

RECORDED PLACES, EXPERIENCED PLACES. SOME REMARKS ABOUT THE HOLOCENE ROCK ART OF THE IBERIAN ATLANTIC NORTHWEST

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1. Introduction

Any particular landscape results from the human condition of interaction with the world, and it is generically accepted that past evocation forms part of this phenomena (Gosden 1994; Bradley 2000, Ingold 2000; Brück and Goodman 2001; Tilley 2004). Being the product of past generations' agency or inexplicable supernatural powers – underlining the importance of animism to past societies (Sahlins 1972; Descola 1996; Bradley 2000; Ingold 2000; Thomas 2001; Tilley 2004) –, landscape is something mentally constructed, comprising both natural and artificial (or anthropic) elements (Ingold 2000). As such, landscape can also be considered as the perception and experience that communities obtain and achieve from contacting the surrounding world. In addition, its complex and permanent (re) construction has the power to, act as an agent in certain circumstances.

Also, due to its existence, man and communities often embody different kinds of *loci* (Campelo 2009), contributing to the emergence of a network of places (Thomas 2001). Its experience and practice promote both a sense of belonging and social integration, creating what Feld and Basso (1996) refer to as “*senses of place*”. Its use and frequency stimulates a connection and interlinks with histories and memories, meanings and feelings, developing an increasingly emotive relation with those known *loci*. In many cases the materialization of these relations leave “readable” archaeological traces.

Considering human consciousness, the socialness of things (Latour 1991), the power of memory – also deriving from the subjective interaction materialized by being in the world (Bachelard 1969; Merleau-Ponty 2002) –, especially the effect of social memory – the collective representation of the past associated to social practices (Connerton 1989)

responsible for the communal awareness about things (Halbwachs 1975; Connerton 1989) –, and the importance of iconographic memory as a possible container of subjective, aesthetic and metaphorical understandings of the world (Thomas 1991), the importance of rock art sites is undoubted. Even though they are one of the most difficult expressions of past agency to interpret, rock art sites were definitely lived and experienced places. Therefore, rock art in the North-western Iberian Peninsula is the main transversal subject of this book, as well as the different methodological perspectives for studying this kind of materialization of past societies' thought.

2. The book structure

This book, which results from the compilation of some oral presentations or posters, presented in 2013 and 2014 during the 2nd and 3rd *Enardas Colloquia*, entitled *Living Places, Experienced Places. The North-western Iberia in Prehistory* and *Recorded places, experienced places in Iberian Peninsula Atlantic margin*, respectively, is divided into four parts and fourteen chapters.

The first part, entitled *Concepts and Tools to Study Rock Art* has two chapters. The first one, authored by Campelo, concerns the interpretation of symbolic spaces in North-western Portugal through the perspective of the Anthropology of Space, which is important to understand the pre-modern way of experiencing it. The author stresses that the Northwest, *outlined by a particular orography, where boulders, springs and mountains are widespread*, is symbolically organized *in legendary narratives and cultural processes of appropriation and control of the space*. This process confers properties *on the natural elements of the landscape, conducting rituals in order to appease those forces and delimiting the uses and benefits of the men that dwell in such landscape*, which Campelo regards as *'cultural imbibed spaces'*.

The second paper, by Bettencourt, Abad Vidal and Alda Rodrigues, introduces the Rock Art Virtual Corpus of the Northwest of Portugal (CVARN), a database dedicated to Post-Palaeolithic rock art in Northwest of Portugal that exhibits both its social and scientific potential.

From Sub-naturalistic to Schematic Rock Art Tradition is the title of part two. This discusses various expressions of recorded art in the Northwest Iberia hinterland area, as well as expressions of the schematic art tradition from North-Central Portugal. The study of the latter kind of art has achieved particular importance, since it has been considered as

belonging to prehistory. It should be stressed that in many regions of the Iberian Northwest, particularly in Galicia, this type of rock art has not yet been studied, to a great extent as it has been considered medieval or later. Thus we do not know its true spatial distribution, iconography, subtypes and interrelation with other types of rock art developed in the Northwest. The fourth chapter included in this part addresses such issues in general studies, such as Comendador Rey and González Ínsua and Silva *et al.*, or either in monographs, as in the cases of Sanches and Teixeira and Sanches and Gomes.

Rock Art of Atlantic Tradition names the third part of this book, subdivided into four chapters. The first one corresponds to a rock art inventory in the northern area of Galicia, from Vázquez Martínez *et al.*, which forms the basis of future interpretative works. By applying statistical analysis, the authors present some considerations about rock engravings' spatial distribution, which is mainly littoral. Furthermore, they observe differences between the distribution of figurative (animals, weapons, etc.) and abstract motifs, and identify correlations between them.

The next two articles seek to interpret Atlantic tradition rock art, although using different scales of analysis. Rey Castiñeira *et al.*, using as a case study the rock engravings of Cova da Bruxa – an impressive outcrop that includes images of deer and abstract motifs – and giving special attention to the spatial location of the carved outcrops, to the internal positioning of the engraved motifs, and to the historical data available for hunting, hypothesizing that these engravings appear to result from repeated carving episodes, during different times. As such, they may represent narratives of hunting scenes (related with forest or water) that could have been religiously meaningful – related with the sun – and could represent a psychopomp animal that accompanies and protects individuals as they travel to the afterlife.

Sousa, working on the rock art complex of Monte Eiró, detaches the interrelation between motifs and their spatial context at different levels as an important guide to its interpretation. Using this case study he highlights its accessibility and the possibility of being seen by a large audience, hypothesizing that this place hosted the celebration of rites regarding both water and the fertility that it allows, considering both the place's physical features and the kind of represented motifs. According to the what one can observe from the engraved *locus* (the impressive morphological appearance of *Montedeiras sierra*), this also raises the hypothesis that this “scenographic space”, with a deeply “symbolic” character, would be “*suitable for the most diverse rites and celebrations, involving the elements of the physical*

environment or the properties that inhabit them”.

The last article from this part is from Cardoso *et al.*, and addresses the theme of past representation during the Iron Age, according to prehistorically engravings positioned in the area and in the vicinity of the fortified settlement of Briteiros. Its major objective is to discuss the implication of ideology behind the concept of respecting previous rock art by a later group of inhabitants of Monte de S. Romão.

The fourth part of the book, designated as *Other Styles*, includes five chapters. These focus some depictions that the book editors consider non-suitable to include in the best-known regional styles, that is in the traditionally considered schematic and atlantic engravings addressed in Parts 2 and 3, respectively, of this book.

The first chapter from Bettencourt reviews the rock art of Northwest Portugal, discussing what is considered Atlantic and schematic art and proposing the existence of a new iconography that can be inserted, essentially, into the Bronze Age.

The chapter from Santos-Estévez *et al.*, is about the context and meanings of engraved weapons dating back to the Late Chalcolithic / Early Bronze Age, located in the South-west of Galicia and North-west of Portugal. Based on the assumption that they can be carved in active and passive positions, some differences in the contextual location of each group were noted and lead to some interpretations. Taking into consideration both physical context and the orientation of weapons in active positions it seems likely that they materialise a cosmogony connected to the symbolic importance of the celestial world and of some hills that seem to have served as structuring places during the Bronze Age landscapes. The group of sites with passive engraved weapons, although more heterogeneous, seems to be related to intersection areas and several natural paths, indicating the importance of votive offerings to deities associated with outcrops, water sources and earth.

To study the engraved places, the chapter from Bettencourt and colleagues is focused on the application of the concept of magical and symbolic geography (Campelo, 2017) and the interaction between outcrops' morphology and the motifs engraved or inscribed on them. The considered case study is Fornelos, in Northern Portugal, carved mainly with schematic horses and horse-riders, interpreted as the materialisation of a Late Bronze Age or Iron Age mythical narrative, probably a rite of passage. This kind of place is also considered an “imbibed space”, a place of appropriation, control and integration of the elements of territory in everyday life and in the social practices of communities.

Antón Malde is the author of the chapter concerning Pena Furada, considered an important Iron Age ceremonial place in Northwest Iberia. To interpret this place the author focuses on the importance of archaeoastronomy, the spatial and archaeological context at different scales of analysis, and the features of the “visible” territory. According to this approach, Pena Furada is linked to the Celtic Festival of Imbolc and to an Iron Age sacred territory, without hillforts and directly related to sunrise.

The last chapter, by Pereira and Arruda, concerns a stone plate, carved with several boat like motifs, found in the city of Oporto, probably belonging to the Second Iron Age and the Roman period. In order to interpret this item, other representations of boats found along the Atlantic coast of the Iberian Peninsula are analysed, aiming to discuss the meaning of places with these kinds of depictions.

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