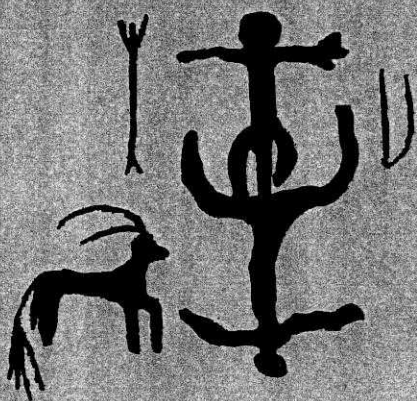


Signifying Place and Space

World perspectives of rock art and landscape

Edited by

George Nash



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PREFACE

Within archaeology one tends to look at sites, well... as sites. The empirical approaches applied to the 'site' indeed reinforce an image that it is very much devoid of human meaning. In particular, the concept of recording rock art focuses firstly on subjectivity - what is depicted; objectivity - the extrinsic value of the site and stratigraphic deposition - what lies in front of, and underneath the art. Some attention, though has been given to landscape, albeit from a traditionally stale account of what can be seen. Recently, rock art and landscape studies have incorporated a text which relies more on personal experience and the cognitive value of the audience - those who witness the act of application or visit the completed image. It is obvious, therefore, that when rock art was executed, the artist intended it to remain indefinitely; with this was the intentional location of the panel/rock art surface to the surrounding landscape.

By omitting landscape, and in particular, rock art as place, one is only looking at subjectivity and ignoring media. Arguably, landscape/place is as important as paint. Within this volume, contributors will re-address the importance of landscape/place and suggest both can be considered as part of an archaeological assemblage. More importantly, the intentionality of landscape/place is as important to the artist, as the images she or he was painting/carving. Some chapters will attempt to place rock art into a narrative, placing its historical value into a prehistoric context.

It seems that over the past ten years (or so) the term landscape has received much discussion albeit based on the mechanics of landscape. What has been omitted is the construction of landscape in terms of aesthetics, knowledge, emotion, interpretation and application. One therefore might ask; what is landscape? We know it's there; the hills, mountains, rivers, streams, trees and so on. These features, although natural, are socially constructed within our minds. Although landscape is there, the imagination and the cognitive construction is controlled by ourselves. Fundamentally, landscape can be defined as a series of spaces which become places. These are based on socio-political cognition, time and the sense of occasion.

This book is the product of a number of conference sessions run between 1997 and 1999; the Theoretical Archaeology Group conference at Bournemouth and Birmingham and the IRAC (International Rock Art Congress) held in Vila Real, Portugal in 1998. The sessions, were organised and run by myself and, in the case of the Vila Real conference, by myself and Sven Ozman (from South Africa). The theme throughout all three sessions was rock art and landscape. The popularity of firstly, rock art followed by rock art and landscape concepts appears to be at the forefront in academic debate, especially at the time of this publication.

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Deconstructing Rock Art Spatial Grammar in the Galician Bronze Age

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1. Galician rock art: general aspects

1.1. Historiography and presentation

The first references to the existence of rock art in Galicia (Fig. 12.1) dates from the XVIII century (Sarmiento 1750). In the following century we may find other sporadic mentions which only deal with the subject tangentially. It was not until the beginning of the XX century when the first publications appeared which lent a degree of importance to this type of artistic manifestation: Sobrino (1919 and 1935), Obermaier (1923) and Serpa (1929). After this initial period in which studies began into Galician rock art, in the years following the Spanish Civil War - the 1940's and 50's - there was a notable decrease in the quantity and quality of publications. Mention should be made of Ferro's work (1952) which affirmed that all of the petroglyphs found are mediaeval or modern boundary stones.

In the 1960's and 1970's there was a resurgence of studies into the subject, with work by the Italians Anati (1964 and 1968) and Borgna (1973). After these studies we should mention the work of Peña and Vázquez (1979) and García and Peña (1981) which systematised the information about Galician rock art which had been accumulated until that moment.

In the 1990's innovative proposals appeared which dealt with different aspects of the subject. Peña and Rey (1993) proposed a short chronology for Galician petroglyphs, between the end of the 3rd millennium and beginning of the 2nd millennium B.C. where as Vázquez Varela (1990) investigated the ritual function and legitimisation of social dominant groups; Vázquez Rozas (1994) applied similar concepts used by Leroi-Gourhan in parietal Palaeolithic art to rock art found in the open air.

The first investigation into the landscape of rock art from the Bronze Age may be found in Criado (1993); later, there is a series of interesting investigations by Bradley, Criado and Fábregas (1993, 1994a and 1994b) and, in the same line, Santos (1996). Theoretical principles were later applied of landscape archaeology in order to study the spatial organisation of carved panels (Santos and Criado 1998 and Santos 1999). A recent synthesis of the different dimensions and characteristics of the phenomenon may be found in Criado, Fábregas and Santos (1999).

1.2. Chronological framework

The petroglyphs which belong to the Bronze Age in Galicia may be included within the group of post-glacial rock art of Western Europe, which in the case of Galicia developed between the emergence of the first agricultural cultures and fully sedentary and hierarchical societies of the Iron Age. They are very similar to those found in the Alps (Switzerland) and in the British Isles: art carved in the open air which at times combines geometrical symbols with sub natural elements, and at times features aspects related to man and war.

As in the rest of Western Europe, open-air rock art has a very long chronology. Although there is still controversy regarding this point and there is a prevalence of the traditional idea which connects the petroglyph tradition with the Bronze Age. We today believe that it is quite clear that, behind the generic description of 'open air rock art', hide at least three different phenomena: firstly, carvings with cup marks as their only motif which appear associated with neolithic monuments (Filgueiras and Rodríguez 1994 and Villoch 1995); secondly Bronze Age petroglyphs (1800 - 800 B.C.) are the most studied and those which occupy this text; and the thirdly, cultural and chronological horizon would be formed by carvings with inscriptions, circles with radii, snake shapes and podomorphs which occasionally appear in the interior of hillforts from the Iron Age.

During the Bronze Age two basic types of rock art exist: geometric shapes, cup marks, circular combinations (concentric circles, circles with cup marks in their interior, etc.), labyrinths, pseudolabyrinths, and spirals; and figurative motifs: quadrupeds (horses, deer, riding scenes and footprints), anthropomorphs, weapons (swords, daggers, halberds and shields). Some scenes can be identified such as pastoral activities, hunting, horse training and warfare, although there are no scenes related to agriculture or other types of domestic activity. It is without doubt a type of art which appears to emphasise the masculine values of a heroic and warlike society.

In this chapter we will deal with the way of organising space based on rock art from the largest scale (which includes the construction of social territories) down to the design of panels at the smallest level (passing through the

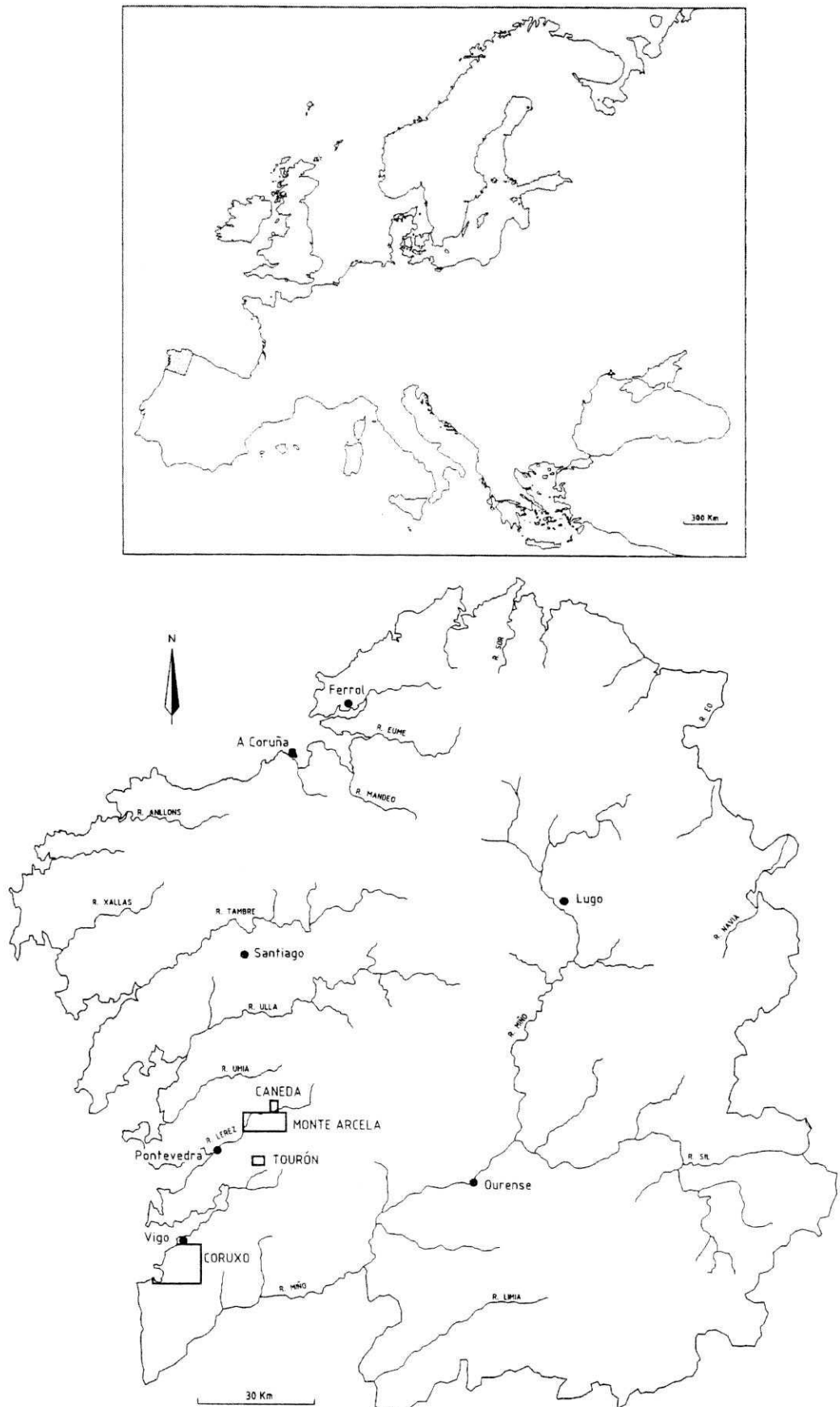


Fig. 12.1 Location of Galicia in relation to Europe and the two research areas covered in the chapter. See also fig12.2 and 12.3.

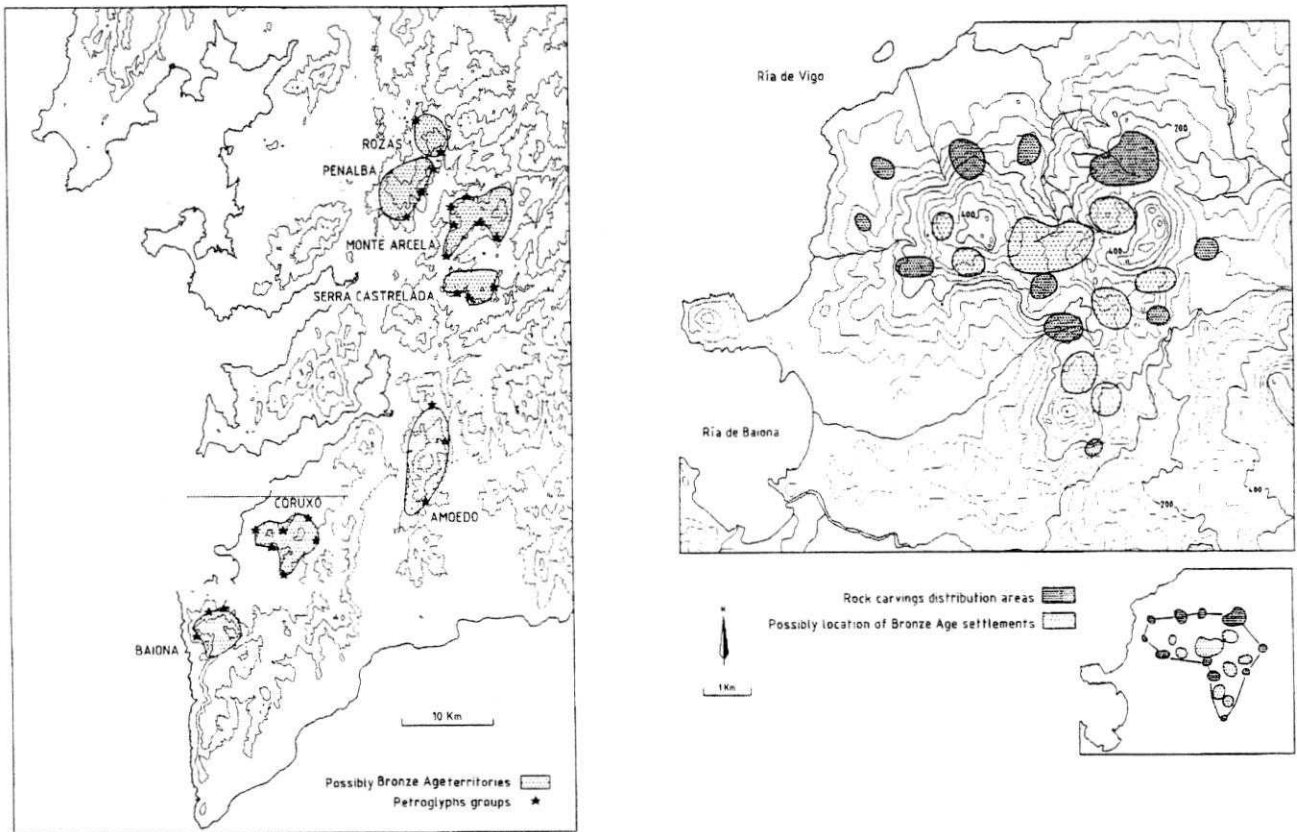


Fig. 12.2 The research areas based on rock art and Bronze Age settlement distribution.

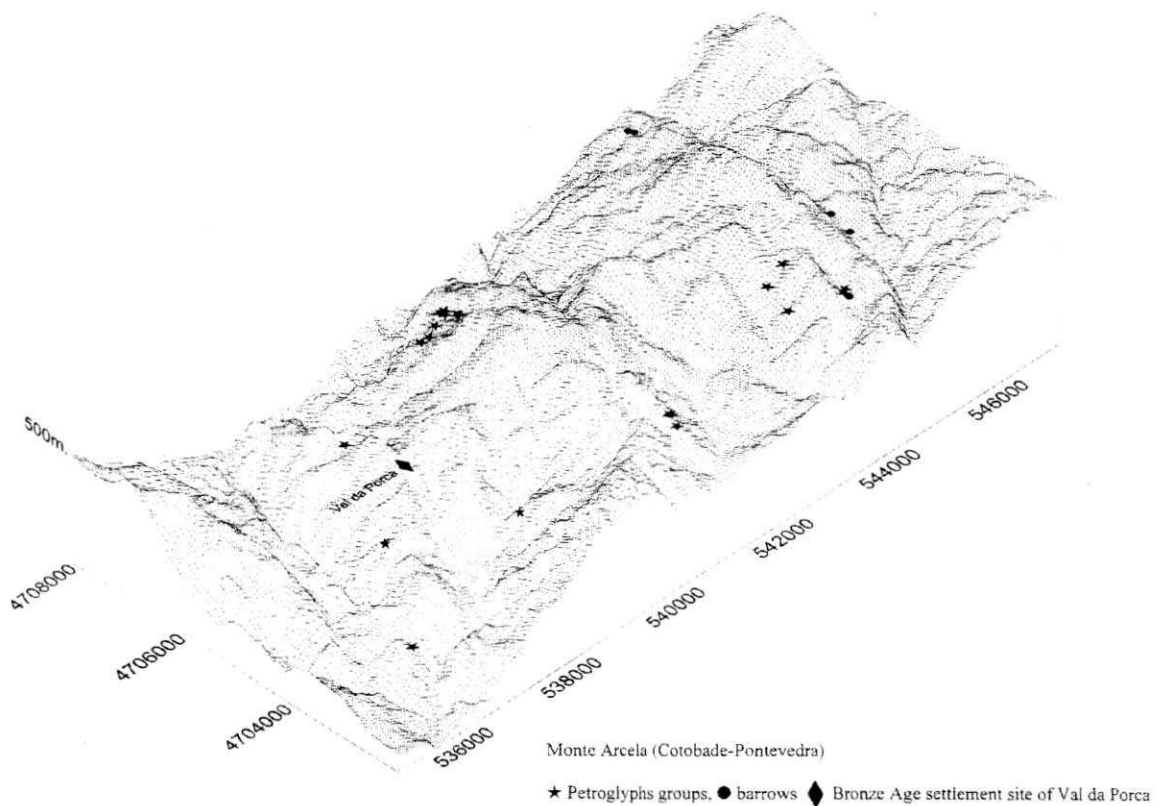


Fig. 12.3. An isometric topographic plan of the Monte Arcela area showing rock art, barrows and settlement. See 12.1 for area location.

intermediate level of 'stations'¹. We will attempt to: (1) define what are the common fundamental principles which structure the art space and landscape in the Galician Bronze Age, and (2) thus establish the spatial grammar or group of rules which regulate the representation of space of that moment. This project is much more ambitious than may be represented by this text, and accordingly we shall limit ourselves to presenting a synthesis of a wider investigation which is actually ongoing (see Santos and Criado 1998).

2. Dividing space

2.1. Bronze Age settlement

Evidence of settlement from the Bronze Age is limited to open-air sites which were occupied episodically and cyclically. This recurrence in the use of a same settlement is reflected in the archaeological record in the formation of accumulation areas of material (see Méndez 1991: 173-97). These areas studied in the Serra do Bocela are always in hilly ground, and are specifically linked with wetland areas (Méndez 1994: 77-94)². Archaeological work alongside public civil engineering work (e.g. oil and gas pipelines and motorways), has uncovered a similar model of settlement which has been confirmed in the rest of the country, and we are thus able to define what the areas of occupation were in this period.

Settlements are found on small plateau areas half way up hill-slopes or close to the summit, but rarely on low-lying ground. It is clear that these communities survived through keeping livestock and agriculture through a system of land clearance. The agricultural technology of the Bronze Age required the search for the well drained, light soils, usually found on or close to mountain ranges. At the same time, rejecting the heavier valley soils with tree cover. (Criado 1989 y 1991, Méndez 1998:153-90). The cutting regimes meant that the zone had to be abandoned after 2 or 3 years due to the reduction in nutrients and subsequent waterlogging. For this reason the ground could not be cultivated for a further 6 to 9 years. The concentration of non-simultaneous groups of settlements in certain zones leads us to believe that Bronze Age communities had a limited mobility within a fixed hill range, an itinerant settlement linked into a particular territory³.

2.2. Bronze Age territories: the divided landscape

We now wish to consider the concept of the 'System of Stations' used for the zonal analysis of the distribution of rock art. We use this term to describe a group of stations

associated with the same morphological unit, usually a hill range. In these systems the petroglyphs are found surrounding the limit of the hill range and are regularly concentrated in its principal points of entry.

We may generically describe the placement of the group of petroglyphs as a system of stations which mark the access points to the flat areas of the hill ranges in which Bronze Age settlement is found. We propose the possibility that petroglyphs were a visible expression of defining a territory.

Systematic investigations carried out by our team since 1992, has extend this model to a large area of south-western Galicia, and thus reconstruct the 'map' of territories defined by Bronze Age petroglyphs in this area that included: Rozas, Penalba, Monte Arcela, Serra Castrelada, Amoeiro, Coruxo and Baiona (Fig. 12.2a). We also believe that this model may be extended to other nearby zones: for example, the area of Coruxo situated between the municipal regions of Vigo and Nigrán (south-western Galicia), where petroglyph distribution may be similar to that of Monte Arcela or Serra Castrelada. Figure 12.2b shows the areas in which rock art is distributed (Costas 1984) and the possible areas of later prehistoric occupation - described as flat areas close to peat bogs on the plateaus of hills. However, the valleys between the hills which are occupied nowadays, in Bronze Age times would have had few inhabitants, and, according to palaeoecological data available, occupied by dense tree cover. There are no records of rock carvings or domestic settlements, and only occasional burial sites have been found, fundamentally in pits, thus demonstrating an opposition between funerary space (found in low, tree-covered areas) and domestic space (in high, agricultural lands) which was anticipated by Méndez (1994). The criticism which Meijide (1997:228) dedicated to the previous study was suitably contested by the author in a study which may also be referred to in order to check other aspects of the model which we will not deal with here (Méndez 1998: 177). We now wish to discuss how space surrounding petroglyphs was utilised.

Petroglyphs are found on the dividing point between the uninhabited zone (exterior and low) and the inhabited zone (interior and high). The character as a limit or entrance to a supposed territory, is underlined by the fact that the panels are oriented towards the exterior of the territory, in order that they may be seen by those who enter or ascend towards the hills. It is also highly possible that this situation as a frontier would give this type of art a certain symbolic power as it was found in a transitional point between the space used by society and 'wild space', which was unoccupied.

We may represent the Bronze Age landscape either horizontally or vertically. If we do so horizontally, we would see the social space in the centre, with 'wild' or unoccupied space on the periphery. If we represent it in

¹ We define 'station' as a group of petroglyphs that are within close vicinity to each other thus forming a group value.

² Peat bogs are of great importance in traditional Galicia as reserves of fresh grazing in summer. We presume that this was also the case in the prehistoric past.

³ In the known cases studied in this article, the size of these territories is around 30 km².

profile, we would see the social space at the highest point, and 'wild' space at the lowest, in the valley.

3. Shaping space: the constructed landscape

In the previous section we have seen how petroglyphs served to define territories and to separate social space from unoccupied space. We will now attempt to check if the organisation of rock art space fits into our model of landscape construction. For this, we have chosen the Caneda rock art station as a form of control for this hypothesis.

3.1. The Caneda rock art station

This is the site with the highest concentration of rock art in Galicia. Between the municipalities of Cotobade and Campo Lameiro (Pontevedra), close to the low estuaries, over the canyon of the Lérez River and in a symmetrical position to Chan da Lagoa. There are frequent extensions given over to grazing, including peat bogs. There are two in Caneda; one in Fentans, known as Chan de Balboa, and another in Chan da Lagoa. (Fig. 12.3).

In synthesis, they are found in a flat, stepped zone, with wide views over the surrounding landscape and with a

convergence of several 'lines of movement' which cross it. Nearly all of the petroglyphs are found in flat areas half way up the slope, with a particular concentration around Chan de Balboa and Chan da Lagoa, including the most complex panels.

In summary, we may define three fundamental elements of the landscape. Firstly, the 'chans' are associated with peat bogs; secondly, the 'lines of movement' which enable access to them and intercommunicate them, and finally, the entrances or 'portelas' to the physiographical unit which contains the station. These elements create a model which features central viewing positions, access points or paths and entrances, which in the case of the Caneda station is reflected in the following landscape grammar.

The central points, or 'chans' are Chan da Lagoa and Chan da Balboa are characterised as small flat platforms which are found half-way up hill slopes. usually with a large peat bog present. Peat bogs situated on flat areas with wide visibility are usually associated with rock art. Within this locate here are found the majority of the most complex rock carvings (Chan da Lagoa, Laxe dos Cebros and Laxe das Ferraduras, Fig. 12.4) consisting of deer carvings and some riding scenes.

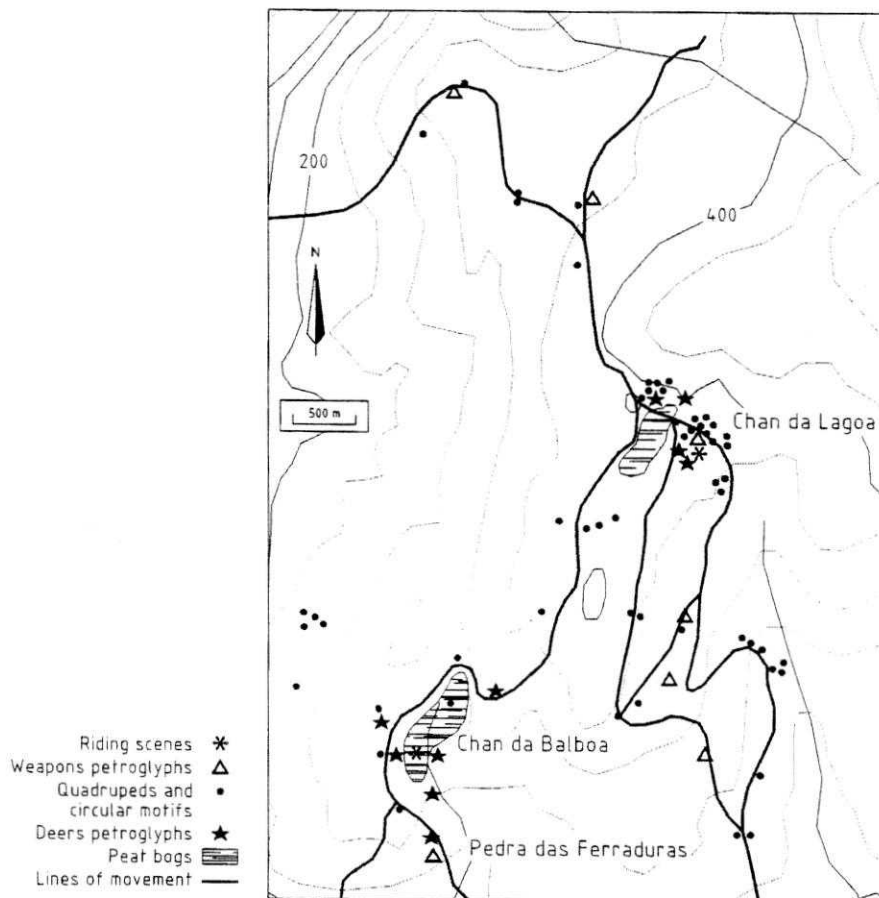


Fig. 12.4 Distribution of rock art subjectivity within the Chan da Lagoa area.

The 'lines of movement' contain the majority of the circular combinations with single motifs, and less often quadrupeds (including limited cervid). We may accordingly introduce a second relationship between these petroglyphs and other places from this period. The entrances are places found on the points of intersection between the limits of the petroglyphs and the lines of movement. Here, the most complex representations of weapons, generally swords are found. Examples of these types of petroglyphs may be found in O Ramallal, Campo de Matabois and Pedra das Ferraduras.

3.2. The Tourón rock art station

Situated in Serra Castrelada, the Tourón station is surrounded by petroglyphs carved into the immediate hill slopes (Fig. 12.3). The carved rocks are found close to the main lines of movement which lead up to the hills from the valley. This relationship is reinforced by the zoomorphs being oriented towards the direction of movement.

We may synthetically divide the distribution of the petroglyphs into two well differentiated areas: one superior area with deer, and an inferior area with quadrupeds without horns. If we arrange the panels according to their degree of complexity, we would find the most complex petroglyphs situated in the highest zones, and the simplest in the lowest-lying areas.

With regard to the orientation of the zoomorphs, we again find a vertical distribution. There is an important difference between the most complex and the simplest petroglyphs. Whereas in the two most complex, Laxe das Cruces and Nabal do Martiño, zoomorphic figures are oriented in a descending manner (except for a minority which are ascending), the petroglyphs found at a lower altitude tend to have their figures oriented in ascending fashion.

4. Representing space: the depicted landscape

4.1. Panel: motifs and patterns

If we take together all of the motifs which appear in Galician rock art and observe the relative position between each of the panels we find a formal pattern of distribution whose sequential structure would be from the top part of the panel to the bottom: Riding and dominion (E) // concentric circles (A) // weapons (F) // deer (B) // quadrupeds¹ (C) // human figures (D)

Obviously, not all of the associated motifs appear together on one petroglyph. Only the most complex have combinations of more than four different motifs. In any case, in this scheme we have attempted to reflect that independently of the combination of motifs used, the relative situation between them is the same. The rules

which appear to regulate the specific character of the generic model would be:

- i) *Circles are placed over animals;*
- ii) *There is only one exception to this: representations of horse riding or training are the only motifs which appear above the circular combinations.*
- iii) *Deer are always placed above the quadrupeds.*
- iv) *Weapons are always above deer: and*
- v) *All motifs are placed over human figures.*

These rules imply a series of formal regularities which, through the resource of spatial imposition on the panel, represent two relatively clear oppositions: a first between abstraction and naturalism (by this, we mean the rules imply a series of formal regularities, by which spatial superimposition on the panel represents two relatively clear oppositions. The first is between abstraction and naturalism (i.e. the naturalist images are always below and abstract images); and a second between nature and culture (i.e. motifs such as deer, wild animals and circle representations² which are always located above domesticated, semi-domesticated animals, horses and human figures). Circles may represent physical spaces around the rock art. The only exceptions to these dichotomic rules are those representations, quantitatively exceptional within the repertoire of Galician rock art are scenes which represent domestication. In the case of these scenes domestication superimposes all the other scenes, creating an opposition between domestication and nature whose regularity appears to indicate a fixed rule. (Fig. 12.4).

The observation of how these expressive resources are combined with the previously mentioned oppositions allows us to make several additional observations. We may see how the 'cultural' is situated on the panel, it always represents an act of violence; domination, a show of arms (always in a threatening position and ready for combat) or even hunting; likewise, the expressive resource used to signify the 'cultural' is such that it always inverts the character of what is used to signify the natural - for example: if the natural is represented in an abstract form (i.e. using concentric circles), then the 'cultural' is represented in a naturalistic manner, and, vice versa. If the 'natural' is represented using naturalist motifs, then the 'cultural' is represented using a metonymy.

We may now reorganise the formal scheme which we outlined earlier, bearing in mind the rules, oppositions, expressive resources and exceptions which we have defined for rock art. These observations allow us to

¹ We use the term quadrupeds for those animals which are difficult to decipher due to their schematic representation and lack of horns; these may be horses or bovinds.

² It is probable that in some cases, concentric circles may represent peat bogs. This possibility is upheld by the presence in some petroglyphs of this type being associated with parts of the rock where water accumulates: in other cases natural basins substitute concentric circles.

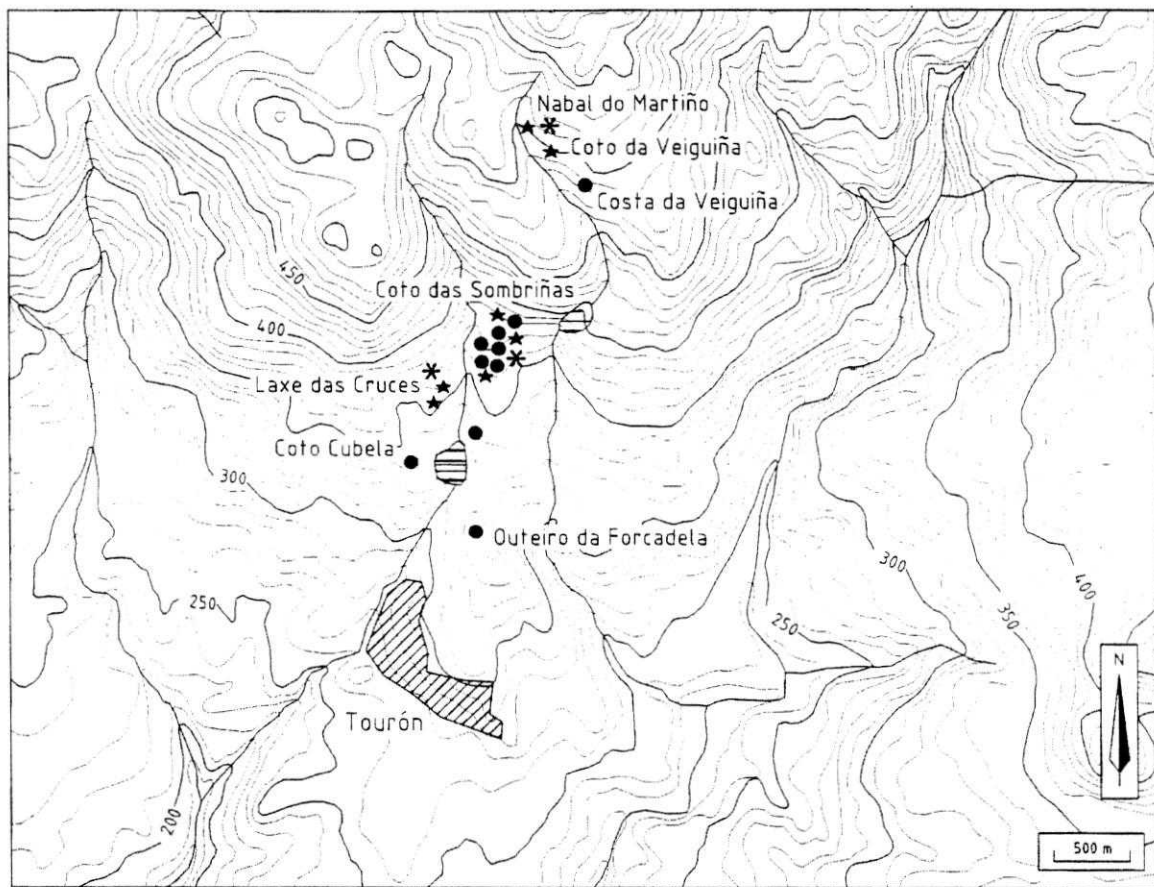


Fig. 12.5 Distribution of rock art subjectivity within the Tourón area.

construct a more complex and detailed formal scheme, which intends to unify the relative position on the panel, with the type of motif represented. The character of this representation and the principle rules of opposition.

If we 'read' the panels and what they might represent in the direction indicated by the positions up-down and left to right of the rock art panel, which is the reading direction, we can apply to the scheme through the superimposed circular arrow, the panels that signify a regression of 'culture' to 'nature' which was initially a comparison between 'nature' and 'culture'. This is formalised with two expressive resources: using the comparison between the representation of the wild and the cultural (in the case of A above F and BCD, and through abstract representation, naturalist representations (in the case of AB and AF). However, the system of representation is completed with scenes of domestication and violence which signify a comparison between culture and nature. (Fig. 12.4)

4.2. Planning, seeing and meaning of the panel

We now change the merely formal orientation of our description, to offer an interpretative reading of the formal regularities which make up this scheme.

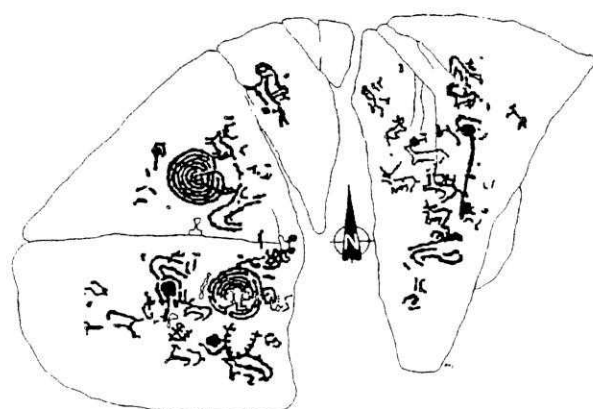
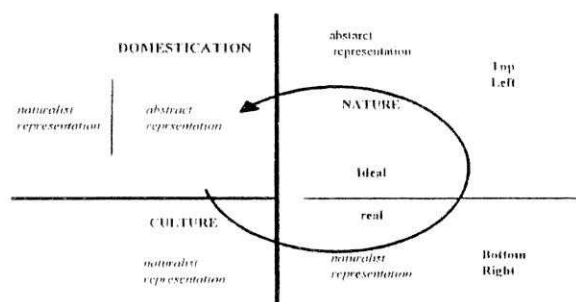
The ideological bias of this spatial grammar and style of representation is made evident by the fact that domestic

activities are those which are least represented. Galician rock art, unlike other contemporary types of art from similar cultural horizons, does not illustrate daily life. This fact, which appears paradoxical, as an art form and represents the constructive action by people and their environment. However, it also deals with the human and daily life in an elusive manner, and is a clear symptom of this art's ideological orientation; it is inclined to lean towards the values which privilege the males.

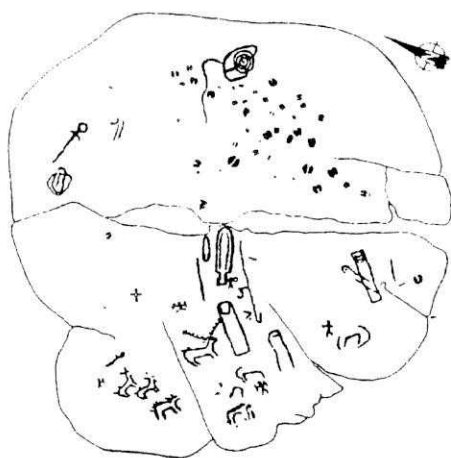
To complete this analysis, we will return to the petroglyph of Laxe das Ferraduras in the area of Caneda, armed with the new perspective discussed in this section. The system of representation detailed in Fig. 12.4 is not, in the case of Laxe das Ferraduras, only a representative grammar, but also offers the matrix or actual model of the panel. Its analysis reveals to us that the model of spatial articulation of different individual motifs and with the micro topography of the rock reproduces this models authenticity.

The panel is placed like an ascending line which juts out from the lower left-hand corner to the right, and splits off half way to the left. If the distribution of motifs and the relief of the rock cross at its centre, we see that the natural motifs remain on the lower section, with the abstract motifs remaining on the upper section. Similarly, the model also shows that the lower section contains the

Caneda



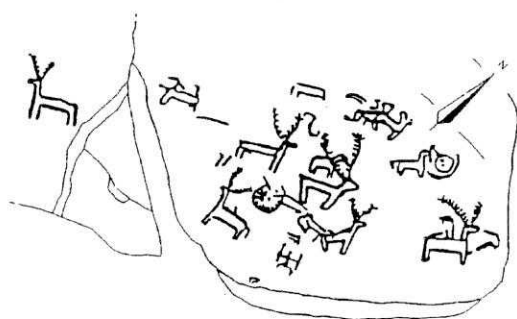
Chan da Lagoa (Peña Santos)



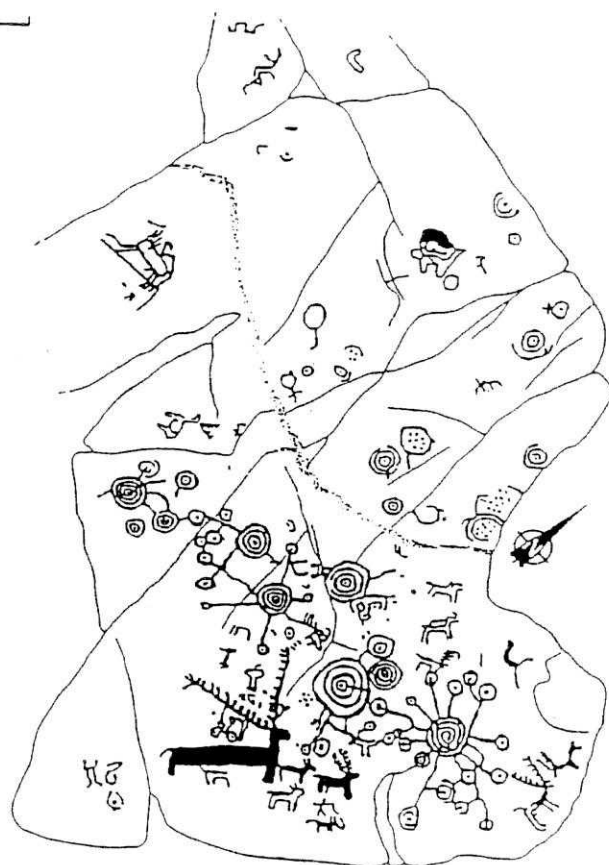
Pedra das Ferraduras (Peña Santos)

1 m

Tourón



Nabal do Martiño



Laxe das Cruces (Peña Santos)

Fig. 12.6 Rock Art from Chan da Logoa, Laxe das Cruces, Nabal do Martiño and Pedra das Ferraduras (after Peña Santos).

human motifs, whereas the upper section contains natural motifs. Vertically from bottom to top appear: grazing, deer, idols and weapons, followed by animal footprints and circles. This 'journey' also represents a movement from

the cultural to the wild, which then returns to culture, and finally finishes again with the wild. As we have mentioned, the features of this system of expression are generally used in Galician rock art.



Plate 12.8. Rock carving including circles, cupmarks, wheeled crosses and zoomorphs on the Chan da Lagoa panel.

Concluding Remarks: 1. The territory

The landscape of the Bronze Age may be represented as a ground plan or in profile. Represented horizontally, we may see how the space occupied by the inhabitants was concentrated in the centre of the figure, whereas the uninhabited space corresponding to the valley is found on the periphery, and separating both worlds is the space of the representation. If this same landscape is observed in profile we may see that the populated space is found in the upper part and the uninhabited valley lies in the lower part, and again the space containing the carvings is found between both.

Summarising the sphere of culture, this is found either to the top or in the centre of the scheme, whereas the sphere of nature and the 'wild' world is found in the lower, peripheral part.

2. The station

In order to schematically represent the space of the stations, we will use as examples Tourón and Caneda, analysed in our study. Tourón is clearly a vertically organised station. In the upper part of the station we may find the most complex panels, with quadrupeds, deer, circles and riding scenes. In the lower part the only motifs are quadrupeds and anthropomorphs.

At the Caneda station the distribution of motifs and the complexity of the panels is concentric. In the centre of the

station, around the peat bogs, are found the most complex panels with riding scenes, deer, quadrupeds and circular combinations. Finally, in the Caneda station the distribution of motifs and the complexity of panels is developed concentrically. Around these and throughout the lines of movement which eventually lead to the peat bogs are found much simpler petroglyphs with quadrupeds without horns and circular combinations. Finally, in the most peripheral zones on the routes leading to the station, are found weapons including daggers.

At both stations we find a very similar way of structuring the art space. In the upper or central zones there are motifs connected with culture as well as male deer, which are not present in the lower and/or peripheral zone. In the case of Caneda, in which there are carvings of weapons, these appear to be defining the space of the station.

3. The Panels

We have seen in the corresponding section a general vertical or diagonal distribution of the motifs within the panel space. With riding scenes in the upper part (E), with circular combinations beneath them (A) followed by weapons (F), deer (B) quadrupeds without horns (C), and, in the lowest part, anthropomorphs (D). Once again we see a division between motifs which represent culture and the geometrical motifs in the upper part, and motifs which refer to nature in the lower part, with weapons being placed in the middle of both groups.

This was also the case at the Caneda station, where petroglyphs representing weapons separate areas between rock art and 'wild' space.

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