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directed by  
Jean CLOTTE

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Short articles



## ANALYZING THE TOPOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF PALAEOOLITHIC ROCK ART AT CUEVA DE MALTRAVIESO

Hipólito COLLADO GIRALDO

Maltravieso is located in the south west of the Iberian Peninsula in the town centre of Cáceres, in a district known as “El Calerizo”. Geologically it extends over 135 m.

### The different stages of rock art at Cueva de Maltravieso

The rock art at Maltravieso includes handprints, zoomorphic representations, and symbolic elements.

Both painting and engraving techniques were used to make the figures.

The superimpositions and different techniques and styles that have been documented have enabled us to identify at least four different chronological stages in the rock art:

- stage 1: the small caprid's head and the two triangles that face each other at the base, engraved on panel III in the Sala Pinturas. Chronology: Aurignacian-Gravettian;
- stage 2: a collection of handprints distributed over the different panels in the cave and the undulating red figure on panel V in the Galería de la Serpiente. Chronology: Gravettian;
- stage 3: rows of black dots on several panels, paired finger markings, and the bovid in the Sala de las Columnas. In addition, the red triangles on panel XXII, the cervid on panel XXVII, the zoomorphic engravings on panel XIII, the new engravings in the Galería de la Serpiente and the Sala de las Chimeneas (the cervid, the horse's head, and the quadrangular symbol), and the symbols in the Galería Inversa. Chronology: Solutrean-Magdalenian;
- stage 4: the schematic paintings on panel XIV in the Sala de las Chimeneas. Chronology: Neolithic-Bronze age.

### The topographic distribution of the Palaeolithic art at Maltravieso

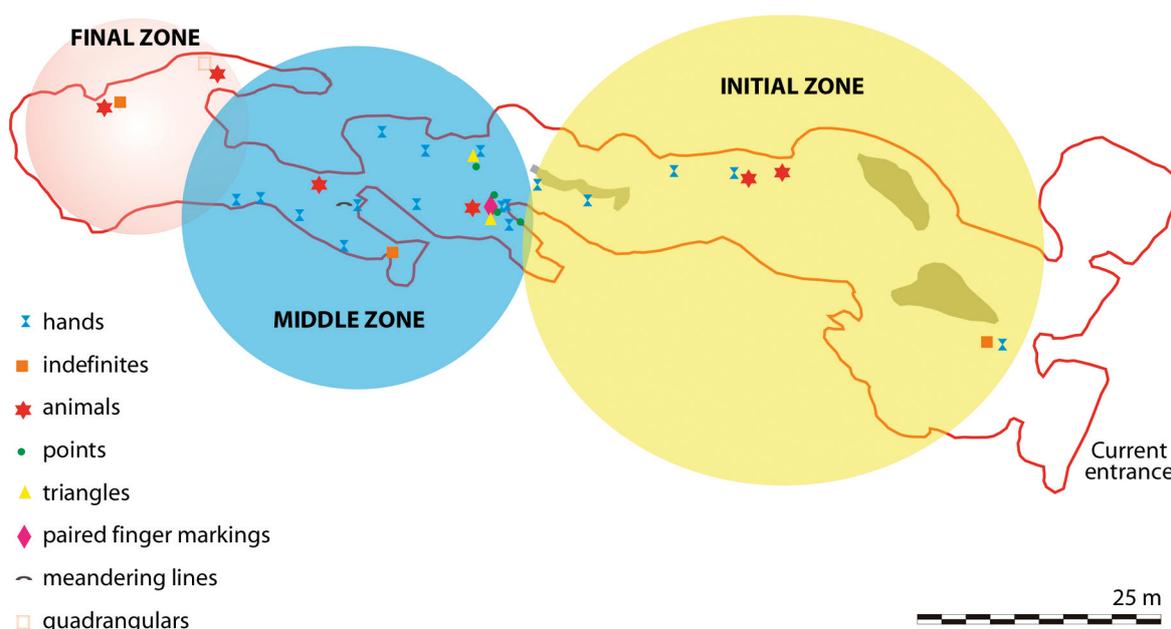
The topography of Maltravieso means that it can be divided from the entrance into three zones:

- in the *Initial Zone*, painting is the only technique that was used. Red pigment for the handprints is alternated with black pigment for the zoomorphic motifs and for an unidentified grapheme on the panel in the Sala de Entrada. The motifs are not concentrated together, but are distributed in a scattered form that clearly corresponds to the areas of passage. In this zone, older motifs (stage 2 hand stencils) are found alongside zoomorphic figures of a more advanced style (the stage 3 cervid on panel XXVII and bovid on panel XVIII);
- the *Middle Zone* is technically more varied, and includes incised linear engravings, red and black lines, and hands. This zone has the largest quantities of rock art and the greatest thematic variety. As well as the hands and zoomorphic motifs, the majority of symbolic graphemes are

also found in this zone (triangles, paired finger markings, meandering lines, and series of dots). It is an area that was repeatedly reused and is the part of the cave where the majority of graphic superimposition is found and where the graphemes are not exclusively found in areas of passage but also on panels that are further away, including areas that are difficult to reach or view. In chronological terms, the motifs correspond to stages 1, 2 and 3, although all of them have been made in older patterns and styles;

- the *Final Zone* is the deepest part of the cave. No hands have been found here, and only symbolic and zoomorphic representations have been documented, all of which correspond to Maltravieso stage 3.

As with the initial zone, this zone involves dispersed iconographic groupings, however they do not correspond to the areas of passage and are difficult for the viewer to see, not only because of their technical characteristics, but also because the location of the panels means that they do not catch the eye in relation to the vast size of the Sala de las Chimineas.



Cueva de Maltravieso: Distribution of Palaeolithic motifs.

## Conclusions

1. In Maltravieso there are signs of rock art dating from the oldest stages throughout all of the areas of the cave, although the largest quantities are found in the middle zone.
2. Rock art with more recent stylistic characteristics is only seen in the initial zone of the cave.
3. There appears to be a graphic structuring to the cave, not only in terms of the techniques used (exclusively painting in the initial zone, painting and engraving in the middle zone, and exclusively engraving in the final zone), but also because of the public or private nature of the panels. Thus, in the initial zone and at the beginning of the middle zone the figures have

been made on relatively large surfaces, which are always well defined and which clearly correspond to the areas of passage, and it can be inferred that this art was made to be seen by those who entered the cave. Further into the cave however, the concept appears to change, and the panels are increasingly located further from the areas of passage and made on small- or medium-sized surfaces, with some figures positioned in places that are relatively difficult to reach and view.





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