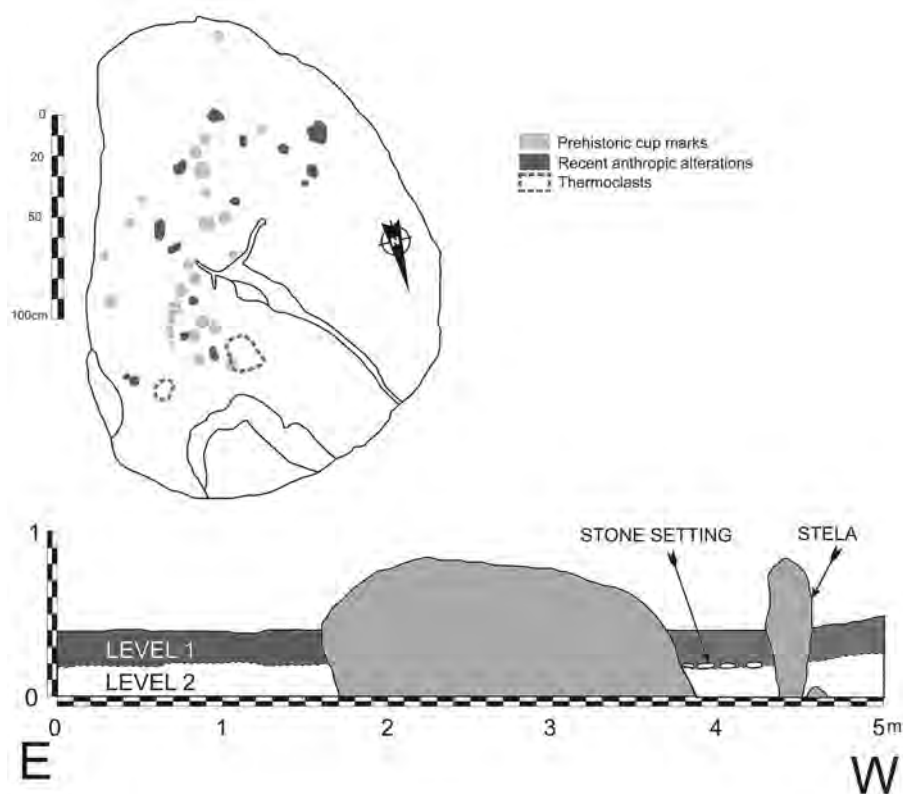


Fig. 10.- The carved outcrop at Chan do Cereixo and the surrounding features. Modified after Villar 2008.

through the realization of excavations nearby. We can say that, with regard to the more complex panels, the results have not been conclusive: Gurita (Rodríguez Rellán, 2008), Foxa da Vella (César, 2008) or Os Mouchos (Bonilla, 2008), beyond recording severe processes of erosion/sedimentation in the immediate surroundings, sometimes going back to ancient periods (Laxe dos Carballos –Santos, 2005). A different situation, more in line with observations made in Great Britain (R. Bradley in this same volume), is claimed in Chan do Cereixo (Gondomar – Pontevedra) where, around an outcrop decorated with cupmarks (Villar, 2008) was located a small pavement and a stele, all this surrounded by an earthen ring, externally reinforced with stones (Fig. 10). Next to these features lay the foundation of a hut containing ceramic and lithic materials. The three dates obtained point out that both contexts are probably contemporary (beginning of the IV millennium BC). A similar case, although less documented, is reported in Betote (Sarria, Lugo), where a granitic outcrop decorated with cupmarks appears again encircled by a lithic ring and pits, with an associated stone pavement and several combustion structures and ceramic and lithic material (apart from two fragments of ochre) that ought to be assigned to the Chalcolithic, according to the excavator (Cano, 2008).

It is illustrative that until now the only well documented examples of the existence of structures and (presumably) symbolic activities associated to engraved rocks

corresponded with the simplest section of the iconic repertory. In this respect, it must be remembered that despite their formal simplicity, the cupmarks are the motif that is most often spatially associated to the tumular necropolis since the Neolithic (Filgueiras & Rodríguez, 1994; Villoch, 1995) and to other domestic or ceremonial sites along the Copper Age (Concheiro & Gil, 1994; Carballo et alii, 1998: 93; Gómez et alii, 2004: 28-30).

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