

JUAN F. RUIZ



# LEVANTINE ART

A CASE STUDY FOR ANALYZING PREHISTORIC  
SOCIAL SPHERES BY MEANS OF ROCK ART

# INTRODUCTION

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# 1. ROCK ART AS ARCHAEOLOGY



# ARCHAEOLOGY - study of human past (people and societies)

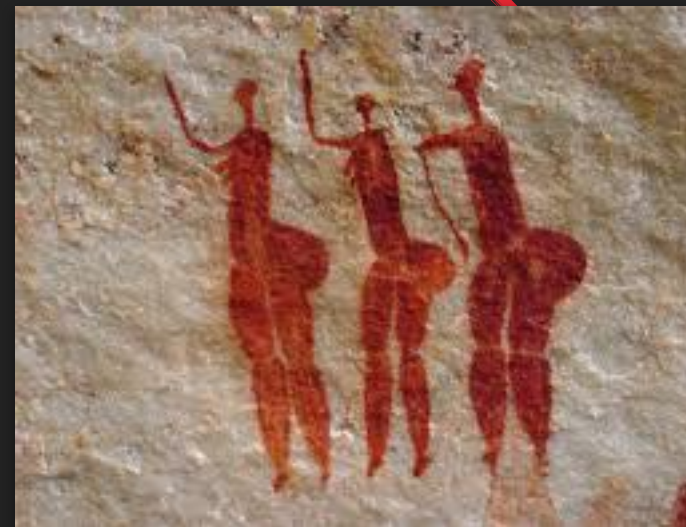
MATERIAL  
CULTURE



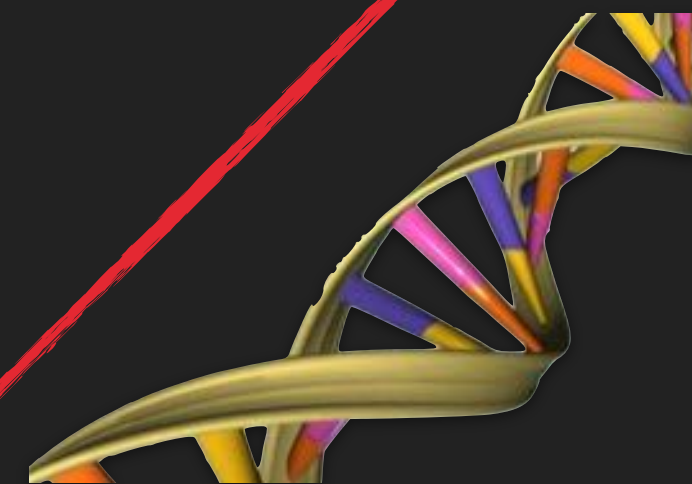
LANDSCAPE  
CLIMATE



ROCK  
ART



GENETICS





**MULTIDIMENSIONAL ENTITY**

**SYMBOLISM**



**TECHNIQUE**



**MATERIAL**



**COMMUNICATION**

**SOCIAL SPHERE**



## SOCIAL SPHERE

### ▶ Lii's Definition

SOCIAL SPHERE is the “cultural landscape on which various forms of performance and public drama are staged, and through which social bonds are created and collective experiences articulated”

Lii, Ding-Tzann (1998). Social spheres and public life. *Theory, Culture Society* 15: 115-135.



# SOCIAL SPHERE

- ▶ Religious ceremonies
- ▶ Public festivals
- ▶ Recreation
- ▶ Consumption





# SOCIAL SPHERE

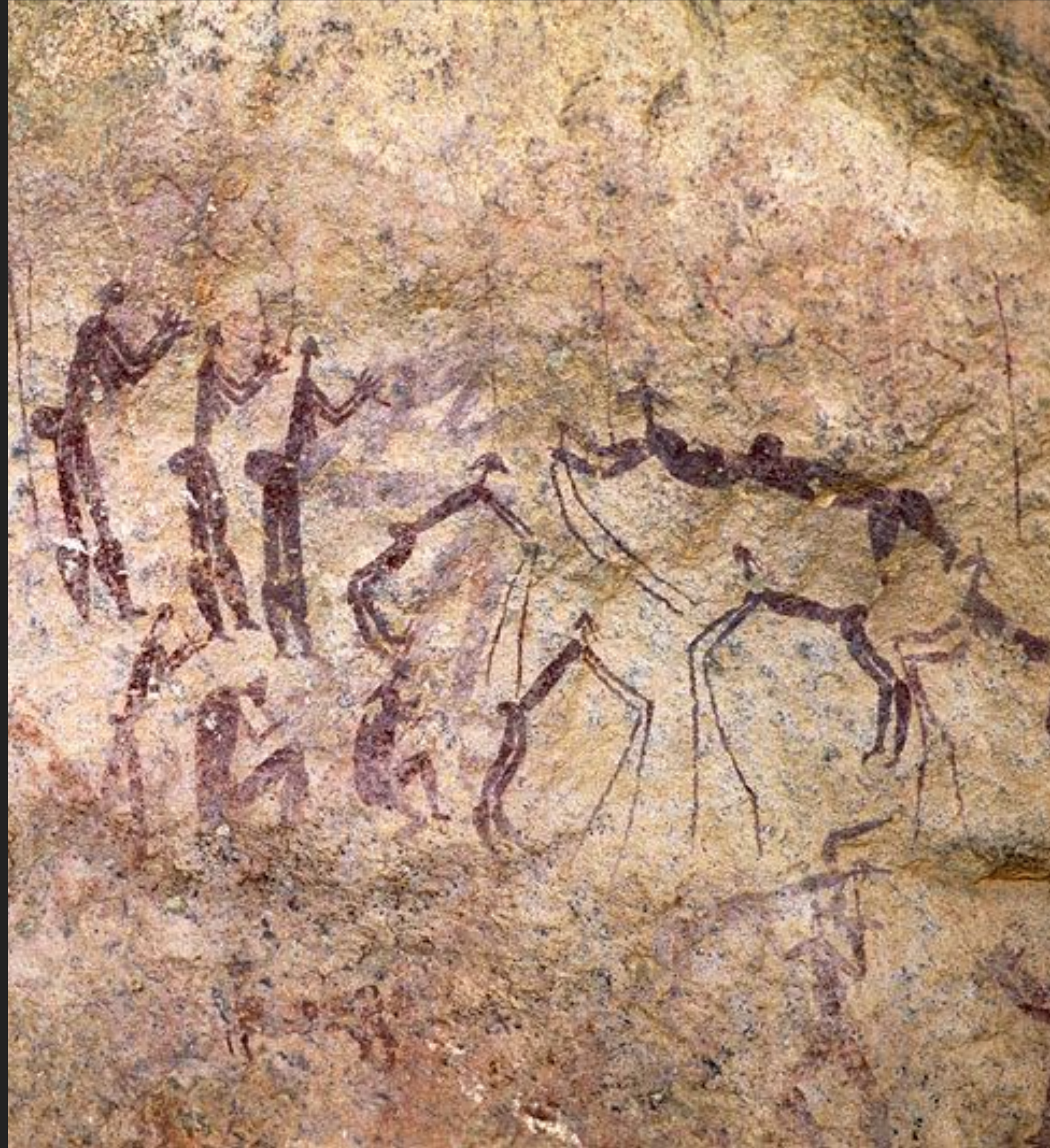
- ▶ Aggregation sites
  - ▶ Linked to rock and cave art since Upper Palaeolithic
  - ▶ A distinct time - leisure
  - ▶ Learning, resilience and symbolic connections
- ▶ Time for consumption
  - ▶ Rock art production
  - ▶ Collective rituals - Rites of passage





# SOCIAL SPHERE IN ROCK ART

- ▶ An appropriate media is required to approach to prehistoric social spheres
  - ▶ Naturalism
  - ▶ Expressionist
  - ▶ Gender roles
  - ▶ Human interactions
  
- ▶ This is the case of Levantine art







LEVANTINE ART

RED LINEAR STYLE

NORTH AFRICAN

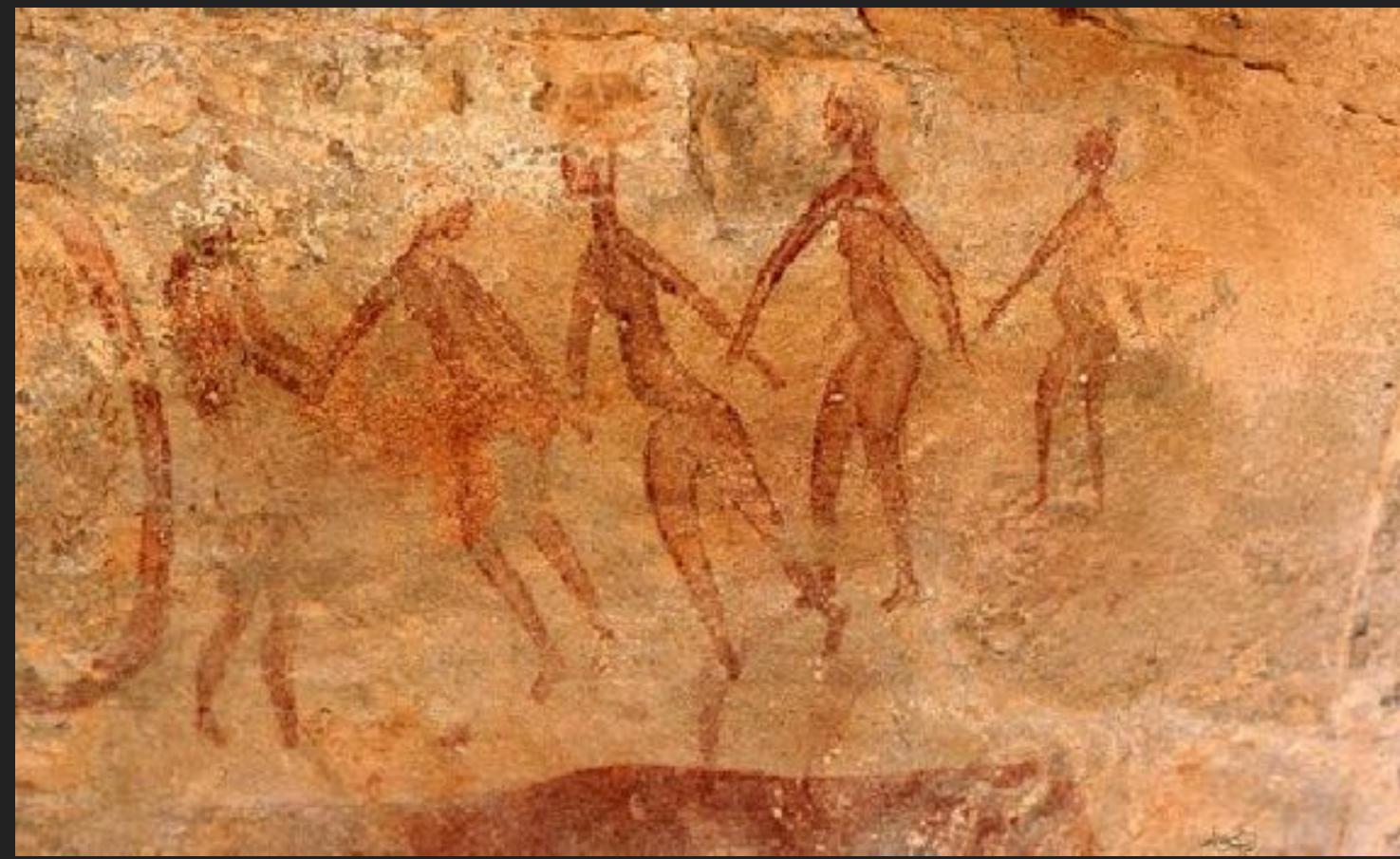
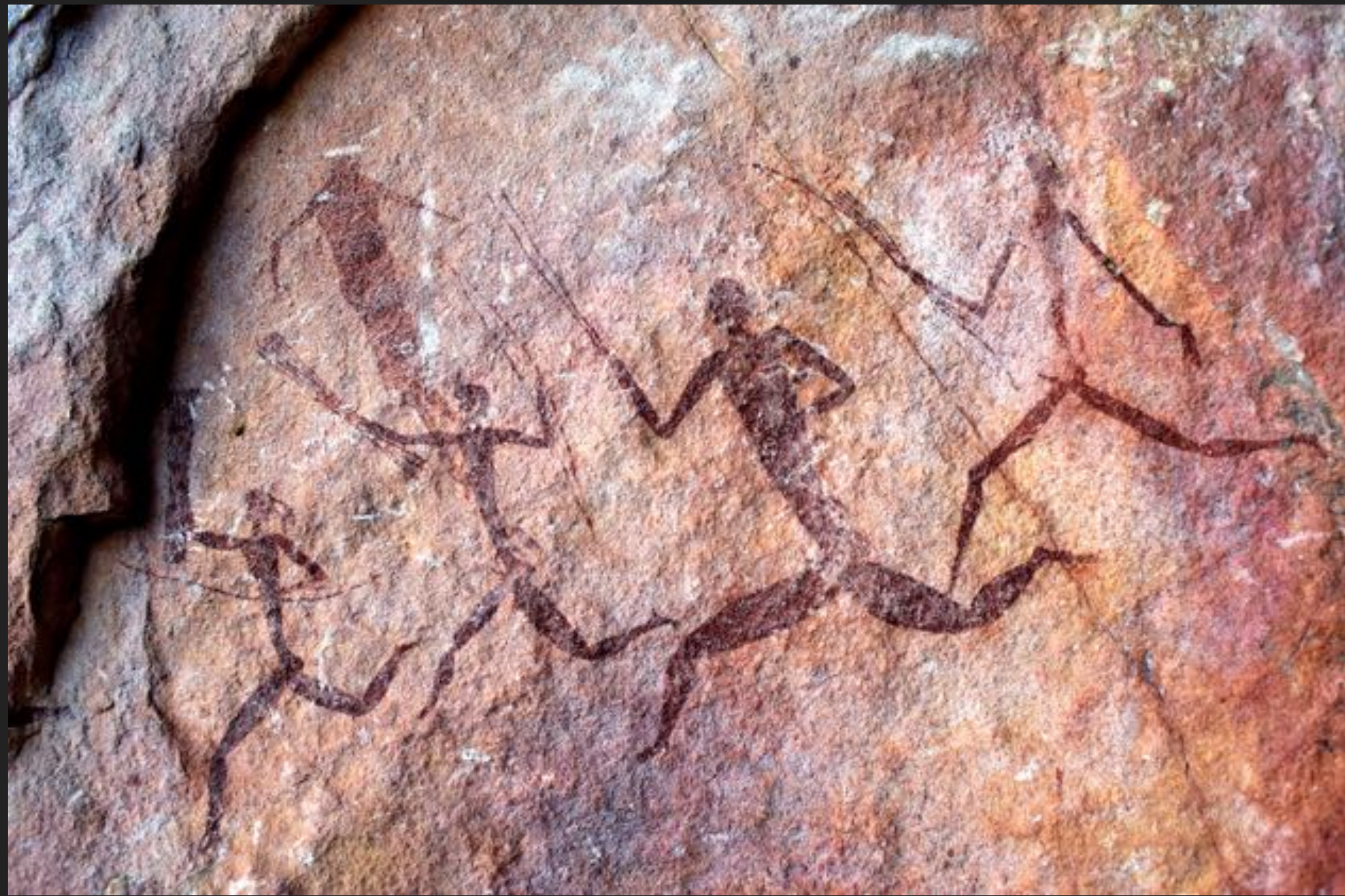
BHIMBETKA

CONFLUENCIA

SAN / NAMIB

GWION







AN EXCEPTIONAL STYLE

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# 2. LEVANTINE ART



# LEVANTINE ART

- ▶ First discovered in 1903
- ▶ c. 700-800 sites discovered up to now
  - ▶ Most of them included in UNESCO WHL
  - ▶ Rock art of the Mediterranean Basin of the Iberian Peninsula (1998)





# SOCIAL SPHERE IN LEVANTINE ART

- ▶ Human as main characters
- ▶ Naturalistic depictions
- ▶ Gender roles
- ▶ Hunting strategies
- ▶ War scenes and violence









SELVA PASCUALA









# MINATEDA

© Breuil, 1920

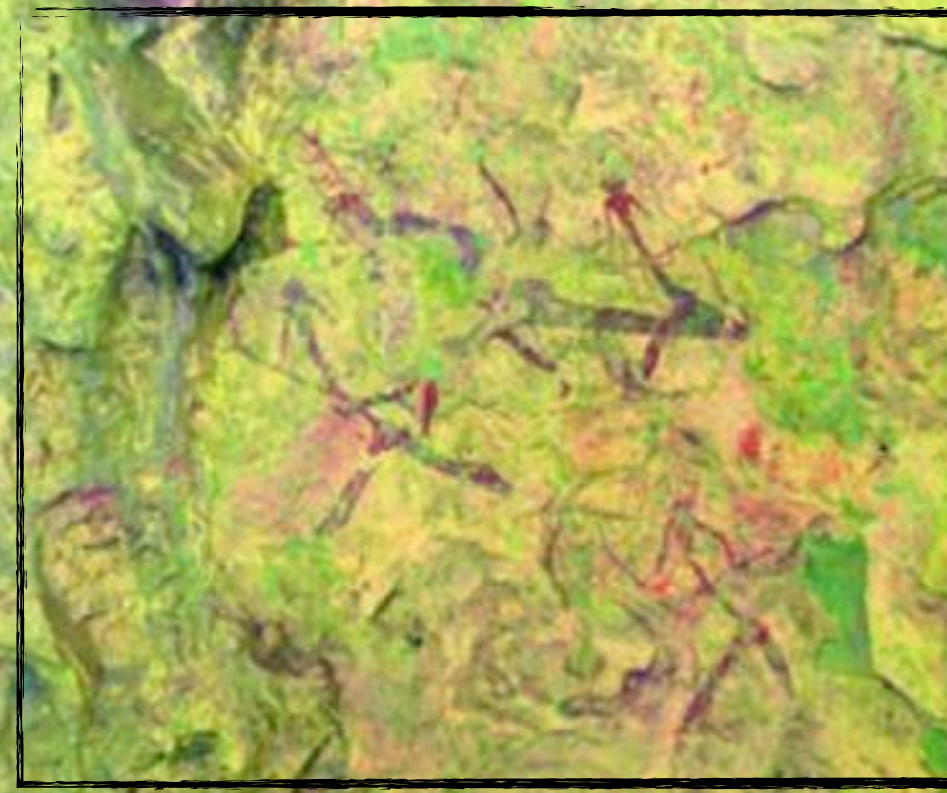




COVES DEL CIVIL, P. 4







50 cm



COVES DEL CIVIL, P. 4



20 cm



# BARRANCO DE LAS OLIVANAS





COVA DELS  
CAVALLS





# SOLANA DE LAS COVACHAS



# COVA CENTELLES







**RÍO VERO**

**LOWER EBRO**

**RÍO MARTÍN**

**ALBARRACÍN**

**SIERRA CUERDAS**

**ALDEAQUEMADA**

**NERPIO**

**LORCA**

**ALPERA**

**YECLA**

**MORATALLA**

**BICORP/CAROIG**

**VALLTORTA-GASSULLA**

**MAESTRAZGO**

**ALCANTE**

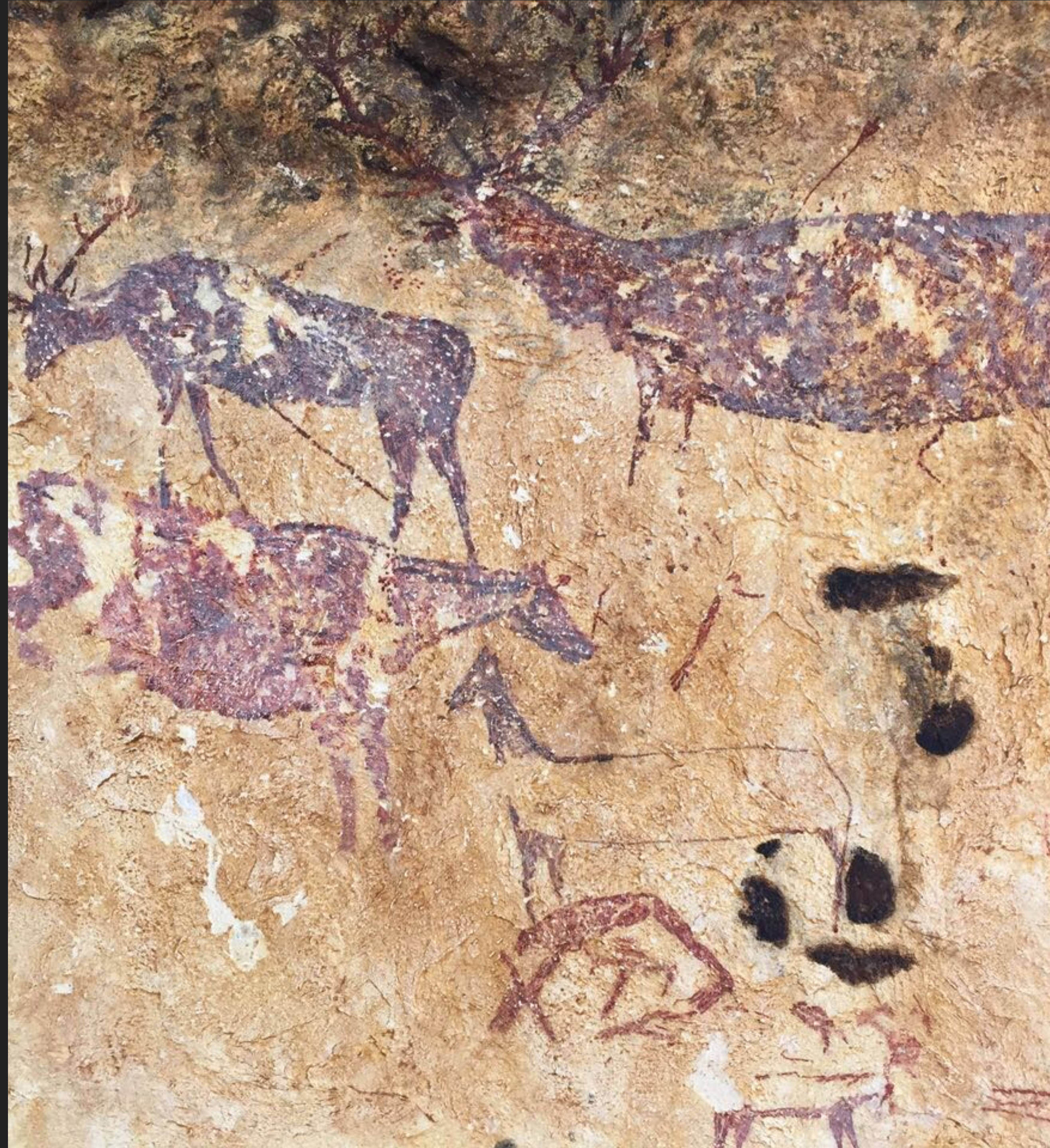
**PRADES/  
PRIORAT**

**EL S PORTS**

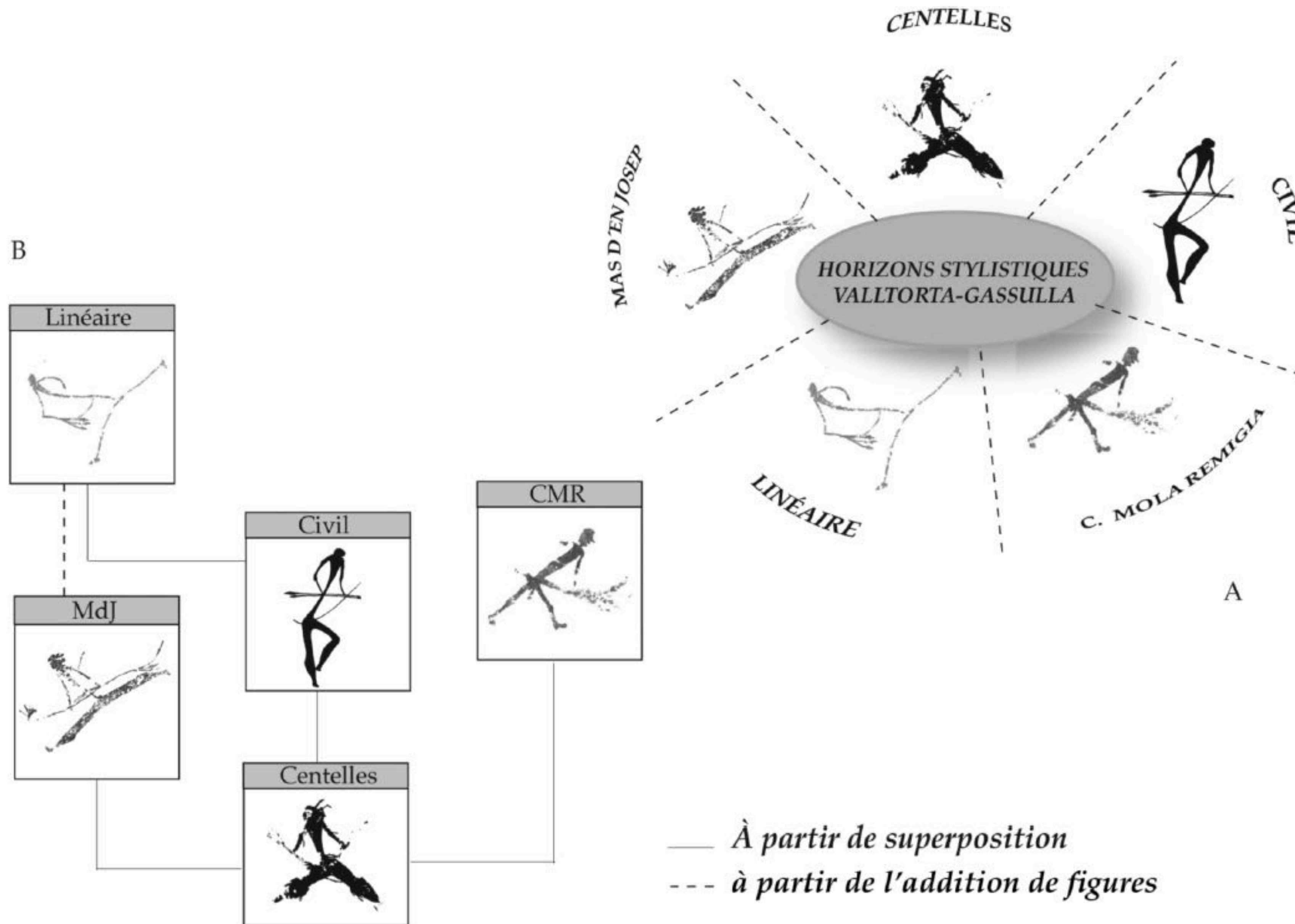


# LEVANTINE ART

- ▶ Made by mesolithic hunter-gatherers, since at least 7000 cal BC
- ▶ Some connections with the last stages of Upper Palaeolithic traditions
- ▶ It was probably disappeared by c. 4500 cal BC, after the arrival of Neolithic to Iberian Peninsula in 5700 cal BC







**López-Montalvo**, Esther. 2011. Violence et mort dans l'art rupestre du Levant : groupes humains et territoires. In L'armement et l'image du guerrier dans les sociétés anciennes: de l'objet à la tombe, eds. Luc Baray, Matthieu Honegger, and Marie-Hélène Dias-Meirinho, 19–42. EUD. Art, Archéologie & Patrimoine.



LEVANTINE ART

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# 3. SOCIAL SPHERES



# SOCIAL SPHERE IN LEVANTINE ART

- ▶ Sex-gender roles
- ▶ Personal adornment
- ▶ Hunting
- ▶ Violence







LEVANTINE ART

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**SEX-GENDER**





SEXED



NON-SEXED





# SEX DISTINCTION

- ▶ Secondary sex features
  - ▶ Breasts
  - ▶ Male genitalia
- ▶ When absent
  - ▶ Clothes
    - ▶ Skirt (female)
    - ▶ Trousers (male)
  - ▶ Objects (purses, elbow decorations)





# WOMEN ROLES

- ▶ Mostly static figures (75%)
- ▶ Large variety of scenes
  - ▶ Pairs or groups of women
    - ▶ Symbolic roles?
- ▶ Explicit maternity and breast-feed are really scarce





# EL COGUL



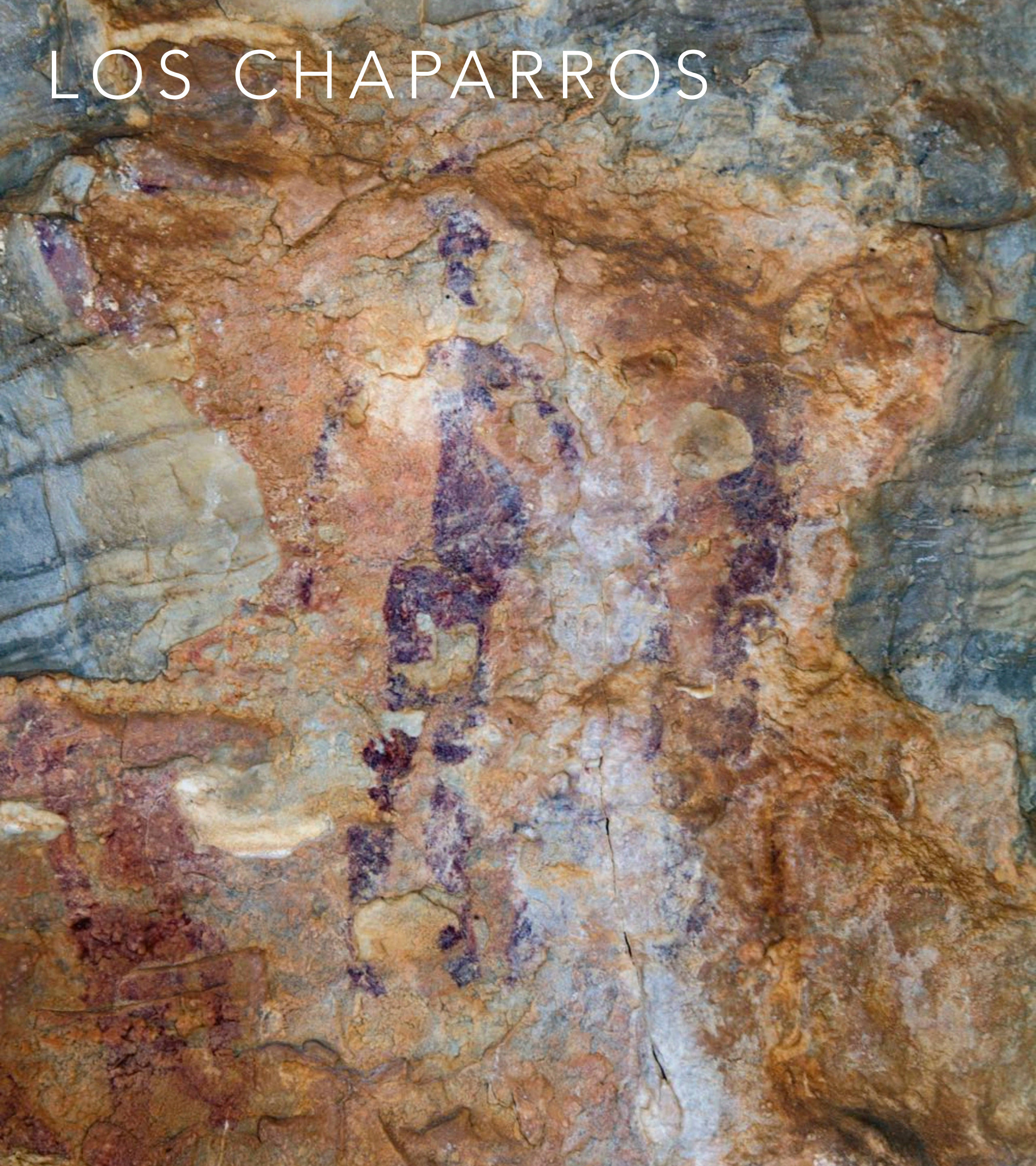


COVETES DEL  
PUNTAL

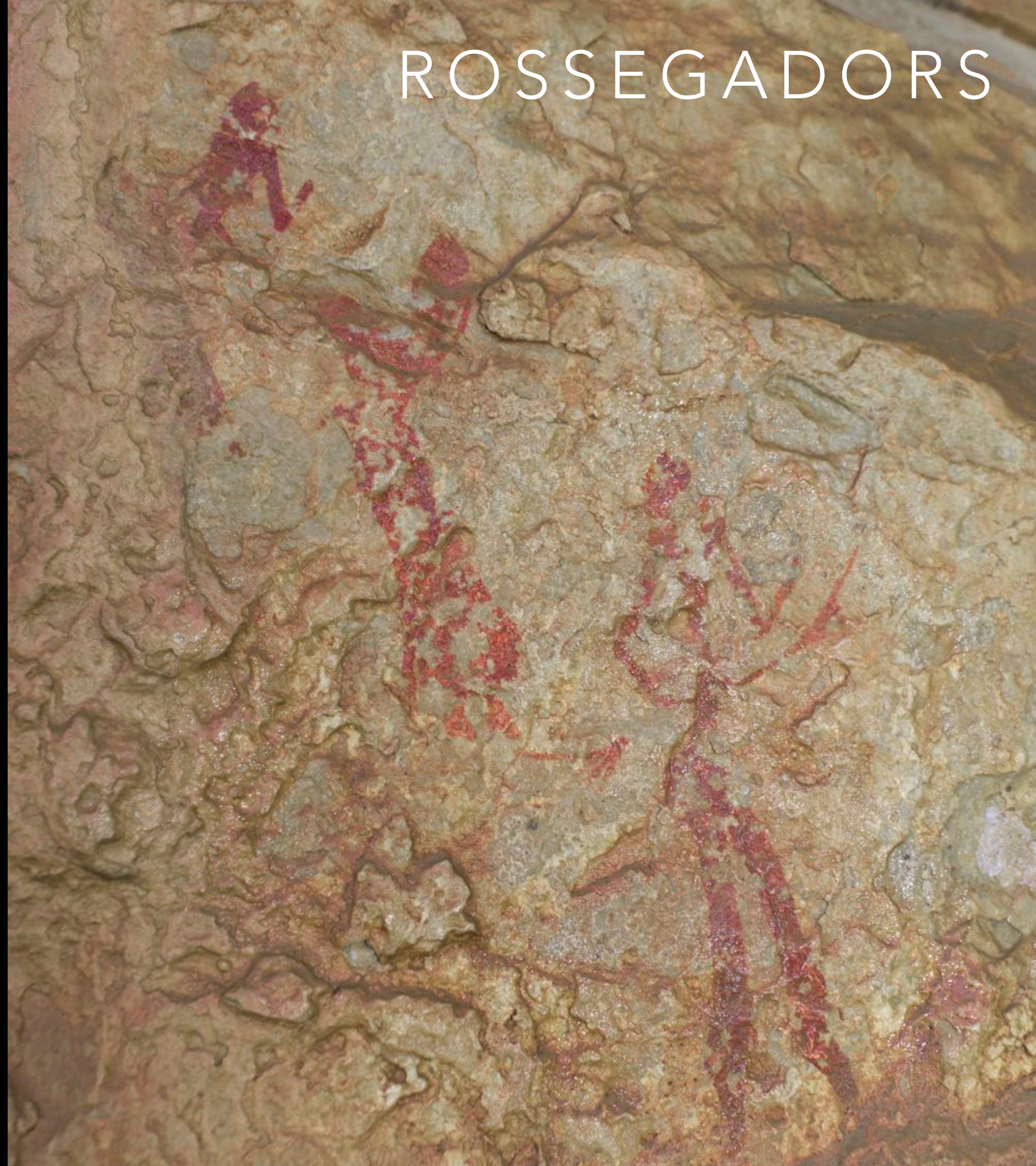




LOS CHAPARROS



ROSSEGADORS



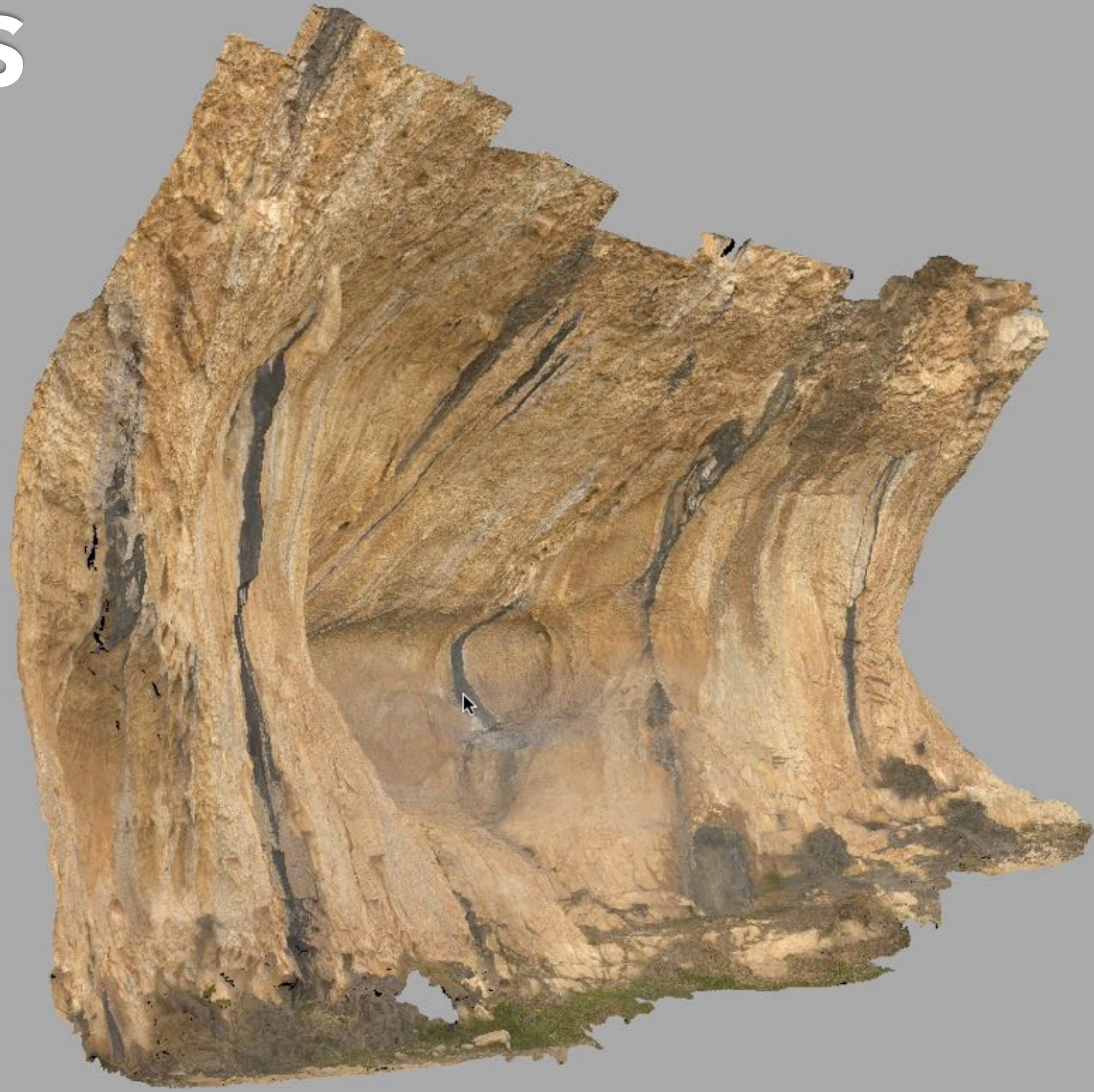


MINATEDA





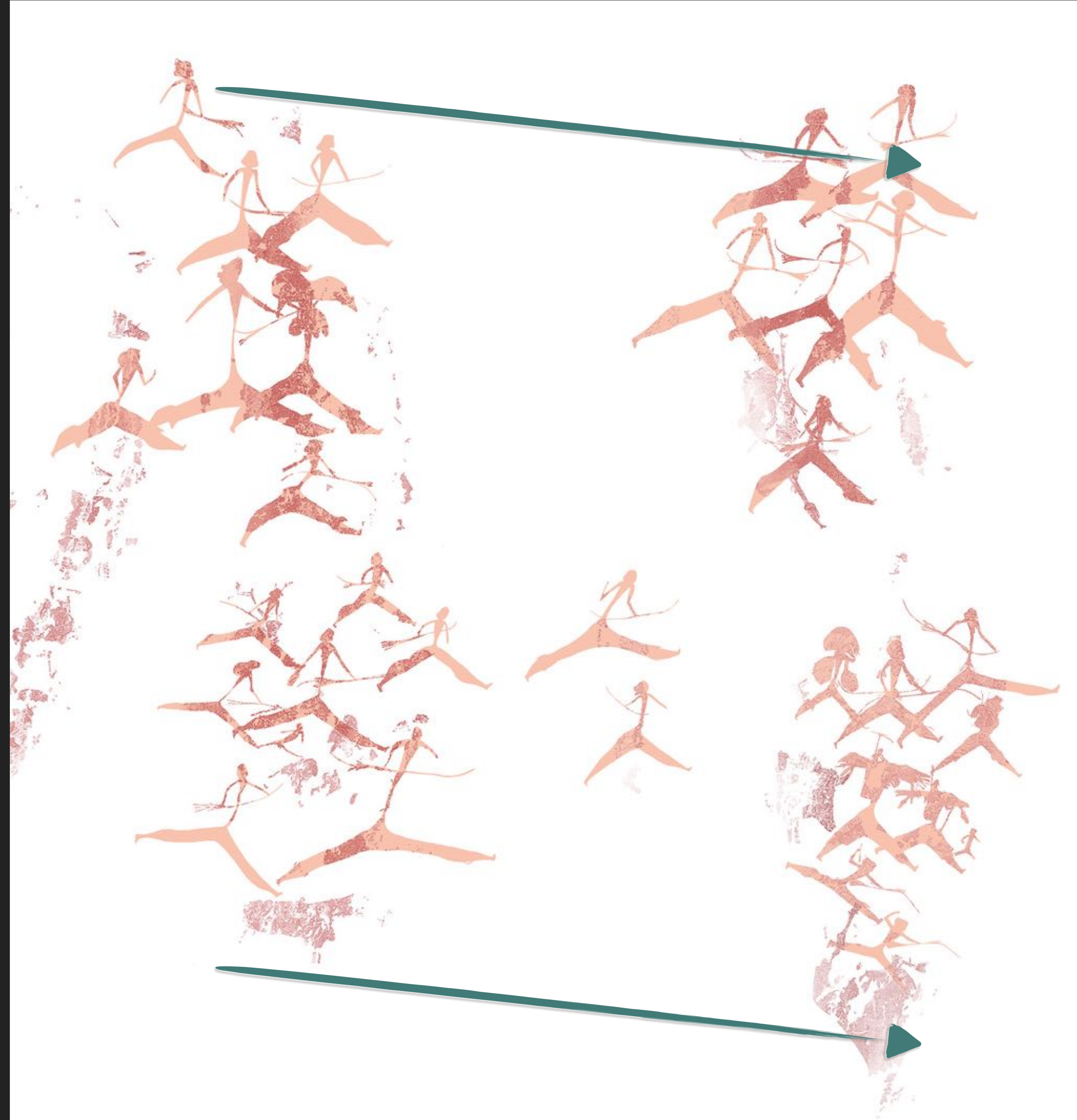
# COVA CENTELLES





# WOMEN IN COVA CENTELLES

- ▶ Moving campsite
- ▶ 30+ figures involved
- ▶ Archers and people carrying burden
- ▶ Coordinated action
- ▶ Carriers surrounded by archers
  - ▶ Interpreted as women carrying loads and children





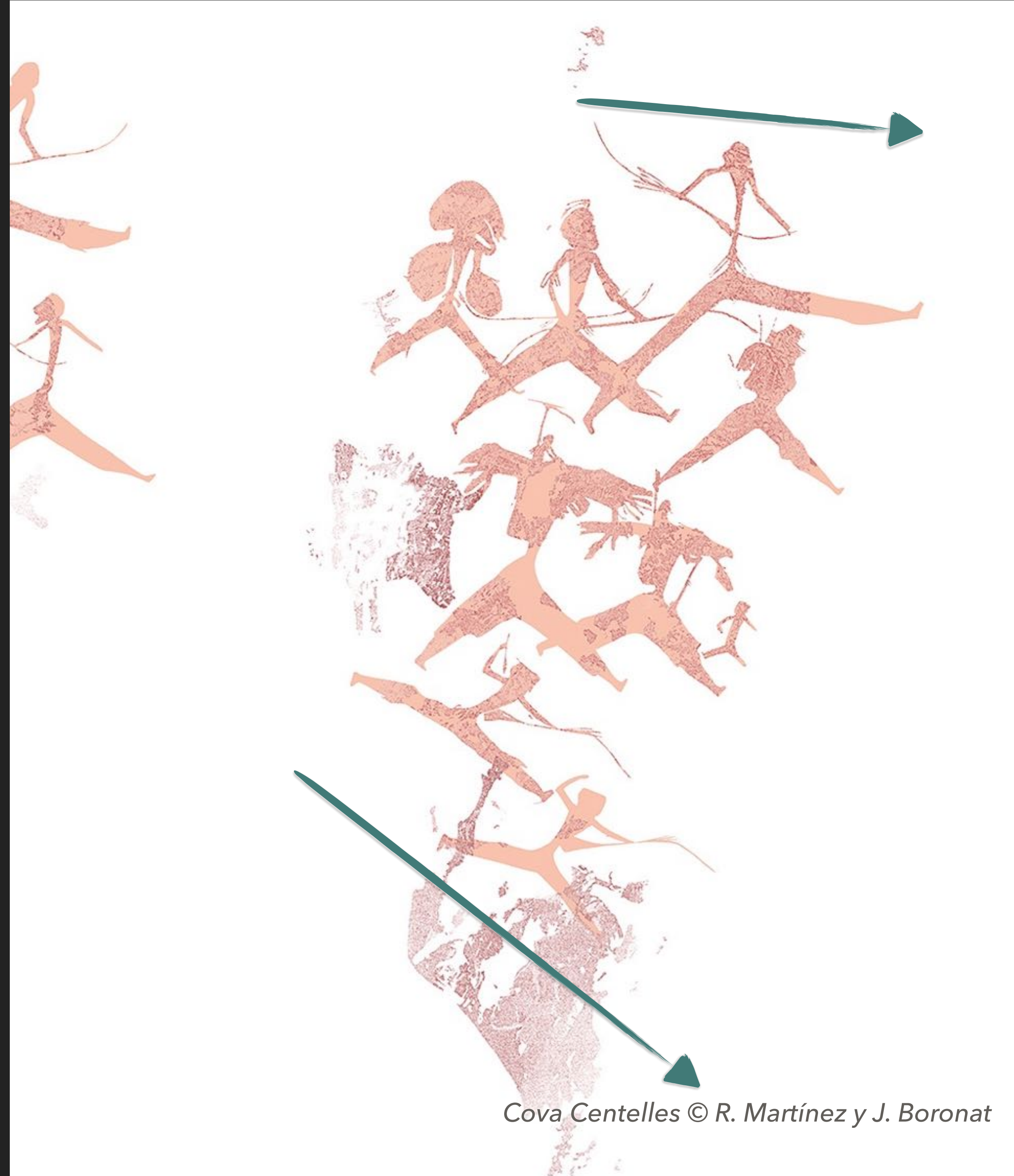
# GENDER ROLES IN COVA CENTELLES

## ▶ WOMEN ROLES

- ▶ Carrying packs
- ▶ Carrying children
- ▶ Taking care of children

## ▶ MEN ROLES

- ▶ Carrying packs
- ▶ Defend flanks and rearguard
- ▶ Attack menaces







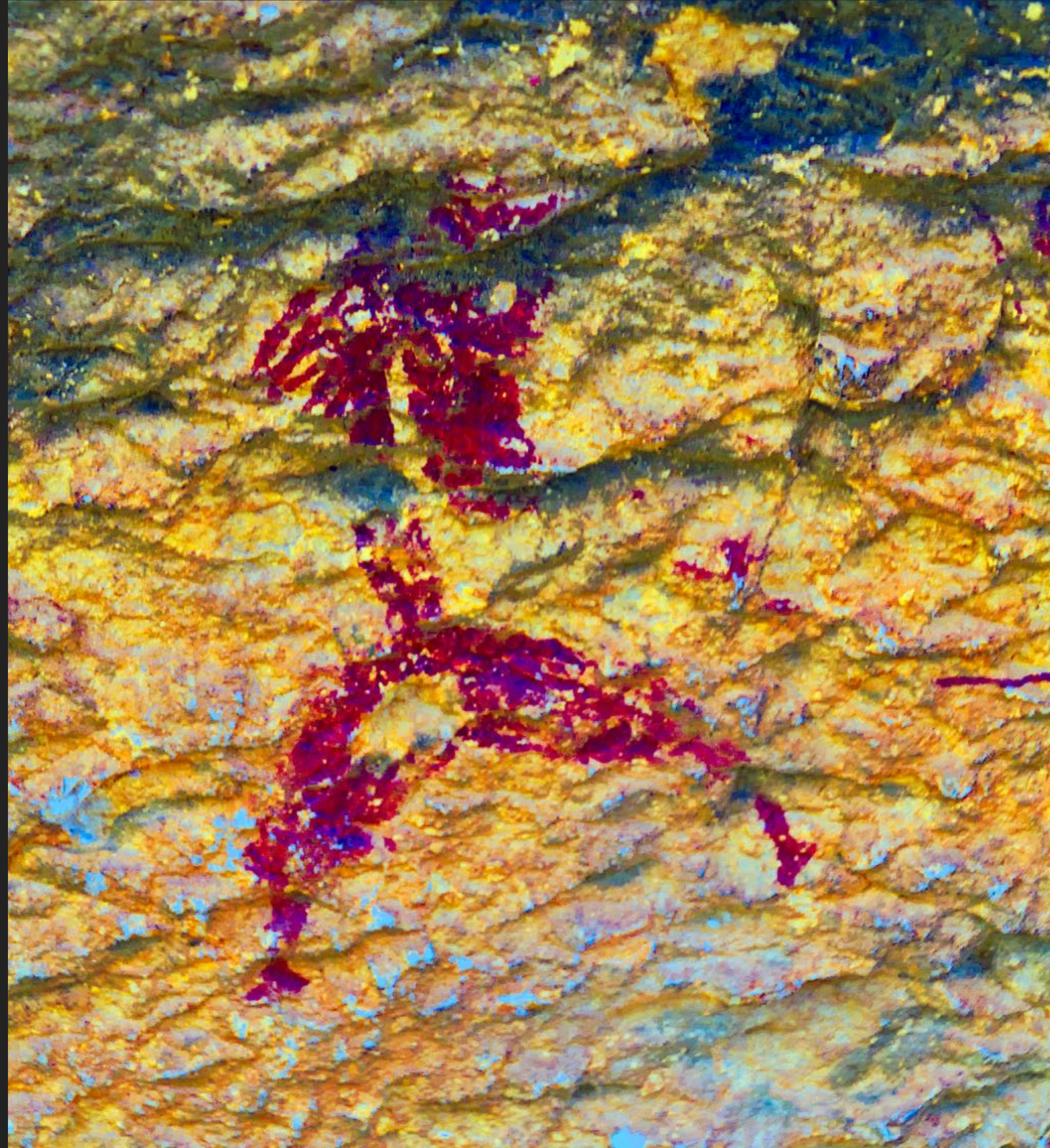






# WOMEN IN TROUSERS

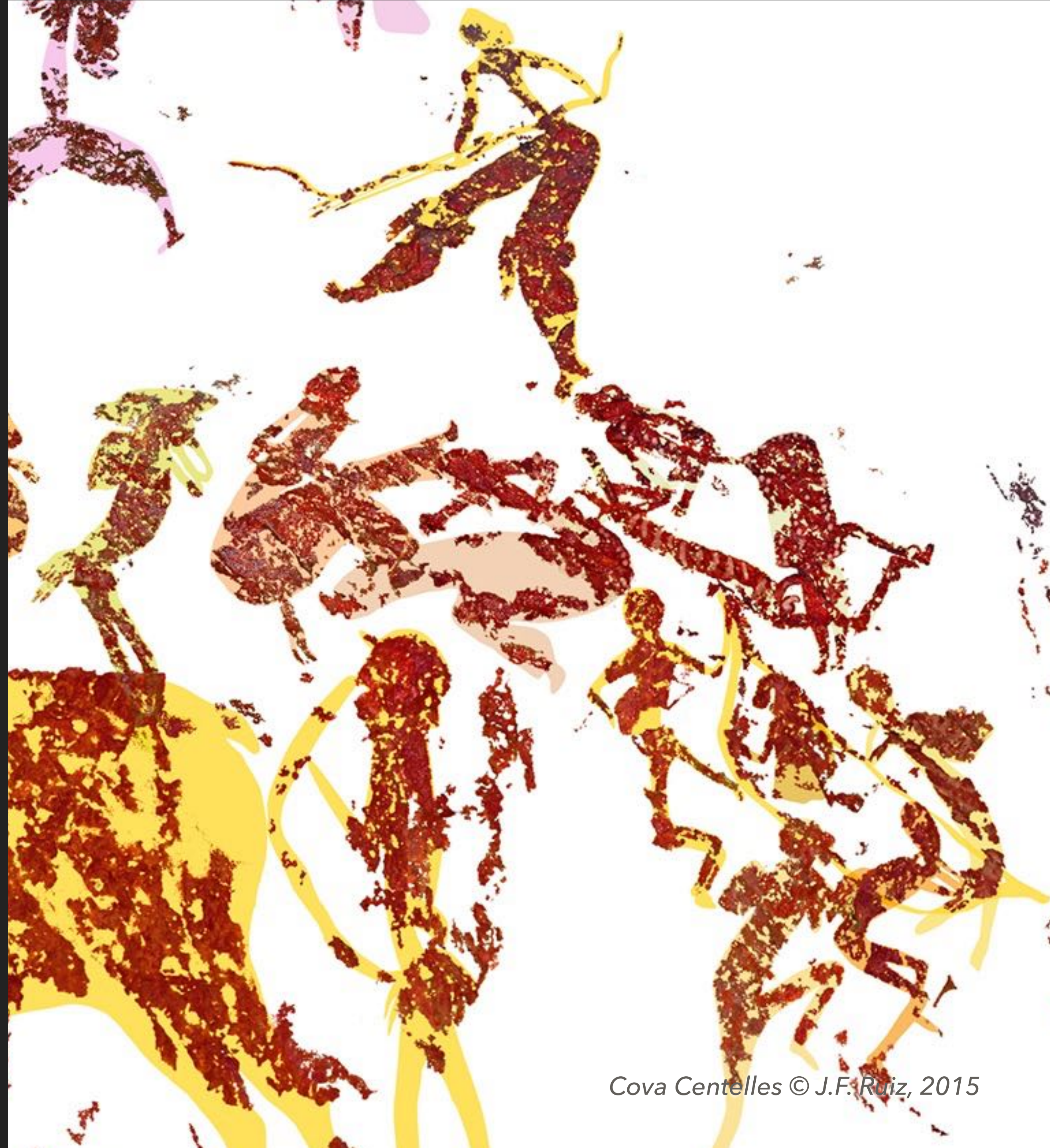
- ▶ Arrival to campsite
- ▶ Some women still carrying burden
- ▶ They are wearing broad trousers and show their breasts





# WOMEN GIVING BIRTH

- ▶ Two women wearing trousers seated face to face
- ▶ One is bent to help giving birth to the other
- ▶ A small figure appear below the hips of the second woman
- ▶ Woman caring to a man laying on the floor
- ▶ Women caring other people (male and female)



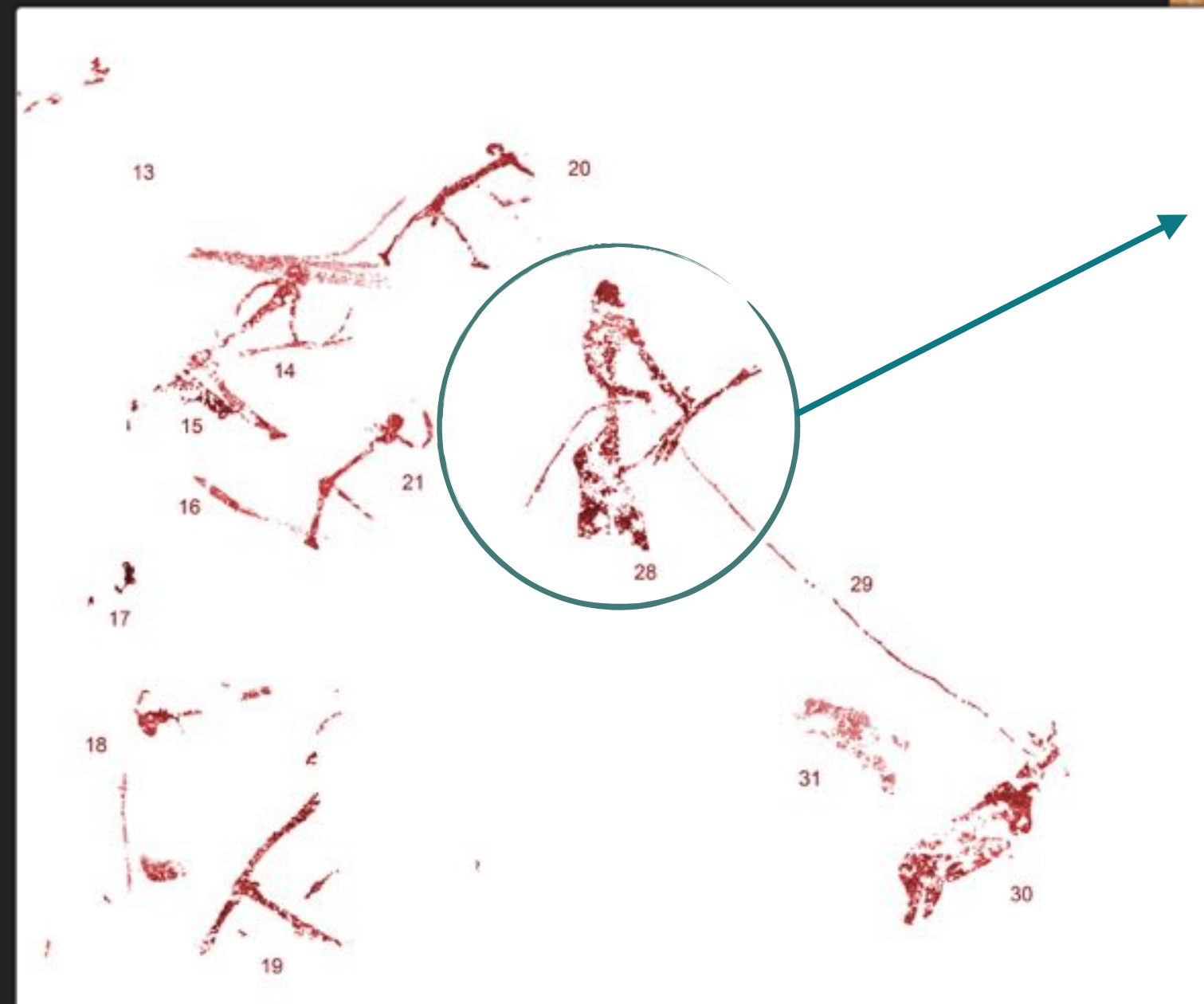






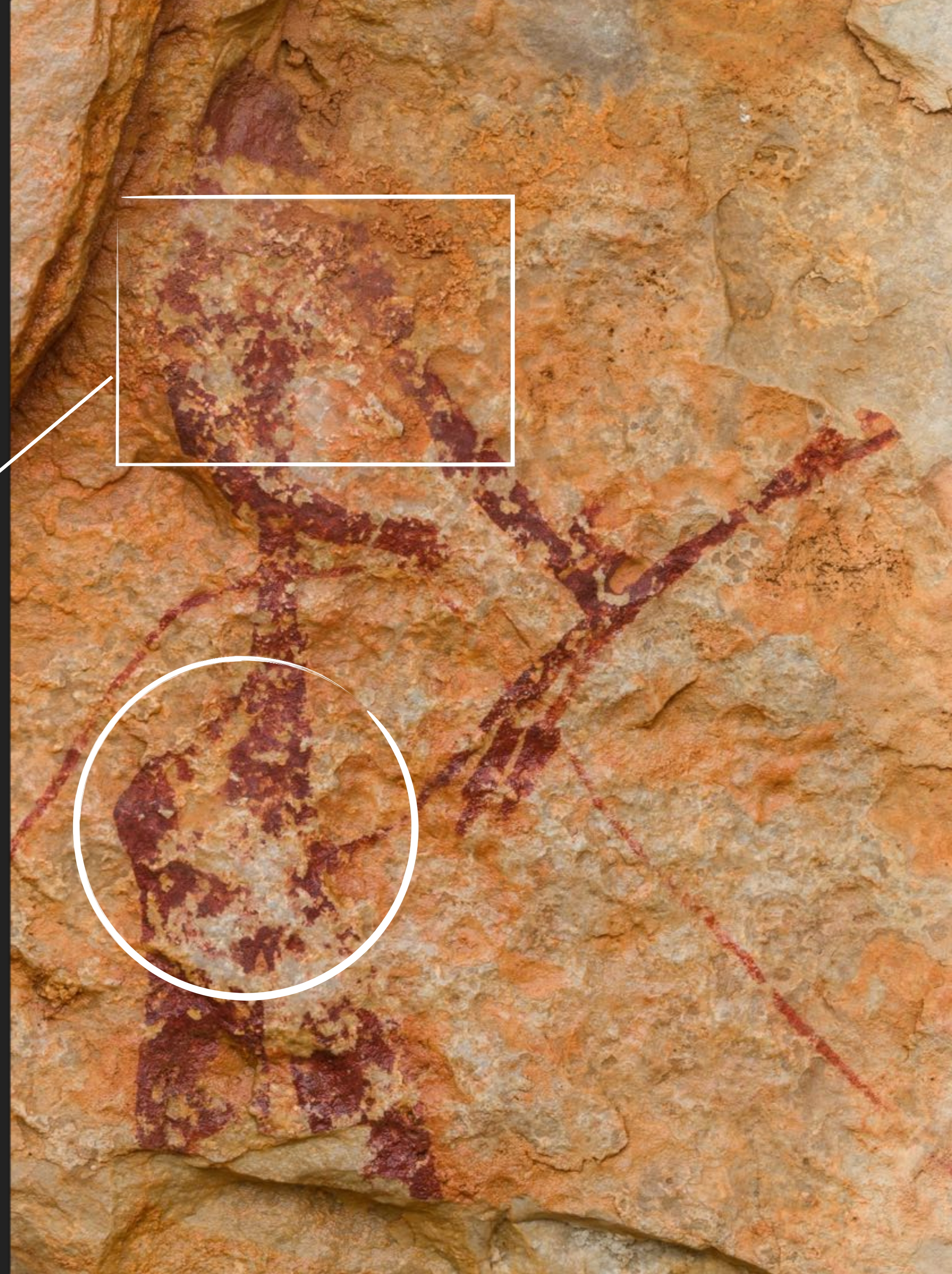
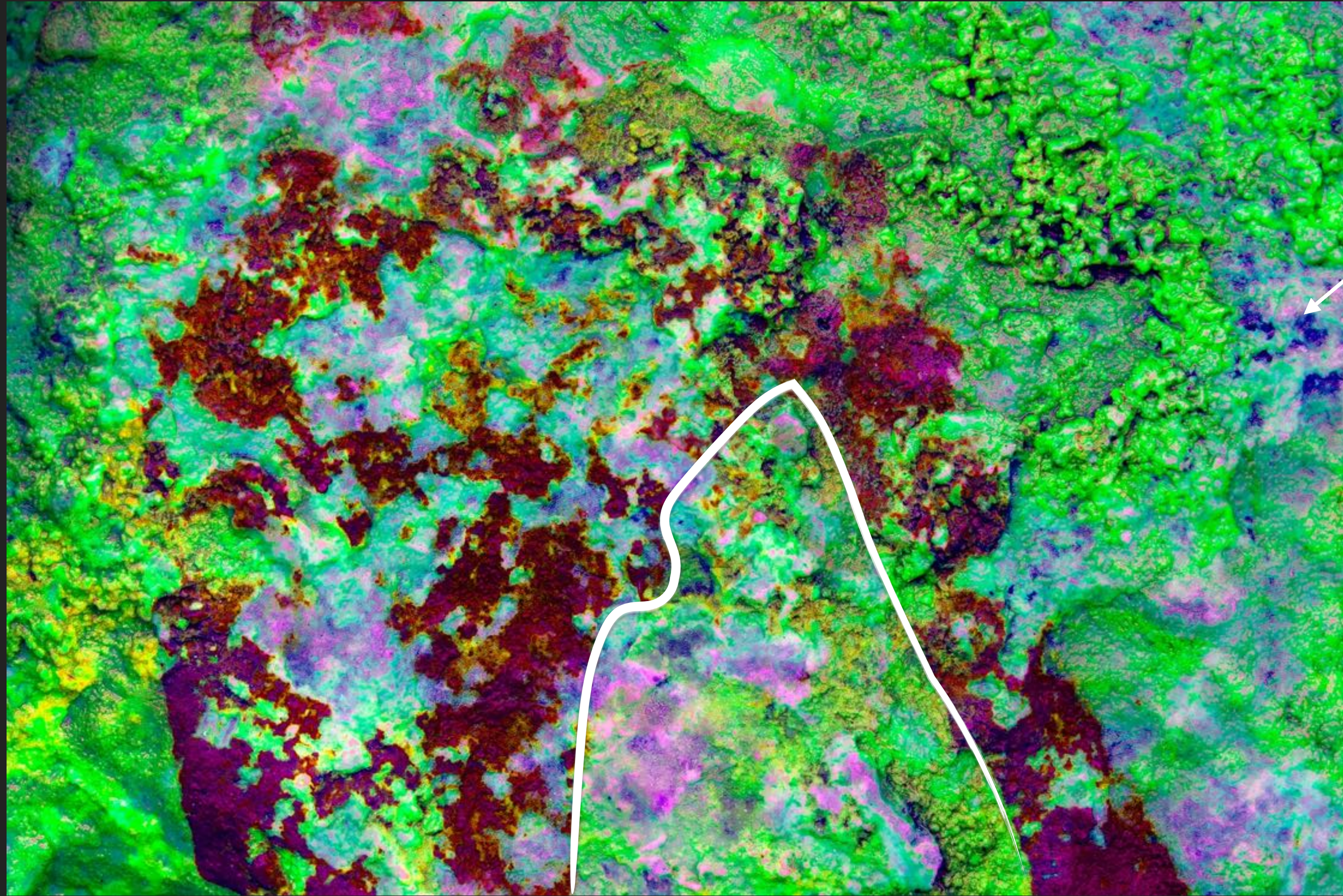
# WOMEN HUNTING?

- ▶ One figure from Cova dels Rossegadors can be interpreted as a woman holding bow and arrows
- ▶ Holding an animal with a rope
- ▶ Symbolic figure?
- ▶ Lady of the beasts?





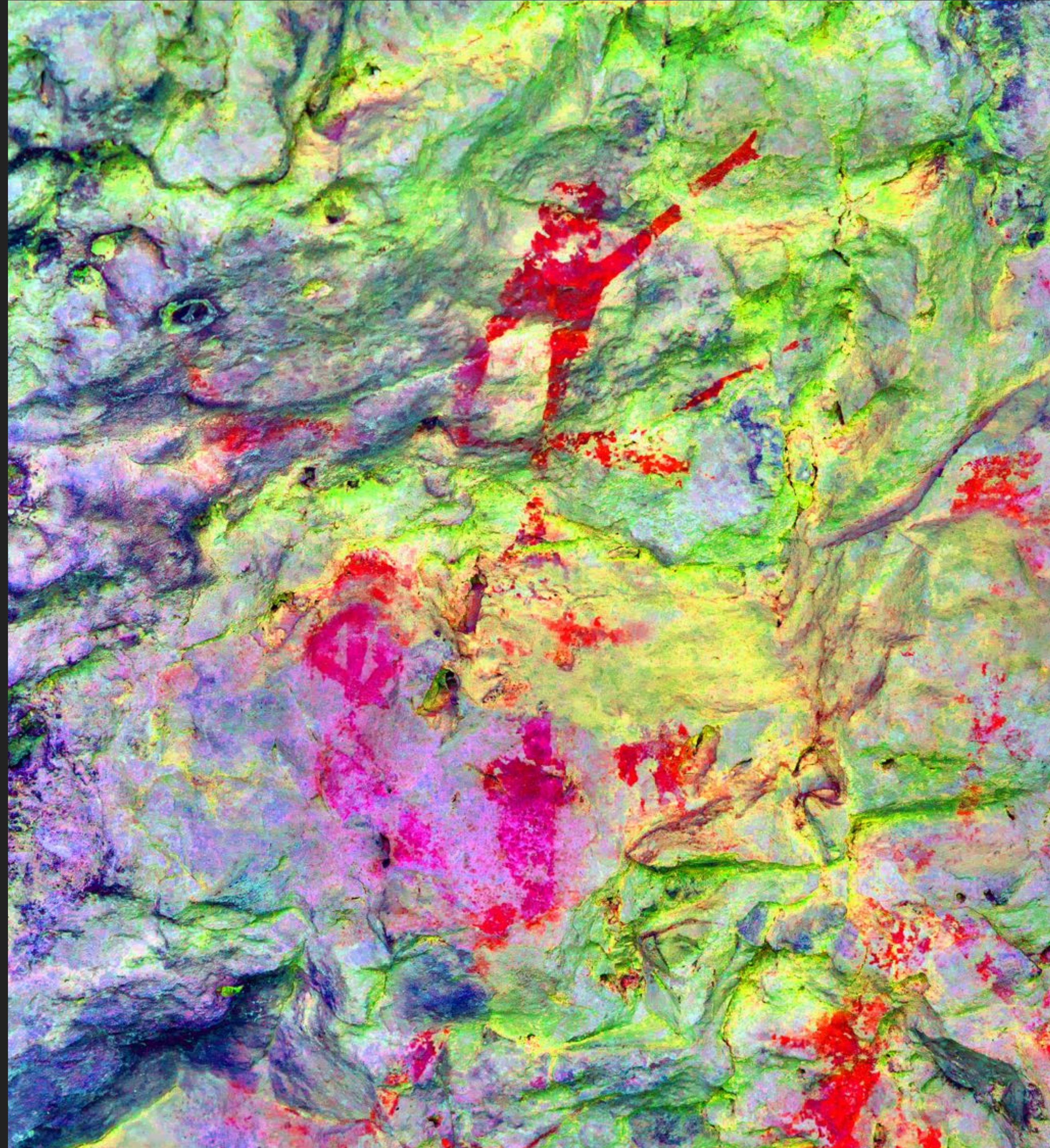
# WOMEN HUNTING?





# SOCIAL SPHERE IN GENDER IN LEVANTINE ART

- ▶ Significant female roles are depicted in scenes of the first stage
- ▶ Changing roles for women could be reflecting changes of hunter-gatherer societies over time?
  - ▶ From egalitarian societies to progressive subordination to men?
  - ▶ Just a symbolic world interaction? Or a reflection of everyday life?
  - ▶ Who was painting? Men, women?







LEVANTINE ART

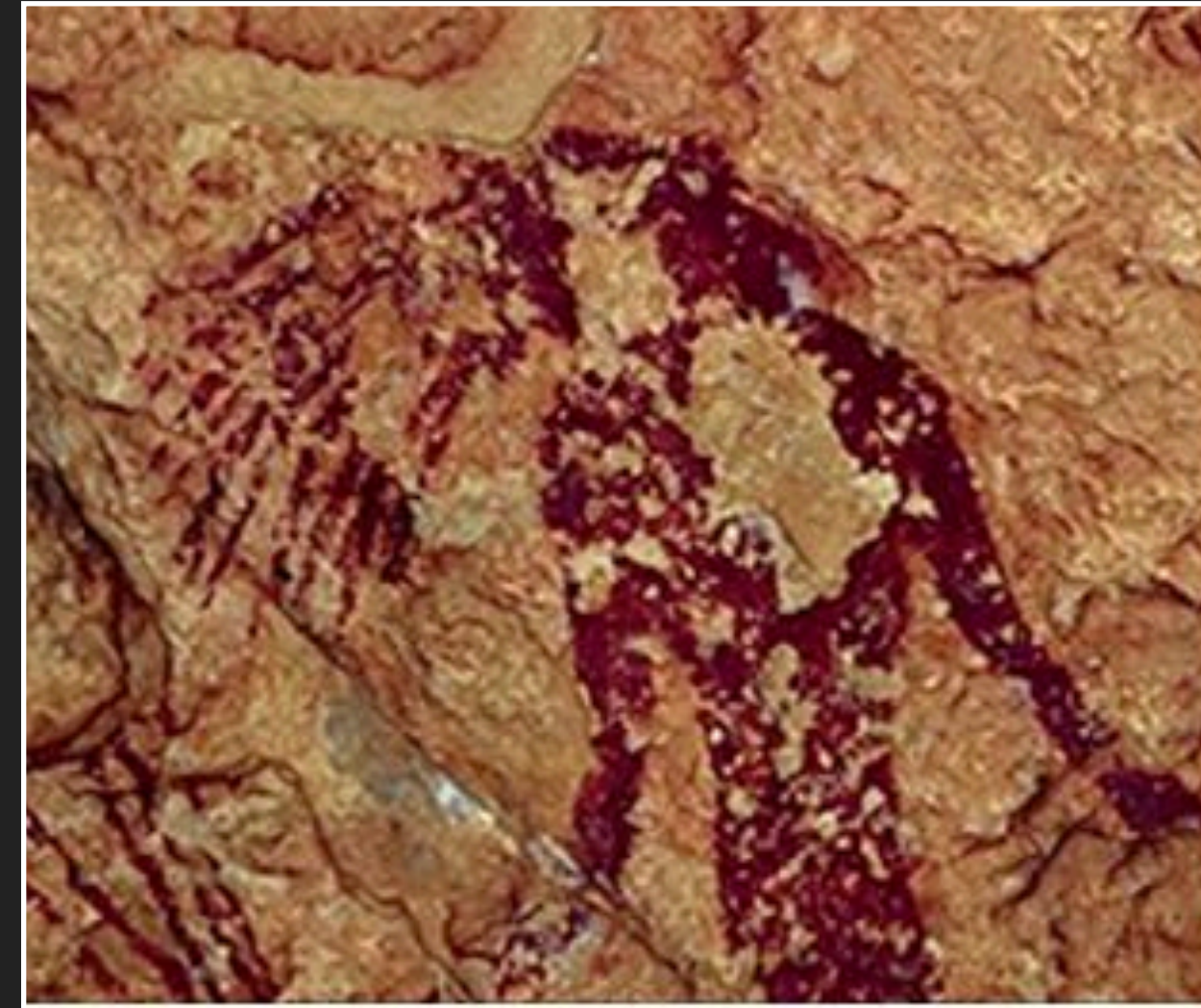
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**IDENTITY**

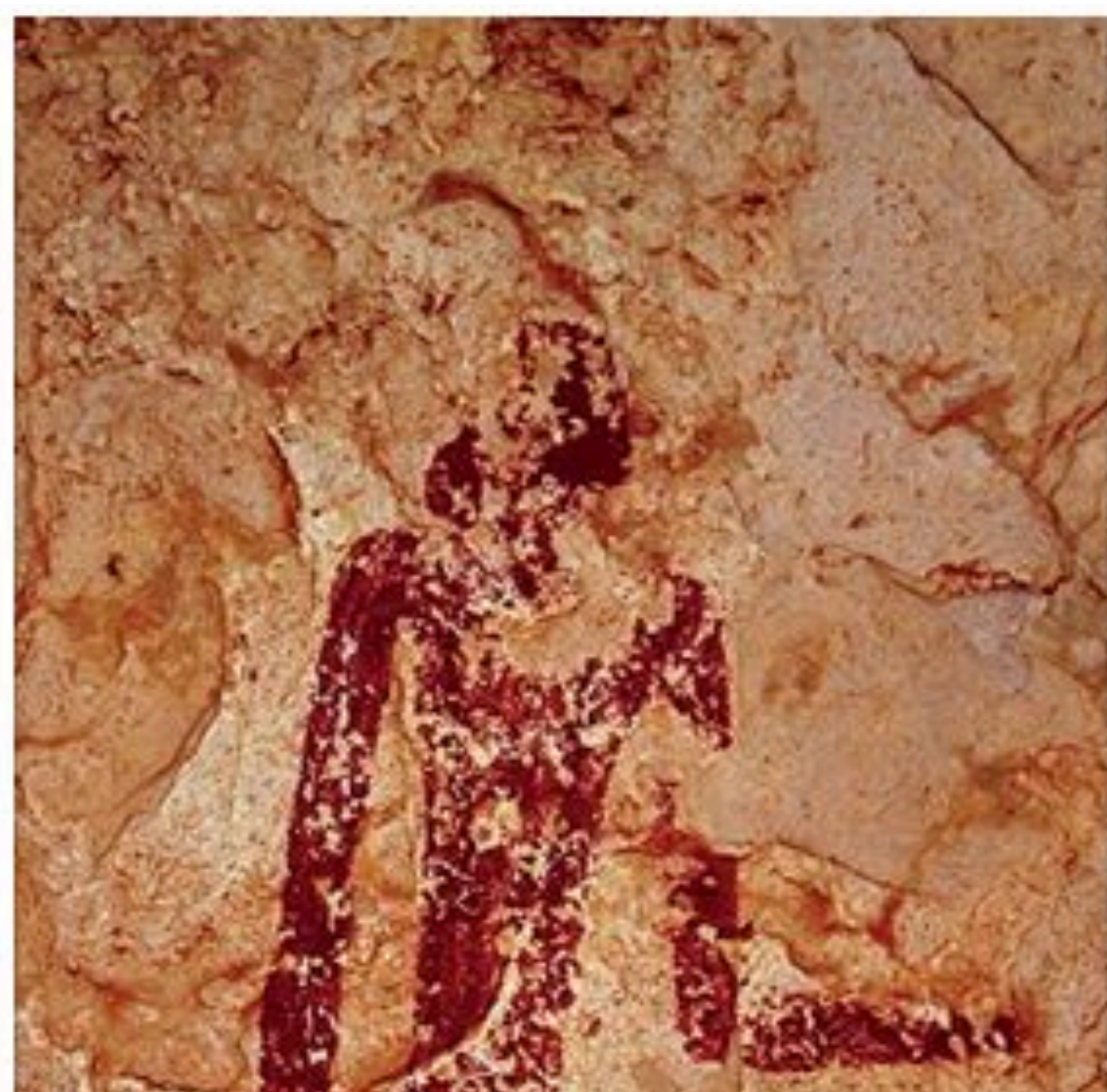
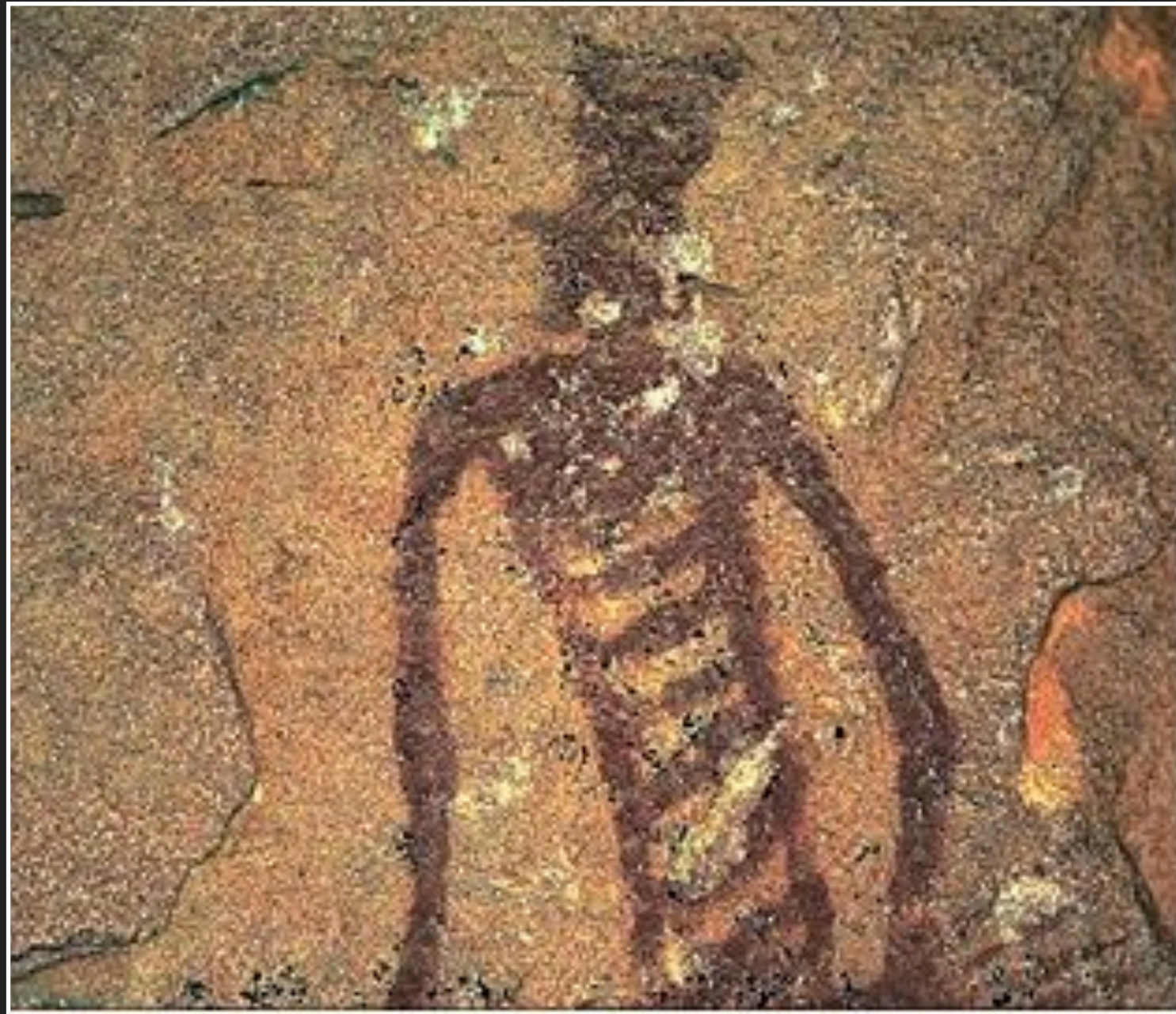


# HEADRESSES

- ▶ Headdresses are the most striking personal adornments in Levantine art
- ▶ Mainly wore by male figures or archers
- ▶ It includes horned bonnets, flat top hats, feather headdresses, hairstyles, animals skins...
- ▶ Identity markers? Group affiliation?
- ▶ It can be used as a marker of the regional variations



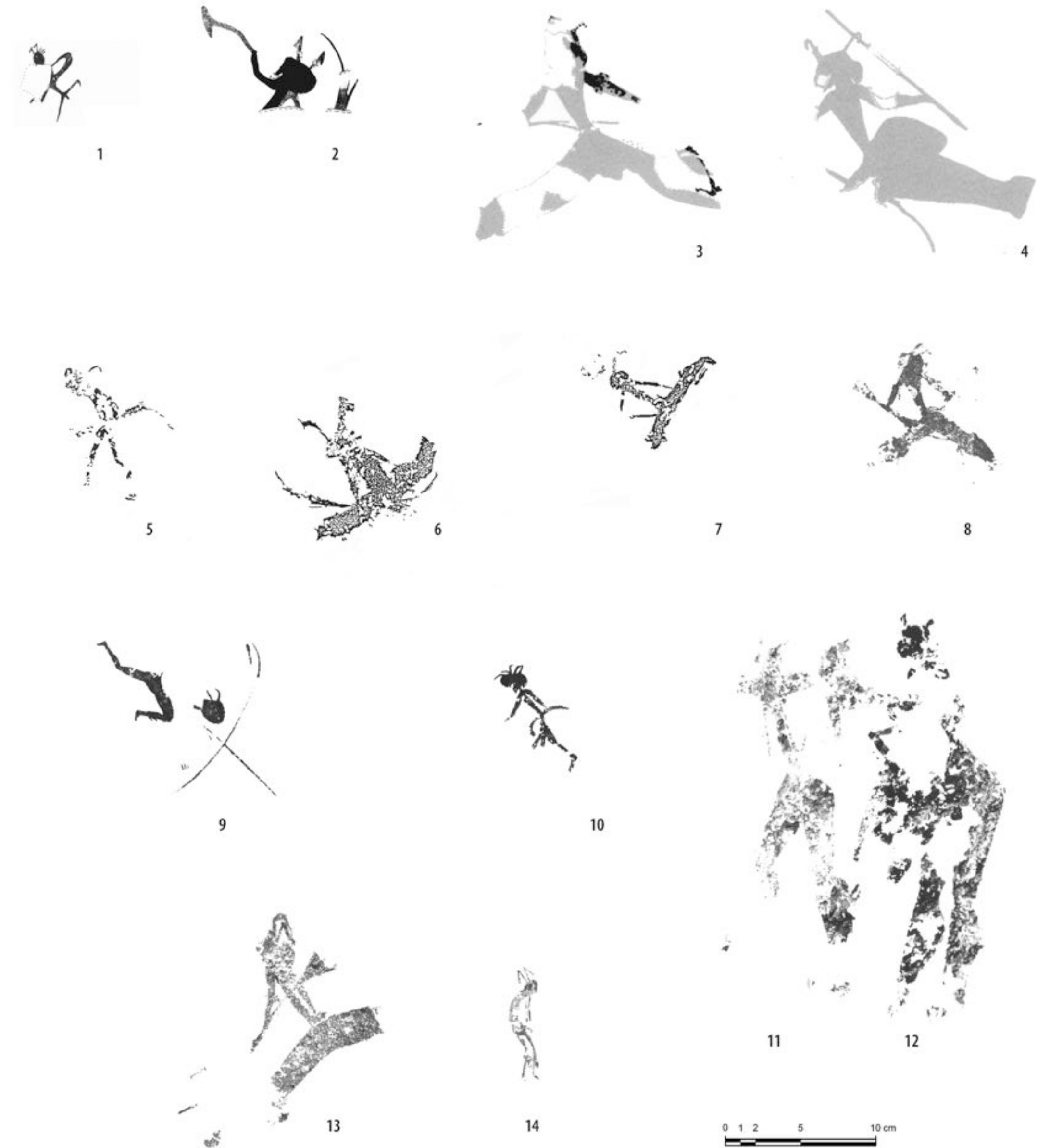






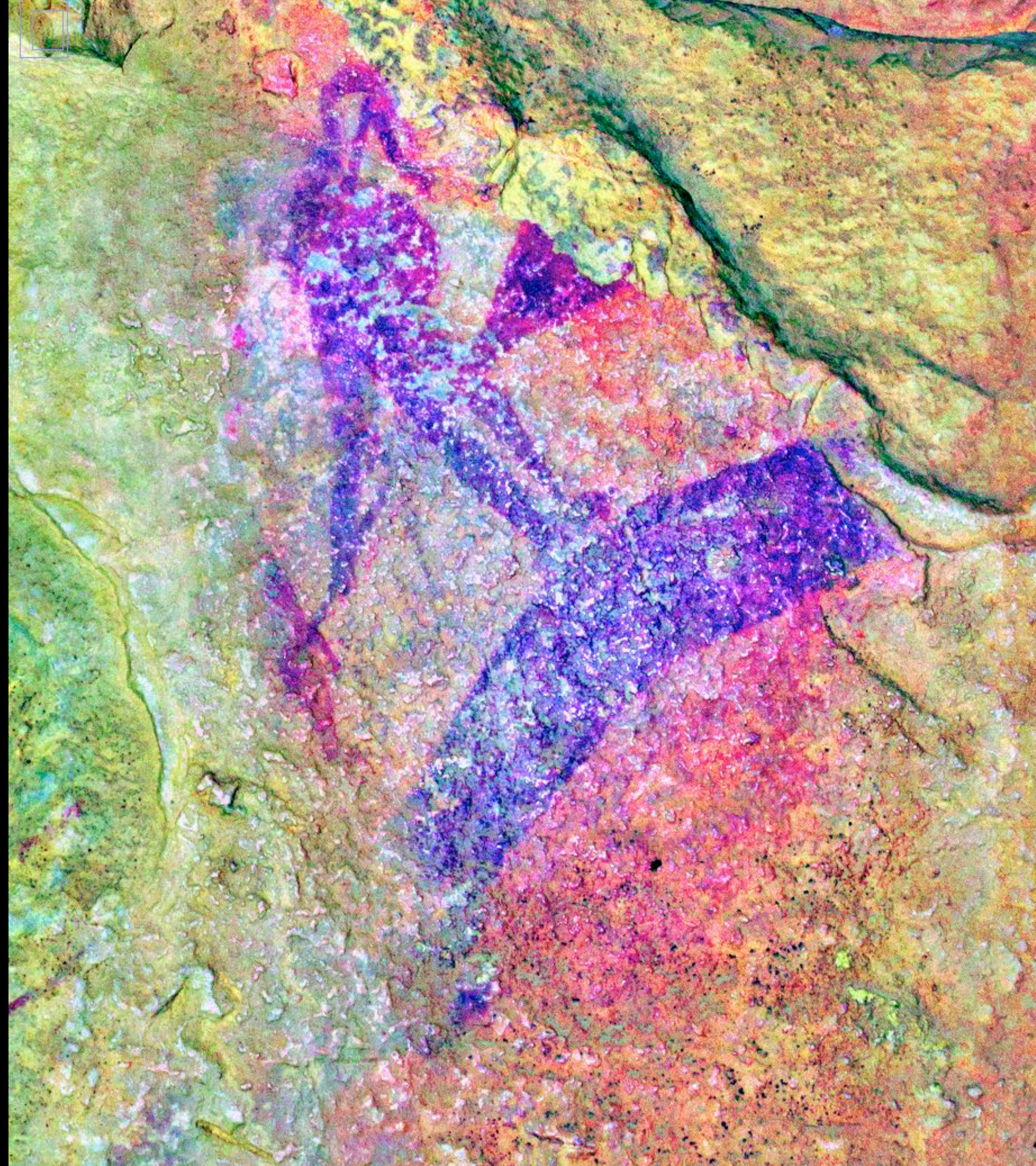
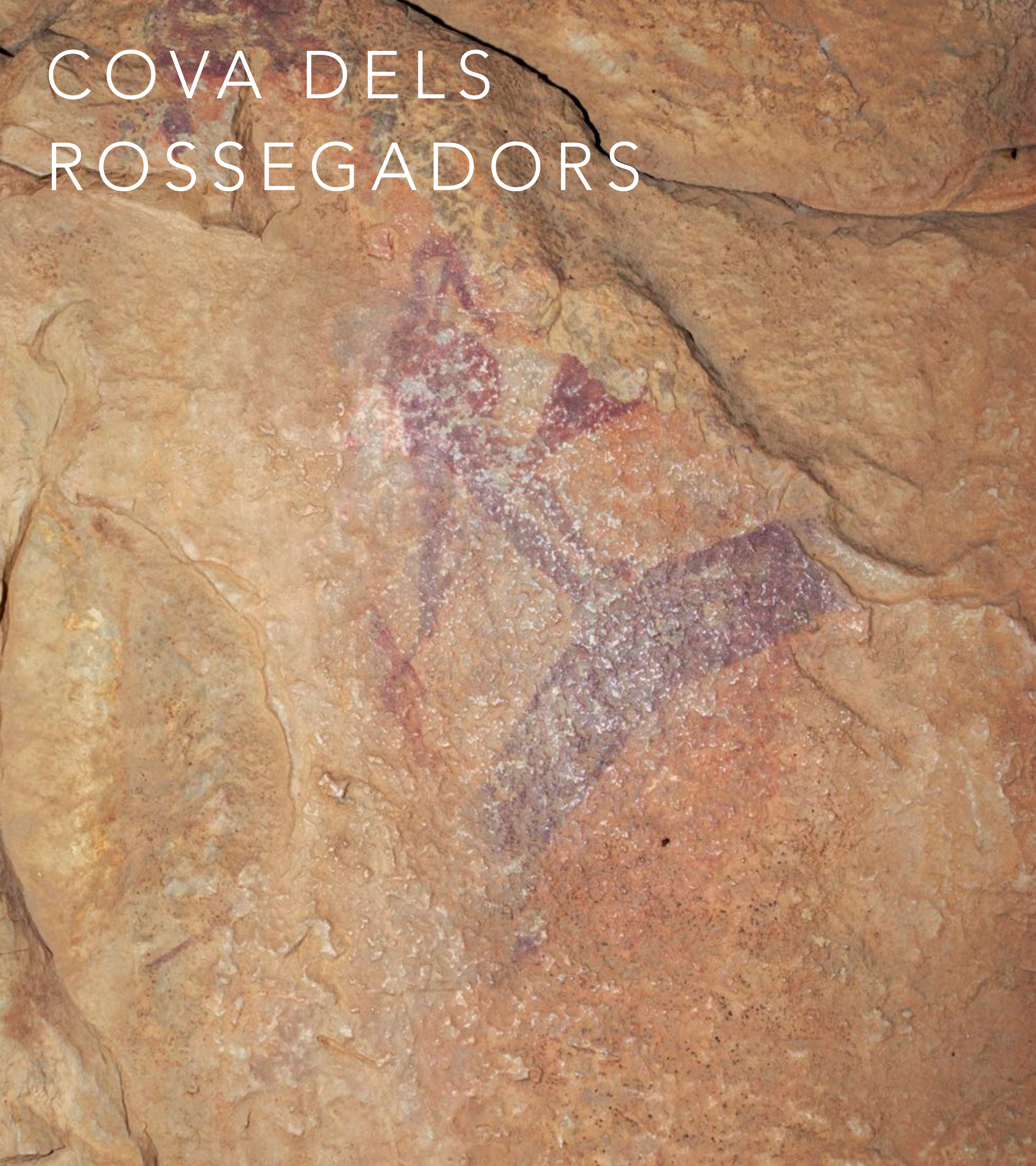
# IDENTITY MARKERS

- ▶ Antennae headdresses
- ▶ Worn by archers in northern areas
- ▶ Maybe some women too
  - ▶ Cultural region marker
  - ▶ Group affiliation marker
  - ▶ Fashion element - temporal marker





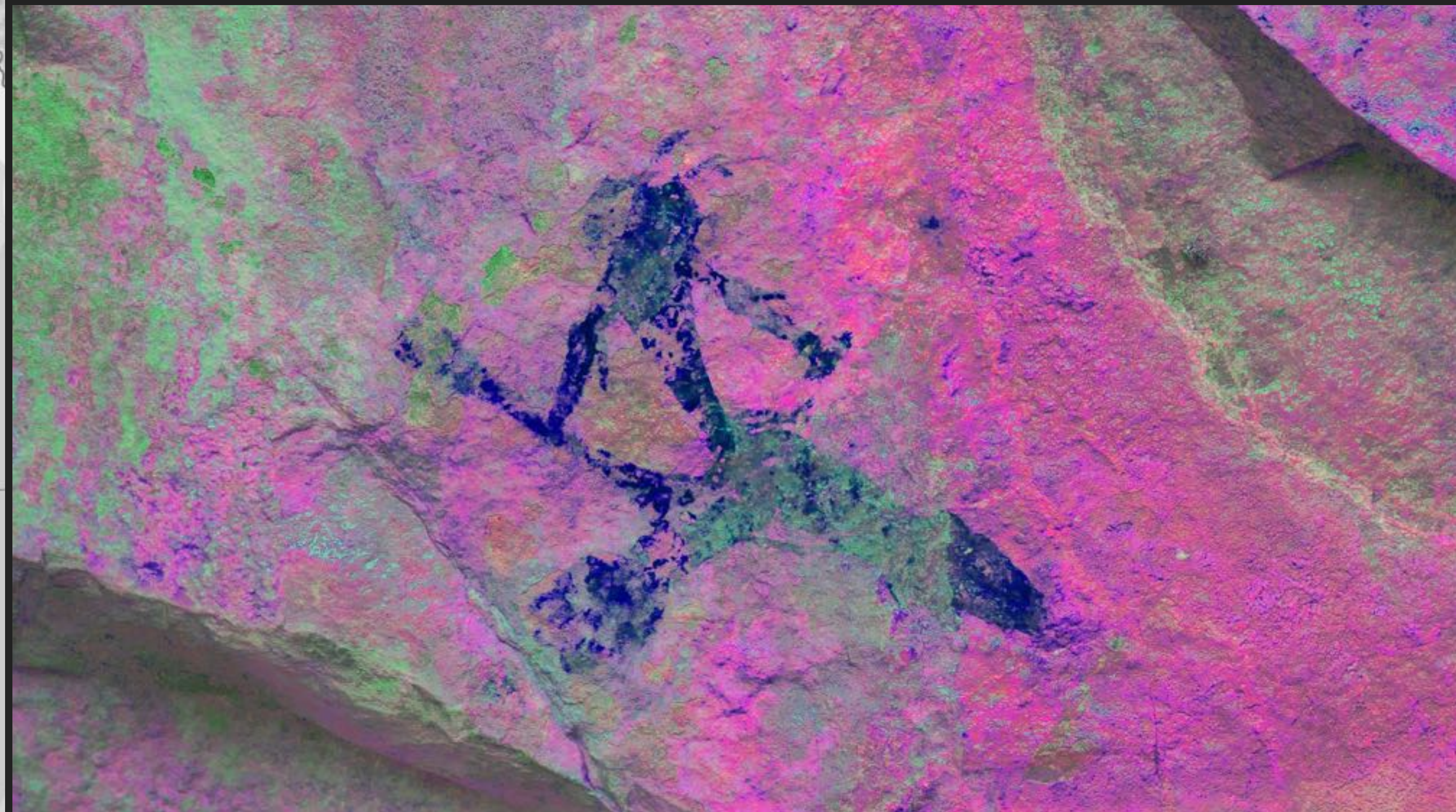
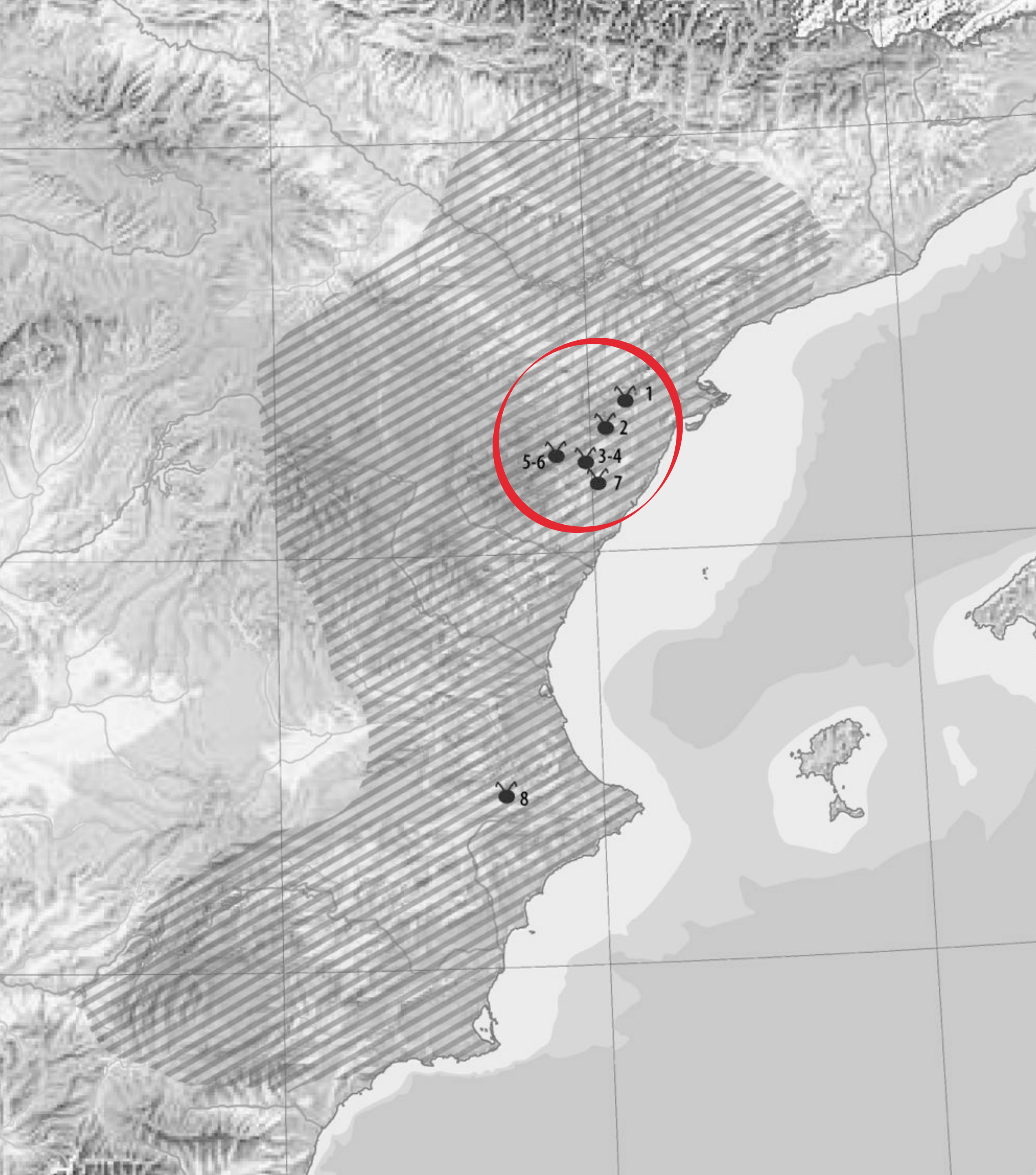
COVA DELS  
ROSSEGADORS





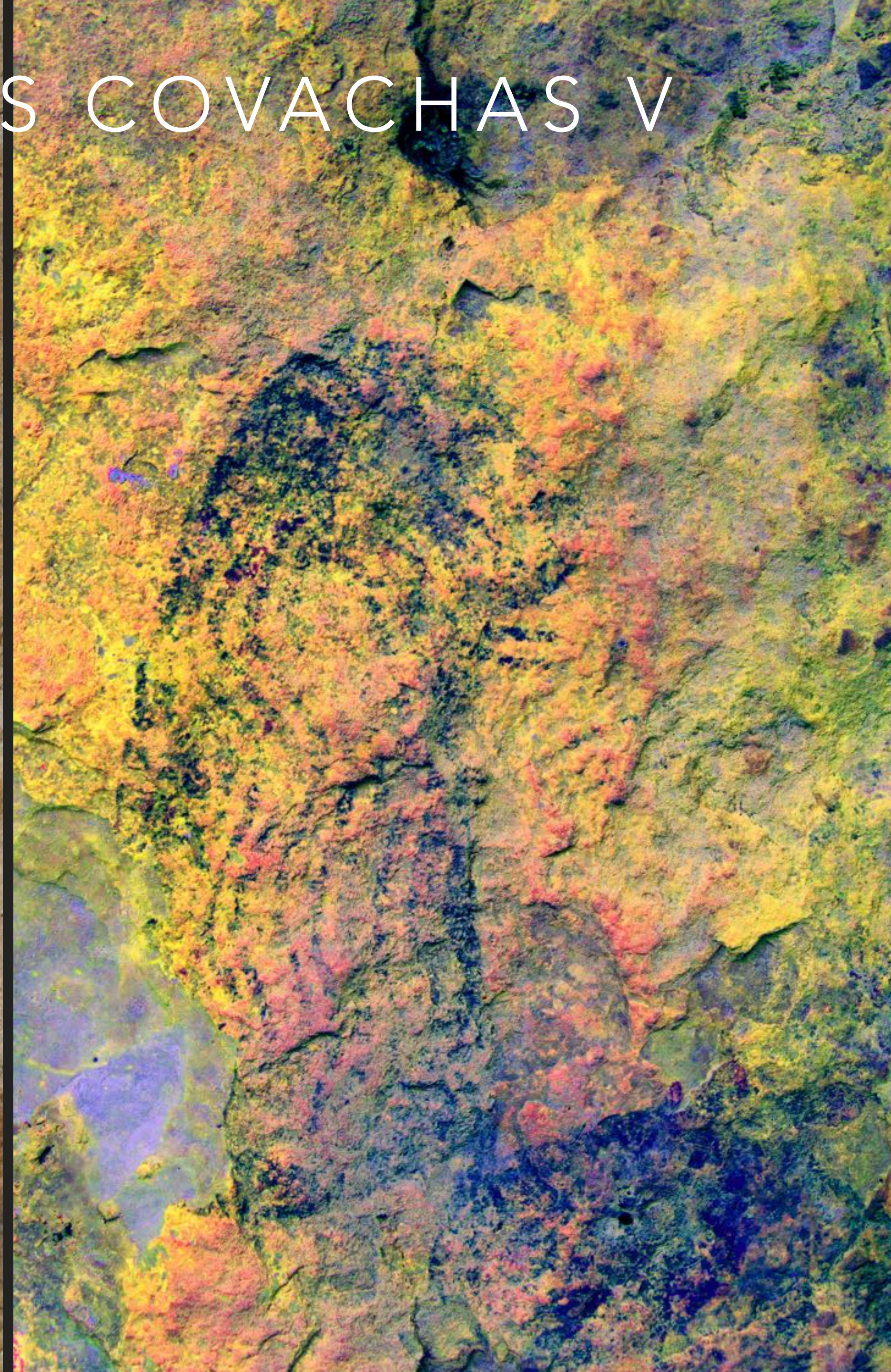




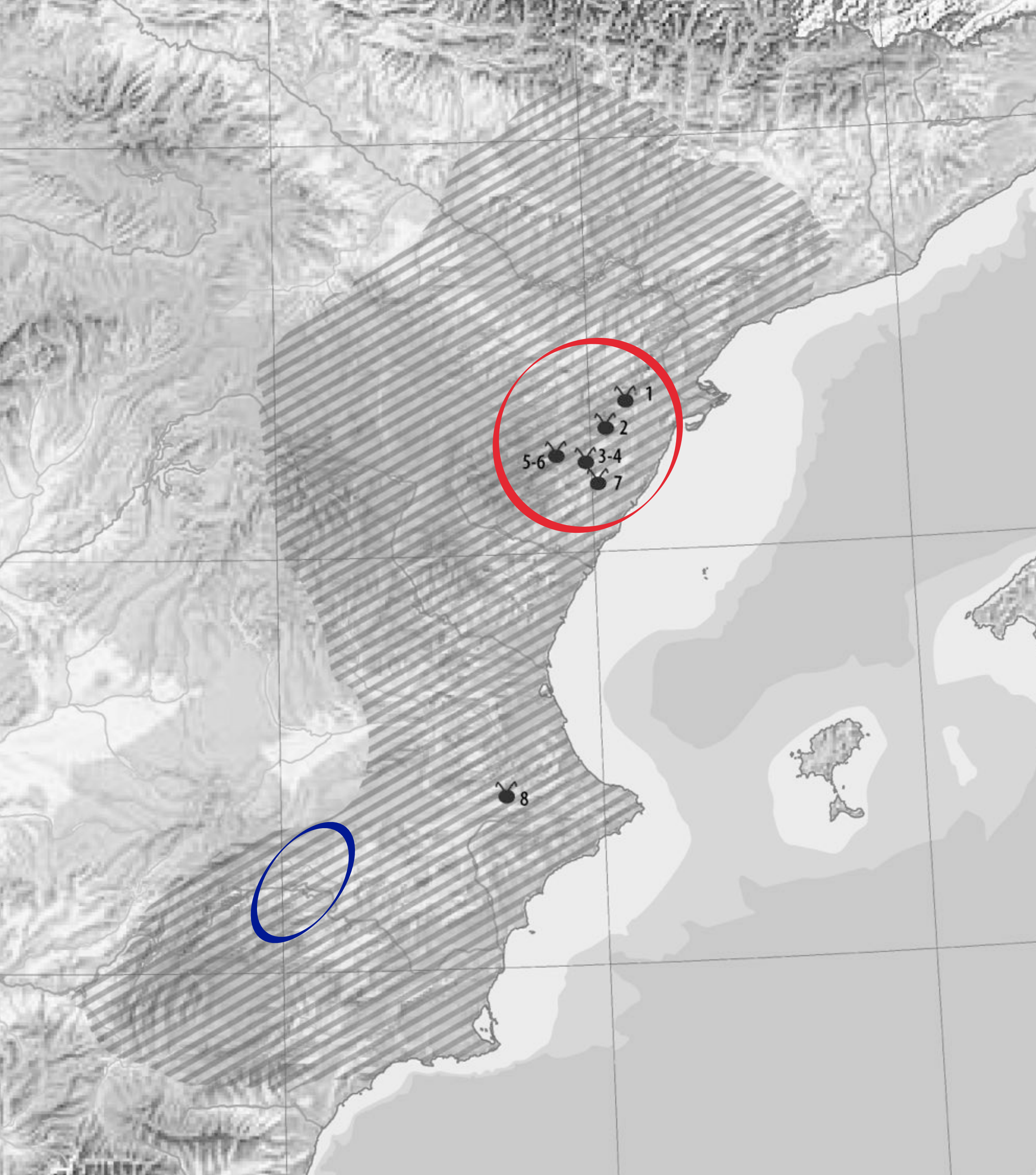




# SOLANA DE LAS COVACHAS V

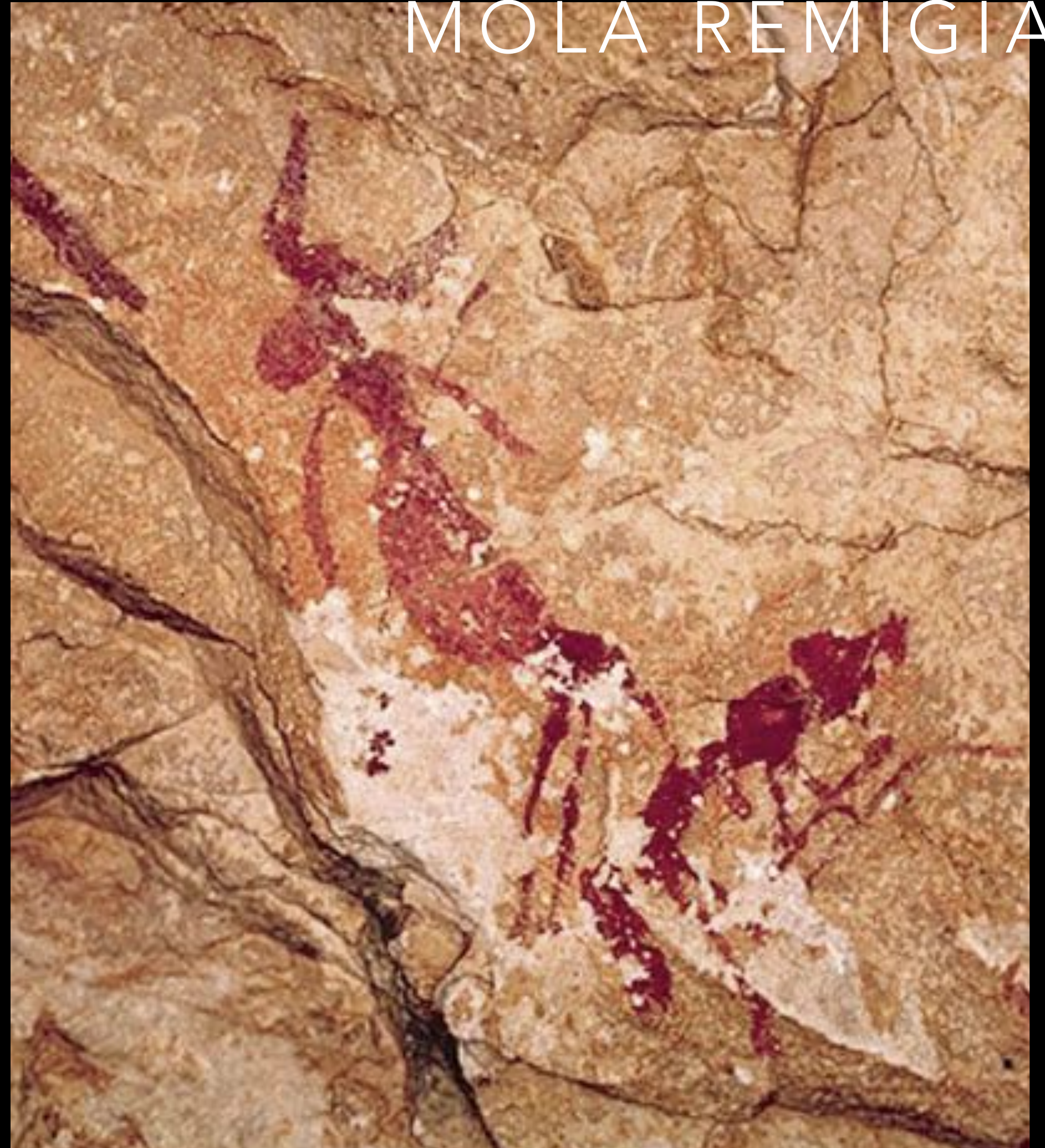








# MOLA REMÍGIA







LEVANTINE ART

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**HUNTING**

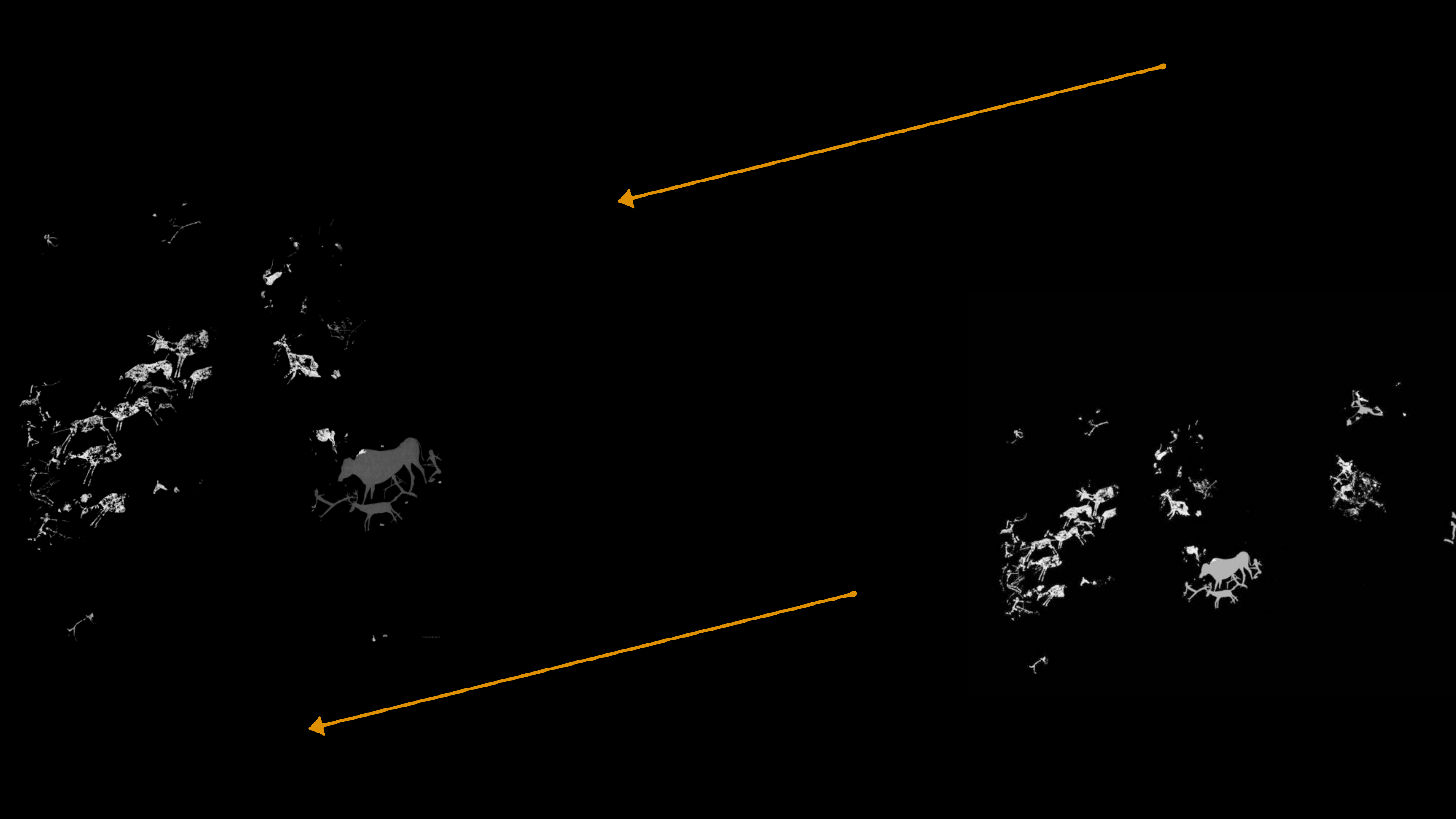


















# ABRIC D'ERMITES I















LEVANTINE ART

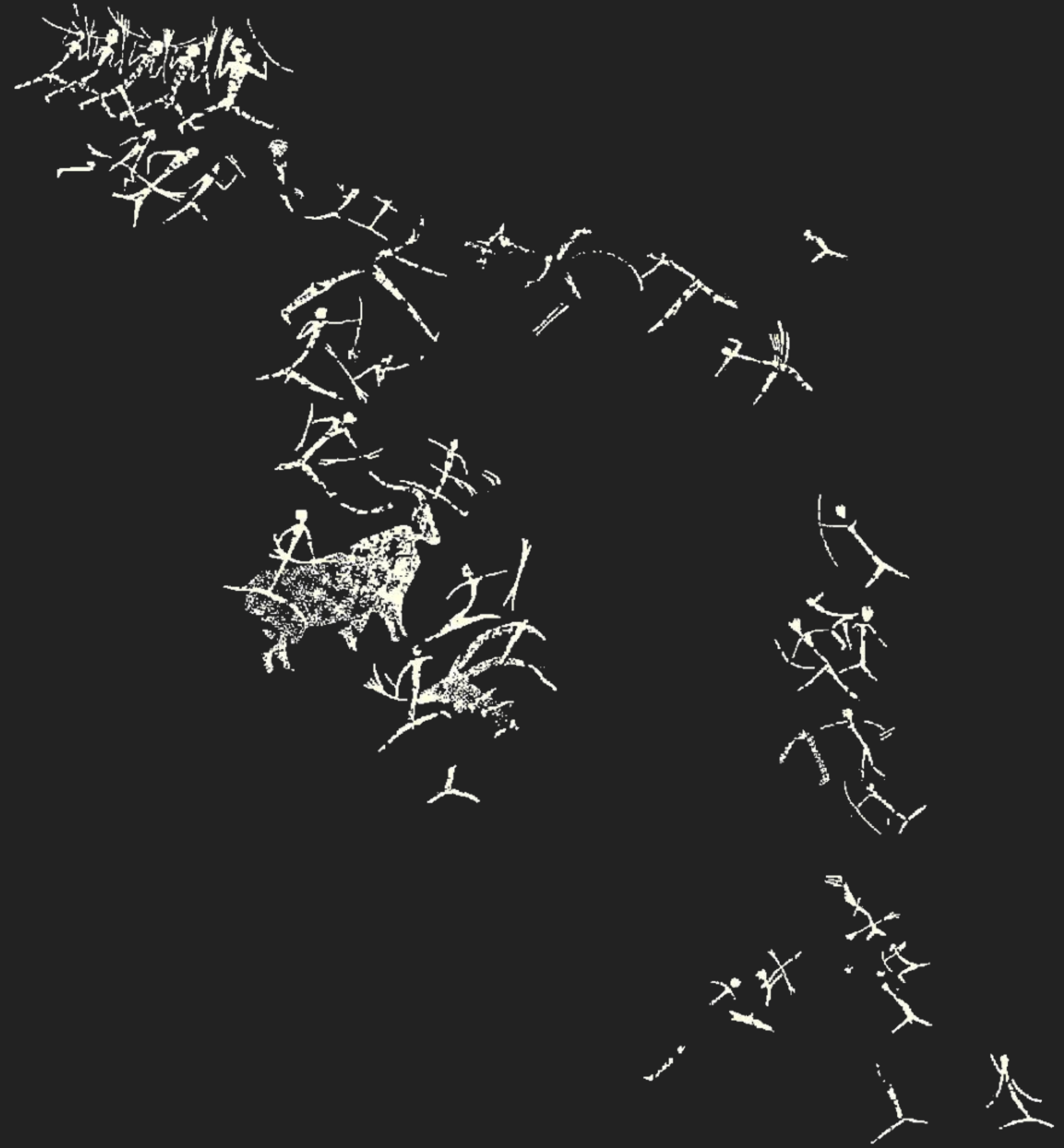
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**VIOLENCE**



# LEVANTINE ART – VIOLENCE

- ▶ Violence between people is shown in Levantine art
- ▶ War and deadly actions are a special kind of collective scenes
- ▶ Fight between two groups of archers
  - ▶ Distance fighting
  - ▶ Dead or wounded people
  - ▶ Ritualistic?

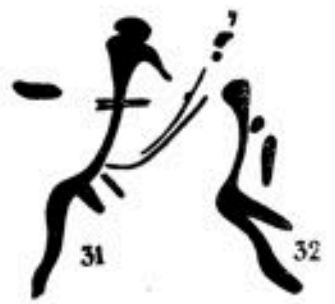
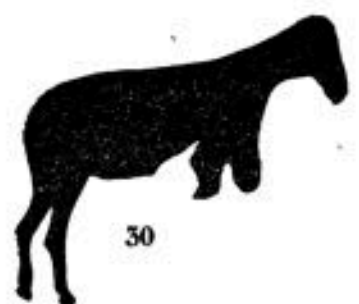
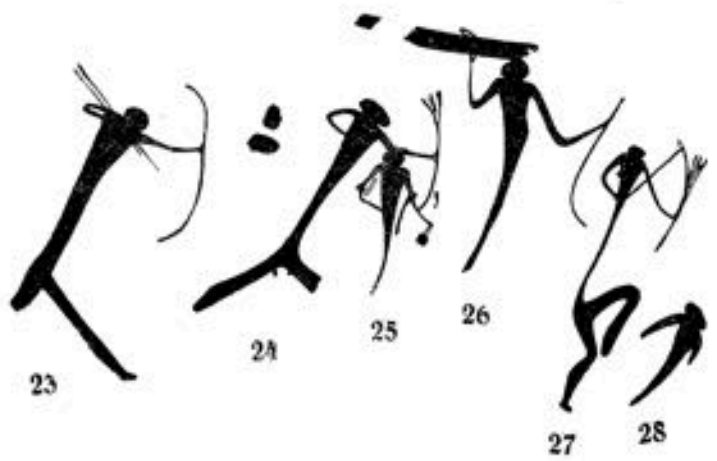




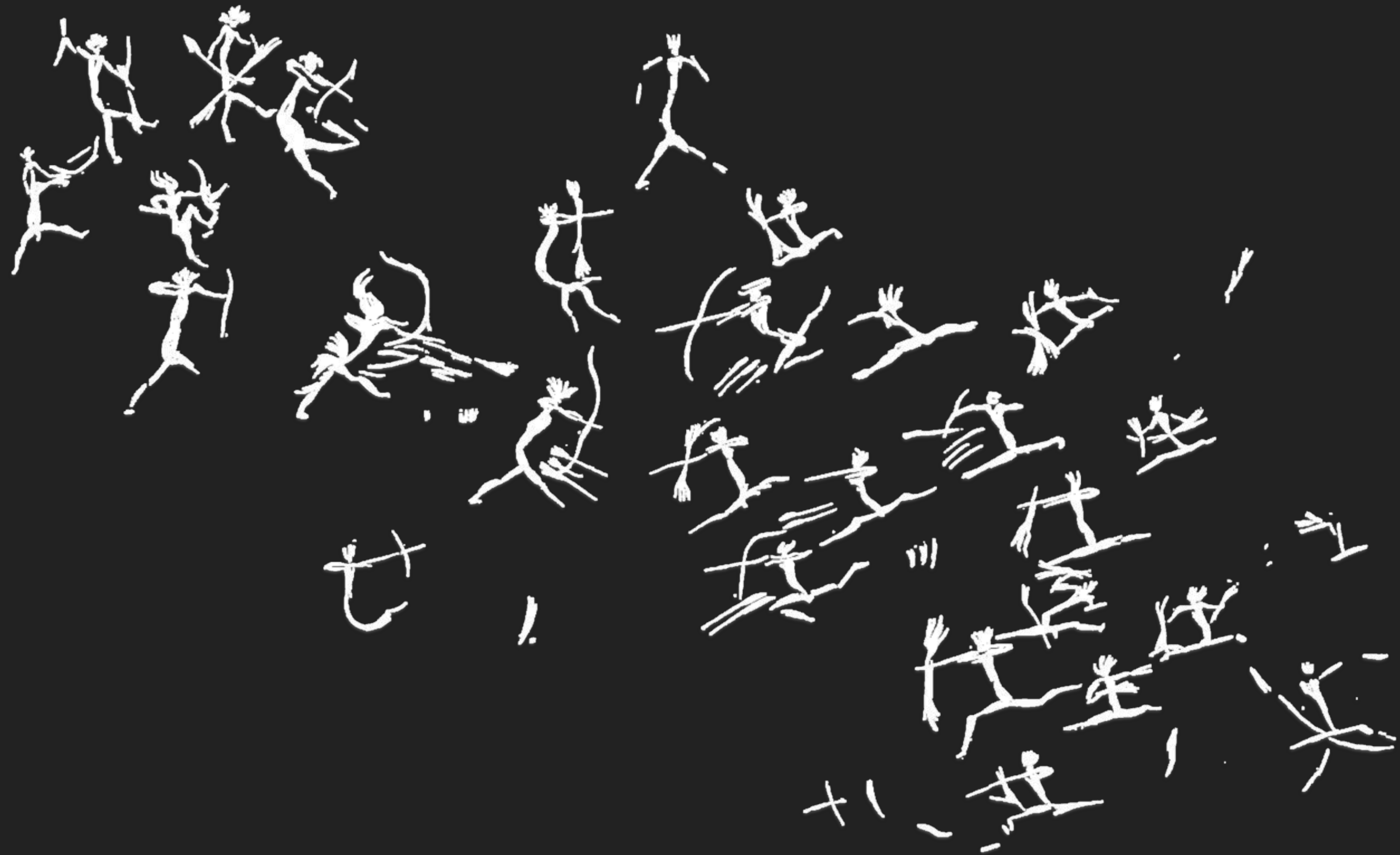
# COVES DEL CIVIL













MOLA REMÍGIA VIII



















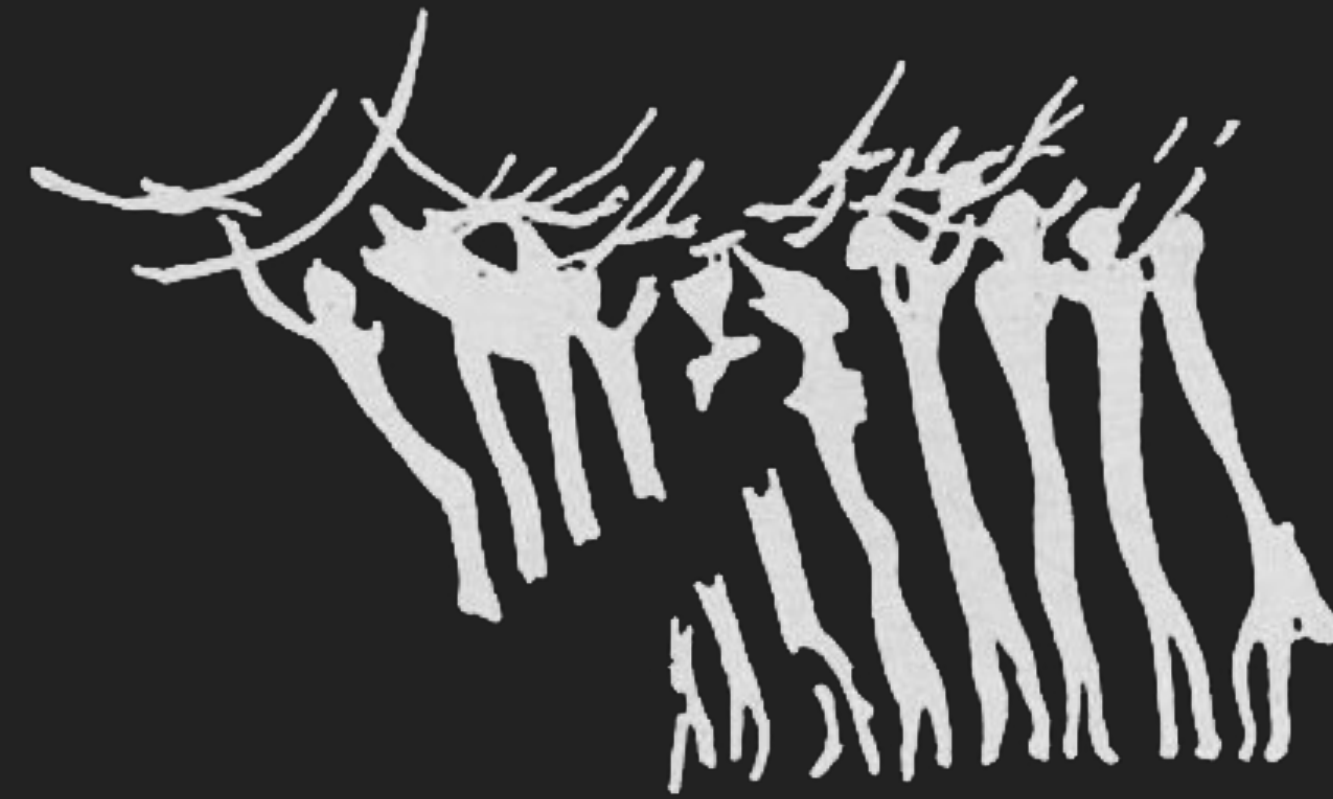
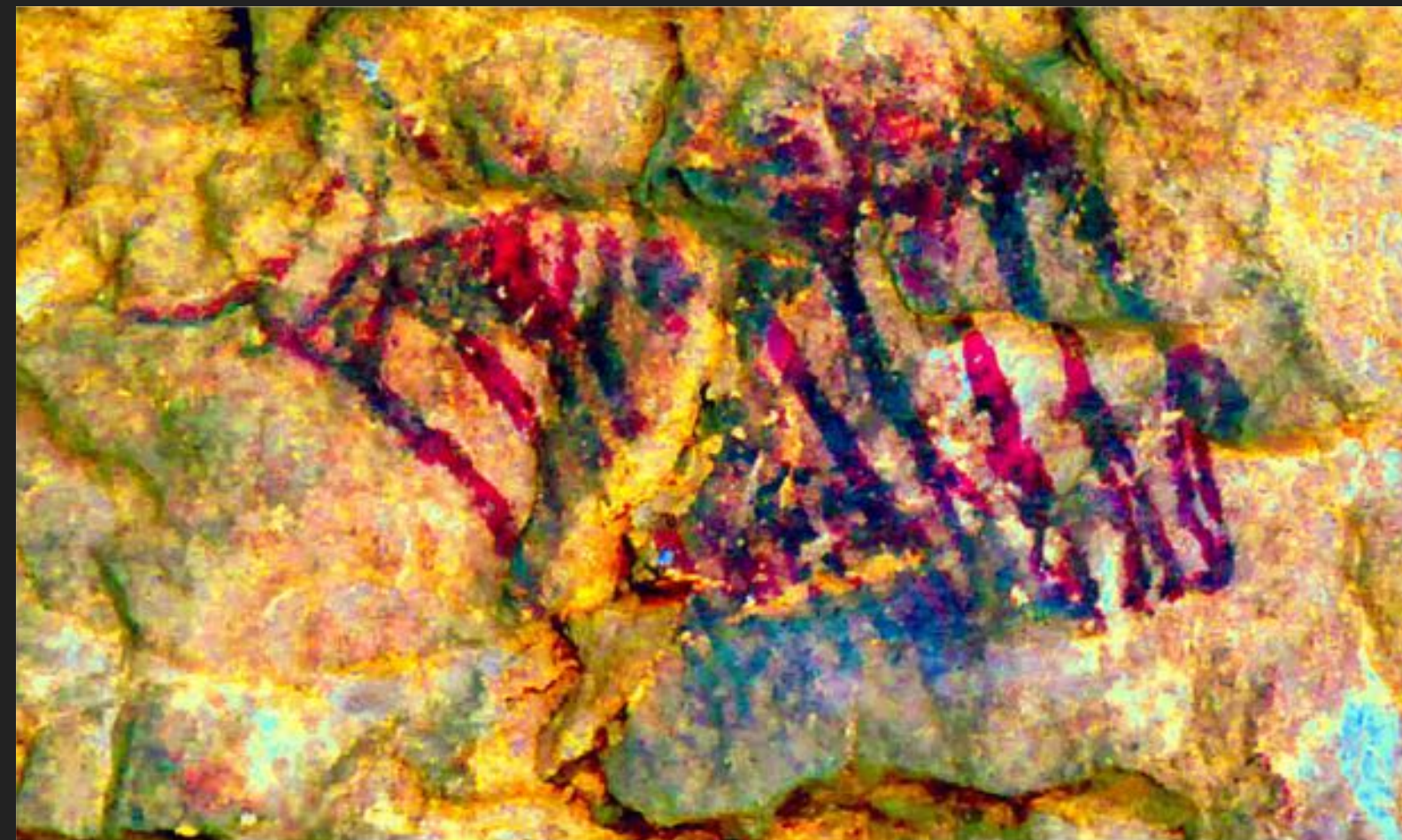






# LEVANTINE ART – VIOLENCE

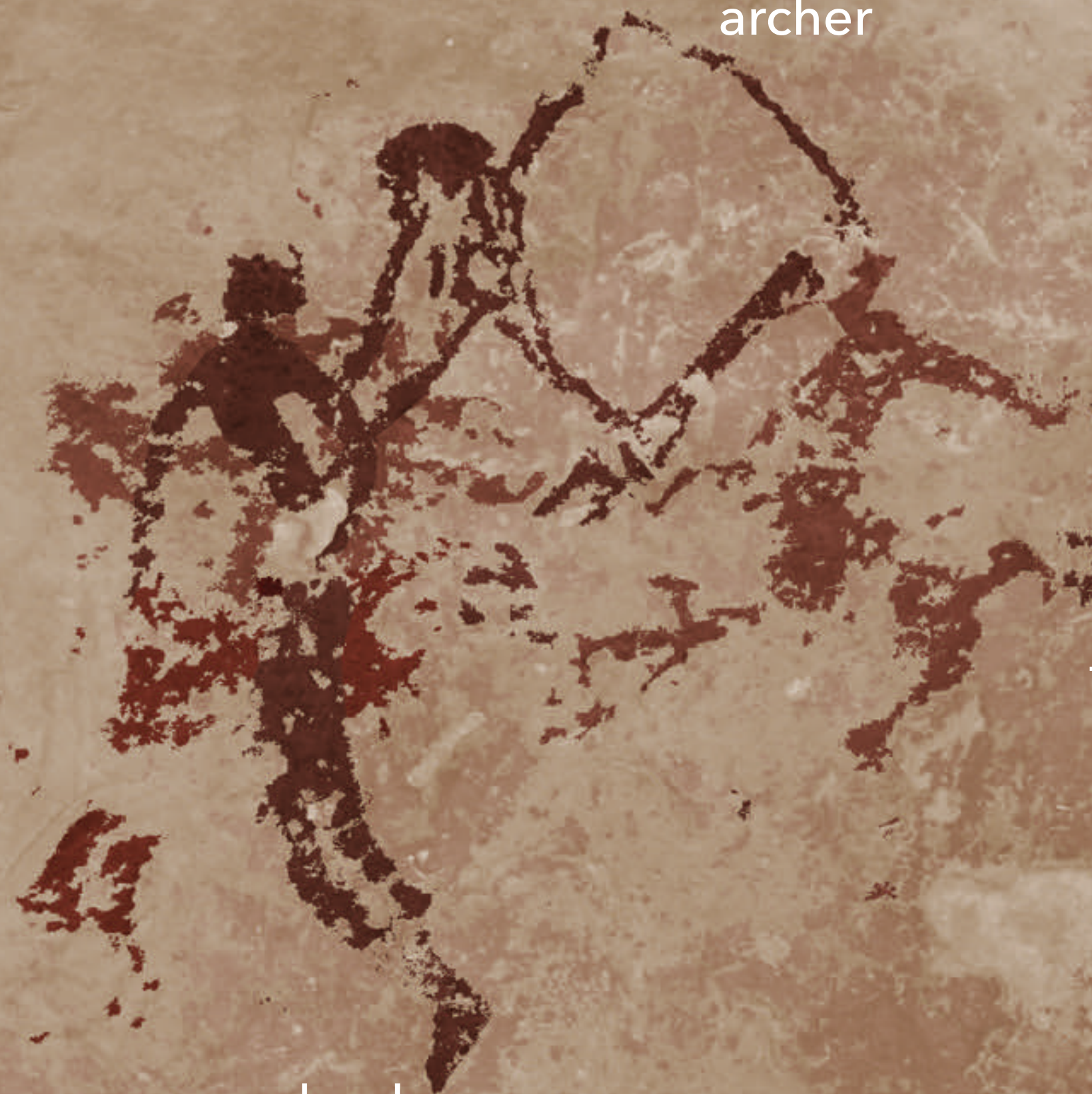
- ▶ Individual violence
  - ▶ Execution
- ▶ Tied prisoners
- ▶ Mass grave
  - ▶ Violence signs
  - ▶ Arrows
  - ▶ Dismembered bodies





# CAÑADA DE MARCO

archer



dead

tied legs

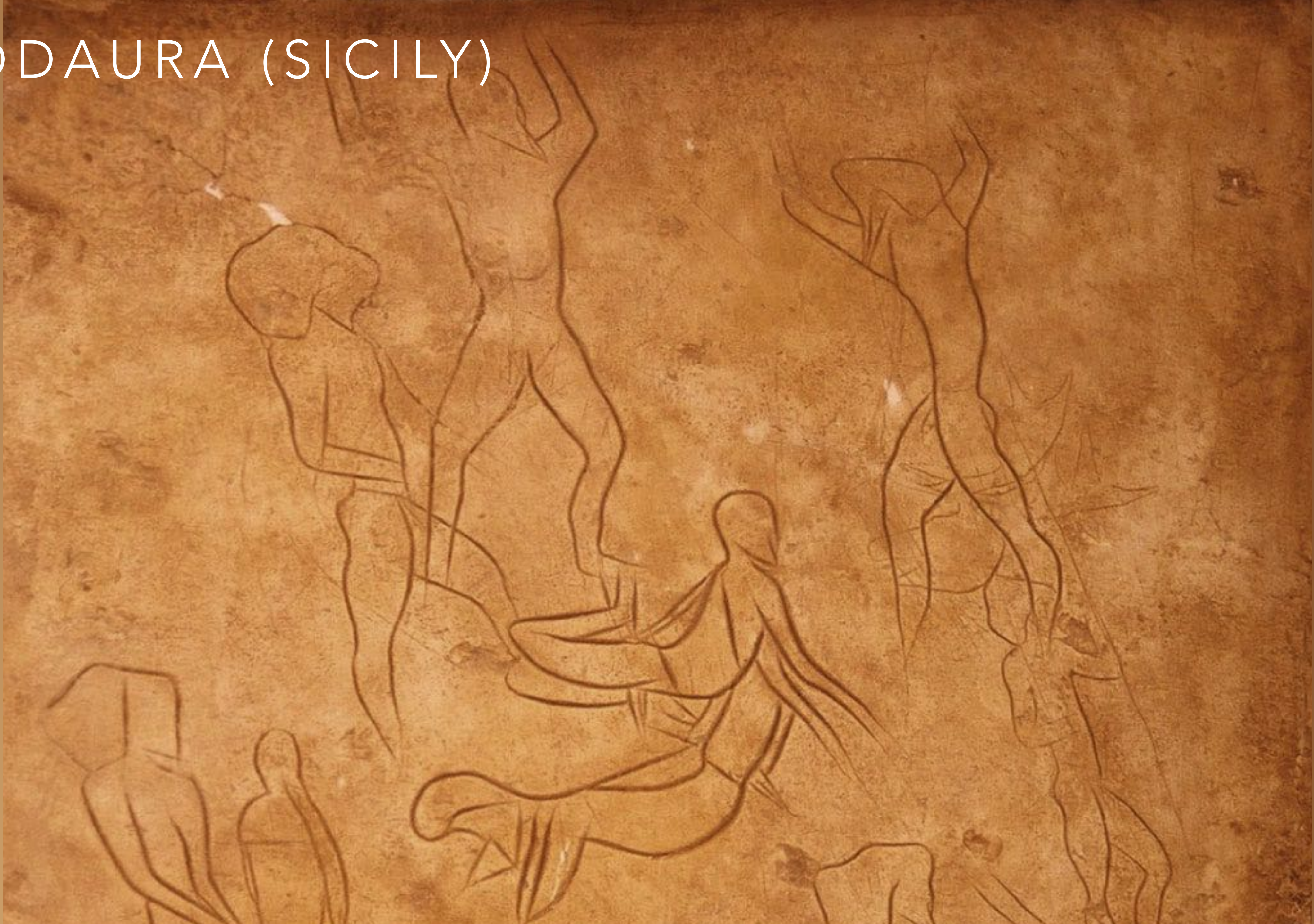


tied legs





# L'ADDAURA (SICILY)





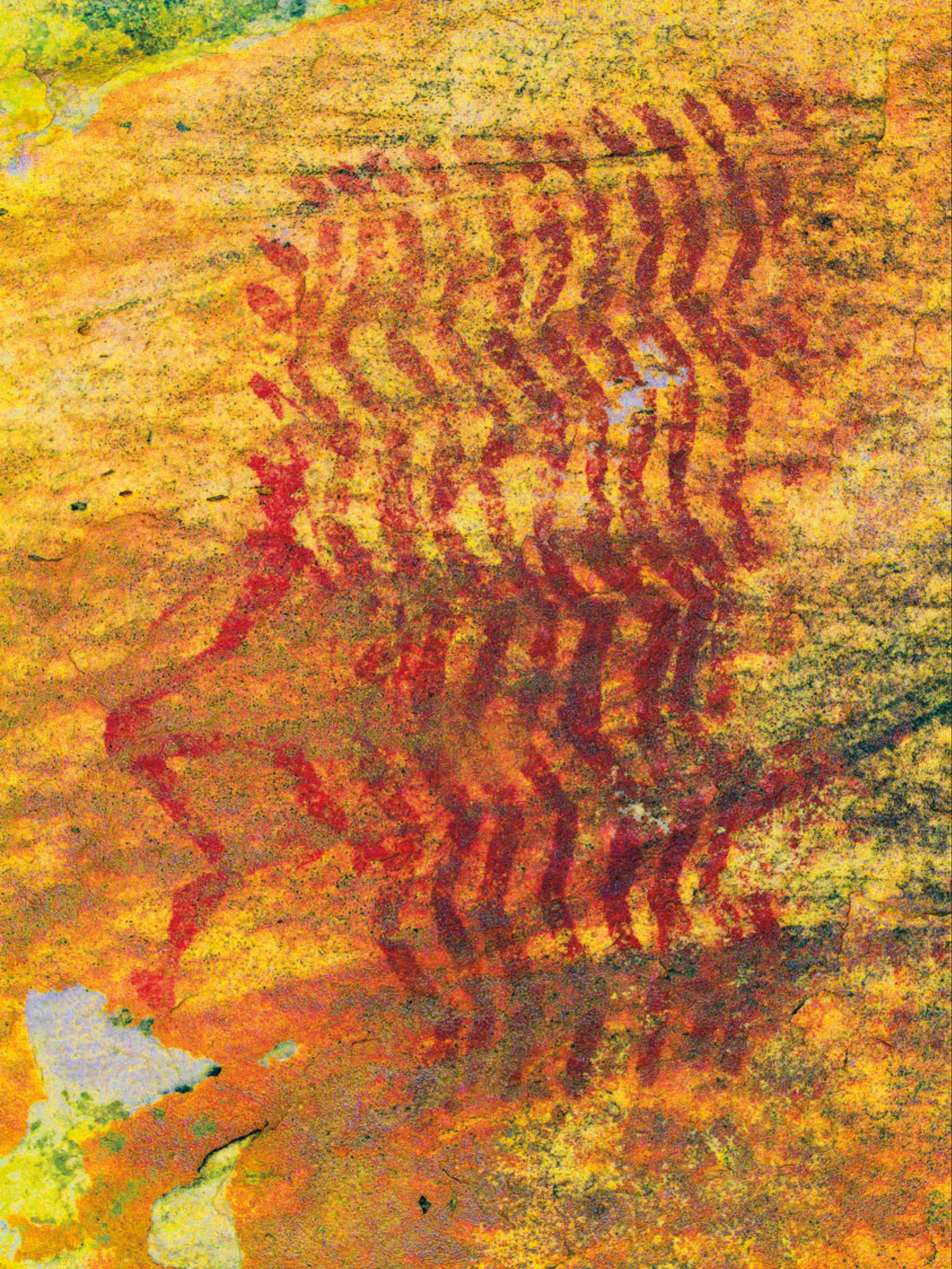
LA VALL











LEVANTINE ART

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**CONCLUSIONS**



# SOCIAL SPHERES

- ▶ Levantine rock art emphasises some aspects of the life of hunter-gatherers
- ▶ But other crucial aspects of those societies are completely ignored or hidden
- ▶ The codified message in Levantine scenes is culturally mediated
  - ▶ However, a significant amount of information can be retrieved





# MANIPULATED MESSAGES

- ▶ Gender, identity, feast, consumption, war and violence are described in this rock art assemblage
- ▶ Social sphere shows cooperation and collective identity
- ▶ Also a growing number of conflicts
  - ▶ Gender issues
    - ▶ Subordinated women
  - ▶ Hierarchy
  - ▶ Competence and war





# MANIPULATED MESSAGES

- ▶ Hunting scenes represents collaboration from social bonds
- ▶ Large animal hunting could be connected to feast and consumption
- ▶ Seasonal gathering of bands
- ▶ Rock art could be sanctioning this fission-fusion strategies





# MANIPULATED MESSAGES

- ▶ Rock art can be used for reconstruct some aspects of the social life of prehistoric people
- ▶ Levantine art is a privileged example of how hunter-gatherers rock art can be used for this purpose





**MERCI**  
POUR VOTRE ATTENTION

