
The Empowerment of Imagery: Stone Warriors in the Borders

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This article explores the potential contribution of a biographical, phenomenological and performative approach to the study of material images in the past through a particular study case: the warrior statues from the so-called 'Castro culture' in northwestern Iberia. The aim is to provide a different way of thinking, as opposed to the traditional conceptions that have prevailed in archaeological research, taking into account what material forms enable the construction of the social at a micro-scale level. To this end, the author analyses how these statues actively build their own meaning and sense in the socio-material contexts where they belong; and how, in this process, their materiality partakes in the creation and maintenance of indigenous identity and sociality.

The prevailing representationalist trends in iconographic approaches have encouraged archaeologists to routinely view images produced by past societies as a medium or a passive reflection of pre-existing ideas (and, therefore, as a secondary product of the society where they were produced). From this perspective, statues are understood as material forms that convey meaning in an underlying unambiguous idea-object relationship which must be *discovered* by archaeology. This traditional approach usually reduces the materiality of the image to a mere vehicle through which an idea is communicated and the landscape where it is placed is considered as a mere backdrop. Thus, the power of an image ultimately becomes dematerialized. More recently, however, theoretical trends in archaeology (such as material-agency theories and phenomenological semiotics) have encouraged approaches centred on material images as ways of action, and on the embodied experience as a form of interaction with them (Gell 1998; Pinney & Thomas 2001; Meskell & Joyce 2003; DeMarrais *et al.* 2004; Tilley 2004; 2008; Gosden 2005a; Knappett 2005; Joyce 2005; Miller 2005; Mitchell 2005; Ingold 2007; Osborne & Tanner 2007; Boivin 2009; Bradley 2009; Morphy 2009; 2010; Robb 2009; 2010; Knappett & Malafouris 2010; Olsen 2010). From this viewpoint visual imagery, through its materiality, does not simply convey a meaning but actively contributes to

producing, maintaining and reformulating it in the various socio-material contexts where it is incorporated throughout its existence, thus functioning in different forms and with diverse meanings.

My purpose here is to consider the implications that the return to the things themselves (Olsen 2010) has for archaeological interpretation of material images and, more specifically, for the interpretation of the warrior statues from the so-called 'Castro culture' which developed in the region between the Duero and Miño rivers in northwestern Iberia (Fig. 1). I argue how these statues actively build their own meaning and sense in the socio-material contexts in which they worked, and how, in this way, their materiality partakes in the creation and maintenance of indigenous identity and sociality. To this end, I use a set of concepts from current archaeological theory to rethink these warrior images in the theatrical context of the materiality of hillforts.

Warrior statues in historical perspective

These statues, also called Galaico-Lusitanian, are monumental images of warriors which emerged in the context of large hillforts in this region by the late first millennium BC. They consist of 34 statues of oversized warriors of stone wearing decorated clothes with belts, and carrying torcs, bracelets and

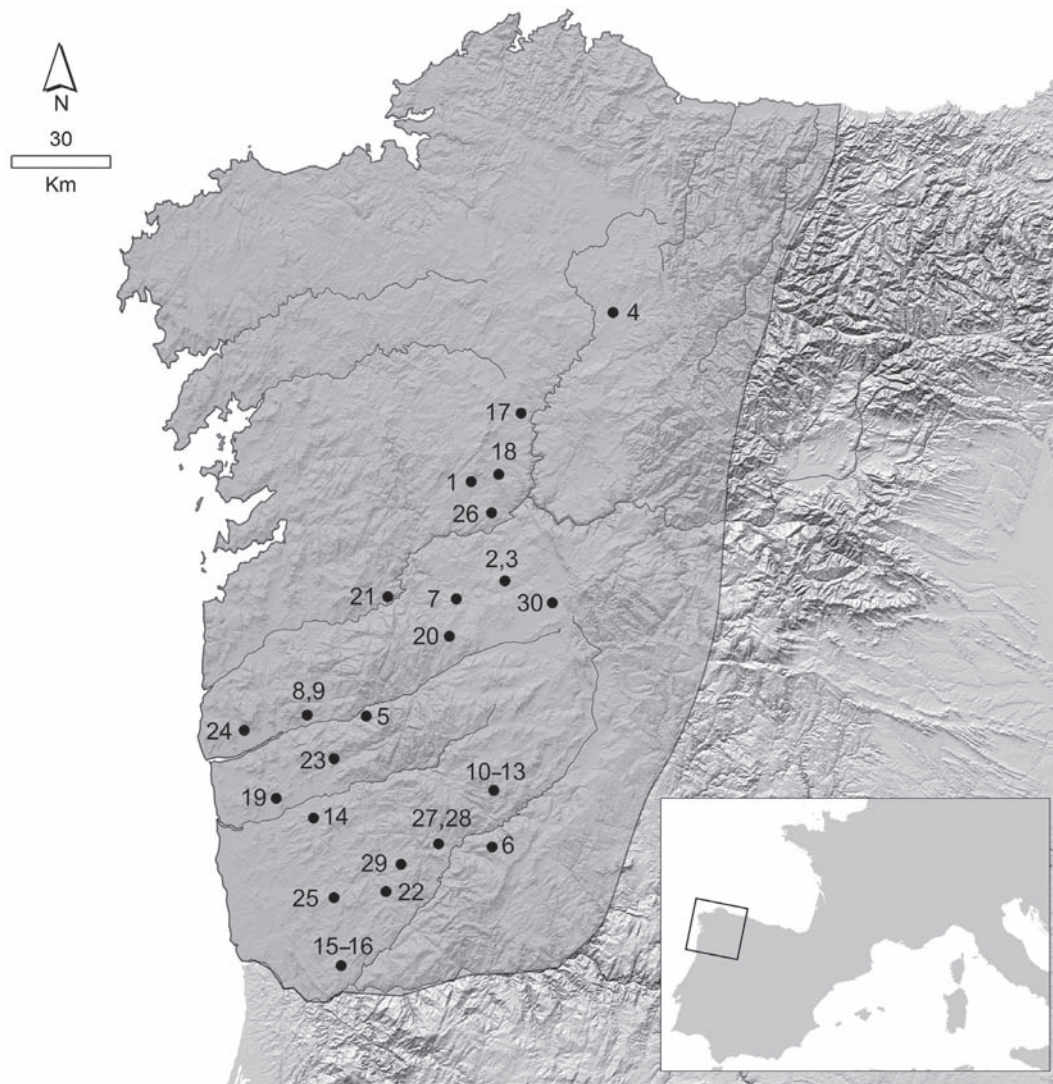


Figure 1. Distribution map of warrior statues: 1. Anlló, Cea (Ourense); 2–3. Armea, Allariz (Ourense); 4. Bergazo, O Corgo (Lugo); 5. Britelo (Ponte da Barca, Viana do Castelo); 6. Capeludos (Vila Pouca de Aguiar, Vila Real); 7. Castromao (Celanova, Ourense); 8–9. Cendufe (Arcos de Valdevez, Viana do Castelo); 10–13. Lezenho (Bótticas, Vila Real); 14. Midões (Monte da Saia, Barcelos); 15–16. Monte Mozinho (Penafiel, Porto); 17. Ralle (Taboada, Lugo); 18. Río (Vilamarín, Ourense); 19. Roriz (Barcelos, Braga); 20. Rubiás (Bande, Ourense); 21. Sabanle (Crecente, Pontevedra); 22. San Jorge de Vizela (Filgueiras, Porto); 23. Sao Julião (Vila Verde, Braga); 24. San Paio de Meixedo (Viana do Castelo); 25. Sanfins (Paços de Ferreira, Porto); 26. Santa Águeda (Vilamarín, Ourense); 27–28. Santa Comba (Cabeceira de Bastos, Braga); 29. Santo Ovídio de Fafe (Fafe, Braga); 30. Vilar de Barrio (Ourense).

a short sword or dagger (see González-Ruibal 2004; Sastre 2008) (Fig. 2). Two arguments, however, have been put forward by the archaeological mainstream to date these statues to the first century AD; one is epigraphic and the other archaeological. The first element in support of this dating was the presence of Latin inscriptions on several of these statues. Assuming that these inscriptions were made at the same time as the images enabled archaeologists to use epigraphic dating as *termini ad quos* of the statues

and, by extension, to consider them to be the result of Romanization (Hübner 1871; Sarmiento 1933, 207; Silva 1981; Almeida 1982; Martins & Silva 1984, 43; Alarcão 1988; Calo Lourido 1994; Redentor 2008; 2009). Still, while many of these scholars extend the epigraphic date to the entire group of statues — including those with no inscriptions — Tranoy (1988, 224–5) takes an intermediate position and differentiates between pre-Roman images (with no epigraph) and Roman images (with an epigraph).

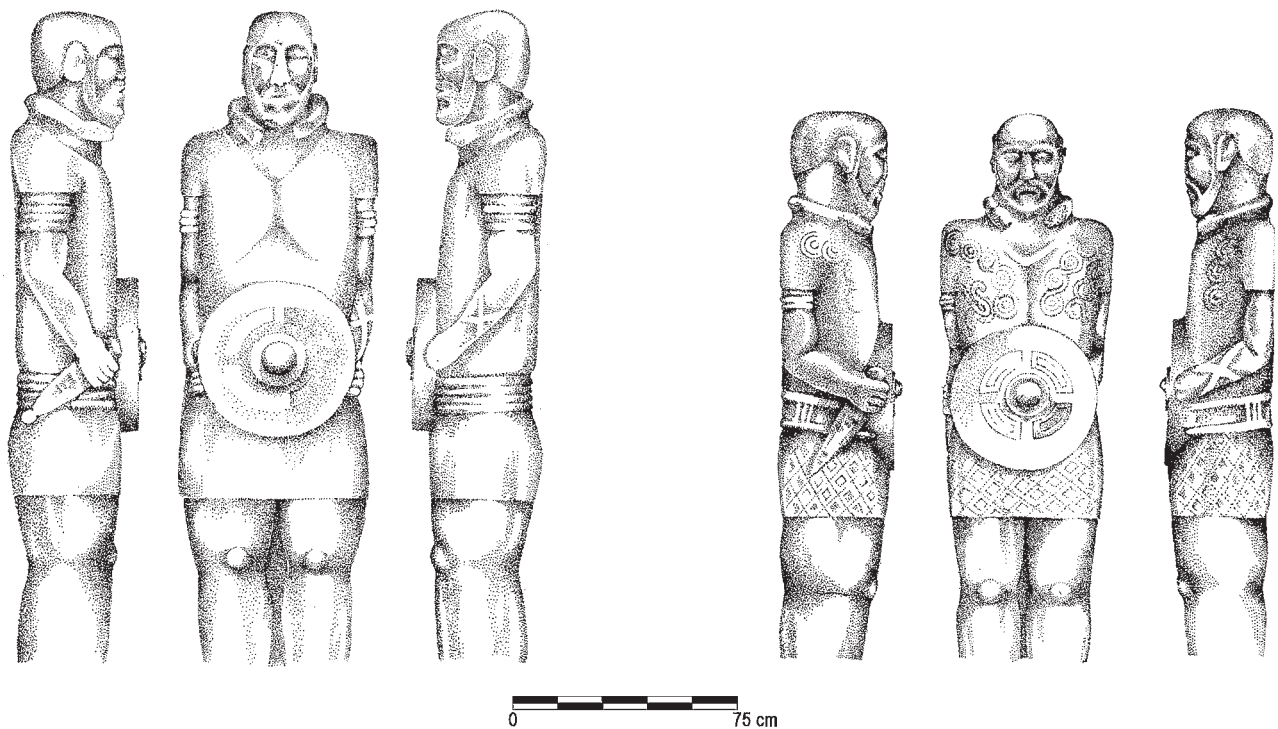


Figure 2. Warrior statues from Lezenho, Vila Real, Portugal. (Modified after Silva 1986.)

This epigraphist approach — informed by the traditional theory of Romanization (Hingley 1996) — has considered these statues to be Roman provincial art, which has ultimately conditioned their interpretation. Based on the inscriptions on the statues from Rubiás and Meixedo, Hübner (1871), by the late nineteenth century, put forward the main thesis that they were funerary monuments. Sarmiento (1986, 246), Vasconcellos (1896) and Paris (1903, 71) subsequently offered the same interpretation. Yet, from 1973 onwards, when the feet of a warrior were found *in situ* at one of the entrances to the hillfort of Sanfins, the hypothesis that they were monuments placed over graves was abandoned. This does not prevent some from continuing to defend their funerary nature even today (Koch 2003, 82). As a result of the discovery at Sanfins, however, the idea suggested by Pereira (1908) and Maluquer de Montes (1954) gained strength. In their opinion these statues represent deified eponymous heroes or tutelary divinities of a votive or honorific nature. In the late 1980s, this thesis grew in strength amongst several scholars (Alarcão 1988; Tranoy 1988, 223; Almagro-Gorbea & Lorrio 1992, 418). Tranoy (1988) considers that the pre-Roman images with no epigraph represent anonymous heroes or tutelary divinities, while the statues with an inscription made in the Roman period represent actual chiefs who probably fought in the Roman

auxiliary forces. Since the 1990s some scholars have extended this last hypothesis to the entire group of statues and claim that they represent local warriors or princes who were rewarded for collaborating with Rome (Calo Lourido 1994, 685–6; Peña Santos 2003, 175–6). Recently, Alarcão (2003, 116) and Silva (2003) have once more underlined that these icons are the portraits of historical princes from the local elite. The latter, after analysing the epigraphs, attributes to them a heroic tutelage function ‘linked to the cult of the Chiefs and the glorification of ancestors typical in societies based on blood-lines as was the Castro culture’ (Silva 2003, 47).

Some scholars, in addition to accepting the epigraphic criterion, use archaeological and contextual data. They hold that all the statues found in the course of excavations or associated to hillforts that provide contextual information, can be dated to the first century AD (Almeida 1986; Calo Lourido 1994, 683). In line with the traditional Romanization theory, these authors view these images, along with other singular material shapes such as saunas (which they also date to the same period), as an expression of Roman provincial art, inspired by the sculptural and architectonic agenda at that time in the Roman city of Bracara Augusta. The concept of ‘progressive emulation’ (Millet 1990) underlies this interpretation. They thus consider that the stone warriors, the monumental

decoration and the saunas with *pedras formosas* (literally, beautiful stones) originate in the Julio-Claudian period, when a provincial clientele demanded statues and baths to their taste, always with the limitation of available local skills and means, but ultimately taking inspiration from Roman statues or baths. The warrior statues would then be feasible, in the first place, in a society which was subjected to ‘strong acculturation on the side of Rome’, and secondly, within the Roman strategy of promoting these statues as an element of the ‘propaganda and assimilation agenda’ in the Iron Age communities of the northwestern Iberia (Calo Lourido 1994, 806–7, 825–6; 2010, 260–65).

Cultural biography of the stone warriors

Recently, however, this assessment has been questioned (González-Ruibal 2006–2007; Rodríguez-Corral 2009). In my opinion, the problem is not only that archaeological data might indicate otherwise, but also that this argument explicitly assumes the existence of an intrinsic and uniform meaning of the sculpture for which Roman materials provide a date, disregarding the fact that this material culture actually dates from a specific time in the life of these statues.

There are no known chronological or stratigraphic contexts which might enable us to accurately establish the date of primary use of these warrior statues. Their recurrent use in modern contexts prevents us from linking many of them to a particular settlement. Such is the case, for instance, for the statues from San Jorge de Vizela and from San Paio de Meixedo. They were found as reused material in modern constructions but we are unaware of their provenance. In other cases, the statues took on new significance when reused in other modern socio-material contexts. For instance, in the fifteenth century, a noble coat of arms was engraved on the shield of a statue from Meixedo (Viana do Castelo) which was recontextualized as a material symbol of a noble family from this region. One of the two statues found in Bastos (Braga), was also altered and reused more recently. First, an inscription was engraved on it during the seventeenth century. Then, at the end of the nineteenth century, a head was added with a military cap and a moustache in the fashion of the time. The statue was then relocated to the public square in Bastos where, in a new context, it became the personification of Bastos territory (Calo Lourido 1994, 513) (Figs. 3 & 4:4).

These statues which show evidence of several biographical paths (Kopytoff 1986) — that is, different uses with various iconographic and epigraphic additions — invite us to re-examine the link between some statues and Roman material culture. The statues



Figure 3. Warrior statue from Refojos de Basto (Braga, Portugal) reused in modern period. (Photograph: Miguel Carriço.)

from Cendufe and Santa Comba are good examples. In the first case, the statue fragments were found being used as construction material in modern houses near the hillfort from where they are thought to have originated. In their turn, the Roman objects used as references for dating (a coin from Nero’s reign and another from Claudius’, fragments of columns, bricks and the top part of a Roman altar) were from the surface of the site. As this material culture can in no way be used to establish the date of a statue to which they are not spatially related, it is even less feasible to use them as a reference if we bear in mind that they were found on the surface of an archaeological site mixed with other materials from the Visigoth period (Barroca 1984). In the second case, the statue of Santa Comba was found on the slope of the hillfort during farming activities which also brought to light tegulae and common Roman pottery. The artefacts found during farming work are not reliable for dating this kind of sculpture. In any event, if we were to accept the chronology indicated by these objects, we would merely be able to establish the date of a specific moment in the

life of the statue when it had already lost its original setting in the hillfort, as we shall see below.

On the other hand, another group of settlements where warrior statues were found, or to which they are linked, provide data (though quite irregular) which, in my opinion, allows us to place the context of use of the statues in a non-Romanized arena during the second and first centuries BC. This is the case, for instance, with the hillforts of Castromao, Monte Mozinho, Santo Ovidio de Fafe, São Julião and Sanfins. Firstly, with the exception of Monte Mozinho, the settlements which are associated with the statues had been occupied at least from the second century BC (Rodríguez-Corral 2012). Secondly, the development and expansion of these hillforts takes place before AD 0. In Monte Mozinho this occurred around 30–20 BC (Soeiro 2000–2001, 107), while in Sanfins it is observed from the end of the second century BC (Silva 1999, 25–6). Thirdly, this process of transformation, reordering and restructuration of the defence systems takes place in a totally indigenous context, with no traces of Romanization, and in contact with the exchange networks between the Atlantic area and the south of Iberia, which explains the presence of certain types of Roman objects (Martins 1990, 149). And, fourthly, the evidence shows that in the Julius–Claudian period, to which the epigraphs are dated, people began to live outside the settlement walls at hillforts such as Castromao and Monte Mozinho. It is at this point when walls lose their defensive role and symbolic value, a fact which is key to understanding these warrior statues, as we shall see later.

The warrior statues as biographical objects

Iconographic approaches have generally encouraged the understanding of images as mirrors of a pre-existing reality, reducing them to a mere reflection of a concept or initial idea. This has also been reinforced because these interpretations establish a relationship between the object (statue) and the writing (epigraph). The second item in this pair determines the sense and chronology of the former, preventing any possibility that the statue may have meaning(s) beyond that suggested by the interpretation of the epigraph itself. This has made many scholars, as we have seen, speculate about an essential and unambiguous meaning underlying the materiality of the statue. I think that this way of understanding material images has distorted and diminished our understanding of them. Acknowledging the existence of diachronic elements in these material forms, however, enables us to reflect on the relationship between material culture, identity and time.

In my opinion, there are sound reasons to support a diachrony between the creation of the images and the inscription of the texts. First of all, should the statues have been conceived as a support for an inscription we would expect an epigraphic area to have been created to this end. This, however, does not seem to be the case: there is no pattern in how the inscriptions are placed (Fig. 4), in contrast with the distribution of iconographic elements which are fully standardized (González-Ruibal 2006–2007; Rodríguez-Corral 2009; 2012). The umbo of the shield in the statue from São Julião is in the middle of the text; in the statue of Santa Comba the text, larger than that of São Julião, is awkwardly engraved on the lower part of the shield; and in the statue of Meixedo, the text, even larger than the previous two, is fragmented and distributed on different parts of the sculpture, which confirms that the text had not been planned when the statue was made. Moreover, the recent find of an inscription on one of the statues of Lezenho becomes highly interesting here (Redentor 2008, 212). The inscription is damaged and impossible to read, although we can see that it was superimposed on the decoration of the piece and was thus a later addition to the symbolic nature of the icon. Therefore, if we can observe only five instances where an epigraph exists (we only know of the fifth through written documentation) out of 32 documented warrior statues (Calo Lourido 2003) it seems quite reasonable to reckon that we are dealing with the exception rather than the rule. They are probably specific cases of reutilization, singularization and symbolic recycling occurring at a later date to that of the primary use of the statues, in other words, the reason for which they were originally built.

The addition of an inscription to a sculpture of this kind should not be considered unusual. These types of material item can undergo changes in context and severe processes of re-signification owing to their size, visibility, durability and symbolism: they may accumulate different meanings and functions throughout their cultural biography (Gosden & Marshall 1999). With the introduction of the use of epigraphy in the western region of Iberia, writing became a mechanism of appropriation and a tool for symbolically recycling objects from the past. This is particularly noticeable in the case of recontextualization in a funerary or votive sense (Díaz-Guardamino Uribe 2006, 25; García Sanjuán *et al.* 2007, 119–20; 2008, 7–9; Alfayé Villa 2010). This is confirmed not only by some of the *verracos* (stone sculptures of bulls, pigs and boars) from the Iron Age in the Vetton area (Álvarez Sanchís 1999, 215–94, 345–73), but also by some stelae from the Late Bronze Age such as those found in Chillón (Ciudad Real) and Ibahernando

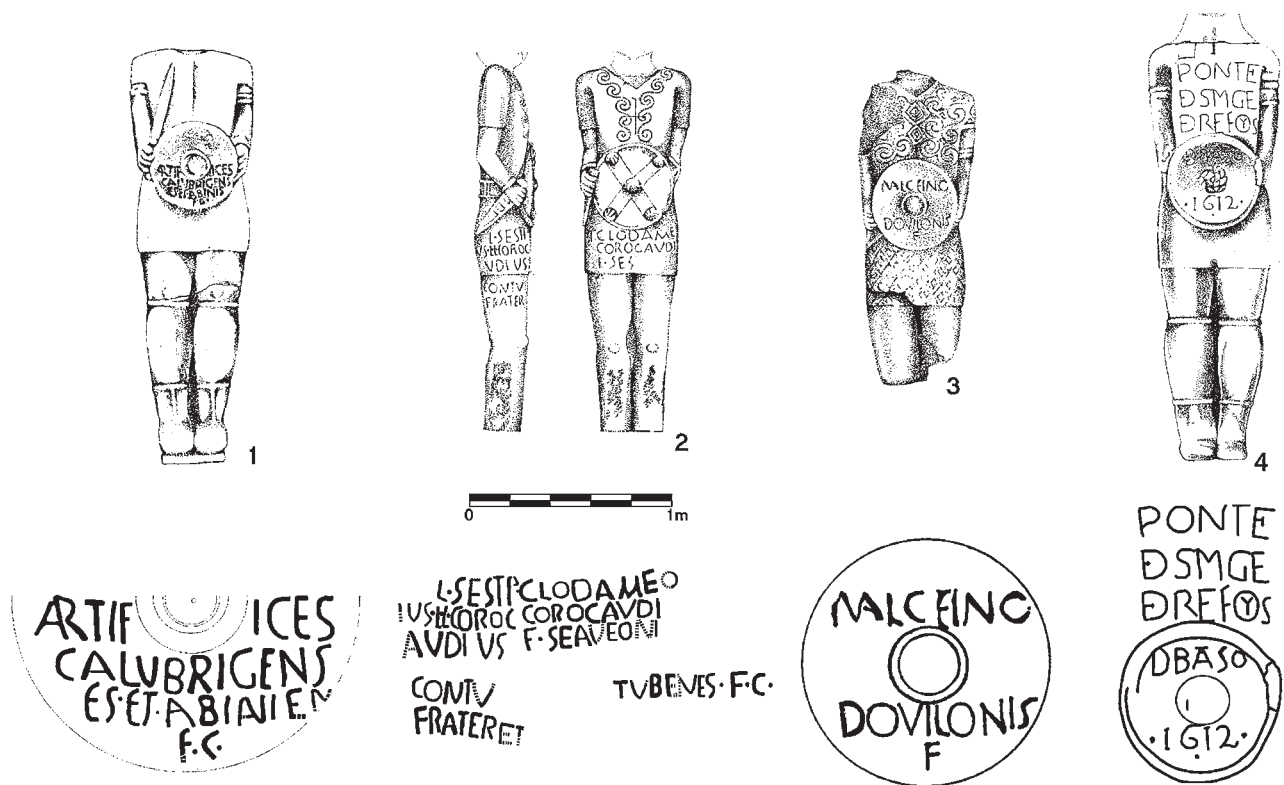


Figure 4. Warriors statues with inscriptions: 1. Santa Comba, Braga, Portugal; 2. San Paio de Meixedo, Viana do Castelo, Portugal; 3. Sao Juliao, Braga, Portugal; 4. Refojos de Bastos, Braga, Portugal.

(Cáceres). In both cases, the pieces were transferred to a necropolis in the Roman period and reused as grave markers. The statue of Muiño de San Pedro (Verín, Orense), located in the same geographic area as the warrior statues, is a further example. On the obverse, an engraved Roman epigraph has been dated to the middle of the first century AD. Archaeologists, using the same reasoning applied to the dating of the warrior statues, have attributed this piece to the same date as that of the epigraph (Taboada Cid 1988–89; Nodar Nodar 2004, 217). Some scholars even interpret it as a Roman bifrontal stela (Rodríguez Colmenero 1993). Yet, the sub-rectangular motif on its reverse, typical of statue-menhirs from the area of Tamega and Duero in the Late Bronze Age, conclusively reveals its affiliation within this group (González García 2009) (Fig. 5). Hence, as in the case of the aforementioned stelae from Chillón and Ibahernando, this statue-menhir was recycled in the first century AD for funerary use by engraving an epigraph on its obverse. This material object might actually have had a larger cultural biography. It was probably a phallic menhir up until the beginning of the Late Bronze Age (Bettencourt 2005, 75–6). It was

then anthropomorphized and as a statue-menhir was used as a road sign up until the end of the Iron Age. By the first century AD the Latin epigraph had been added and it was reused as a funerary monument, thus acquiring another new meaning.

The temporal gap between the creation of these images — stelae, statue-menhirs and warrior statues — and their later lives, made it possible for them to be re-evaluated and in turn re-incorporated into the world in a new form. These material forms could certainly become instruments of manipulation aiding the creation of a desirable vision of the past and the present. Thus, in the first century AD, in a context of acculturation and negotiation of diverging identities under Roman administrative-political control (González-Ruibal 2006–2007), the materiality of these images must have served as a gateway to the past, sucking up ideas of the present: encapsulating ancestral memory, a sense of belonging and, consequently, a deliberate retro-ideology (Webster 2003; Aldhouse-Green 2004, 25–6; García Sanjuán *et al.* 2007, 124; 2008, 10; Rodríguez-Corral 2012).

The individuals reusing the material are indigenous, as the anthroponymy of the epigraphs reveals

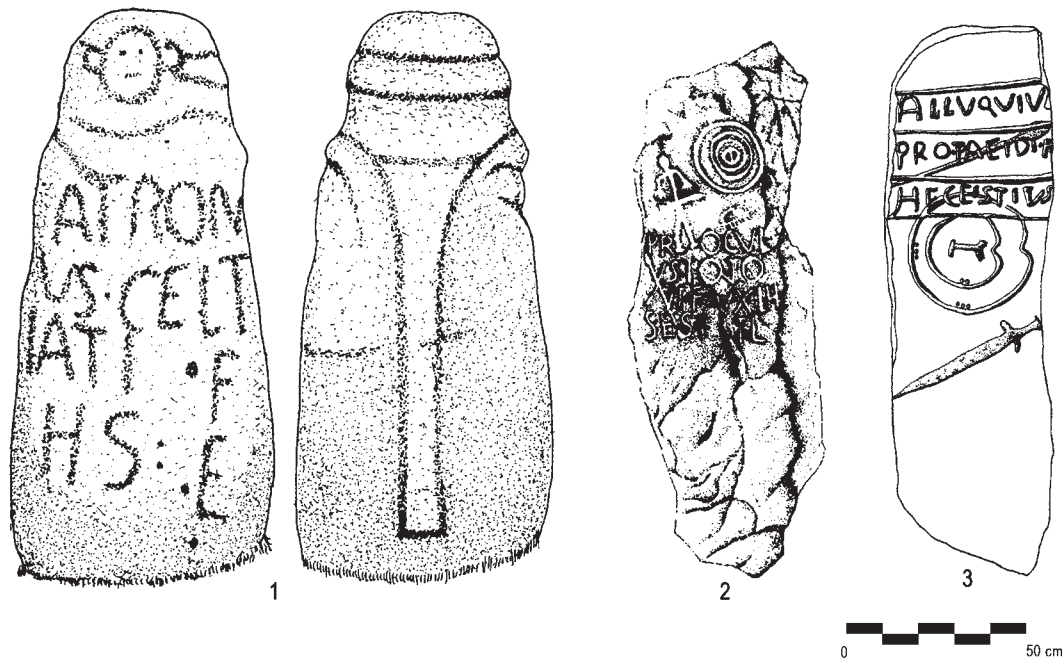


Figure 5. Roman inscriptions on prehistoric monuments in the west of Iberia: 1. statue-menhir of Muiño de San Pedro (Verín, Ourense, Spain); 2. stela from Chillón (Guadalajara, Spain); 3. stela from Ibahernando (Cáceres, Spain). (Modified after García Sanjuán et al. 2008; Taboada Cid 1988–89.)

(Fernández Ochoa & Zarzalejos Prieto 1994; Nodar Nodar 2004). Writing serves as a novel and powerful mechanism for the creation of memory while it also acts as an effective tool to relate to, appropriate and singularize an object which filters temporalities from the past, making the past non-absent (Domanska 2006). In one single act, past and present come into play: the reuse of an old object as a funerary monument to which an epigraph with a name is added allows the indigenous individual to negotiate his way of being in the world in a very specific manner against a background of discrepancy and reconstitution of local identities. Nonetheless, as these material images become more distant in time from their primary context, their semantic uniformity disappears and they become more ambivalent, facilitating new meanings and uses which result in different biographical paths (Kopytoff 1986). Significantly enough, from the epigraphs engraved on the stone warriors, it would appear that their reuse in Roman times may not have had the same meaning in all cases (Redentor 2009). Likewise, the statue-menhirs and warrior statues may possibly have lost their role as objects of resistance from the Flavian period (AD 69–96) onwards. Once a new imperial Roman identity had become widespread, old identities no longer needed to be negotiated. As a result, from that moment onwards, these material objects were reused as construction material. Thus,

the statue-menhir from Chaves — which had formerly been a phallic menhir, as was that from Muiño de San Pedro — was reused in the construction of the Bridge of Aquae Flaviae (between the 1st and 2nd centuries AD) (Varela Gomes 1997, 270). On the other hand, in Monte Mozinho, in the Flavian and Antonine periods when domus-type houses and a monument of Roman architecture were built, the already-broken warrior statues were used for the construction of pavements (Almeida 1974, 9). These last two sections underline three highly relevant issues. Firstly, the fact that these statues mutated over time and their status varied as they took on a new meaning after various recontextualizations; secondly, the inscriptions on some of the statues were added after they had been created and acted as a mechanism of appropriation over these images in a new context of ‘discrepant identities’ (Mattingley 2004) after the incorporation of this region into the Roman Empire; and thirdly, these images played an active role and served to link the past with persons at that time through their biographies.

In the following sections I intend to analyse precisely the significance and sense which these images had in their context of primary use in the second and first centuries BC based on an approach which supersedes representationalist assumptions. The concern of archaeologists to know what or who is depicted by these statues has prevented us from gaining a

proper understanding of them. This is mostly due to the fact that archaeological interpretation has adopted the viewpoint of iconography and epigraphy and ignored the materiality and the phenomenological and performative dimensions of the statues and of the landscape where they are placed, as different scholars have pointed out (Tilley 2008; Boivin 2009; Olsen 2010). In my view, two questions must be highlighted which have been overlooked in the interpretation of these images so far: (1) what was the relevance of the role of the observer or of the audience in the construction of the meaning and function of the statues; and (2) how important were the various socio-material contexts to which these objects and those audiences belonged?

From social to socio-material analyses of material images: theatricality and phenomenology in the borders

The main reason why these material forms are commonly seen as a reflection and a secondary product rests on a central notion of modern discourse: the idea that the social link or social contract is acquired by individuals through language. Yet the social is not what binds a community of individuals together but rather what is maintained through the objects and material forms (Latour 2005, 10). Individuals in society produce material culture but material and symbolic forms also create the conditions for that society to exist and shape the behaviour of those individuals. The processes of human action on material things produce types of persons and externalize culture (Miller 2005). This culture may act as a force autonomous from individuals through its engagement with different 'networks of things' co-created by human acts, choices and understandings. The social interaction is therefore framed and performed by extrasomatic forms which have the ability to make it recur. As Gosden states, 'people crystallize out in the interstices between objects, taking up the space allowed them by the object world, with our senses and emotions educated by the object world' (2005a, 197).

It is hard to describe the capacity of material images like statues to be drawn into the world of the living, to become not representations of something else but almost individuals in their own right, as Gombrich rightly pointed out (1999, 139). When we enter into the 'image fields' (Tilley 2008), these images become an intimate part of us. On this basis I argue that we must not inquire into what the warrior statues *are* but what they *do*. These warriors of stone are *actants* or non-human agents which 'make do' (Latour 1999) rather than mirrors of stone of pre-existing ideas and socio-political relations. Through their performa-

tive, phenomenological and relational capacity they actively play a part in the creation of identity within the socio-material contexts where they belong. For this reason, it is necessary to explore the power and agency of these images at a micro-scale of analysis. The only way to achieve this goal is, as Knappett pointed out (2011, 68), to reconcile two aspects of micro-scale interactions: 'face-to-face social interactions in which material forms seem to be in the background; and the individual-objects interactions in which socially seems to fall into the background'. Since we approach images as artefacts or functional objects, a phenomenological, cognitive and archaeological background may considerably contribute to the interpretation of their meaning (Hamilton 1996, 282). We must relocate these statues in the socio-material context for which they were created and where they actively played their original role and try to reproduce the stage upon which they performed and worked.

Most stone warriors lack an archaeological context although we may know with certainty the space where they acted: the liminal zone of access to the settlement. The finding *in situ* of the lower part of a warrior at the entrance to the hillfort of Sanfins reveals the original location of these images. Likewise, all the statues found in these hillforts, which were not reused for any other purpose and were abandoned immediately after they lost their role in connection with the walls, seem to support this idea because they were discovered in the contexts of the walls or on the slopes of the hillforts (i.e. statues from Roriz, Braga, Santa Comba and Bergazo). The presence of more than one statue in many hillforts — four statues may come from the hillfort of Lezenho (Calo Lourido 2003) — makes us think that these stone warriors were located at the different access zones to the settlements.

The location of the statues is particularly relevant for understanding them. Walls and entrances to settlements are transitional places which materialize 'an entire cosmos of the half-open' (Bachelard 1994, 222). By being 'betwixt and between' social space (Turner 1967, 93), the great material divisions become a space of anxiety for the community (Parker Pearson & Richards 1997). From the end of second century BC onwards, settlements become larger — sometimes covering up to 20 hectares — due to the increase of population and to synoecism. Liminal zones are then monumentalized and become more complex. Great walls and access zones are built transforming the micro-physics and perceptive systems of the Early Iron Age. Material metaphors of possession and compartmentalization of space are developed. Likewise, within or beyond the walls, in access zones to the settlements, semi-hypogean buildings were erected

which were used as saunas (see Rodríguez-Corral 2009, 189–93). From that moment on, the settlement enclosed within the walls is visually hidden from the external world and topography is shaped which objectifies a particular understanding of the outside world. It is from the interior of the hillfort, the only settlement pattern in this region during the Iron Age, that the world is thought and experienced.

There are numerous parallels linking the presence of a warrior in a liminal zone such as the walls or entrance gates to an apotropaic agent. Texts in early Irish literature, such as *Dindsenchas* (literally, *Lore of Places*) for instance, describe how the bodies of dead armed warriors were placed upright on top of a hill or by the banks or walls of the settlements with the purpose of protecting the place (Joyce 1903, 551–3). In this case, the biological death of the warrior does not mean his social death or the end of his agency, which is transfigured or even increased: the material presence of the armed body in this location makes the warrior acquire new powers, protecting the settlement and having an emotional impact on his enemies (Velasco López 1999, 779). But it is not only the materiality of the body of a dead warrior which may distribute agency in these liminal zones. Another common and frequently documented practice consists of material images of warriors. An interesting instance can be found in the Maori statue known as Pukaki (Tapsell 2000). Its political and socio-material context reveals some similarities to the context of the statues of the hillforts in northwestern Iberia. Pukaki is a Maori warrior of the tribe of Te Aeawa who achieved fame for expanding the lands of his tribe in the late eighteenth century. It was carved in the early nineteenth century to be placed at the entrance to a defensive settlement, as were the Iron Age warrior statues from northwestern Iberia. In both cases, the settlements are very large as a result of synoecism in the context of contacts and colonial encounters with foreign agents and of anxiety and violence. Under such circumstances, the role of Pukaki at the entrance to his settlement was to protect the group against extreme forms of violence. In these two examples, their agencies are largely due to their biographies and to who they are, but they depend not only upon that. In the first case, the location of the warrior, the performativity of his arms, the way the body is placed set the sense of the scene. In the second case, as Gosden points out, while to Western eyes Pukaki is simply an oversized statue of an ancestor who lived some time ago, ‘to the people of Te Arawa, Pukaki is not a mere representation of something. To them, it is a human being though of a much different kind from that of western conceptualization’ (2005b, 33–4).

The power of the stone warriors placed in liminal zones of access to the hillforts does not exclusively consist of their ability to make an individual present or to express an absent idea. They also constituted a major element in the co-creation of cognitive thoughts of native people by virtue of their phenomenological experience (Tilley 2008, 255). The encounter between these stone warriors and their audience in the context of hillfort landscapes is a matter of iconic, indexical and symbolic associations (Gell 1998; Knappett 2005; 2011, 100–102; Preucel 2008). When we take a delocalized view of the meaning of these images, beyond the limits of specific material forms, as our modern definition of a statue dictates, an alternative course of analysis opens up in order to rethink these warrior images. I think that several metaphoric, mimetic and mnemonic processes make these images — embedded in a material world of interaction and a meeting point of diverse realities — put a spotlight on links and relationships relevant to the persons affected by them and contribute to the formation of the hillfort landscape.

The stone warriors were commonly placed not only at the entrances but were also situated (at least some of them) on rocky ledges found in that area. The warrior from the settlement of Sanfins, found *in situ*, was embedded on a outcrop at the entrance (Fig. 6). This location does not appear to be accidental: according to testimonies compiled by Sarmiento (1999, 313) amongst inhabitants of the area near another hillfort where the warrior of Vizela (Porto, Portugal) originates (that statue was also found amongst rocks). We do not know the original location of the rest of the statues although the statues from Berganzo, Cendufe or Monte Mozinho preserve conical bases similar to those from Sanfins and therefore their location must have been similar. The warriors, and the rocks on which they are placed, must have made up an integral material set. In this sense, we need to deconstruct the idea of a sculpture as a delimited material form, bearer of its own meaning and located on a neutral background — whose purpose is merely to display the statue, regardless of its meaning — and try to grasp the meaning of these images looking into the theatrical and phenomenological relevance jointly created by the scene (the rock) and the warrior.

Material signifiers, unlike other sorts of signifiers, typify or represent something by association or by sharing similar attributes (Tilley 1999). Physical attributes and uses of material culture do not fully delimit the symbolic dimension of material forms, although they do play a significant role in their sense and meaning. The material ensemble made up of the two elements could thus operate at two metaphorical levels: the rock as the place and the stone as the material. In the first



Figure 6. *Modern reconstruction of the stone warrior from the hillfort of Sanfins (Paços de Ferreira, Porto, Portugal) on the outcrop where the lower part of this statue was discovered. (Photograph: Sole Felloza.)*

case, the relevance which the rocks had during prehistory because of their visibility in the landscape and their numinous, ritual nature as meeting places could play a part (Bradley 2000; 2002). In northwest Iberia, from the Chalcolithic onwards, rocks were habitual places for local communities to represent and place weapons and other objects. The first hillforts emerged precisely in these landscapes of the Later Bronze Age. In the second case, there may have been an appreciation of stone as a material substance that is sensually potent (Hamilton *et al.* 2011). Stones, due to their hardness and durability, have often been linked to men's bodies and acted as a recurrent symbol of lineage and ancestry (Parker Pearson & Ramilisonina 1998). In this sense, the image of the warriors placed on rocks must have produced an extremely powerful metaphoric ensemble, creating the impression that the warriors sprouted out of the rock and were therefore an intrinsic part of the landscape. This setting must have generated a strong context of sacrality and temporal depth on the territory for the community.

All in all, in order to understand the meaning and role of these images at the time they played their part in this setting we must expand our view. In the next section, I look into three questions which I believe make up the socio-material 'collective' (Latour 1999) where these images are inserted: firstly the relation-

ship between these images and the surrounding material forms (walls and gates) and the activities carried out there (passage or prophylactic rituals, etc.); secondly the performative or theatrical configuration resulting from their location, creating a very particular type of audience; and thirdly the aesthetics, objects and iconographic gestures shaped by the image of the warrior involved in this theatre.

Liminality: ritual practices and apotropaic objects in relation to walls and entrances

Hillforts, as with numerous other cases of architectural spaces, are the phenomenological and performative result of the material, social and symbolic-ritual relations produced at a particular time. They are created by material forms such as the walls and gateways where artefacts of different types are deposited and warriors and other material images are displayed. Portals and walls are materialities that do not just reflect social reality of a community and its way of being in the world: they play an essential role in the creation of that social reality itself. As solid metaphors, they objectify a sense of place by segmenting space and shaping the flow of individuals who move within their environment. While walls create different ontological domains, e.g. exterior/interior, wild/domestic, enemy/

friend etc., portals as thresholds ease the transit between those domains (Parker Pearson & Richards 1997, 24). The ritual action in these contexts is marked by two ideas: protection and change.

Common findings of material deposits and visual media at walls and gateways in prehistoric settlements (Edmonds 1993; Thomas 1999, 34–53; Gheorghiu 2003; Hingley 2006; Alfayé Villa 2007) suggest that these architectural forms become places in need of foundational and prophylactic ritual practice and of apotropaic elements. In the specific case of the hillforts of northwest Iberia, deposits of metallic objects and human and animal remains linked to the walls as well as stone heads placed on gates from the eighth century BC seem also to support this idea (González-Ruibal 2006–2007; Alfayé Villa & Rodríguez-Corral 2009; Rodríguez-Corral 2009, 178–80). Metallic objects deposited immediately next to hillfort walls such as that of Saceda (Cualedro) (González-Ruibal 2005), may have been intended to grant supernatural protection to the walls (Alfayé Villa & Rodríguez-Corral 2009), given their spatial and morphological similarities with other metallic deposits in the north of Europe interpreted as such (Hingley 2006). Likewise, despite the poor condition of bone remains due to the acidity of the soil in this region, human bone deposits have been recorded in the context of walls and entrances. For instance, a human jawbone was found in a layer of ashes located directly above a sixth- to fifth-century BC level of the wall of La Campa Torres, in Gijón, as well as child burials in two sectors of the same wall which the excavators link to liminal ritual practices (Maya González & Cuesta Toribio 2001, 295). Other possible human cremations linked to walls have been documented in the hillforts of Castromao (Celanova) (García Rollán 2004, 10), San Millán (Cualedro) (Rodríguez González & Fariña Busto 1986, 62) and Baroña (A Coruña) (Calo Lourido & Soeiro 1986, 35). Horse bones have been documented inside the wall of the hillfort of Espiñaredo (As Pontes) (González-Ruibal 2006–2007, 569).

In the Chao Sammartín hillfort (Grande de Salime), one of the settlements showing early monumentalization, a cista was built, around the eighth century BC, at the access gate to the acropolis to hold a human skull (Villa Valdés & Cabo Pérez 2003) (Fig. 7). There was probably a conceptual link between this type of deposit and the group of human stone heads which are documented in these hillforts and were in use at least during the second and first centuries BC (see González-Ruibal 2004). Different interpretations of these objects have been put forward, although it has been mostly agreed that they represent deceased persons, deities or the severed heads of defeated



Figure 7. *The cista that holds a fragment of human skull at the access gate to the acropolis from Chao Samartín Hillfort, Grandas de Salime, Spain. (Photograph: Angel Villa Valdés.)*

enemies. The exact location of some of these items is unknown although there are two instances for which their setting is with certainty at the entrance to the hillforts. One is at the settlement of San Cibrán de Las (Orense) where, as in the previous case, a granitic block was found with a head of this kind engraved on it by the gate of the acropolis wall (Calo Lourido 1994, 440). Another stone head, clearly related to the entrance to the settlement, was found during excavations carried out at the hillfort of A Graña (Melide, A Coruña). In this hillfort the final section of the path, just before access to the settlement, was carved along a large rocky ledge thus creating a control device. This access corridor, built into the rock, limited the movements and channelled the flow of people in this liminal zone. The stone head was located at the inner end, where a large gate was installed guarded by two towers, one on either side. The image may also have been originally built into one of the towers or placed directly above the gate (Calo Lourido 1994; Barciela Garrido & Rey Seara 2000, 135–6). Consequently, this

stone head must have worked as an apotropaic artefact in the context of the entrance to the enclosed area.

These borders need to be ritually protected and fortified as transits between the various domains must also be managed and ritualized. This transit (either real or metaphorical) requires adaptation processes and specific transformation practices traditionally described by anthropologists as rites of passage (Van Gennep 1909). Such rites involve people crossing the critical threshold, marked in each case by alerting performative acts, powerful symbols and images, and the deposition of objects (Garwood 2011, 271). As we shall see next, the manner in which spaces and artefacts are manipulated and used in these ritual contexts of passage, were designed to have agency and a dramatic and vivid effect on the social actor.

Image and audience in socio-material borders

The encounters between diverging identities are complex and problematic, and transition and access areas to a settlement are a good example of this. In these socio-material contexts of transition and interaction, two notions, which overlap and intermingle, commonly delimit this space built as a cosmos of the half-open which needs to be managed and negotiated: hospitality and war. In the ancient world, for instance, the Latin term *hospitium* shares its Latin root with *hospes* (the foreigner) and *hostis* (the enemy). In these contexts of anxiety and encounter with the outside world, socio-political and cultural negotiation needs a theatrical performance culturally recognized by the participants (Inomata & Coben 2006). This contributes to breaking the closed circle of the settlement at different levels and to establishing social relationships between the members of the community and those hosted within it (*hospites*).

The theatrical nature of this socio-material context made up of walls, gates, ritual practices and images requires the physical presence of an audience. The manner in which this audience is incorporated and how the material forms shape behaviour contribute to the creation of a performative dimension of the place which ultimately determines emotional responses. From an analytical point of view there exist two different forms of integration of this audience through embodiment within this socio-material context: by means of incorporated and by inscribed practices (Rowlands 1993). In the first case, these types of practices allow individuals to take an active part in the performances. Through a sequence of performative and socio-material acts, individuals incorporate and internalize culture. This is the case, for instance, in the rites of passage to which some documented

deposits and ritual practices outside the walls seem to refer.

Various deposits have been documented in this region. Due to their location on the slopes of the hillforts and to the material objects deposited — weapons and ritual implements — these deposits may be linked to rites of passage. This is the case, for instance, of the deposit of daggers discovered outside the hillfort of Sofán (López Cuevillas 1989), or the deposit found on the lower part of the slope of the hillfort at Castelo de Neiva. In the latter, two decorated bronze Montefortino helmets — probably the same as those shown in some stone warriors — were documented and, half a metre away from them, three bronze beakers and fragments of two situlas (Almeida 1980). Likewise, other deposits of small objects, e.g. necklace beads or spearheads, at the entrance gates to settlements such as the hillfort of Saceda (González-Ruibal 2005, 277) should be interpreted as deposits made by individuals when crossing the gap in the wall, linked to more regular and personal rites of passage than those mentioned earlier.

We also ought to include the aforementioned semi-hypogean constructions (Fig. 8) located near the entrances to hillforts in the group of elements and socio-material forms we have seen so far — such as walls, gates, apotropaic heads and ritual deposits. These semi-hypogean structures could equally be linked to rites of passage and liminal practices. This may be due to firstly, as we have just pointed out, their topographical location; secondly, their architecture and physical divisions imposed by the materiality of the buildings themselves (their internal partitions trigger alterations and synesthetic changes in the persons entering them); and finally the fact that they are accessed through a small opening in the so-called *pedras formosas*, large stones profusely decorated which enclose the building. Symbols of the liminal world are depicted on their surface, as we shall see later.

Likewise, processes of monumentalization instil meaning and sense on the landscape (Bradley 1993; Rowlands 1993, 142). Theatrical stages are created through highly visible material forms. Walls, gates, saunas or access roads provide stages for theatrical events and their materialities shape ordered spaces which define and encourage specific types of mobility and interaction between participants and material forms. The context of interaction between the warriors of stone and their audience is created precisely in this socio-material collective.

Three features are common to any observer of the warrior in this context: first, the observer is outside the hillfort; second, he approaches the settlement going towards its gateway, the most critical point where, as

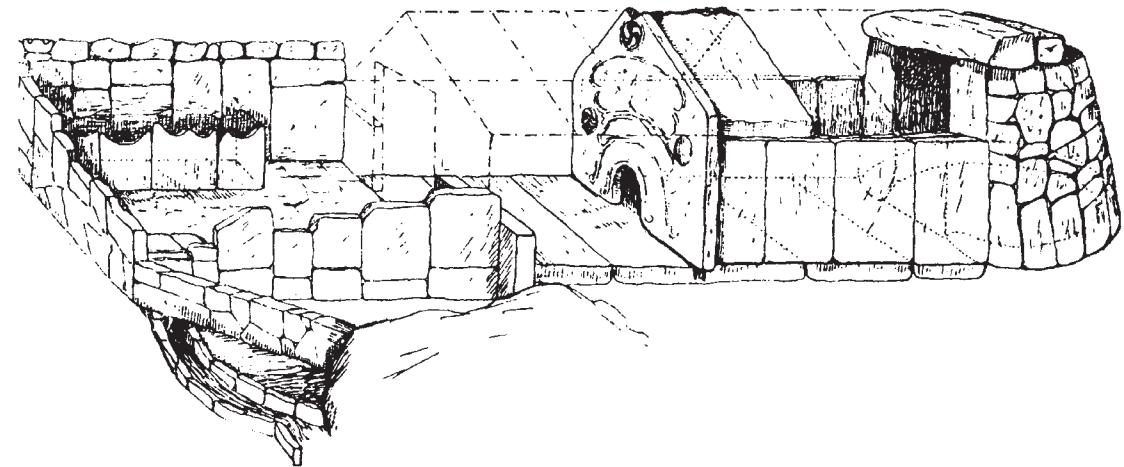


Figure 8. An Iron Age ritual sauna from the hillfort of Briteiros. (Drawing modified after Cardozo 1931; photograph: Vitor Ribeiro.)

he moves from one ontological space to the next, a space of anxiety emerged; and third, this observer views the statue in motion, altering position as his viewpoint gradually changes during his approach. The image field requires, in this way, a body in motion, movements in relation to the stone warriors and their setting. In contrast with the movement of the observer, the material logic, hieratism and symbolism underline

the stationary position of the warrior which emanates from the rock itself. This is where the size of these statues ought to be taken into consideration. Most of these figures are over two metres high (Fig. 6) (Calo Lourido 2003, 15; Schattner 2004, 40). Their oversized dimension might increase their actant power in the liminal context: firstly because their magnitude would emphasize the values and power of the warrior,

and secondly, because it could be seen by anybody approaching the hillfort from far away.

Consequently what does the materiality of the warriors of stone convey to an audience approaching the hillfort, a space of anxiety? Or more accurately, how do warriors work on this stage to affect their audience? Stone warriors with their accessories and clothes can buttress ideas and identities and act as efficient mechanisms of resistance, though of a quite different kind from that operating in the first century AD, while they intensify some aspects of reality. Against a background of growing unrest, reordering and confrontation in the late second century BC, after Rome entered northwestern Iberia, the performativity of these images in the socio-material context of the entrances to the hillforts makes them act as powerful actors and negotiating agents. In the next section I will analyse the way in which the statues actively contribute to the construction of sociality in the hillfort through their performativity, aesthetics and iconography.

Situated aesthetics and semiotics

The aesthetic interpretation of these images has viewed them as an expression of Roman provincial art, following the criteria of the traditional theory of 'Romanization'. Hence, the lack or presence of aesthetic features such as naturalism, movement or realism, has led some scholars to consider the warrior statues to be imperfect forms of art (Almeida 1974; Calo Lourido 1994). According to these authors, the lack of technical skill in handling the material (stone) prevents the final creation from achieving the aesthetic ideal sought by the local communities producing them (Calo Lourido 1994, 803). Some authors have also insisted on establishing an evolution outline for these statues, based on the alleged introduction of elements of Roman art into some of them (Schattner 2004). I do not believe that the higher level of naturalism of some of the icons derives from an evident attempt to copy Roman models or that these statues are the product of an inability to imitate them. Viewing provincialism simply as a failure to achieve a classical canon within Roman provincial art is quite problematic and clouds local logic beyond the metropolis (Gosden 2004; Hodos 2009; Hingley 2009; Revell 2009). And in the case of a visual culture emerging in contact with Rome, albeit in a still not Romanized context, it is even more challenging. Imperfect as the heads or statues of warriors may seem to an observer educated in the classical canon, one who ponders other factors such as the functionality of the statue may actually disagree (Gell 1998).

I therefore believe that we should not consider these images to be based on a Greco-Roman feature

such as naturalism because it did not necessarily play a part in the logic, aesthetics, function and intention of the local sculptural tradition. Doing so implies accepting an evolutionary metanarrative which teleologically places Roman aesthetics as the universal ideal with set phases and features applying to any form of art. We must simply accept that we are faced with alternative aesthetics which create different socialities. As Noelke (2003) argues, plastic art may be a space of resistance in contexts of Roman acculturation. Against this background, if failure to keep classical canons constitutes a sign of resistance against the norms of representation of the imperial power and not a mere indication of partial or unfinished Romanization (Aldhouse-Green 2003), all the more obviously might this be the case in a context of contact, negotiation, transformation and confrontation from the first contact with Rome until the latter took over political and administrative control of the region.

The images of warriors, in my view, are an example of resistance and independence, sublimated in art, understood as a 'specialized technology to achieve specific effects' (Gell 1998). The very aesthetics of the warriors, moving away from Roman naturalism towards hieratism, could work in that direction, while playing a part in the construction of a local identity. Materiality, through a series of characteristics such as solidity, firmness and size can, as we have already stated, be essential in the performative construction of the image. The aesthetic canon, however, may also evoke a powerful social reality. As Robb (2009) has recently pointed out, the simplification of the body of a statue is a strong act of concentration. By presenting a minimalist standardized image of the warrior an essential and regulatory image is created for one sole purpose. What is lost in terms of naturalism and movement is gained in terms of immediacy and understandability (Robb 2009, 174). All protagonism is given to iconography — the weapons, gestures and symbolic motifs of clothing — as key to the efficiency of the image itself set in the theatrical space we have described.

Shields and defence of the community

One of the most outstanding features of the warrior is the position of the shield or *caetra*: the warrior holds it in front of his abdomen, showing it to the visitor arriving near the zone of entrance to the hillfort. This awkward position may be linked to its symbolic role in the ancient world: owning a shield shows independence and announces a willingness to defend the same, acting as a material metaphor of protection. Its loss, as pointed out by Lincoln (1991,

143), involves the renunciation of the defeated group of the social bounds previously kept. This is consistent with a vision of the shield as a movable border separating oneself, the group and the territory from the Other.

In my view, the geometric symbol depicted on the shields of five statues — those from Cendufe, Armeá, San Jorge de Vizela and the two from Lezenho — should be interpreted along the same lines. Some scholars have considered it as a labyrinth. This interpretation highlights this apotropaic dimension of the shield of the warrior (Quesada Sanz 2003). The labyrinth, amongst its multiple meanings, is linked to the physical defence of a territory or settlement through its magical-religious protection (Gell 1998). Yet, what is depicted on the shields is not a labyrinth *strictu sensu*. The geometric pattern, which also appears on the coins of Augustus (*caetra*) and appears again on a metope of Porta Flaminia (Blanco Freijeiro 1971), could be a characteristic motif from the second half of the first century BC. As Höck pointed out (2003, 56) ‘if the motif is so typical of the northwest and the piece discovered by Blanco in the capital of the empire was so unique, (...) it would be logical to think that Romans took as a model a pre-existing north-western indigenous motif’, or at least one originating in the northwestern context of Iberia.

The motif depicted on the warrior shields may possibly materialize a symbolism of the centre or represent the ideal layout of a settlement at that time; they could actually refer to both simultaneously. The concept centre–periphery (unity–multiplicity) constitutes one of the fundamental bases of architectural symbolism (Rykwert 1985; Snodgrass 1992, 21–4; Robinson 2003). Besides, we must bear in mind the documented engravings on stone which appear to be sketches of the layout of hillforts (Myrberg 2006; Meijide Cameselle 2009) or of architectural structures such as cairns (Bradley 2009, 42–3).

The layout of settlements such as those of Monte Mozinho or San Cibrán de Las, in full operation in the second half of the first century BC, show peculiar similarities with the motif represented on the shield.



Figure 9. Above: the geometric symbol depicted on the shield of one of the statues from Lezenho and on two coins of Augustus (this *moneta castrens* coinage from northwestern Iberia is generally thought to be related to the Cantabrian War). Below: Aerial view of San Cibrán de Las hillfort, San Amaro, Ourense, Spain. (Photograph: Terra Arqueos.)

Both settlements have a ritual place in the central zone surrounded by a ring of houses. Secondly, in the case of San Cibrán de Las, strict planning of its layout has been demonstrated (Fig. 9): the settlement was first laid down, the plots were delimited and construction work then began. Thus, as the excavator pointed out, ‘all the dwellings are located in the external area, around radial streets which link the lower and upper areas acting as circular axes’ (Álvarez González 2007, 30) as the motif depicts. Thirdly, these hillforts were built within the framework of a process of synoecism typical of the first century BC (González-Ruibal 2006–2007, 338–48), and were conceived ‘from the start to host a large number of persons and the interior area was divided into similar plots for each family’ (Álvarez-González 2007, 31). Around the walled acropolis there must have lived people from different places, probably concentrating by filiation in zones or quarters inside the settlement. This plurality of popu-

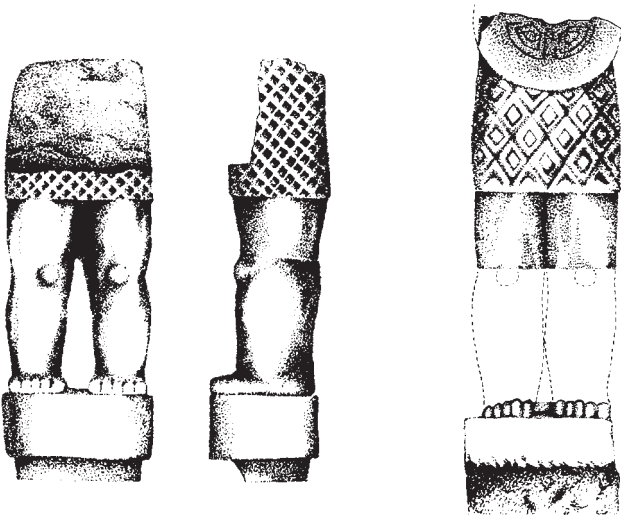


Figure 10. *Left: mutilated stone warrior from Monte Mozinho (Penafiel, Porto, Portugal). Right: fragment of warrior statue from Cendufe (Arcos de Valdevez, Viana do Castelo, Portugal).*

lation would find its point of unity in the central place within the walled area, a sacred non-inhabited space where several votive engravings are documented and where the relief of a head has been found at one of the entrances. There are two radial movements depicted in the drawing and in the layout of the settlement: from the centre to the circumference and from the circumference to the centre. The inner moves towards the outer and the outer towards the inner. From unity to multiplicity and from this back to unity.

The five warrior images with this geometrical motif on their shields might refer to the very end of the first century BC, and the representation of this symbol, along with the weapons on the coins of *caetra*, could point to the new reality. Thus, the geometrical figure of the *caetra*, by being depicted on the shield, might indicate what the latter is protecting, enhancing the power of the icon as a protection element for the settlement. No warrior statues have been found yet at the hillfort of San Cibran de Las which is currently being excavated, while in Monte Monziho the remains of two appeared in the excavation, though only the torso of one of them is preserved. Symptomatically, the shield was broken off this statue, which could indicate the relevance of this symbol and perhaps reveal iconoclastic attitudes or practices of deactivation of a power element (Fig. 10). The fact is that this statue (Almeida 1974, 28; Calo Lourido 1994, 345) is the same as the piece from Cendufe where the geometric motif appears.

Right hands: meaning, materiality and praxis

The right hand is of great significance to indigenous sociality because it is used to represent the most important gestures and material acts in these pre-Roman societies. The right hand is the channel for peace and for war. On the one side, it can be used to shake hands with another individual, whether as a personal act or on behalf of the community. The material gesture of the *fides* is done with the right hand. It also directs war. It carries the sword and is the bearer of violence and of the capacity which an individual and, by extension, the community have — to defend oneself and subdue the other. Both these aspects turn right hands into a material metaphor on which to work and with which to act in the negotiation of the reality of these communities.

Classical authors, iconography and archaeological records corroborate the relevance of the right hand in the context of Iron Age societies in the Iberian peninsula. These communities had a gestural corpus to objectify hospitality and *fides*. Perhaps the clearer material example of shaking the right hands (*dextrarum iunctio*) as a sign of *fides* (Marco Simón 2006) is the fact that some hospitality tesserae found in the Peninsula — some of which have the text written in the indigenous language — take this shape. It is quite common that in inscriptions of this type of tesserae, in the Celtiberian language, the word *Car*, for instance, appears. According to some authors this word can be interpreted as the abbreviation of *caruo* or as the feminine nominative stem in *r*, or else it conveys the idea of pact of hospitality or else is the indigenous equivalent to *hospitium* (Peralta Labrador 2000, 143–4).

Likewise, the right hand carries the weapon and its material and metaphoric symbolism thus becomes highly relevant to indigenous sociality. We know through Strabo's *Geography* that the pre-Roman communities of this region chopped 'the hands off prisoners and consecrated the right hands' (3, 3, 6). This is a widespread practice amongst indigenous communities in the Iberian peninsula during the Iron Age. Amputating the right hand of the enemy involves not only humiliation but, as Sextus Aurelius Victor points out (*De Vir.* III, 58), it also plays a part in trials of courage. This author recounts that a father who wanted to decide who should be his daughter's future husband sets the suitors the test of leaving the settlement of Numantia and returning with the right hand of one of their enemies. They also serve as war trophies. Diodorus Siculus (*Historicus* 12, 56, 5) narrates that in the battle of Selinunte in 409 BC mercenaries coming from Iberia carried bunches of hands tied to their belts and the heads of the

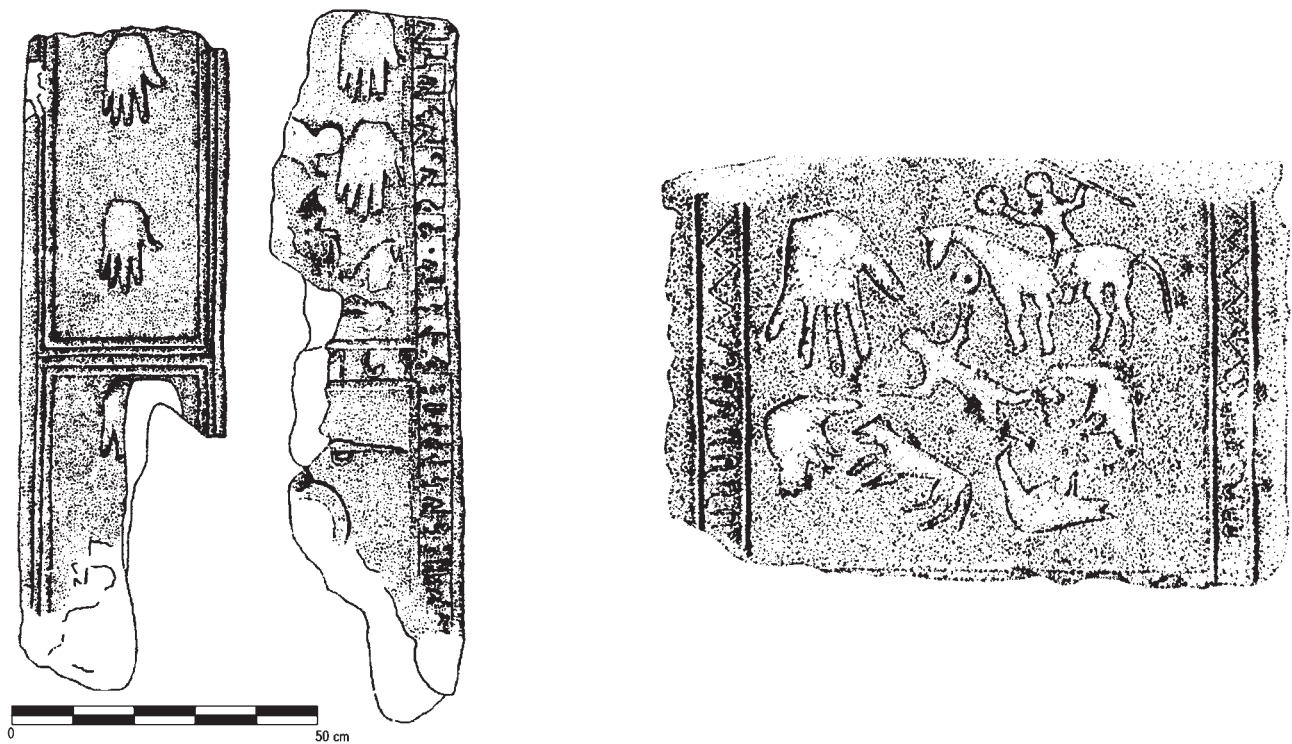


Figure 11. Representations of amputated right hands: (left) stela of Binefar; (right) stela of Palao in Alcañiz.

enemies stuck on their spears. In fact, the Roman army appropriated this form of punishment to subdue the indigenous communities of Iberia. Valerius Maximus in *Memorable Deeds and Sayings* (2, 17, 11) recounts that Servilianus' military garrisons gave the order to amputate the right hands of any Lusitanians embracing Viriathus' cause.

An iconography centred on the symbolic significance of right hands and shields in the context of indigenous populations of the Iberian peninsula has also been documented (Alfayé Villa 2004) (Fig. 11). For instance, the right hands, the *caetra* and the spear of the defeated are represented on the stela of Binefar. Above them, the two mutilated corpses have suffered the selective amputation of the right hand and have been decapitated while a vulture is seen plunging towards them. In another instance, on the stela of Palao in Alcañiz (second to first century BC), a vexing and dishonourable act of denying burial to the enemy by the victorious warrior is depicted. The horseman is carrying a spear and a *caetra* while at the feet of the horse a corpse is being devoured by vermin. Once more, the amputation of the right hand and the loss of the shield are depicted. Marco Simón (1998, 393–4) has equally interpreted part of the iconography on the lunula from Chão de Lamas

(Conimbriga) as a scene of degradation and amputation of the limbs.

Finally, these practices have also been confirmed by archaeological records in the Iron Age settlement of La Hoya (Laguardia, Álava). Around the third century BC, this settlement was besieged and set on fire and its inhabitants were murdered. The skeletal remains confirm that the people of this settlement endured mutilation practices involving the amputation of hands and decapitation (Llanos 2005; 2007–2008; Fig. 12). In sum, it seems obvious that the violent mutilation of these members acquires the consideration of a synecdoche amongst the Iberian communities in the Late Iron Age: the right hand as the signifier of the social capacity of individuals renders them useless as such if it is amputated (Sopeña Genzor 2009). If we accept the relevance of the shield at the front in the creation of a differentiated space against the enemy/foreigner and of the right hand as material metaphors of independence and political and military capacity of individuals, it then makes sense that the warriors of the hillforts on the walls adopt the two gestures. The right hand always holding the dagger or carrying the unsheathed sword makes the warriors work as an active image in the construction and protection of the liminal space.



Figure 12. Skeletal remains with signs of the violent mutilation from settlement of La Hoya (Laguardia, Alava, Spain). (Photographs: A. Llanos.)

Captivation and distributed symbols

A final level of analysis is possible if we look into the symbols and decorative elements recurring in different material domains within these communities. The same symbols (triskele, swastika, etc.) and patterned forms are used to cover the costumes of the warrior statues, the body ornaments, the walls of houses and the *pedras formosas*. Firstly, they are depicted on body ornaments such as torcs or belts, and are represented on the dress and belts of the warrior statues. Secondly, they appear on the lintels, doorjambs and cornices or as stone discs embedded in the walls of houses. And finally, they appear carved in the *pedras formosas*, large stones that divide the internal space of ritual saunas located just outside the hillfort entrances (Figs. 8 & 13:3). The use of these powerful symbols and geometrical patterns may have been to serve as protection devices against contamination in these liminal contexts (Vasconcellos 1913, 80; López Cuevillas 1989; González-Ruibal 2004; Rodríguez-Corral 2009; 2012). In this connection, these patterns by their multiplicity and complex geometrical basis could produce a link over time between the person and material forms because from a cognitive perspective what they present is, in Gell's (1998, 80) term, 'unfinished business'. Their visual properties of repetitiveness and symmetry inspire an appearance of animation. The geometric motifs might thus act as a sort of 'technology of enchantment' (Gell 1992) whose social efficiency is not only due to symbolic issues but also to cognitive issues. The geometric motifs should not be considered as mere decoration if by that we mean something without a purpose. Decoration is essential to the psychological functionality of the artefacts, costumes and architectural elements and

should not be disassociated from its other social and practical functions.

The repetition of the same visual media (apotropaic symbols and patterns) at different scales suggests, in my view, a fractal conception of the indigenous sociality in this region during the Late Iron Age. Symbols and patterns are present on the bodies of the warriors, on the walls of the houses and at the entrances to hillforts — where warriors are placed and act. The same pattern, therefore, is working in the domains of the individual (body), the family (house), and the community (hillfort). Subsequently, it might be working in these hillforts as a category of person who acts for the whole community as both a collective and singular person (Fowler 2004; 2008). The community and family act as a person on a different scale, so the single individual is a fractal equivalent of the family and the community.

The symbols and complex patterns also cover the surface of the *pedra formosa* of the saunas. These buildings are liminal places due to their location at the entrances, and their semi-subterranean architecture with internal divisions. Movement within the sauna involves a synesthetic transformation through the body. Bodily sensations which demand a very specific type of movement — going through a small opening in the *pedra formosa* — and which take the individual from light into darkness, from cold to heat, from dry to wet or *vice versa*, and even bring changes of smell (sweat and grease) and sound (inner echoes) (González-Ruibal 2006–2007, 575; Rodríguez-Corral 2009, 189–93). Whether the *pedra formosa* divides and creates areas of privacy, change or sensorial creation or not (for similar debates regarding caves, megalithic monuments or Maltese temples see Lewis-Williams

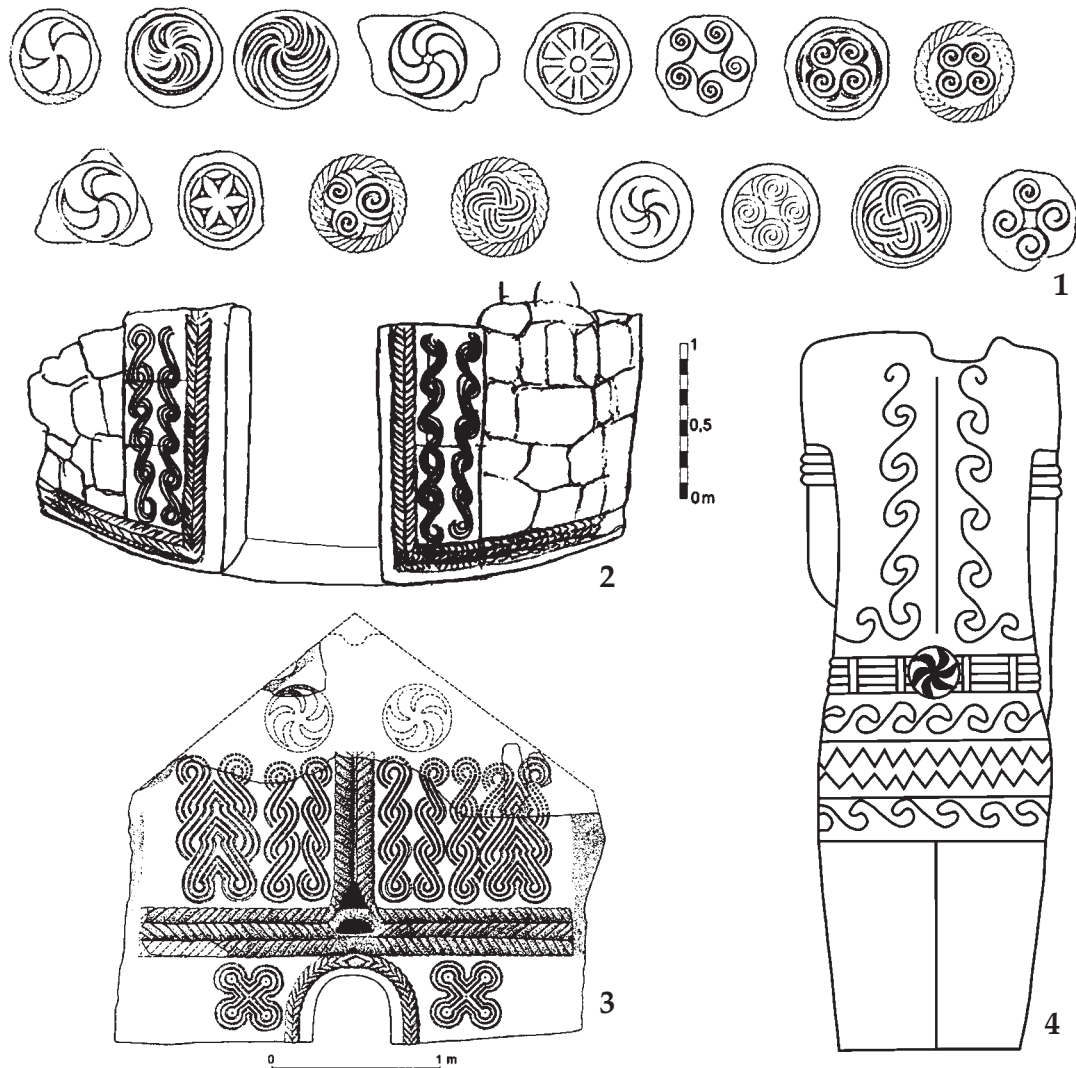


Figure 13. Material symbols: 1. architectural decoration from the hillfort of Santa Tegra (A Guarda, Spain); 2. domestic decoration: door frame and friezes from hillfort of Sabroso (modified after González-Ruibal 2004); 3. pedra formosa from Eiras, Vila Nova de Famalicão, Portugal (modified after Queiroga 2003); 4. warrior statue from Lezenho (Boticas, Vila Real, Portugal).

(2002) and Tilley (2007; 2008)), the same symbols and pattern on the surface of the houses and the warrior bodies at the entrances appear just there, working at that liminal moment where the synesthetic surrounding of the individual mutates and is transfigured. These buildings consequently seem to be linked with specific rites of passage and transformation.

If we take a fractal vision of the material and social space of the settlement, it is necessary to think that all the symbols and decorations might have acted simultaneously in the social, synesthetic and cognitive construction of what being indigenous is, a way of being-in-the-world prior to becoming Roman (Woolf

1998) which was certainly in operation from the second century BC and which, after AD 0, was gradually deactivated over the following hundred years. In the first century AD, in hillforts such as those of Santa Tecla or Cidade de Ancora, this plastic decoration is reused as construction material or is covered by other constructions, which therefore indicates that it loses its cognitive and symbolic value and its apotropaic function. It is logical to think that if it is no longer used and does not have relevance as a material symbol on the walls of houses, it should likewise cease to function on the belts of the stone warriors and on *pedras formosas*. Symptomatically, the walls of many of the

hillforts are no longer repaired from that moment onwards, the inner space is abandoned or gradually loses population and the houses begin to expand outside the walls, as can be noted in Castromao or Monte Mozinho (Rodríguez-Corral 2012, 75). The performative and fractal space which we have just reconstructed is dismantled and the statues begin to lose their purpose. The warrior icons are deactivated and in some cases, around the mid first century AD, their uses and meanings are recycled. Already incorporated into other material collectives, they negotiate other realities which are added as a further phase in their cultural biography. It is now that an epigraph is added to some statues. We know that the warrior of São Julião was found in the old rubble tip of the excavation of a Roman level of the hillfort, which points to the secondary context where image and the epigraph lived together. It is also by then, in the first half of the first century AD, that the warrior of Sanfins, which used to be placed at one of the entrances to the hillfort, is dismantled and relocated along with two anepigraphic altars inside a structure on top of the settlement.

Conclusion

My aim has been to rethink the stone warriors beyond the traditional conceptions that have prevailed in archaeological research. On the one hand, acknowledging the existence of diachronic elements in these images, I have shown that they cannot be fully understood at just one point in their existence. Their significance derives from the persons and events to which they were connected over time and from their capability of accumulating histories. Thus, I have argued that in the first century AD, in a context of negotiation of discrepant identities, these images were reused as a gateway to the past, encapsulating a deliberate retro-ideology.

On the other hand, I have also analysed these images in their primary context. Moving away from the notion of representation that has dominated their interpretation, I have considered the stone warriors not as a mere reflection of a heroic ideology but as active artefacts working to create the indigenous sociality itself. Although the images are still about object or ideas which are taken to make present, they are not merely representational but also performative. As this article has tried to show, the warrior statues were thought to transcend their status as a symbol and to produce ontological effects. The conditions of possibility for the meaning of these warriors must be found in the performative ensemble made up of differentiated spaces co-created by walls, gates and

ritual practices. It is in this context where these images act, addressed to foreigners (because of their location) and enemies (potentially so because of their location). Through metaphoric implications, mimetic techniques and their insertion within a network of relationships and links, these material images acquire their sense. In sum, their performative power emanates from the insertion of the medium (stone), in the materialized action (showing the shield and the armed right hand), in the place where the image is displayed (the wall and the outcrop) and in the audience at which it is aimed (individuals coming from the outside), co-creating the liminality of the space at a pre-predicative level and activating the power of the image. Thus, the meaning of the wall as a liminal space in the architecture of the hillfort is emphasized by the presence of the warrior sculpture, which visually anticipates this transition zone, marking the independence of the hillfort while serving as an active element of protection for the community.

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