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HANDBOOK

Castelo Velho and Prazo (V.N.F.Côa, Portugal): places of memory

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During our research we have come to realize that landscapes should no longer be seen as the "scenario" in which the actions of our ancestors took place, or as the support of an action, but instead should be engaged with as a current of time, space and movement. Many authors define landscape as a "palimpsest of memories," a group of many layers that accumulate over time; a document, a living archive. In this sense, we must be mindful of two types of phenomena: the visible elements, materialized by the archaeological evidence; and the invisible elements, the intangible or symbolic dimension of the landscape, which is shaped in social memory.

Many of the archaeological sites that we study became authentic "markers of the landscape" or "places of memory", restored through time, passed on to each subsequent generation, reinforcing the mnemonic qualities of the landscape. There seems to be a repository of timeless popular knowledge, carefully preserved and faithfully handed down through countless generations. The analysis of the landscape as "places of memory" leads us in search of new analytical tools, applied to the study of archaeology. Thus, the study of oral narratives, legends, myths, in short the oral tradition of a given community, becomes fundamental. As an example we bring here a brief summary of the oral traditions that are associated with two prehistoric archaeological sites from the region of Foz Côa: Castelo Velho de Freixo de Numão and Prazo.