El LEGADO ARTÍSTICO de las SOCIEDADES PREHISTÓRICAS

Nuevos paradigmas de análisis y documentación

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Shelter with schematic painted art in Portugal:
territories and symbologies

Abrigos con arte esquemático en Portugal:
territorios y simbolías

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In the Portuguese territory there are several artistic cycles defined by their typological characteristics, chronology and geography. One of them is the so-called Schematic Art. Studies of rock art arise from the very beginning of the investigation, following the establishment of Archeology as an independent science. Thus, the painted shelters in Portugal are known since the 18th century. Graphic manifestations of the agro-pastoralist communities are diverse, appearing in different supports and with different techniques, creating a wide range of specific terminology such as Megalithic Art, Liner Schematic Art, NW Peninsular Art, among others.

This paper deals with representations that fit in the so-called typical Painting Art or Schematic Painted Art. In this paper we’ll use the last term. This option is based on technical criteria: painting is the technique used to represent these representations, in opposition to Engraved Schematic Art, where engraving is the method used on rock surfaces. Nevertheless, theme and conceptual universe are identical, but the geological conditions led to the use of different methods to humanizing the landscape.

Schematic Painted Art emerges as one of the best styles known in Portuguese territory, despite the lack of syntheses. The knowledge of these
manifestations is reduced just to descriptions more or less detailed. The formation of a specialized critical mass becomes imperative, enabling the integration of Schematic Painted Art in the peninsular territory, allowing the integration of Art on the material culture of a particular human community in a certain geographical space and time.

The shelters with Schematic Painted Art are distributed through Portuguese territory. The sites under study are Lapa dos Coelhos (Torres Novas) with a ramiforme motive; Shelter of Lapedo (Leiria) with two anthropomorphic; Shelter Pego da Rainha (Mação) with representations of bars and semi-circular motives, Shelter of Ribeiro das Casas (Almeida) revealing anthropomorphic and zoomorphic motives; the Faia nucleus in Côa Valley Archaeological Park with anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, ramiformes, soliformes and numerous scenes. Finally Arronches nucleus composed by four shelters – Pinho Monteiro (zoomorphic, anthropomorphic and soliformes), Lapa dos Gaivões (anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, ramiformes), Igreja dos Mouros (geometric motives), and the Lapa Louções (geometric motives).

These shelters represent different forms of humanizing the landscape and are part of conceptual programs carried out by distinct agro-pastoralist communities.
in different times. We define three types of cultural strategies to modify a previous natural landscape turning it into a symbolic space:

1 – Mountain sites or enlarged view: Lapa dos Coelhos and Pego da Rainha, visually dominating the landscape, on top of streams and water sources with a varied repertoire.

2 - Sites of Passage or limited view: Abrigo do Lapedo and Ribeiro das Casas, located on the banks of streams, with a few iconographic manifestations and economic implications.

3 - Complex Sites or ritual: Faia, where there are several panels along the axis-mundis, the Côa river, with mythic and symbolic scenes representations, and the Arronches shelters, where humanization of the landscape is achieved through the use of several shelters in the same geographical space - São Mamede Mountain.

The approach to the everyday life of prehistoric populations, from Early Neolithic to Late Chalcolithic, will be achieved through the study of certain symbolic programs expressed in Schematic Painted Art.