

Rock art and cultural contacts in Protohistoric Europe: two case studies



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In certain examples, rock art seems to allow speaking of cultural contacts between different peoples.

According to several colleagues, some figures from Valcamonica have similar examples at Tanum, in Sweden, resulting probably of cross cultural contacts in the sequence of trade.

Two case studies:

1 - “Camunian Rose”

2 – Examples of Post Palaeolithic incised rock art

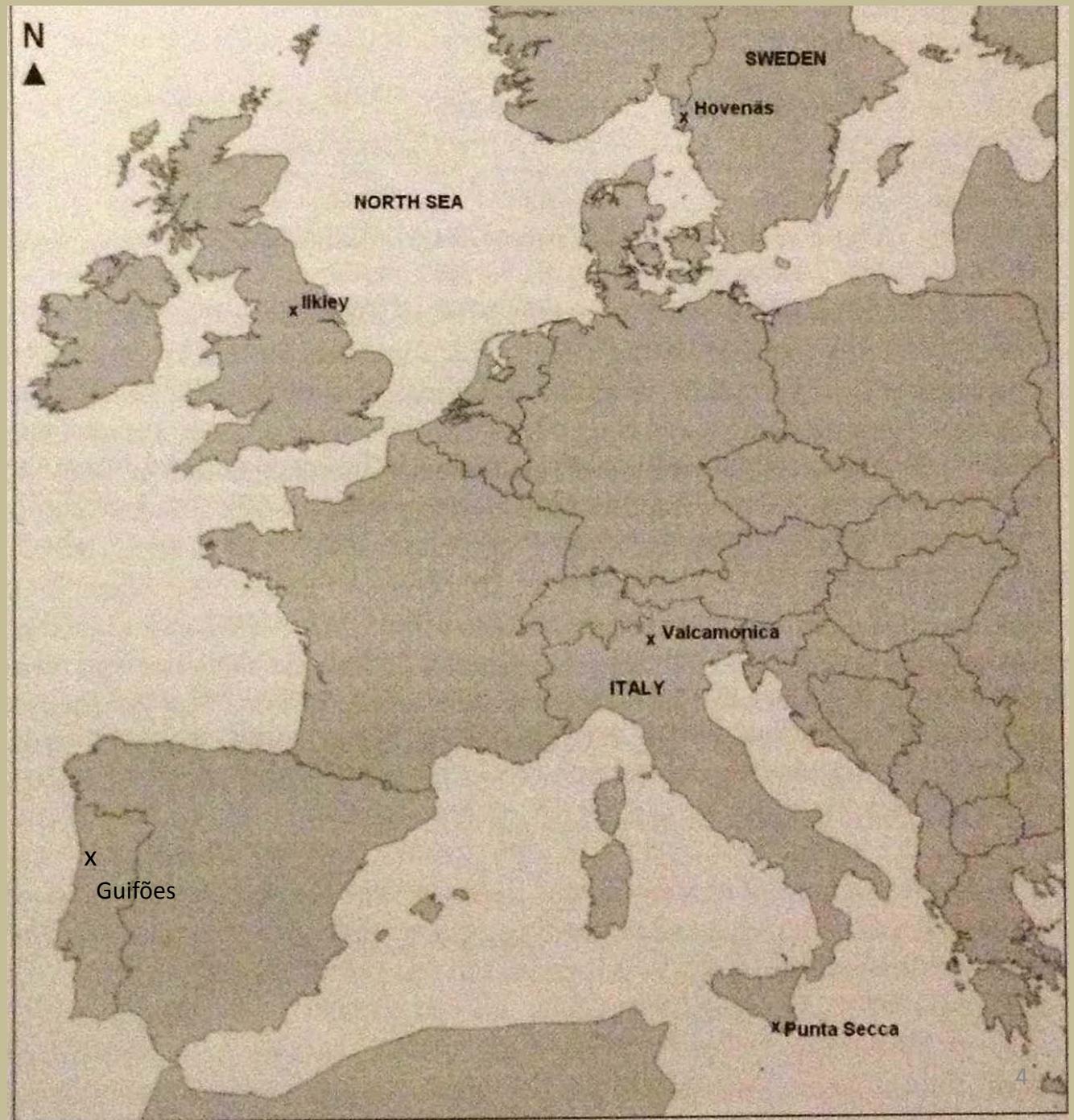
1 - The “Camunian Rose”



After Sansoni, 1987

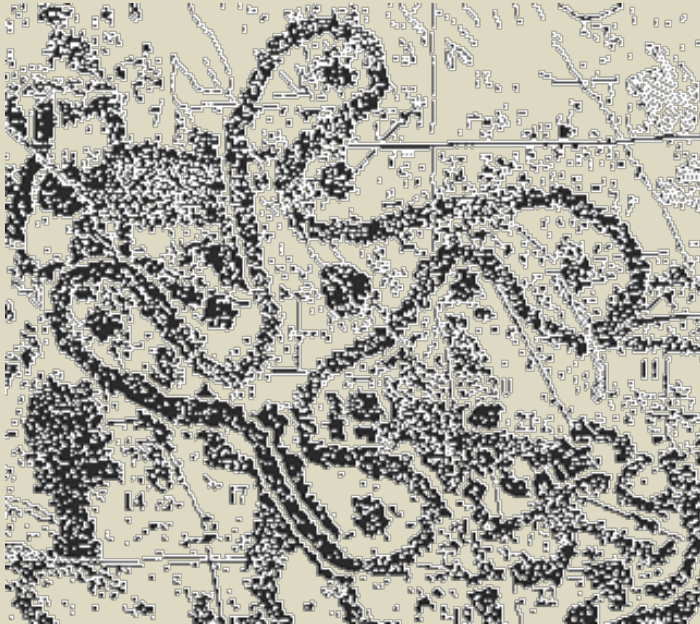
The *Camunian Rose with swastika typology* is a motive which appears with 16 examples in Valcamonica, certainly its diffusion centre.

There are also other examples in Europe (Portugal, England and Sweden) and in North Africa (Mali). Only 1 in each country



Adapted after
Boughey, 2012

There are also 12 cases of asymmetric swastika type “Camunian Rose”



After Farina, 1997



Swastikas, Sweden
After Anderson

1st Conclusion: The “Camunian Rose” in Valcamonica is a recurrent theme

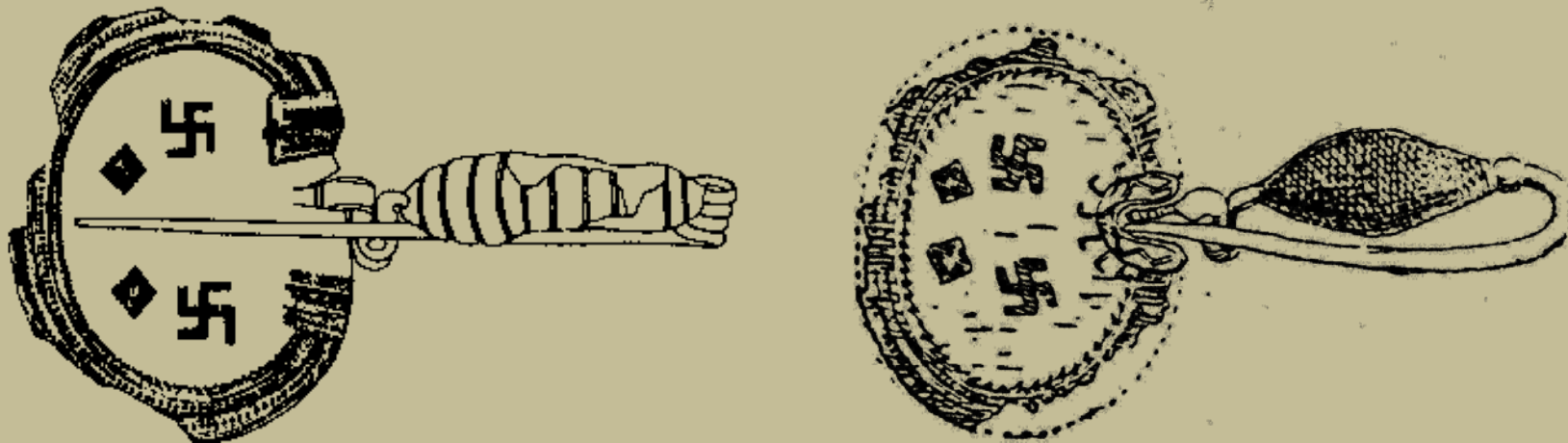
Portugal



Hillfort of Guifões,
Matosinhos



In the Hillfort of Parreitas (Alcobaca), in the Portuguese west coast, there was found a bronze fibula, dated from the 8th century BC, very similar to another one discovered in the north of Italy.



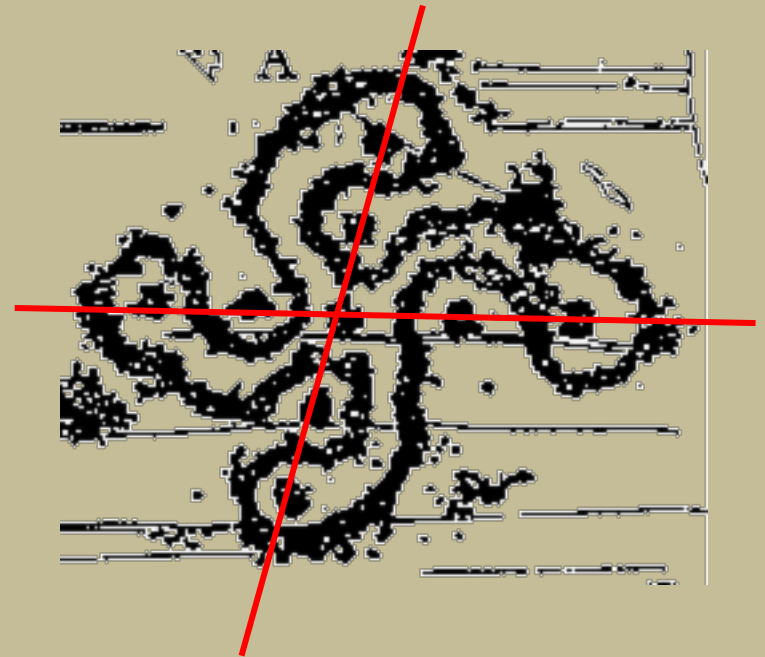
These two artefacts must have been done by the same artist.

They seem to reveal contacts between the North of Italy and the West of the Iberian Peninsula during Late Bronze age.

However, according to archaeological evidence, contacts between the North of Italy and the south of the Iberian Peninsula seem to have occurred much earlier, during the III millennium BC.

In fact fragments of **pottery from Los Millares** (Spain) were found about 4 years ago in Liguria (drawings shown by Filippo Gambari at the Conference – L'Arte Rupestre delle Alpi, Capo di Ponte, 2010)

A typological analysis shows that the swastika from Guifões is very similar to the example found at Giadighe (Valcamonica), having the idea of this figure arrived to Portugal **probably trough sea trade**.



After Farina



Ilkley Moor, Yorkshire
Photo: Gyrus, 1998.
Tracing: Fossati

England



Sweden



Hovenäs, Sweden
After Gaspani

Other cases:

- One example in Turkey (U. Sansoni pers. comm.)
- Roger Wilson from the University of British Columbia (quoted by Boughey, 2012), reports examples in Austria, Switzerland and Ireland.

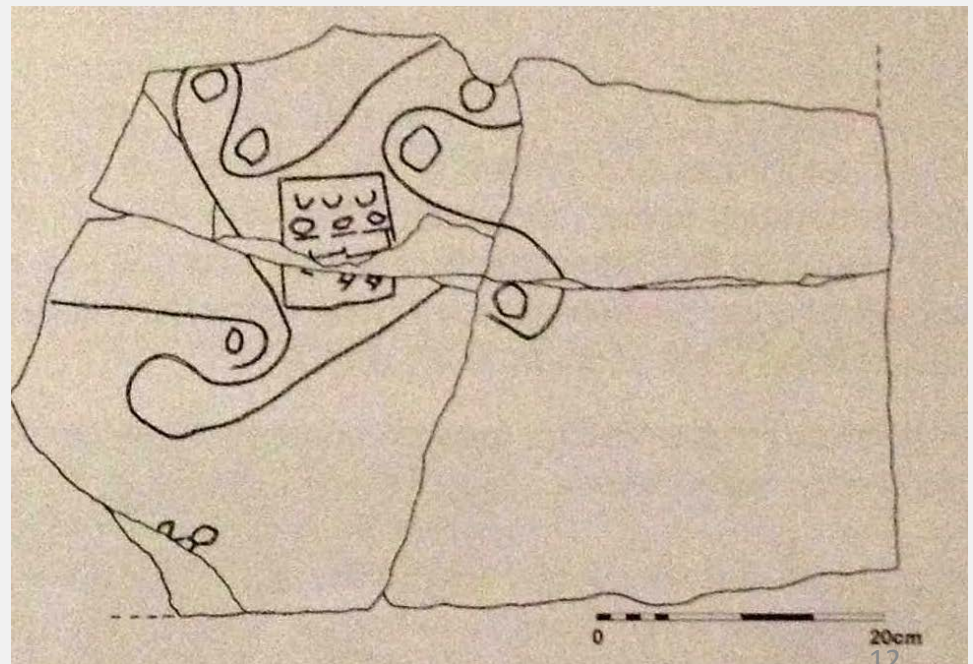
These new examples make easier to understand a cross cultural contact with the north of Europe

1.1 - Chronology

The swastika type “camunian rose” appears in Valcamonica in the mid 7th /6th century BC and seems to be present not later than the 5th / 4th century BC (De Marinis, 1988; Fossati, 1991; Farina, 1997).

There are interesting survivals:

Tomb slab from Punta Secca,
Sicily,
7th century AD
After Boughey, 2012



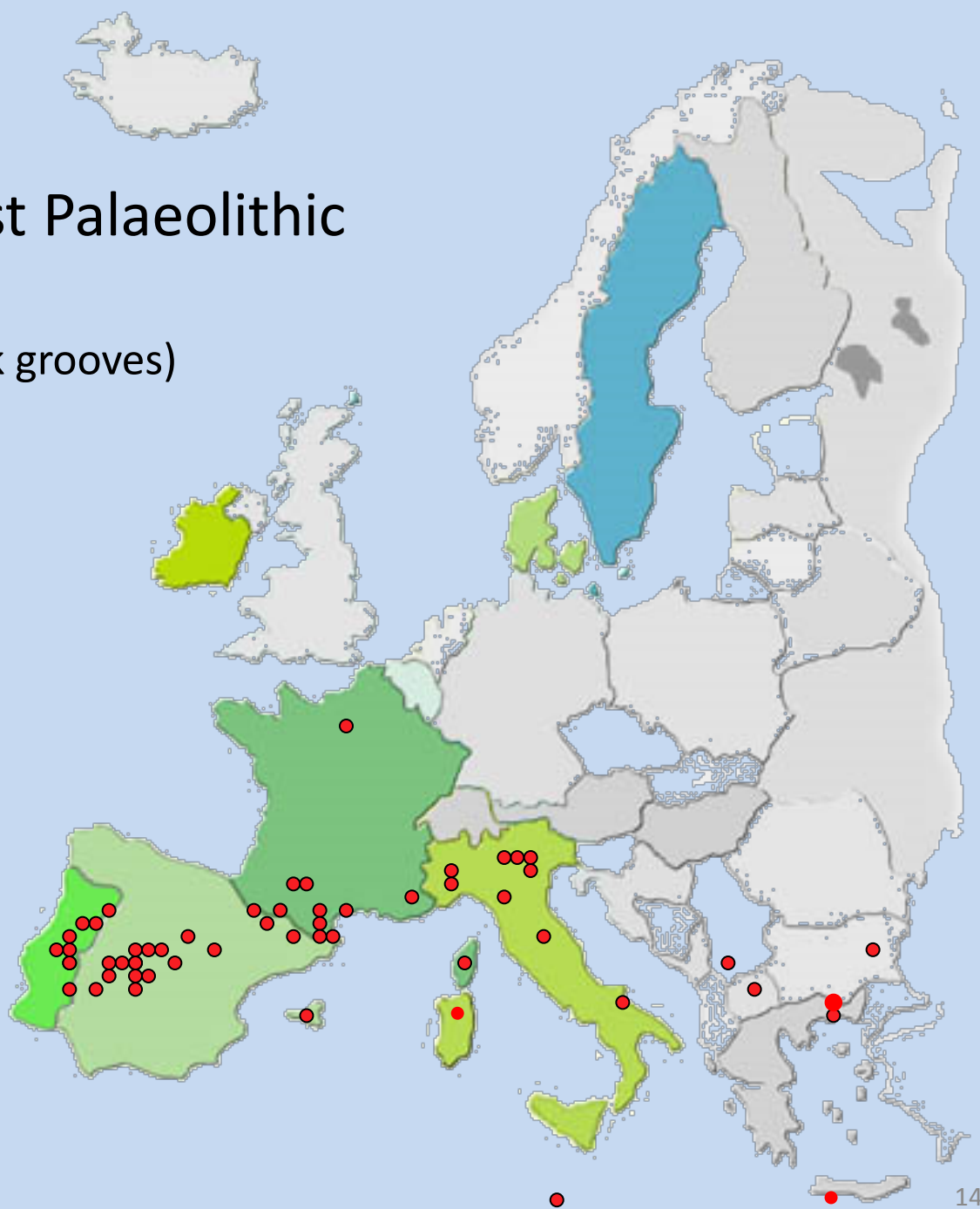


15th century fresco,
St Mary's Church, Turku, Finland
Photo: S. Kane


2 – Examples of Post Palaeolithic incised rock art (Filiform and medium/thick grooves)


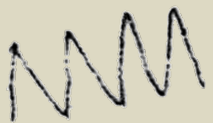

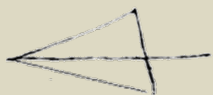
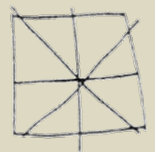

Post Palaeolithic
incised rock art
major sites

European Map: Europeart
Dots: F. Coimbra



These examples appear as common themes in several countries from Southern Europe, mainly in different regions from **Portugal**, **Spain**, **France** and **Italy**, but also in eastern Europe.

	PO	EX	CL	AN	EP	FA	CO	LI	VA	LO	SA	PU	KO	GR	RO
 Pentagram	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X		X			X
 Net-pattern	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		
 Scalariform	X	X		X			X	X	X	X					

	PO	EX	CL	AN	EP	FA	CO	LI	VA	LO	SA	PU	KO	GR	RO
 "Asterisk"	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X		
 Zig-zag	X	X	X	X	X	X			X			X			
 Tree like	X		X	X	X	X			X	X			X	X	
 Arrow head	X	X	X	X		X				X		X			X
 Square	X	X		X	X		X	X							
 "Greek Cross"	X	X		X			X						X		

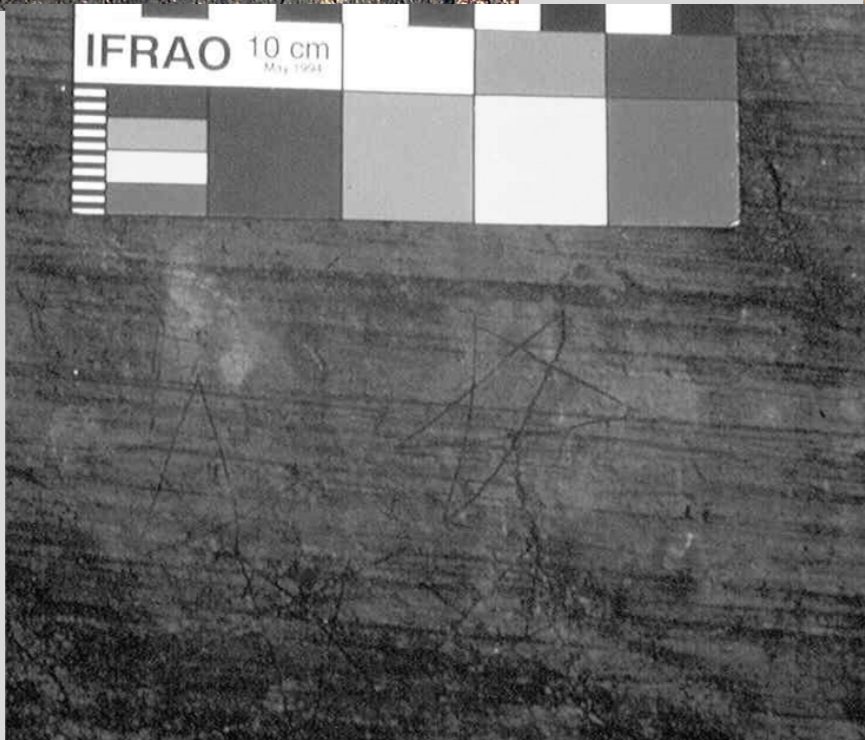
The **structural similarity** of these motives allows thinking about the existence of cultural contacts between some of those regions at least during Bronze Age and Iron Age.

It's an idea that makes more sense than the **simultaneous creation**, in each of those countries, of figures such as scalariforms, zigzags, net-patterns, pentagrams and other.

Otherwise, by what reason should men produce, at the same time, the same type of symbols in Portugal, Romania, Spain and Greece without mutual contacts?

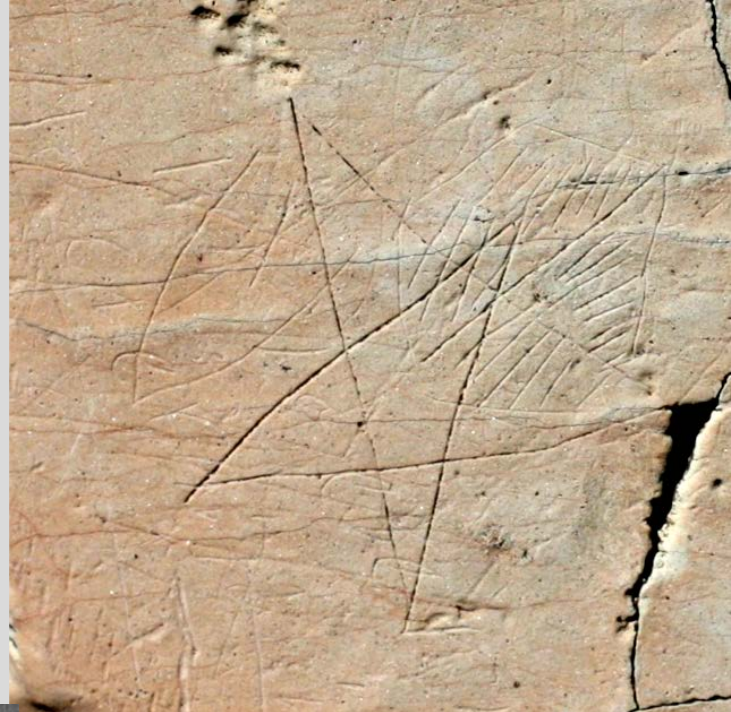


1



3

2



1 – Sertã, Portugal

2 – Mont Bego, France

Photo: N. Bianchi

3 – Foppe di Nadro, Italy



1 – Sertã, Portugal

2 – Andorra

Photo: J. Casamajor

3 – Mont Bego, France

Photo: N. Bianchi



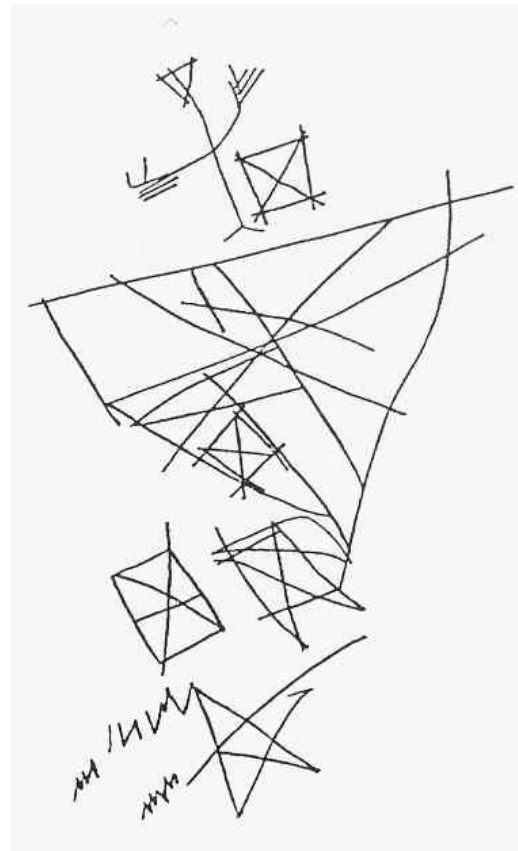


Cave of Diana, Italy

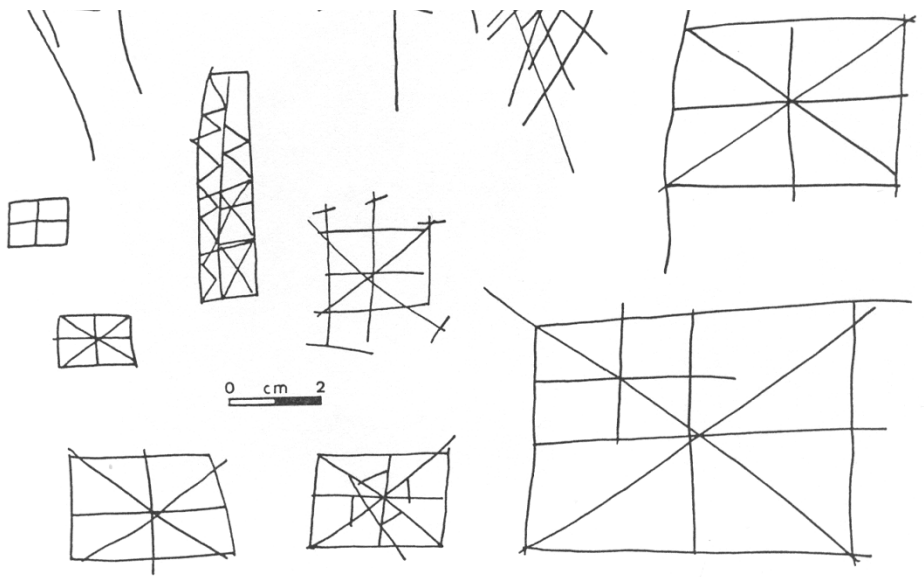
Not a game



1



2

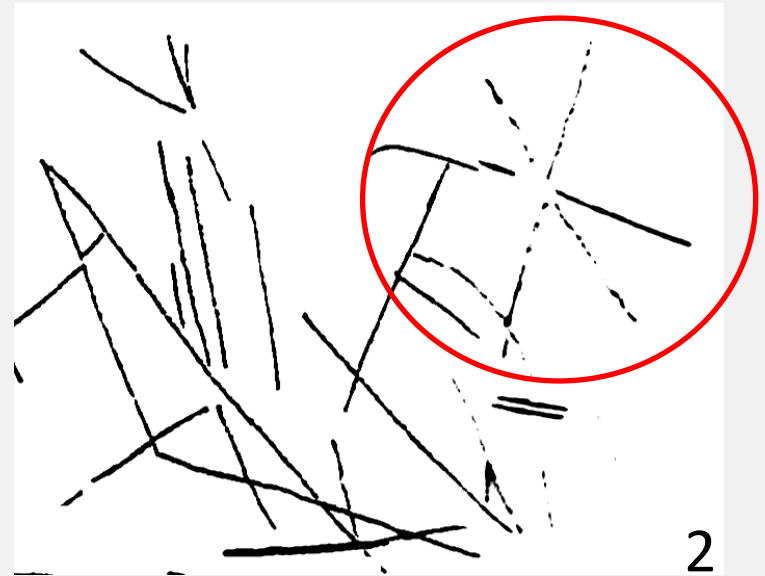


3

1 – Sertã, Portugal

2 – Roc de les Bruixes, Andorra
After G. Barrera

3 – Peyra Escrita, Perpignan
After Abélanet



1 – Poço da Moura, Portugal

2 – Sertã, Portugal

3 – Riparo del Cavone, Bari

After Astuti et alli

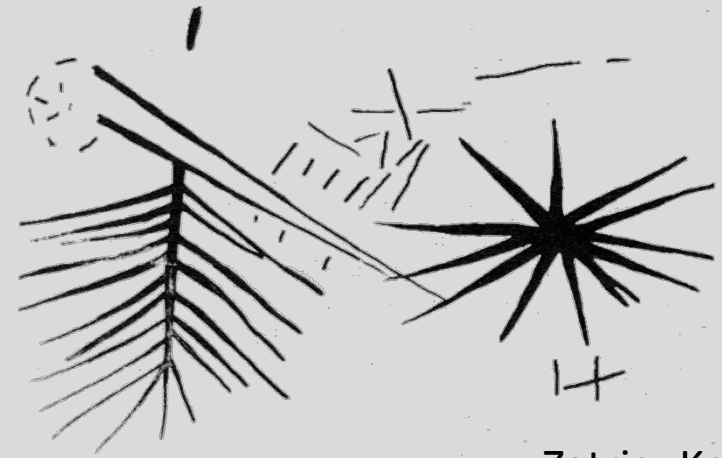
Slab from Tal-Qadi temple, Malta
III millenium BC



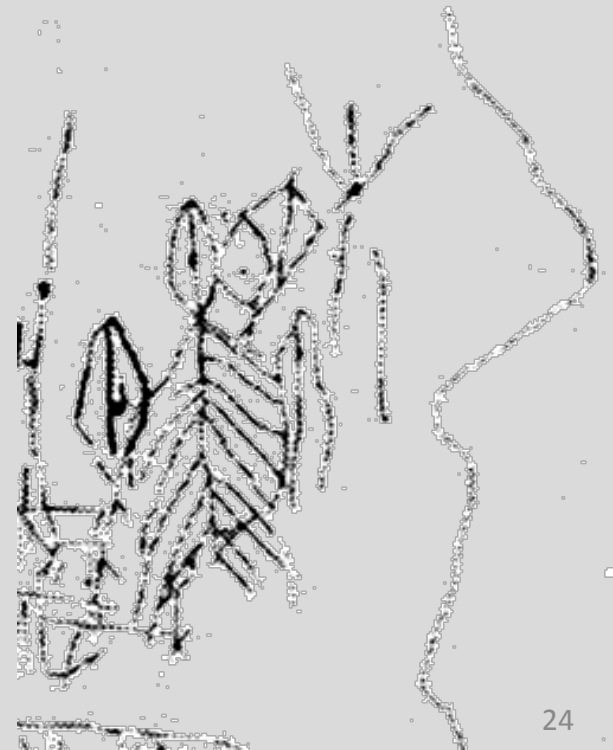
Photo: D. Ciria



Sertã, Portugal



Zatriq, Kosovo
After Krasniqi



Evros, Greece,
After Iliadis



Typical cover, North of Portugal

Anthropomorphic figure

Photo: A.M. Baptista

Final note

- The common themes presented here constitute **true examples of rock art as a source of History**, allowing being aware of **contacts between Late prehistoric peoples across Europe**.
- It's the more coherent interpretation for the presence of similar motives in distant regions.
- Otherwise, as mentioned before, by what reason should men produce, at the same time, the same type of symbols in Portugal, Romania, Spain and Greece without mutual contacts?

There is still a lot a work to do regarding the typology, chronology and interpretation of this kind of engravings.

It's indispensable to establish:

- more discussions among the researchers
- to publish the results of the several surveys more frequently.
- **XVII IUPPS/UISPP - BURGOS 2014**
- **A18b-Post-Palaeolithic filiform rock art in Western Europe**

A large, dark, textured rock, possibly a piece of slate or a similar stone, is shown against a white background. The rock has a rough, uneven surface with visible mineral grain and some faint, natural patterns. Overlaid on the rock in the center is the text "OBRIGADO ! THANK YOU !" in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The text is split into two lines: "OBRIGADO !" on the top line and "THANK YOU !" on the bottom line. The exclamation points are prominent. The rock's texture is a mix of dark grey and black tones with some lighter, silty areas.

**OBRIGADO !
THANK YOU !**