

CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPES AND EARLIER ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE IN THE TRÁS-OS-MONTES AND ALTO DOURO REGION (PORTUGAL)*

by

Alexandra Maria Ferreira Vieira**

Abstract: The main purpose of this paper is to analyse several archaeological sites, in the Northeast of Portugal, where prehistoric, protohistoric or roman contexts were somehow transformed and sacralized by "Christianity".

Keywords: Landscape, Christianization, Time.

Resumo: O objectivo principal deste trabalho consiste na análise de alguns sítios arqueológicos do Nordeste de Portugal, onde os contextos pré-históricos, proto-históricos e romanos foram transformados e sacralizados pelo processo de "cristianização".

Palavras-Chave: Paisagem, Cristianização, Tempo.

1. INTRODUCTION

In this paper, we will analyze some of the archaeological sites in the Northeast of Portugal where prehistoric or protohistoric contexts were to some degree Christianized. In some cases, there has been an attempt by the Church to juxtapose places that were significant in a community's memory with Christian religiosity, and in others, people through their own initiative have given "Christian" meaning to activities performed in particular places. For example, there are several Iron Age hill forts where, during medieval or modern times, there were built small churches. In the same way, at several rock art sites, Christian symbols were added to prehistoric or protohistoric figures. We aim to understand the connection between the complex process of conversion to Christianity and Christianization

* Paper presented at the Theoretical Archaeology Group (TAG) – session: "Finding Faith in Landscape". University of Southampton, 15 and 17 December 2008, – resumed here with some developments.

** CEAUCP/CAM. Email: alexandra.vieira@gmail.com

(i.e. 'the reformulation of social relations, cultural meanings, and personal experience in terms of putatively Christian ideals') (Huber, 2002: 96), and the archaeological evidence of the Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro.

2. THE ANALYSES OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE IN THE TRÁS-OS-MONTES AND ALTO DOURO

We came across these data while we were producing an inventory on the Cultural Heritage of the region of the Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro. It seemed impossible to be mere coincidence that there were so many archeological sites where small churches had been built in medieval, modern or even in recent times. Therefore, we thought we had identified in our research, several expressions of "sacralisation" of the landscape of the Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro, during the Middle and Modern Ages. We have chosen to systematize the information in the following way – we believe these sites were appropriated by Christianity through:

- the construction of Chapels/Churches/Sanctuaries in places with traces of pre-history; or places with traces of the Iron Age, later Romanized, some with medieval occupation. In other places, there was a clear reuse of the remaining structures, such as Roman tombs and funerary stelae, roman altars, boars' sculptures, roman columns, among others.
- the association of these traces of previous occupation to Christian symbols, from religious legends connected to rock art, through the engraving or/and erection of crosses, possibly indicating territorial divisions or the "sacralisation" of those places by Christian religiosity.

To complement this information and give an historical background, we have researched facts related to the process of Christianization of the Iberian Peninsula, which shows us a lack of information about the first centuries and the process itself. Due to the deficient information we assume, through written texts, that Christian buildings were often used or added to older buildings, civil and religious, demonstrating a gradual transition and no major conflict within, which the context of Christian worship took place. It is also significant that Christian churches were in places where there already existed Roman temples (such as the Endovelicus in Alandroal), which shows that it was important to give a new meaning to places that had been used for previous religious practices. In addition, we also know that the process of Christianization do not occur only in cities but also in rich rural *villae*, where appear spaces for worship, as in Saint Cucufate, at Torre de Palma, in Milreu (Mattoso, 1997: 258) and Prazo, among others.

During the fourth century, we know from the written sources that the authorities gave orders to the construction of Christian basilics, and the confiscation of the temples. Since the resources were limited, and previous buildings were of good construction, it is possible that they felt obliged often to undertake an architectural conversion, and not a programme of demolition followed by new building work. Officially, the *loca sacra* pagan should be destroyed; the *Codex Theodosianus* contains a law of 435 A.D. which insists on the

destruction of pagan temples, purifying them by placing a cross in their place. But simultaneously, during the first half of the fifth century, a sermon by Saint Peter Chrysologus instigates people to transform temples into churches, to convert roman aras into altars. In the *Apologeticum* of Tertuliano (37, 4) it becomes evident that Christian superiority had led to a situation where all pagan buildings had been converted (De Mann, 2005). Christian religion raised, at least since the fifth century, the construction of buildings exclusively for worship, becoming therefore, an important element of social life (Mattoso, 1997: 264).

Another interesting aspect is connected with notes on the occurrence of paganism at the council meetings and the violence of the criminal charge imposed to counter idolatrous acts, which proves the survival and the generalization of pagan practices within the various social strata, even at the highest level. Despite the progress of the "official" religion, the truth is that since the seventh century, references to the destruction, violation and reuse of funerary materials, ornaments and marbles, start to become more frequent, denouncing in general the reuse and christianization of pagan temples. And yet from this process of conversion, there is the example of ancient pagan temples dedicated to a god of water and subsequently converted into Christian churches of basilica type. Furthermore, the Christianization of certain copies of native/indigenous statuary found in the current Spanish provinces of Avila, Segovia, Salamanca, Zamora, Caceres, Toledo, or in the Portuguese regions of Trás-os-Montes and Beira Alta, the so-called "boars" which are known, indiscriminately, to have a funeral or religious significance related to pre-Roman sanctuaries (Mata, 2007: 278-280). As for pagan practices, they are still alive in the seventh century as we see in the document *De correctione rusticorum*, from Martin de Dume where the peasants are reprimanded for lighting candles near the rocks, the trees, the fountains and the crossroads. Or for carrying offerings in festivities such as the Calends; for having household gods; and for references to idolatry, divination, omens and witchcraft. However, this repressive and reprobative attitude, that involved the closure of several pagan temples, did not reflect on the behavioural universe to which it was intended (Mata, 2007: 277). We can even say that these rituals remain unconsciously in our society today, we just need to think about the traditions of many of our small villages.

Next we will focus our attention at the archaeological evidence. We should take into consideration that this data is not the result of systematic research focussed on the investigation of the process of Christianization of the region. Even so, it suggests a series of interesting elements and raises a number of issues that in the future may be crucial to the knowledge of this subject.

Prehistoric sites transformed into chapels

As we have mentioned previously, there is the existence, in the study area, of several shrines/sanctuaries, churches and chapels (as they are called in Portugal) located in places with traces of prehistoric occupation. These situations have already been noticed by other authors, that have noticed that there seems to be a convergence of sacred prehistoric spaces (megalithic monuments and groups of rocks with "small pits") with historical spaces of worship (small churches or chapels) (Henriques *et al*, 1995). One of these examples is the Chapel of Our Lady of the Mount, in Penedono.

The **Dolmen-Chapel of Senhora do Monte** is one of the rare cases of Christianized dolmens in Portugal. The use of the structure to build a chapel in the Middle Ages, perhaps in the fifteenth century, underlines the sense of memory that is associated with this place. This dolmen is part of a necropolis constituted by six megalithic monuments. However, this was the only one that underwent this type of change with the construction of the chapel. The chamber serves as the altar of the chapel. The corridor continues through the exterior of the chapel. We can still see traces of its barrow (or burial mound). The Chapel itself was built in a rectangular shape. Part of the mainstay of the chamber was used as a wall, forming an asymmetrical plan. The Chapel of Nossa Senhora do Monte has been in ruins for approximately seventy years, on the day dedicated to the Our Lady/Virgin Mary, seven crosses came together in processions from surrounding parishes (IPPAR, 2009).

There are several superstitions, beliefs and practices connected with megalithic monuments, particularly with dolmens. Some of the structures have been used for a variety of purposes, including the shelter of people and cattle, the storage of agricultural tools, to the transformation and adaptation of Catholic churches as was shown previously (Chaves, 1951: 96). Many of the popular names of dolmens are related to mysterious entities that have created myths more or less widespread in Portugal. Others were associated with religious invocations corresponding to temples, niches, etc. But the process of Christianization went beyond the foundation of chapels near dolmens, with their transformation into churches. The same process occurs with caves, some of which contain prehistoric traces, (Chaves, 1951: 108-110), for example, Buraco da Pala in Mirandela.

At the top of the Passos Mountain, on a rocky spur/buttress of quartz schist lies a prehistoric shelter with a single room. From the shelter we can catch sight of an extensive area of the Mirandela region. In the mid-eighties, the shelter was transformed into a place of worship and pilgrimage. It was the construction work leading to this adaptation that pointed out the importance of this structure as a prehistoric archaeological site, even though it had partially destroyed it. In this shelter, three distinct moments of human occupation can be identified. Between the mid-third millennium and the beginning of the second millennium B.C., several structures were built with perishable materials. From the material found, one can highlight a number of ceramic artefacts, some of which are decorated, thousands of carbonized seeds (some were still in the containers) and lithic artefacts. Rock art was also detected on the side wall of the shelter with schematic figures painted in a wine-red colour. At the top of the mountain, on the road leading to the shelter, there is a big iron cross, "buried" and cemented into the cliff. **Buraco da Pala** was discovered in 1985-86 when the Bishop of Bragança (D. António Rafael) decided to Christianize it with the support of local people. They transformed the shelter into a "chapel", with stairways of interior and external access, upon the prehistoric sediments, and in the back they built an altar where the bishop himself celebrated mass. A granite image of St. Benedict was placed on the right side of the altar, remaining until today on the same spot. People started calling this site "Pala of Saint Benedict." To prevent people from going there to pray to S. Benedict during the archaeological work, the director of excavations asked the bishop to stop the prayers. The bishop agreed and explained to the director Maria de Jesus Sanches that that place was "transcendent"; it was like a natural cathedral. And the cross (also

ordered by him, before the Christianization of the Buraco da Pala), marked "the limit of the diocese of Miranda and Bragança."¹

The construction of Churches/Sanctuaries in places with earlier archaeological evidence and the reuse of remaining structures or materials

We have just referred to the sacralisation of prehistoric sites, but if we move a little further in time, we can see the same phenomenon emerging within the construction of churches and chapels on hill forts dating from the Iron Age. Several of the sites listed have a broad diachronic that can go from the Iron Age to the Late Middle Ages. And in many of them there was the reuse of remaining structures or materials. The **Sanctuary of Nossa Senhora da Assunção** (Vila Flor) is one of these cases, rising over an important Iron Age hill fort that was subsequently occupied in Roman times (IPA, 2009). The **Castro da Aldeia Nova** (Chapel of São João de Arribas in Miranda do Douro) is a hill fort from the Iron Age with two lines of wall and an external ditch; it was also occupied in Roman times. Inside this hill fort a chapel was built, dedicated to St. John that could have been built in modern times, not knowing for sure its chronology. Here were found twelve Roman funerary stelae (IHRU, 2009).

The construction of these chapels should be related exactly with the traces of previous occupations, whether they are Iron Age hill forts, cities or Roman necropolis. Although the existing buildings are relatively recent constructions, the truth is that they occupy old sites/ places that had previously served for pagan worship and with Christianity became predestined/holy/sacred places (Vaz, 2006: 150).

The current **Sanctuary of Nossa Senhora dos Anúncios** (Alfândega da Fé) was responsible for the almost complete destruction of a hill fort that seems to have evidence of a long occupational sequence. In its foothills, in the Northeast, is a medieval necropolis. In the fields that surround this station, fragments of pottery from Iron Age, to Roman and medieval periods can be collected, as well as fragments of millstones and significant quantities of Tegula (IPA, 2009). The **Church of Saldanha** (Mogadouro) is located inside the hill fort of Torre de Saldanha, which has vestiges of Iron Age, Roman and Medieval occupation. The church still maintains some elements of its medieval origin, such as the front Gothic portal. At this church three Roman inscriptions were identified, all in marble. One of them is a votive altar devoted to Jupiter, dedicated by a veteran of the VII legion (IHRU, 2009).

The **Church of Santa Maria de Sabroso** (Tabuaço) is a church with one nave that is situated in a place with traces of human occupation at least from the Iron Age. Along the walls there are several medieval cross slabs with crosses and swords that are possibly from the primitive cemetery involving the building (IHRU, 2009). The **Chapel of Granginha** (Chaves) is part of the archaeological area of a Roman villa which survived until Early Middle Ages. The archaeological surveys conducted in the chapel revealed remains of pavements in "*signinum opus*," a Roman wall and two levels of a medieval cemetery (IPA,

¹ Personal information of Maria de Jesus Sanches

2009). The **Chapel of Santa Ana** (or **Santana** in Freixo de Espada-à-Cinta) is a small temple that stores inside a big boar head in granite, a voluminous head that seems to be of a wild boar, and whose body is missing. Outside the chapel is another boar sculpture in granite, with the whole body but headless (IPA, 2009).

In the area between the small hill called Casarelhos and the place where we can find the ruins of a small Church, a Roman site developed, remaining stable until the sixteenth century, when it was abandoned. The ruins of the **Chapel of Nossa Senhora da Hera** (Bragança) are the testimony of the former church of Cova de Lua, from the Romanesque period. Of the small church, we can only see its structural foundations and the remains of the main door arch. Before the construction of this building, another temple of Roman origin existed here, having being subjected to an archaeological investigation in 1997 (IHRU, 2009).

The historical and archaeological research on the origins of Christianity in the study area has experienced, in recent years, some developments. With this data there came to raise new questions, namely with the identification of places of Christian worship, adjacent to or within the old *villae* of the countryside. The construction of paleo-Christian basilicas, some of them with a certain structural refinement, shows the emergence of communities that adhere to the new religion.²

The archaeological site of **Prazo** (Vila Nova de Foz Côa) is a legendary place, said to be the "Old town of Freixo," where it is said that the St. Johns Chapel or St. Joan existed. The chapel was abandoned due to, as the legend says that "ants ate children." It has archaeological remains dating from the Mesolithic and Early Neolithic until the twentieth century (Coixão, 1997: 49). There are traces of a Roman *Villa*, with occupations among 1st and 4th century AD. The site would have been occupied again, probably in the 5th century AD, with the construction of a Christian temple probably from the last period of the Roman Empire, beginnings of early Middle Ages. This building underwent enlargement around the 10th century, and its definitive abandonment occurred at the end of the 13th century. This temple re-used Roman material such as columns bases, column shafts, capitals. The temple was increased during the Low Middle Ages and the interior of the Church then had naves and spaces separated by granite arcades. Two aisles were added to the sides of the building, where burials from this period have been detected. In the 15th century the area of the church was probably reused as a house, as there is evidence that the grave was used as a drinking fountain for animals. Then the site became a farm until the first half of the 20th century (IPA, 2009).

Petroglyphs associated to legends

There are countless cases in Portugal where small cavities or inscriptions on the rocks have been interpreted by people as footprints or supernatural marks. They can be natural, resulting from mere geological accidents, or artificial, such as cavities (fossettes) and marks (petroglyphs) of anthropogenic origin. Morphologically, these can be grouped

² See BOWES, Kim (2000) *Villa Sacra: The transformation of domestic Space in some late roman villas of Hispania. Actas do 3.º Congresso de Arqueologia Peninsular – Arqueologia da Antiguidade na Península Ibérica*. Vol. VI. Porto. ADECAP.

into three classes: anthropomorphic traces (hands, fingers, feet, head, elbow, face); zoomorphic traces (mostly footprints attributed to equine); and traces of objects (Noah's ark, the car of the devil, the crown of Our Lady). As for its mythical-religious explanation, people relate them to supreme entities such as Christ, Our Lady, the Devil; with saints or with fantastic/imaginary entities (fairies, giants, witches).

According to José Leite Vasconcelos engravings are known as saint's, as a donkey's footprint or marks from the Devil himself (Pato, 2007a). The **Sanctuary of San Salvador of the World** (S. João da Pesqueira) is one of those cases. The whole hill is still sacralised, with the presence of numerous chapels dispersed along the elevation. From here, the sights of the River Tavora and the surrounding outskirts are excellent. At the top of the hill is an engraved rock known as the "stone of the Devil" which shows two footprints and 'cup-marks' of various sizes interpreted, by the locals, as knees, elbows and the head of the Devil. One of the chapels has a Roman tombstone as part of its exterior (IPA, 2009).

Archaeologists Mário Varela Gomes and J. Pinho Monteiro also presented a list of rocks and stelae with "podomorfos" interpreted as footprints of Our Lady in Cabeça Boa, Samil and Cabeço do Carocado (Bragança), Aldeia Nova (Miranda do Douro) and Alagoa (Tondela); the "crag with the paws of the Virgin Mary's donkey" in Travanca (Vinhais); among others. Examples abound throughout the country, but especially in the north of Portugal (Pato, 2007a).

The **Sanctuary of the Lord of the Mount**, located in Serra do Facho (Boticas), is one of the largest sanctuaries in the region. According to the legend, the area where the church is located was a place of rest, where merchandisers used to stop along their journey at a small shrine and where they left a small gift, appealing to divine protection to keep the thieves away. One day, the Lord of the Mount appeared on top of some big rocks, where we can still see the footprints today. Local people carried the image of the saint to the main Church of Pinho, more than once, but the Saint insisted on appearing in the same place. Finally, the locals yielded to his will and built a chapel near the place where he appeared and put a cross on top of the rocks (Câmara Municipal de Boticas, 2009). The sanctuary is located in a large outcrop. At the far north, facing the sanctuary, we can see the top surface of two engraved rock panels, separated by a deep and wide fissure. In both panels there are several types of petroglyphs such as circles, sometimes in pairs, that could be the representation of horseshoes tracks, but footprints are the most common motifs, isolated or in pairs (IPA, 2009). The local tradition grants miracle powers to those footprints.

According to some authors, these anthropic traces of footprints can also be interpreted as: "footprints of the Virgin Mary" or "the paws of the Virgin Mary's donkey" as happens in the **Sanctuary of Nossa Senhora da Penha de França** (Vinhais). Here we can find a large granite outcrop. On its surface facing east, there seem to be some engravings, although today, they cannot be observed. This granite outcrop is known, locally, as the "crag of the donkey's footsteps". This site is associated to the legend of Nossa Senhora da Penha de França, which reads as follows: Our Lady, riding a female donkey came from Spain, crossed the border into Portugal and entered the village of Rebordelo. When she arrived at the crag, she noticed that Moorish people wanted to pursue her, so she drove the donkey up the rock and the animal left its tracks on the crag. Suddenly, the crag opened and the Virgin disappeared inside (Junta de Freguesia de Rebordelo, 2009).

Petroglyphs interpreted as landmarks

Sacralization, protection spell, Christianization, are the various strands of the cruciform marking in spaces as diverse as fountains, fortifications, mills, significant monoliths in the landscape, roofs of houses, door jambs and windows – all of these are the different possible meanings of the marking that a cruciform can take. Recording cruciform can identify a way of converting an area related to pagan worship. Vergílio Correia (quoted in Ballesteros e Santos, 2000: 25) highlights this issue by reporting that:

“En los sillares de las iglesias románicas, en monumentos religiosos cristianos de várias espécies e hasta en las jambas de las puertas de las casas arruinadas en Miño, he encontrado grabados: cruces con una base triangular, circular o tripartita. De aquí podría inferirse que los grabados cruciformes que que revisten las peñas de Sant’Ana y muchos otros de Portugal y España tendrían por objeto cristianizar las piedras a las cuales daban culto los paganos.”

In the Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro we can find several rock engravings where this process might have occurred. The **Crag of the Footprint** (Macedo de Cavaleiros) is an archaeological site with 12 panels, where a large number of motifs have been engraved, including footprints (alone or in pairs), cup-marks, horseshoes, cruciform signs, most of them concentrated in a single panel. These last ones could be related to territorial boundaries between Santa Combinha and Quintela de Lapaças, representing landmarks. It is extremely difficult to date these kinds of petroglyphs: the oldest are attributed to the Iron Age, whilst there are others that can be attributed to the Middle Ages and Modern era (AA VV, 2008: 47).

The **Crag of the Horseshoes of Belver** (Carrazeda de Ansiães) is a granite rock that develops in a horizontal plane at ground level in a small forest of pine trees. It has several types of engravings such as semicircles known as horseshoes, approximately 34, some cruciform signs, cup-marks and circles in smaller number (Pereira e Lopes, 2005: 10). The **Crag of the Linhares Horseshoes** (Carrazeda de Ansiães) is a granite block of reasonable dimensions, where 55 engravings had been identified: horseshoes, circles, cup-marks and some cruciform signs. This granite block leaned against an old granite wall that integrated the ancestral road connection between the plateau of Ansiães, starting from Linhares, and the river Douro (idem: 28).

The engravings at **Fonte das Seixas** (Carrazeda de Ansiães), reveal a group of signs similar to “rosaries”, as they were called by António Luís Pereira. Besides these groups, there are the traditional horseshoes, circles, the cup-marks and several typologies of crosses. This is usually known as a sanctuary from the Bronze Age or Iron Age, but António Luís Pereira introduces the possibility that it might be dated from the Middle Ages or Modern era, although he admits the existence of engravings from previous periods (Pereira e Lopes, 2005: 38).

For the vast majority of engravings, it is impossible to obtain any direct dating evidence, leaving stylistic comparisons and archaeological context as the only means of reaching a conclusion on the possible age of any such markings. For example, some crosses from medieval times could be easily confused with an anthropomorphic figure in a cruciform shape from an Iron Age context, such as the ones found in the archaeological site of Tripe in the Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro. It has been attributed to these figures

a chronology that goes from the Neolithic to the Modern age. The cross-type engravings cannot be uniformly classified as moments of medieval Christianity or later (Baptista, 1983-1984: 72). The work of António Martinho Baptista centred in the archaeological site of Gião and other studies of the region shows the evolution of anthropomorphic types to the simple cross-shape, which are in effect, the final step of the group II from the Iron Age. On this issue he states:

“(…) It is not unlikely that many of these small anthropomorphic figures gradually become the emblematic Christian crosses, which will appear thus linked to a double tradition: the indigenous, coming from the Iron Age, and the Christian, imported by the first missionaries. Let’s recall the text classic of Saint Martinho de Dume, reviling the pagan worship of stones, that was very much alive in the NW even in the fourth and fifth centuries; or the proceedings of the councils of the early Christians, advising how to combat this and other “naturalists” cults. We believe therefore that the cross-shaped signs, clearly marking the end of the group II and simultaneously, the end of the rock cycles of NW, can not continue to be naively regarded, just as Christian crosses, apotropaic signs, or simple anthropomorphic. Crosses that mark territorial boundaries, christianizations as the three crosses of Bouça do Colado, passages mark, and so on, bind to other contexts and we must be careful in its systematization, not to confuse them with these small shrines, which have their apogee/climax in the Iron Age” (Baptista, 1983-1984: 76-77).

Recent studies in the north of the country may bring new data to this difficult question of dating these types of cruciform motifs. We must pay attention, for example, to the recording techniques (that in some cases are very different) and also to the geomorphological framework of the landscape, which lead to the intentional choice of the recording of certain rocks instead of others. The intention of recording crosses in rocks decorated with antique protohistoric figures is, according to Andrea Martins (2006: 68) to Christianize and to reveal to all of those who see that this place, previously pagan and profane, has ceased to have that meaning.

But we wonder if the recording of crosses, or other Catholic symbols, is limited to the objective of converting a given location? Is that what happens in **Canada do Inferno** (Vila Nova de Foz Côa), one of the most iconic places of rock art in Portugal and in Europe? The site is located at the intersection between a small tributary and the more than 130m deep canyon which the Côa had to excavate in order to reach the Douro. Previously, the area corresponded to a small fluvial beach dominated by impressive schist escarpments whose east-facing vertical surfaces supplied appropriate panels that were engraved throughout different times. Among those dated to the Paleolithic, aurochs, ibex and horse predominate, but fish have also been represented on two rocks. A very interesting component of this cluster are the modern petroglyphs, whose exact age is often known due to the fact that the artist recorded the date of his work and, sometimes, even his own name. From the XVIIth to the XIXth century, religious motifs are almost exclusive: large crosses, reliquaries, monstrances. Mid-XXth century motifs are predominantly secular or related to daily life: the sun and the moon, castles, the train crossing the railway bridge over the mouth of the Côa (PAVC, 2009). Can we ask if the process of recording crosses, and other items of a religious nature, will have a deeper meaning than the Christianization or the appropriation of a space that had a previous meaning? Can we talk about places of memory or sacred places? *Can we see these actions as a practice that connects things in time? Rather than*

always seeing them as separate entities that have to be explained as one replacing the other?³ That is, places where the recording of religious symbols become just another phase of the sacralisation of a space that was already significant for communities?

Crosses and “Cruzeiros”⁴

Some authors think that in order for Christianity and for the faith of the Church to override pagan belief, it was necessary to convert pagan people, starting this process by replacing their symbols. The Cross is the symbol par excellence of Christianity, since it corresponds to the instrument of torture which was used for the death of Jesus, by which we attain redemption. Its symbolism refers to the ‘axis of the world’, whose stems indicate the four cardinal points. The longest shaft (vertical) indicates the direction of the relationship of humanity with God and God with humanity; lower shaft (horizontal) shows the fraternal understanding of men (Ribeiro, 2004: 186). By the Edict of Milan (313), the persecution of Christians stopped and Constantine offered them some peace. Till that time the cross (as an object) was not revered by early Christians since it was seen as something repugnant. It will be after the fourth century that the Cross became represented and honoured everywhere (idem: 182-184).

Crosses and “cruzeiros” are multipurpose elements. The simple crosses or the ones bearing the image of Christ, they can invoke the protection for the traveller, celebrate a particular event, or symbolize the Calvary (via-sacra). They announce a sacred place, sanctify a space, remember a man, an event or a theophany; limit land, parishes or dioceses; guide the travellers; indicate the place of processions replacing the rocks; they are the reminiscent of a church or chapel that has already disappeared. These expressions of religiosity are mainly Christian, although they have a history of pagan origin. On the roads, crossroads, located near “dangerous” places the crosses are reminiscent of “Lares Viales” and “Lares Compitales” protecting the travellers, the land and the houses nearby (Meireles e Rodrigues, 2008). Sometimes still held processions to the hills and rocks and the easier process for its Christianization, was to put on top of granite rocks big stone or wooden crosses. The early church in its logical expansion of Christianity replaced, as it was said previously, these pagan monuments by wooden crosses and stone “cruzeiros” which continued throughout the Middle Ages.

To Maria Clara Mendes (1985: 35) the origin of these large stone crosses placed in churchyards, parks, shrines, cemeteries and rural roads, is very remote, sometimes incorporating elements of pagan and Christian religion. Formed only by the cross of wood or stone, during the first centuries of Christianity, as symbols of the new religion, they were placed in the most important public spaces and at crossroads of major roads and paths. Thus, some “cruzeiros”, beside their evocative functions related to the Christian religion, served also as landmarks and divisions of property and terms. Others, particularly those that were deployed at crossroads, valleys and hills, retained some pagan reminiscences of invocative character in order to obtain the protection of the great spirits against evil and

³ These last two questions were raised by Lesley McFadyen while revising this paper.

⁴ In Portugal we have some cross structures in wood or stone called “Cruzeiros”.

natural disasters. From the twelfth century, the “cruzeiro” came to be adorned with sculptural figures and decorations, acquiring an identity that they retained until the eighteenth century. Crosses and “cruzeiros” can be made of stone or wood, but in this region we did not find (so far) references to crosses built on this perishable material.

One of the most interesting cases we have found in the Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro was the Cruzeiro de Presandães (Alijó). According to the literature, the body of the current “cruzeiro” of Presandães was carved from a menhir from the area of Burneira, from a nearby location of a group of dolmens in this place. This menhir was known by the locals under the name of “enchanted stone” and it was transported from Burneira to the square of the village of Presandães, where it was “transformed” (IPA, 2009).

3. FINAL REMARKS

To conclude, we would like to stress the following ideas:

Firstly, we have encountered a series of obstacles in gathering information related to these sites, as more than seventy five per cent of them have never been the object of proper investigation. Most of the time, the main information comes from sporadic surveys on the periphery of the churches or sanctuaries. Furthermore, it is rare to find an approach that looks upon these places as a whole, or rather, that studies the broad temporal occupation of the place, from its origins to contemporary times. This changes the nature of the archaeological evidence, because the evidence is everything that there is from every period of time. Not only is it urgent to look at the landscape of the Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro in a different way, but it is also necessary to study these places within projects that investigate a larger time-scale, and that brings together a multidisciplinary team.

Secondly, we have realized from the archaeological evidence that the structuring of this new religion - Christianity - did not represent a break with the culture of the indigenous peoples of the Iberian Peninsula. On the contrary there was the appropriation of spaces, symbols and rituals, which will be provided with a distinct meaning, corresponding with the new doctrinal principles of the new faith that is beginning to be organized.

We have also identified in our research, ancient practices with roots in the imaginary of local people, such as the creation of the most imaginative legends associated to archeological evidence. “A posture that would be reinforced during the Middle Ages, by new values and spiritual beliefs, in the need to undermine pagan practices, in a clear (re) appropriation of a sacred place through the overlapping of new material evidence, with the construction of chapels” (IPPAR, 2009) or the engravings of new types of symbols such as crosses.

We believe that, as well as Heitor Pato has said, that the deification of some places begins in prehistoric times, with the cult being successively reviewed by the Romans, Christians and Muslims. In the Western world, and with the process of Romanization we will attend some of the times to the assimilation or identification of these ancient cults to Roman deities, in a process of *interpretatio* that the Greeks had already applied and that Christians will continue and expand, reoccupying and converting the old pagan sanctuaries, or adjusting old rituals, and attaching them to the new faith (Pato, 2007b).

We have tried also to draw attention to the spatial convergence between sites with archaeological remains and modern temples. We make our own the words of Henriques (*et al.* 1995) when they say that this convergence of sacred places, corresponding to different times and cultures, may suggest a persistence of its appropriation/ownership and, therefore, a continuity of occupation/settlement and even the sacred/symbolic tradition of those places.

This research has remarked on the fact that different types of archaeological sites were “converted” and transformed by the Church and local communities in the process of Christianization, and through this process these sites acquired new meanings – making this connection has been a turning point in this research. Not only does it lead us to debate the concept of landscape itself, but also to rethink landscape in terms of different spatial and temporal coordinates. In archaeology we have been thinking landscape as “space-surface” not giving enough importance to its “time-depth”. Indeed we can see this time-depth through archaeological evidence when people deal physically with the remains of previous people’s actions. As Lesley McFadyen has told me: “Time is not here an abstract linear concept of sequence after sequence that exists in the academy and in books, it is *in* the landscape and materialises through the ways in which things connect together”.

Lastly, we would like to underline that this work does not represent the end of a journey, but rather constitutes a starting point for the study of the “sacralisation” of the landscape of the Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro, during the Middle Ages and Modern era by Christianity. What were the main symbols and dynamics used in this process of conversion of a Pagan landscape into a “Christian landscape”? What was the Church’s role in this process? How should we connect the concept of the memory of these archaeological sites and their relationship with the local community? These are just a few directions/questions that might help us find “faith in landscape”.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Susana Oliveira Jorge; Sérgio Gomes and Lesley McFadyen for the exchange of ideas about the themes presented here. Maria Jesus Sanchez gave me important and not published information about Buraco da Pala.

A special acknowledgment to Lesley McFadyen and Paula Santos who have revised the English version of this paper.

BIBLIOGRAPHY*

- AA VV. (2008) *Patris – Heranças Macedences*. Cadernos 05 Terras Quentes. Câmara Municipal de Macedo de Cavaleiros e Associação de Defesa do Património do Concelho de Macedo de Cavaleiros “Terras Quentes”.
- BALLESTEROS, Carmen & SANTOS, Carla Alexandra (2000) Aspectos da arqueologia judaica em Trancoso. *Actas das Jornadas da Beira Interior*. História e Património, Guarda. (Em linha) Disponível em: http://www.catedra-alberto-benveniste.org/fich/15/artigo_Santos_Ballesteros.pdf

- BAPTISTA, A. M. (1983-1984) Arte rupestre do Norte de Portugal: uma perspectiva. *Portugália*. Porto. 4-5.
- BOWES, Kim (2000) *Villa Sacra*: The transformation of domestic Space in some late roman villas of Hispania. *Actas do 3.º Congresso de Arqueologia Peninsular – Arqueologia da Antiguidade na Península Ibérica*. Vol. VI. Porto. ADECAP.
- Câmara Municipal de Boticas (2009) Pesquisa por Publicações – Monografia de Boticas. Disponível em: <http://www.cm-boticas.pt/filemanager/monografia.pdf>
- CHAVES, Luís (1951) As Antas de Portugal. *O Archeologo Português*. Lisboa: Museu Ethnographico Português. N. S., vol. 1 (Em linha) Disponível em: http://biblioteca.mnaraqueologia-ipmuseus.pt/oarqueologo/OAP_S2_v1_1951/OAP_S2_v1_1951_150dpi.pdf/p95-116/p95-116.pdf
- COIXÃO, António do Nascimento Sá (1997) *Um projecto – A investigação, a musealização e um circuito*. Complexo Arqueológico de Freixo de Numão. A.C.D.R. Freixo de Numão.
- DE MAN, Adriaan (2005) Sobre a Cristianização de um Fórum. *al-madan* - adenda electrónica. IIª Série (13). Julho 2005.
- ENCARNAÇÃO, José d’ (1990) A Religião. *Nova História de Portugal – Portugal: das Origens à Romanização*. Direcção de Joel Serrão e A.H. de Oliveira Marques. Vol. I. Coordenação de Jorge Alarcão. 1.ª Edição. Lisboa: Editorial Presença.
- EUSÉBIO, Maria de Fátima (2005) A apropriação cristã da iconografia greco-latina: o tema do Bom Pastor. *MÁTHESIS* 14. (Em linha) Disponível em: http://z3950.ucp.pt/biblioteca/Mathesis/Mat14/Mathesis14_9.pdf
- GOMES, Mário Varela & MONTEIRO, J. Pinho (1974/77) As rochas decoradas da Alagoa, Tondela, Viseu. *O Archeologo Português*. Lisboa: Museu Ethnographico Português. S. 3, vol. 7-9 (Em linha) Disponível em: http://biblioteca.mnaraqueologia-ipmuseus.pt/oarqueologo/OAP_S3_v7-9_1974-1977/OAP_S3_v7-9_1974-1977_150dpi.pdf/p145-164/p145-164.pdf
- GUERRA, Amílcar; SCHATTNER, Thomas; FABIÃO, Carlos & ALMEIDA, Rui (2003) Novas investigações no santuário de Endovélico (S. Miguel da Mota, Alandroal): a campanha de 2002. *Revista Portuguesa de Arqueologia*. Vol. 6. N.º 2.
- GUIMARÃES, Gonçalves (2000) Vestígios Paleocristãos de Ermamoira. Vale do Côa. *Actas do 3.º Congresso de Arqueologia Peninsular – Arqueologia da Antiguidade na Península Ibérica*. Vol. VI. Porto. ADECAP
- HENRIQUES, Francisco; CANINAS, João Carlos & CHAMBINO, Mário (1995) Rochas com Covinhas na Região do Alto Tejo Português. *Trabalhos de Antropologia e Etnologia*. Sociedade Portuguesa de Antropologia e Etnologia. Porto. Vol. 35 (4). (Em linha). Disponível em: http://www.altotejo.org/UserFiles/File/Estudos_e_Publicacoes_arqueol/Rochas_com_covinhas_no_Alto_Tejo.pdf
- HUBER, Mary Taylor (2002) Christianity. *Encyclopedia of social and cultural anthropology*. Edited by Alan Barnard and Jonathan Spencer. London/New York. Routledge.
- Instituto da Habitação e da Reabilitação Urbana – IHRU (2009) (Em linha). Pesquisa por Sistema de Informação – inventário. Disponível em: http://www.monumentos.pt/Monumentos/forms/002_B.aspx
- Instituto Português de Arqueologia – IPA (2009) (Em linha). Pesquisa de Sítios Arqueológicos. Disponível em: <http://www.ipa.min-cultura.pt/>
- Instituto Português do Património Arquitectónico – IPPAR (2009) (Em linha). Pesquisa de Património: Dólmen da Capela de Nossa Senhora do Monte. Disponível em: http://www.ippar.pt/pls/dippar/pat_pesq_detalhe?code_pass=70452
- LEGUAY, Jean Pierre (1993) O «Portugal» Germânico. *Nova História de Portugal – Portugal: das Invasões Germânicas à “Reconquista”*. Direcção de Joel Serrão e A.H. de Oliveira Marques. Vol. II. 1.ª Edição. Lisboa.

* All Web Pages were consulted between September and October 2009.

- MATA, Luís (2007) O «cais» de Santa Iria uma reflexão sobre uma velha questão. *Revista Lusófona de Ciência das Religiões*. Ano VI, n. 11 (Em linha) Disponível em: http://cienciareligioes.ulusofona.pt/arquivo_religioes/n_anteriores_pdf/vol_onze.pdf
- MARTINS, Andrea (2006). Gravuras rupestres do Noroeste peninsular: a Chã da Rapada. *Revista Portuguesa de Arqueologia*. Vol. 9, N.º 1.
- MATTOSO, José (1997) *Antes de Portugal. História de Portugal*, Vol. 1, Lisboa. Editorial Estampa.
- MEIRELES, Miguel Ferreira & RODRIGUES, Agostinho Vieira (Coordenação de) (2008) *Campanhã – Monografia*. Junta de Freguesia de Campanhã. (Em linha) Disponível em: <http://www.j-f.org/monografia/pagina41.htm>
- MEIRINHOS, José Francisco (2006) *Martinho de Braga e a compreensão da natureza na alta Idade Média (séc. VI): símbolos da fé contra a idolatria dos rústicos*. (Em linha) Porto: Universidade do Porto. Faculdade de Letras. Disponível em: <http://repositorio.up.pt/aberto/handle/10216/8362>
- MENDES, Maria Clara (1985). *Por Terras de Portugal*. Lisboa, Selecções do Reader's Digest.
- Parque Arqueológico do Vale do C6a – PAVC (2009) (Em linha) Pesquisa por Arte – Canada do Inferno. Disponível em: <http://www.ipa.min-cultura.pt/coa/>
- PATO, Heitor Baptista (2007a) Apontamentos para uma litolatria cristã – 16 de Novembro de 2007. Biblioteca celtiberia (Em linha) Disponível em: <http://www.celtiberia.net/articulo.asp?id=2933&cadena=heitor>
- (2007b) *O culto dos promontórios em Portugal* – 16 de Novembro de 2007. Biblioteca celtiberia (Em linha) Disponível em: <http://www.celtiberia.net/articulo.asp?id=2938&pagina=0>
- PATROCÍNIO, Manuel F. S. do. (2005) Um rosto para os deuses: A religiosidade e as representações de divindades nas antigas culturas do território português. *Idearte – Revista de Teorias e Ciências da Arte* – ANO I, n.º 2 (Abr-Jun – 2005) (Em Linha) Disponível em: www.idearte.org
- PEREIRA, António Luís & LOPES, Isabel (2005) *Património Arqueológico do Concelho de Carrazeda de Ansiães*. Câmara Municipal de Carrazeda de Ansiães.
- Junta de Freguesia de Rebordelo (2009) Rebordelo (Em linha) Disponível em: <http://www.vinhais.com.pt/paginas/rebordelo/cultura.php>
- RIBEIRO, António Augusto (2004) *As gentes do Douro Vinhateiro: tradições e manifestações religiosas*. (Em linha) Disponível em: <https://repositorium.sdum.uminho.pt/handle/1822/5643>
- VAZ, João Inês (2006) A Ocupação do Espaço de Viseu na Época Romana. *MÁTHESIS* 15. Universidade Católica Portuguesa. Viseu. (Em linha). Disponível em: http://z3950.crb.ucp.pt/biblioteca/Mathesis/Mat15/Mathesis15_143.pdf