

XXVI VALCAMONICA SYMPOSIUM 2015

Capo di Ponte (Bs) ITALY
September 9 to 12, 2015

PROSPECTS FOR THE PREHISTORIC ART RESEARCH
50 years since the founding of Centro Camuno

PROSPETTIVE SULLA RICERCA DELL'ARTE PREISTORICA
a 50 anni dalla fondazione del Centro Camuno



*Centro Camuno
di Studi Preistorici*

Proceedings

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Edited by / A cura di: Federico Troletti (CCSP / University of Trento, Italy)

Editing / Redazione: Federico Troletti, Valeria Damioli

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EDIZIONI DEL CENTRO

Via Marconi, 7

25044 Capo di Ponte (BS) - ITALY

tel. +39 0364 42091

email info@ccsp.it - www.ccsp.it



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FROM INTERPRETATION OF THE SITE TO THE PROJECT: A PROPOSAL FOR THE ROCK ART OF THE TAGUS VALLEY

Mário Monteiro Benjamim *

SUMMARY

The Middle Tagus Valley is a crucial testimony of the humanization process in the Iberian Peninsula documented by a vast number of cultural and patrimonial vestiges that, as a whole, constitute an heritage of considerable importance, yet to be explored. To add to an existing "living system" a new model of intervention that does not interfere with such a legacy and all its references whether anthropological, social or symbolic, is our objective.

RIASSUNTO:

La media valle del Tago è una testimonianza cruciale del processo di umanizzazione nella penisola iberica documentato da un gran numero di rilevanze culturali che costituiscono un patrimonio culturale di notevole importanza, ancora da esplorare. Il nostro obiettivo è quello di introdurre un nuovo modello di intervento territoriale che non interferisce né con il contesto ambientale in essere, né con il patrimonio culturale e il suo contesto antropologico.

INTRODUCTION

The strategy for the construction of dams and the harnessing of the waterpower potential initiated last century (and still maintained in the present time), exposed the Portuguese territory to profound transformations, sometimes abrupt and without the proper recognition of its cultural, archaeological, anthropological and architectural value. Faced with a reality that is factual and unavoidable, and is recurrent in the most significant watercourses, we propose to find a model of intervention - cohabiting with the existing - with a view to define a distinct reading of the territory, and which will have, as a premise, the open air rock art as national patrimony. Because of its specific circumstances and because of the challenges inherent to this approach, the Tagus Valley is the object of study par excellence. The research here presented is directed at two contemporary and problematic issues we consider relevant in the context of in-project research in architecture: a rural landscape that has change and an heritage of unquestionable value that has become underutilized as a consequence of the alteration to which it has been submitted.

Of the broad subject that both themes encompass, we are interested in highlighting some concrete issues in order to exploit their potential: a characterization of a methodology for architectural intervention in archaeological sites - giving particular attention to the rock art heritage on these conditions of increased complexity -, the relationship of Man with an altered landscape, and

the possibility of a cultural and patrimonial perspective in the management of the sites. We can only intervene in such a complex setting when we understand the recent changes occurred in the area and appreciate its intrinsic value as a cultural and patrimonial legacy.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The character in this landscape section has some similarities to sections of Douro and Guadiana River, defined by deep valleys of massif rocks on both sides, extending almost in the course of the study area (e.g Fig.1). The river, once full of life and with energy, is now homogenized by an extensive reservoir of water, achieving greater expression in areas of wider valley. It is the main feature in the landscape reading through the variation of its water plans and the valley profile. So, it has a constant scenic value with a special emphasis on the relationship established with the natural monument of the Portas de Ródão. The natural components acquire a particular presence in the landscape of this valley, especially the organized olive groves on its slopes, based on building terraces of schist walls, which follow the river course and the topography of the valley, benefiting from the Mediterranean climate. The context of isolation and difficulty of access favored the permanence of significant natural and cultural values, which includes the rock complex of Vale do Tejo found occasionally in the last quarter of the twentieth century, and submerged shortly afterwards.

* This text is part of the research for Ph.D thesis in architecture at the University of Évora, Portugal.
CHAIA - Centro de História da Arte e Investigação Artística da UÉvora, email: mariobenjamim@mb-arquitectos.pt

DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY AREA

In an immediate approach, we focus on archaeological classified sites and under process of classification: Cachão do Algarve and Cachão do Boi, and archaeological sites that still allow contact with the engravings: S. Simão, near the Cedilho dam and Gardete, upstream of Fratel dam. The site of Cachão do Algarve and Cachão do Boi, are inaccessible and covered by an extensive layer of detritus deposited by the flowing river along the years, S. Simão and Gardete still allow the contact with some engravings.

As natural and structural elements of this landscape, it was considered the river flows in the direction NE-SW, and the quartzite ridges of Serra das Talhadas, NW-SE. These two natural elements organize the territory on a two well-defined "*Cartesian*" axis. In this system we superimpose the units groups of the landscape (D'ABREU 2004), to the landscape subunit U.P. 53 - Beira Baixa - Tejo Internacional. And from this delimitation we mark two anthropic actions: Cedilho Dam "B1", and Fratel Dam "B2", from which we get a study area with 8,900 hectares, around 40 kilometers. In here we found the largest concentration of rock complex engravings distributed in multiple sites on both river banks. (e.g Fig. 2).

Projecting in this polygon the archaeological points from patrimonial map of V. V. de Ródão, by chronological dates from the Paleolithic to the Roman period, it was stated that:

There are about 200 records referenced in the study area (north river bank)

Concentration and dispersion of records is related directly with the morphology of the place, with increased focus in the area upstream of Portas de Rodão. The highest concentration of finds is located in the sedimentary basin along V. Velha de Ródão, relating to the exploration of gold mining.

The rock art sites are situated in coves or openings along the river directly connected with the geological support.

This interpretation originated a perimeter drawing on a topographic map (1/25.000 scale), according to the reading of the following elements: rural roads, water lines, mountain ridges, geological accidents, place and archaeological sites, administrative limits and anthropic actions.

Action that materialized in two UOPG (Unidades Operacionais de Planeamento e Gestão) inserted in the Master Plan of Vila Velha de Ródão, with the aim of preserving the whole area as an archaeological reserve and promoting specific intervention plans.

Another tested exercise was the separation and distension of the different archaeological sites by chronological periods, unifying and overlapping those creating possible routes. So it was possible to structure a new organization for the territory, through diagrams which are connected. As a summary of these two possible approaches, both are possible processes to approach a

new reading of the territory, according to pre-established and focused analysis. However, we will need an approach that interprets the connection between multiple elements of the landscape, territory and place to have a correct reading of the landscape.

OPERATING CONCEPTS

We chose the structuralist basis defined by Piaget as the operating method to be used in the interpretative analysis of the territory, which seems to us methodologically applicable in the case study. Piaget defines that "a structure is a transformation system and it has laws that behaves as a system (in contrast to the properties of elements) enriching itself by its own set of transformations." (PIAGET 1979, p. 6). The definition of progressive new registration of a system, which relies on its own rules, and values itself and changes in the face of submitted transformations, it seems to us a communicant starting point with a landscape reading. Understandable landscape as palimpsest and a set of deductible or encrypted systems. Where the whole is the result of several relationships or compositions and whose rules are the system itself. According to Manuela Raposo Magalhães (MAGALHÃES 2001), this concept can be transposed in the landscape by an Ecological Structure, support of biological life, and a cultural structure built over the centuries by the man. Both structures complement each other, creating a global structure of the landscape.

WORK IN PROGRESS

The program of patrimonial and educative valorization designed by Dr. Luís Raposo¹ for the archaeological site of Foz do Enxarrique is based on the proposal for the creation of a museum center, directly affiliated with the classified site and combined with an "excavation-school". In the national scene this is an innovative approach, intended to be a continued practice of fieldwork with essentially training purposes. The plan includes a sectioning of two existing terraces, which form the archaeological sector. Our research is built upon a program previously established in an area of considerable historic and patrimonial nature, with unusual and unique features. It is especially remarkable for the privileged localization of the site, given the proximity of the reservoir and the visual perspective that it affords over Portas do Ródão, classified as a Natural Monument.

Thanks to the design of the proposal, the intrinsic significance of the site, and the increased value of the architectural undertaking, this project is viewed as a "laboratory": the place as the subject, not the object, bringing, besides a clear element of enjoyment, a rehabilitation evocative of the identity of the place. The opportunity to validate a theoretical model of in-project research by means of a concrete proposal will give us a threefold advantage: to experiment in design, to correct methodological strategies and to gradually im-

1 Luís Raposo, archaeologist, National Museum of Archaeology, project director.

prove and refine the theoretical model. The dialectic initiated between the model and each specific proposal will create a medium through which we are able to actualize the topology analysis, further adding to the relevance of the proposal.

INTERVENTION PROPOSALS

The research and the architectural project carried out will be the tools used for the reinterpretation of the territory. We propose ourselves in a consistent way to develop a set of proposals to the archaeological sites of S. Simão, Cachão the Algarve, Cachão do Boi and Gardete.

The archaeological site of S. Simão, situated near the border with Spain, provides access to a broad set of engraved panels, regularly submerged by the variation of the river flow caused by controlled discharges of Cedilho. This point swing hinders access to the panels; therefore, we propose to improve access by placing removable surface platforms afloat. Those will be strategically placed according to an exhibition circuit, where the museographical and archaeological content will be inscribed on those platforms.

To take advantage of the pre-existence cofferdam of Cachão do Algarve (e.g. Figg. 3-4), seems to us a real opportunity to emerge seasonally one of the most emblematic centers of the rock complex of Vale do Tejo. Its reconstruction by changing the top of the dam in about 1 to 2 meters would allow this possibility (e.g. Fig. 5). The reintroduction of a vernacular construction process in this context allows questioning the diffusion of the process in other inaccessible archaeological sites, enabling to draw in the territory a network of visitable places in low flow seasons, like the proposal given by Emanuel Anati after the visit made in 1974.

The possible reduction of the river flow in summer periods, coordinated with organized visits to archaeological sites, would be a process of recognition and appreciation of this vast heritage and an economic development opportunity for the region. The drop in the quota level of the reservoir, which we estimate at about two meters with this procedure, would be insufficient to access some of the archaeological sites due to the high depth of the panels: it is the case of Cachão do Boi, the most representative of the complex. In this place, where the first engravings of the complex were discovered, we propose through a temporary installation on the water surface to restore Latex panels used in the molding process and the registration of the pictures before filling the reservoir. Registration process that is a historical and methodological framework of the Portuguese archeology, providing a large set of documentation, photography, drawings and rubber molds. The exposure of this legacy in the Fratel train station simultaneously with the intercommunication that this stretch of railway line offers over the water

mirror, allowed beyond the perception of the true dimension of the archaeological core to provide a reflective moment of its real value.

The site of Gardete is located on the right bank just before the Ocreza mouth, it is the site further downstream of the rock art complex of Tejo, outside the influence of Fratel dam. Therefore, it is possible to visit almost two dozen recorded rocks. The towpaths point out in the landscape framing which goes with the river, spanning both sides, between the dam of Fratel and Amieira do Tejo port. In this place, we propose to recover the damaged towpaths and pond the link between the two banks. The reconstitution of the route between the banks would be complemented with observation points and reading landscape.

CONCLUSION

The research on this topic which starts from the aim of reinterpreting the rock art complex of Vale do Tejo in its territory will always have a more extensive intervention. The rock art is part of a "whole" in a landscape, (e.g. Fig. 6) which has significantly changed. By placing the issue of redefinition of the archaeological, historical, human, cultural and geological undisputed heritage we necessarily have to analyze the context of the landscape in which it operates and the relationship that defines its territory and its actors. A polysemic approach and a proposal for new identities will enable future applications to fit similar models of landscape. It is through an attentive interpretation of the site and the culture of the area that we set out our objectives with the intention to actuate a shifting towards new paradigms, here stated:

- To re-interpret the identity "River" by way of introducing new readings underlying the concept of landscape in Portuguese culture.
- To intervene and rehabilitate the area within a museographic perspective, bringing to attention the particularity of the specific structures and diversity of typologies.
- To understand the operational correlation between architecture and archaeology, in view of patently enunciate common perspectives in the valorization and promoting of patrimony as the object of study
- To define methodologies of intervention-in-project suitable for use in archaeological sites with identical contexts.
- To draw conceptual constructs and methodological options in the disciplinary field of Architecture, aiming at rehabilitating the interpretation and perception of archaeological sites as an observable phenomenon.

The real project must be prospective and generational and should be affirmed through the transdisciplinary of its distinct actors and identity values.

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Fig. 1 - View of archeological site of S. Simão. CIART - Centro de Interpretação Arte Rupestre do Vale do Tejo
▼ Fig. 2 - Delimitation of the study area, 8900 ha





▲ Fig. 3 - Overview of Cachão do Algarve, with delimitation of core rocks identified, (1973). CIART - Centro de Interpretação Arte Rupestre do Vale do Tejo

◀ Fig. 4 - Detail of existing caisson and overview of Cachão do Algarve, (1973). CIART - Centro de Interpretação Arte Rupestre do Vale do Tejo

▼ Fig. 5 - Graphic representation of a caisson

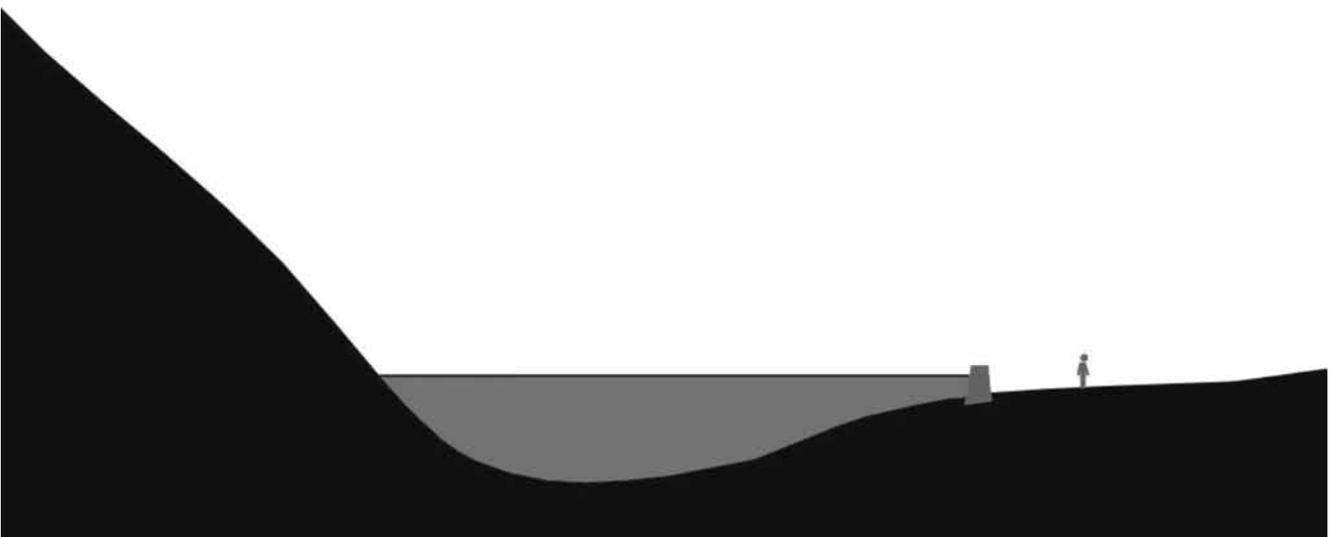




Fig. 6 - Some of the submerged engravings; CI-ART - Centro de Interpretação Arte Rupestre do Vale do Tejo