



TERRITORY - A LAND OF LIFE AND HISTORY

Freixo de Espada à Cinta amazes everyone who passes by. Meadows, vineyards, olive groves and orange orchards produce a diversity of colors and aromas offering a stunning landscape that reaches its highlight with the almonds blossom.

The beauty of the landscape is completed with geological formations, such as the outstanding Penedo Durão (727m), the siluric stratifications of Candedo, or the breathtaking landscapes of the Douro cliffs in the villages of Lagoaça, Mazouco or Lígares contribute to make this municipality an exciting place to live in.

We find ourselves in an unusual and unique place, so quiet and peaceful, to which we can turn to every time we need to relax our spirit.

GEOLOGICAL HISTORY

The most remote history of this territory is "written" in the different rocks that we find in this region.

If we travel in time and go back 550 million years (Neoproterozoic/Lower Cambrian), this land was submerged and the deposition of sands, siltstones and clays would be taking place, which subsequently generated schist and greywacke that originated the soils where most of the plantations of the famous vineyards of this region are today.

480 million years ago this territory was located in the Southern Hemisphere, more or less where New Zealand is today. At this time, there was a new immersion originating the deposition of small pebbles and sandy sediments, which can be found today at the base of Penedo Durão.

Many of the rocks that we find in Ribeira do Mosteiro, Penedo Durão, the Abalona Wall, Cabeço da Urca, for example, were formed at a time when, on our planet, there were no terrestrial plants and all animal life was restricted to water. For this reason, they still preserve the trails of some of the animals that then inhabited those seas. The most frequent marks, the trilobites, were traced by opening a double groove in the clay



sediments, later covered by sands, which, when transformed into hard rock, preserved these marks until today.

Throughout time, some 350 million years ago, the different continental masses began to collide, in a true “clash of titans”, which led to the formation of the supercontinent Pangea. Proof of this are the beautiful folds that we can find in the quartzites of Ribeira do Mosteiro and the granites that bloom in the northeast part of the municipality. The latter correspond to deep magmatic masses that settled and cooled at the root of a large mountain range (Hercynian or Variscan Chain) formed some 300 million years ago.

The current rocks and landscapes of the municipality of Freixo de Espada à Cinta are the result of a long process of erosion, which began about 250 million years ago, and was responsible for the almost complete wearing of this mountain range. This is the reason why we do not find metasedimentary rocks in the municipality that are less than 470 million years old.



DOURO INTERNATIONAL NATURAL PARK

It extends over 85,125 hectares with a relief generally flattened and abruptly cut by the river canyons of the Douro and its main tributaries.

The Natural Park is home to 20 natural habitats of community interest, with vegetation dominated by juniper, holmoak, cork and oak trees.

As for fauna, there are more than 230 species of vertebrates, mainly birds that nest in rocky outcrops, so characteristic of this Natural Park. The griffin vulture, the Egyptian vulture or the black vulture, the heron, the black stork, the golden eagle or Bonelli's eagle are its most representative examples.

Excellent conditions allow vineyards, olive groves, almond and orange orchards, typically mediterranean crops, to complete the agricultural production of the “slope” lands. The cereal parcels with trees around them, together with the bushes and fertile soils, fill the characteristic mosaic of this landscape. The agricultural structure in the region still follows traditional techniques and it is in line with nature conservation policies. The permanence of these agricultural systems favors the existence of vast woods and bushes, to a high biodiversity and the survival of the most threatened fauna.



FROM THE “SHEEP” TO THE HORSE OF MAZOUCO - FIRST PALEOLITHIC OPEN AIR PALEOLITHIC ENGRAVINGS KNOWN IN EUROPEAN ARCHEOLOGY

Some people from the village knew the engraving and called it “the Sheep”. According to them, there was “a sheep looking towards a treasure”. And, wondering who would have done it, they said it was “the work of shepherds”. The central animal they called “sheep” was rather a horse, as the popular interpretation saw in the line of the mane the representation of the horn of a sheep, since another lower line seemed to extend to the back of the horse’s head.

The fact that this engraving was identified on the mouth of a small tributary with the Douro River, very close to the village of Mazouco, far from the great French-Cantabrian Paleolithic cave art is also significant. This long artistic cycle, in time and space, in which there were inevitably several “schools”, with such a great persistence of forms, themes and techniques, regardless of whether they occurred in caves or in open air rocks, over such vast territories seems to indicate that there was a first Europe before all those that followed and that our lands integrated it.



PREHISTORY

The rock art site of the Upper Paleolithic at Mazouco assumes an outstanding place in Portuguese archaeology, as it was the first time that an open air engraving of the Upper Paleolithic was revealed in our country.

The discovery of Mazouco's "Horse" caused, in the early 1980s, a huge revolution in the investigation of Paleolithic art in Portugal. In the same decade another rock known as "Fraga do Gato" was identified at Poiares, next to Calçada de Alpajares and on the slope of the Castro de S. Paulo. This rock presents Paleolithic paintings in black and ocher of red color, with two zoomorphic motifs: a central one, possibly an otter, superimposed on another one that is believed to be an owl. Due to their surroundings, they are absolutely original in the context of prehistoric Iberian open air art, since these paintings may also be integrated in a more western extension of the influence of the so-called French-Cantabrian art.

In the early 90s of the 20th century, the identification of the great paleolithic open air sites in the Douro basin, Siega Verde on its affluent Águeda river (Villar de Argañán, Salamanca), in the area of Domingo García (Segovia) and in the Côa Valley (Vila Nova de Foz Côa), made the latest works on Paleolithic art and its interpretation include not only its meaning, but also the knowledge of its archaeological context and the study of its disposition in the landscape. Such findings allow us to affirm the enormous importance of this region in the Upper Paleolithic period.

It is in the 5th millennium BC that the first sites connected with the Neolithic period begin to appear. Archaeological sites, such as Buraco da Pala (Mirandela) and the rock shelter of Fraga D'aia (S. João da Pesqueira) clearly show the spread of new elements and practices attributed to Neolithic societies, particularly the cultivation of cereals (wheat and barley) that began in the transition from the 6th to the 5th millennium BC.

The 3rd millennium BC is characterized in global terms by the increase in activities such as agriculture and shepherding and by the increase in local, regional and far-reaching exchanges documented above all by the use of regional raw materials or peculiar artefacts. Another mark of this period is the generalization of open villages with a good



command over the landscape and of a sedentary nature. Villages become more complex, sacred spaces are created and the occupation of rock shelters is intensified.



THE CULTURE OF “BERRÕES”

One of the religious manifestations that is closely associated with the territory of Freixo de Espada à Cinta is the cult that during the Iron Age and in the Roman period was made to pigs. Called “berrões” or “verracos”, they are sculptural representations, usually in granite, of pigs, wild boar, bulls, sheep and perhaps bears.

These are rough statues where sex is generally well delineated, leaving no doubt about the masculine character of these sculptures. There are still questions, but these figures might have been worshiped as protective symbols for livestock and later used as funerary monuments.

More than two hundred statues are known, distributed in the Spanish provinces of Cáceres, Salamanca, Ávila, Zamora, Segovia, Toledo, Burgos and, in the Portuguese territory, Trás-os-Montes, Douro Litoral and northern Beira Interior, occupying, according to classical sources, the territory of Vetões and Vaceus tribes.

A special highlight is the set of 22 “berrões” found in Santa Luzia, in the municipality of Freixo de Espada à Cinta which is, in the Iberian Peninsula, the archaeological site with the largest number of these zoomorphic statues.



ROMANIZATION

Roman occupation of the municipality of Freixo de Espada à Cinta is essentially documented by the epigraphic and numismatic findings. Special mention should be made to the funerary stele from the Train Station of Freixo, the headstones of Quinta de Alva and Castro de S. Paulo and the ara of Lagoaça.

From the numismatic findings, the highlight goes to the treasure quoted by the Abbot of Baçal of about 3000 coins from Quinta de S. Tiago (Ligares) objects as well as a magnificent numismatic collection found in the archaeological site of Santa Luzia.

We can also mention iron slag, coarse ceramics, pieces of fine ceramics, fragments of colored glass, loom and net weights, adornment and toilette objects.

TOMBSTONE OF CASTRO DE S. PAULO

ALPAJARES - POIARES

This is a limestone slab found in Castro de S. Paulo - Alpajares, in the village of Poiares. In this tombstone slab, despite being quite incomplete, we verified that there is some decoration in the upper edge, constituted by a probable frieze composed of a vein and motifs in a circular arc.

Dimensions:

48 cm height

30 cm width

5 cm thickness



FUNERARY STELE

PROVENANCE: RAILWAY STATION OF FREIXO DE ESPADA À CINTA

Granite funerary stele, found by António José Sá Lopes and Arq. Carlos Guerra (1982), close to the Freixo de Espada à Cinta railway station, currently under the guard of the Town Hall.

Irregularly shaped, the upper face presents a circular arc and side faces are rudely worked. Decorated with an engraved circle, with a primitive representation of the swastika cross with a diameter of about 35 cm. Flanking the circle, the stele has two grooves at right angles, one of which (the one on the left) is incomplete due to a fracture of the rock. The epigraph face is in reasonable condition, chipped only in the decorated area. We emphasize that the epigraphic field is not delimited and that the preparation of the stone at its lower end is not as careful, probably due to the fact that this terminal portion is intended to be buried in the soil for fixing the stele.

Dimensions:

191 cm height

66 cm width

17 cm thickness



MEDIEVAL TIME - THE CASTLE/FORTRESS

The castle of Freixo de Espada à Cinta was built with a circuit of walls and towers. It was developed, possibly, from a military stronghold dated from the 12th century, assuming itself since the first dynasty, as an important point in the defensive line against the various military attacks.

We can only find the first documentary information on works of architecture in the fortified stronghold of Freixo de Espada à Cinta dated from the year 1258. With the granting of the charter, by king D. Afonso III in 1273, the castle had a major campaign of works, leaving no doubt about the importance of this architectural intervention, which took place during the reign of king D. Dinis.

Based on a drawing by Duarte d'Armas, we can observe that the town had a walled set that embraced the houses and a vast set of towers with hexagonal and pentagonal profiles that were disposed at regular spaces. Of all the medieval towers the only one that remains is the Torre do Galo with 25 meters of height and a heptagonal shape.

In the early years of the 16th century, the town grew and extended beyond the walls. During a period of prosperous development, the town and the respective fortress underwent through improvements, namely a barrier and its respective moat, which protected the main entrance to the castle.

Throughout the modern era the fortification has undergone minor consolidation and construction works, such as the bell tower on the Torre do Galo, and lost the functionality for which it was initially designed, having been adapted as a municipal cemetery.



MILITARY MOVEMENTS AND PENINSULAR CONFLICTS

Due to its geographical location Freixo has been, throughout the ages, in the first line of the defense of the Kingdom and was therefore highly disputed.

In the work of José Gomez de Arteche, Historical-Military Geography of Portugal and Spain, a Spanish army colonel recognized that this border area was one of the most difficult to cross, since the deep gorges and rocky riverbanks ended up making any type of fortification almost useless.

However, this geo-strategic situation was not an obstacle to the fact that during the 18th century and the first half of the 19th century Freixo de Espada à Cinta was the stage of various military conflicts that involved Portugal.

In 1762, Spanish forces entered Portugal conquering Chaves, Miranda, Torre de Moncorvo and ending with several fights in the municipality of Freixo that led to the conquest of the town. On the same date, several reconnaissance of the region were carried out, under the responsibility of Pedro Beaumont and Beltrán Beaumont, engineers of the Spanish army's engineering force, who mainly focused on the border area, which resulted in detailed plans of the military fortifications.

With the French invasions the conflicts returned. The second incursion made by the North led several French military men to pass through this territory generating destruction and causing panic.

The wars between Liberals and Absolutists once again involved this town in battles. In 1827, the Marquis of Chaves entered Portugal by Freixo de Espada à Cinta, after being lodged in Villas Buenas (Spain), and so liberal troops marched through Trás-os-Montes and Minho.



THE TOWN OF FREIXO AND THE LATE-MEDIEVAL ARCHITECTURE

It is from the beginning of the 16th century onwards that Freixo's growth and development is most significant, a fact consolidated in 1512 with the attribution of the charter by king D. Manuel I. This town acquired a new vitality and with the population growth, it expanded outside the walls of the fortress, and so the architectural renovation of the town took place under the “manueline” style - late-medieval architectural design. Thus, we find in the streets houses with portals and windows often decorated with floral elements, crosses of Christ, armillary spheres, spheroids and ropes, and in some houses we even find inscriptions of dates.

Other examples of manueline architecture are the São Miguel Church, the main Church, with its exuberantly decorated portico, the Misericórdia Church, built, probably in the middle of the first decade of the 16 century as well as the pillory, a landmark of the propaganda power of king D. Manuel.

It has to be enhanced that this town was also one of the entrance doors for those in pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela.



CHARTER

The first Charter granted to Freixo de Espada à Cinta, was by D. Afonso Henriques in the years 1155 to 1157.

The proximity to the frontier, the need for settlement and geopolitical events lead kings to strengthen municipal power in this municipality. So, at the end of the 15th century, King D. Manuel granted his judges the representation functions of the king, and other benefits by exempting residents from paying some fees and tolls and authorized a free street market, to be held in this town for two days every month

The geographical and political frontier did not prevent the creation of cultural and trade ties between the two sides of the border. Proof of this is a set of petitions made to the King, kept in Torre do Tombo in Lisbon, by the population of Freixo de Espada à Cinta in order to obtain tax exemptions in trade with Spain or in the establishment of Spanish craftsmen. Freixo was also one of the main entrances to the Kingdom of Portugal.

Within the administrative reorganization of the Kingdom, King D. Manuel granted a Foral Novo, a New Charter, to Freixo de Espada à Cinta on October 1st, 1512, seeking to update taxes and duties, which were characterized by a centralization and standardization of the Royal Power at the expense of local lords and powers.



THE EVOLUTION OF THE AGRICULTURAL WORLD

Over centuries agriculture has been a subsistence activity, which gradually saw its production system transformed by the difficulties of the natural environment and human will.

The landscape structures of the beginning of the 20th century were characterized by the appropriation of the most fertile lands and the ones closer to houses for agricultural practices, designed according to the existence of water and the geology relief. Cereal culture has been gradually replaced by vineyards and complemented by horticultural plantation, livestock and shepherding activities.

Nowadays the almond tree has gained a role of special importance as a fruit crop, complemented by olive trees, orange, and cherry, among others. The steeper areas and those with less productive capacity started to be used as forest production areas. Vegetable gardens, bush areas and pine forests are still present in our agricultural world.

The vineyard is a constant feature in the stunning landscape of this cultural territory, which is the Douro. Inserted in the Port Wine Demarcated Region, in the sub region of the Upper Douro, the wine produced here is considered is a high quality product, with unique characteristics and unmistakable flavor.



MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES

There were other activities that, due to their social and economic importance, deserve to be mentioned: the manufacture of silk and the trade with Spain.

A reference in the proto-industrial panorama, this art spread throughout the region of Trás-os-Montes and gained an international reputation. In 1793 there were 16 factories with 73 looms operating, employing 71 weavers in the production of carpets, fabrics, ties, ribbons and sieving cloths.

Freixo de Espada à Cinta was also a town that benefited from its proximity to Spain, being therefore strong on a commercial level, exporting many of its productions and manufactures to the neighbor kingdom.

THE LAND OF SILK

SERICULTURE - THE PRODUCTION OF SILK

The production of silk begins with the separation of the fibers from the cocoon by immersing them in water at 90° centigrade for some minutes. Then, they are removed from the water and the filaments are separated, being combined to form threads. Later, they are rolled and dried. A cocoon is made of a single thread that can reach up to almost 1000 meters. To obtain 1 kg of silk, about 5 kg of cocoons are needed.

SILK IN FREIXO DE ESPADA À CINTA - A LUXURY PRODUCT

This town was one of the major beneficiaries of the development of the silk culture introduced in Trás-os-Montes during the Pombaline period. The manufacture of silk in the region of Trás-os-Montes grew essentially with the arrival from Italy of the Arnould family from 1786 to 1788. After settling in Chacim, they built a factory and a spinning school there that supplied silk to all the factories in the region by using the Piedmontese method.



In Freixo de Espada à Cinta, in the years 1790-1791, there was still some resistance to adopting the new Italian models, given the permanence of traditions from the 16th century. The existing factories in town mainly exported to Spain and, in 1791, there were already 4 factories with 38 looms. In 1794, they managed to quadruple these numbers by directing their exports essentially to Brazil.

The town was also decisive in the cultivation of mulberries, namely black, allowing the collection of a significant amount of cocoons that supplied the factories in the region. However, mulberry production was still insufficient and there was a need to import silk from Italy. The foundation of the Real Companhia das Sedas, in 1802, allowed the prosperity of this industry, registering the best production record ever in Freixo de Espada à Cinta in 1804.

However, the French invasions dictated the beginning of the end, with the withdrawal of funds from the Real Companhia das Sedas to finance the war in England.

SILK IN PORTUGAL: THE THREAD OF HISTORY

The silk industry in Portugal developed essentially since the 16th century, shortly after the discovery of the maritime route to India, dethroning the secular land routes that made it reach the European continent. The first silk industries would be established in Lisbon during the reign of king D. João V, thanks to the efforts of the Frenchman Robert Godin. However, it was through the initiative of Marquês de Pombal that this industry started to gain expressiveness in the Portuguese territory.

The protectionist measures of the economy and the need for raw materials promoted the planting of mulberry trees, the main tree that supplies leafs for silkworms to eat, and thus created sericultural regions, particularly in the region of Trás-os-Montes. This factor was fundamental for attracting investors, namely the Arnaud family, who settled and developed the silk industry there through the introduction of the Piedmontese production method, which prevailed until the first half of the 19th century. However, when the logic of manufacturing spread throughout the country, there was a setback in the Portuguese pre-industrialization process caused by the French invasions and the liberal wars. In addition to these factors, England developed the steam engine causing the beginning of the decline in silk manufacturing in Portugal.



SILK

Silk is a product with an ancient history that unites Nature and Man. Generated by silkworms, this is a natural product that has unique qualities. So, it is used to make a wide range of objects that can go from luxury products to the aerospace industry. Originally from China, it has been produced in Trás-os-Montes since the 15th century, with a particular focus in Freixo de Espada à Cinta, where this tradition remains until today.

METAMORPHOSIS

EGGS

The female butterfly lays between 300 to 600 eggs, ensuring the continuity of the species. The eggs remain apparently inactive for several months until they hatch in spring.

SILKWORM

At about 2.5mm, silkworms grow for about six weeks feeding on mulberry leaves. During this period they change their skin several times and grow from 3 millimeters to 8 centimeters, reaching the adult stage. In the end, they start weaving the cocoon. It takes three to four days until this task is completed.

COCOON

The worm begins to segregate the silk thread, completely closing itself and forming a cocoon. Inside there is a metamorphosis of the silkworm into a butterfly that lasts for two to three weeks. The cocoon is formed by a single microfilament that can reach 1000 meters.

SILK BUTTERFLY

When the transformation is complete, the silk butterfly breaks the cocoon and leaves it. In the following eight to ten days the female butterfly will lay between 300 and 600 eggs and then dies.