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Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



- UNESCO Chair in
- The Ocean's Cultural Heritage
- Portugal



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OCEANICA

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THE SEA IN PORTUGUESE POPULAR TRADITION

Stories transmitted over the generations reinforce the idea that the sea was for a long time the space of the unknown...

Today the beach is a pleasant place that most people enjoy. But it was not always like this. For centuries, vast stretches of the coast were avoided, being almost empty, except for small communities exploring fishing resources on a seasonal basis. A situation that would only change in the 19th century when the beach became a space for the leisure of the elites.

The sea in Portuguese popular tradition is not the one from the Discoveries and the Atlantic adventures, but the neighbouring sea, source of sustenance and symbol of the daily struggle for survival. In oral tradition, the sea and the coasts are usually connected to dangers, real and imaginary. Many legends and superstitions reflect the sacred character of the sea and the belief that it was populated by fantastic animals. At the end of the 18th century there were still stories of the appearance of monsters near the coast. In the same way, there was a belief in the value of a ‘holy bath’ on the days of St John (24 June) or St Bartholomew (24 August), to free children from disorders such as epilepsy. Piracy, that for so long affected the Portuguese coast, was also present in the popular imaginary. For instance, the saying *Anda moiro na costa* [Moor on the coast] or the verses from *Romanceiro: The Count of Arcelo left / To make a great pilgrimage / From which they came to rest / On a very cold beach. / The Count took up his cape / The Countess her mantle; / Out there in that night / There was a Moorish galley; / They wanted to capture the Count, / He like a man resisted; / Now the Count lies dead, / Now the Countess is gone as a captive*. Because shipwreck was a common reality, the fishing communities had formulas for summoning up those who died and whose bodies they were trying to recover. This example is from Póvoa de Varzim: *At midday and at midnight the person who is calling for the dead cries from the waterfront: “O sea, throw up here that Christian, whom we wish to give a holy burial!” The cadaver will eventually appear, and when a member of the family approaches it will immediately expel blood, even if it has been in the water for more than fifteen days*. Likewise, there were ways of calming a storm. In Leça da Palmeira, when a storm threatened, two girls would sweep out the chapel of the Corpo Santo with sprigs of broom, as the legend claimed that doing this would lead to fair weather.

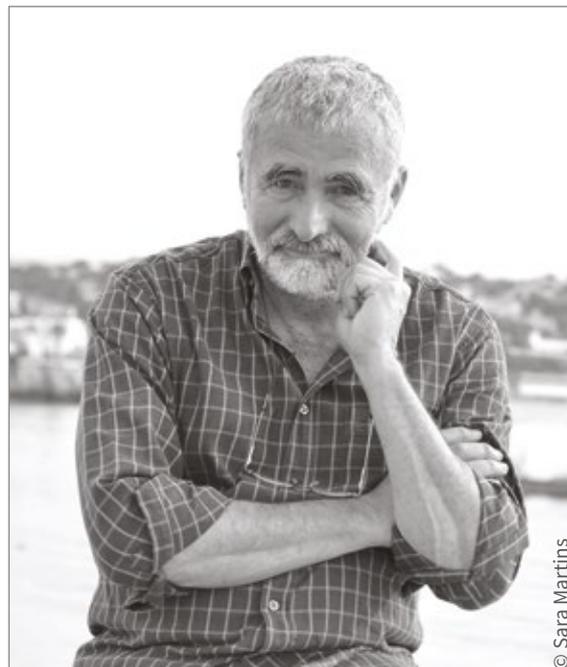
These and other stories transmitted over the generations reinforce the idea that the sea (and the littoral by association) was for a long time the space of the unknown. Full text at: www.researchgate.net/publication/304013188_Landscapes_of_Fear_the_Portuguese_Coast

Joana Gaspar de Freitas

A RESEARCHER AND HIS WORK

Luís Sousa Martins (IELT – Institute for the Study of Literature and Tradition)

PhD in Social Anthropology from ISCTE – Instituto Superior de Ciências do Trabalho e da Empresa, he is the author of several studies about the Portuguese fishing communities. In 2015, he organized, at the Ethnography National Museum, the exhibition *Fishing Gears: fishermen, rules and instable objects*. He was also one of the coordinators of the project *Celebrating Coastal Culture*, that aimed to identify and promoted the cultural heritage of coastal communities. The project was supported by the insurance company Mútua dos Pescadores and financed by the EEA Grants. The base of his academic work is the excellent ethnographic research that he does within the fishing populations. To prepare his PhD thesis, Luís lived for three years with a family in Averomar, Póvoa do Varzim, a fishing village in the north of Portugal. He went out to the sea with the fishermen, feeling in his body the harshness of their jobs, the cold, the nights without sleeping, the violence of the waves. One of the things that makes his work so special is his ability to listen to the Other and his sensibility to be part of the closed fishing communities that trust him their stories and traditions. To hear Luís telling the stories he was told or talking about his experience with the sea people is just amazing.

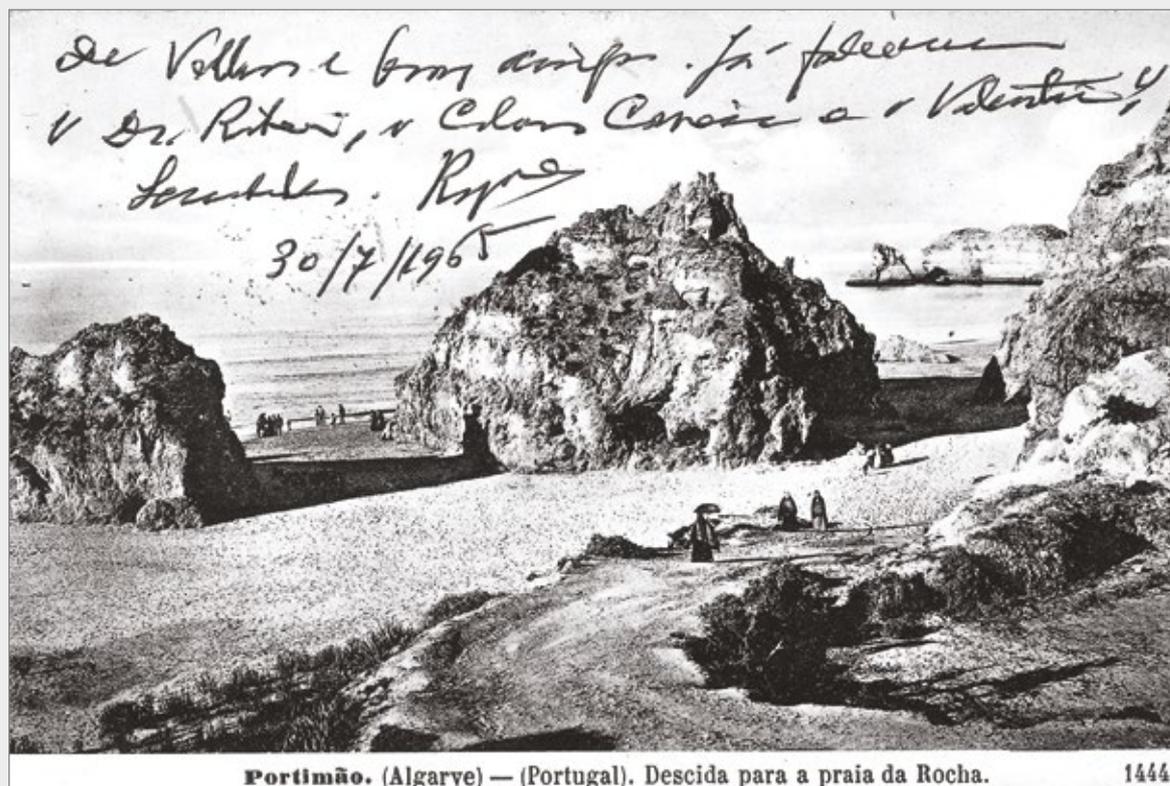


© Sara Martins

THE BEACHES OF PORTUGAL

The Praia da Rocha

The writer Ramalho Ortigão, in his famous book about the beaches of Portugal (1876), did not mention Praia da Rocha. This beach started being used for sea bathing in the beginning of the twentieth century. It was the first seaside resort of Algarve, celebrated by its beautiful landscape and climate conditions. But the beach that visitors can see now is nothing like the one of the beginning of the last century. Few know this! With the increase of tourism in the 1960s there wasn't enough space for everybody. Also, the sea eroding the cliffs was putting at risk the infrastructures built on the top of them. The solution was to enlarge the beach using sand dredged from access channel to the harbor of Portimão. The beach nourishment was a success as anyone can see nowadays, but Praia da Rocha is presently a human-made beach. Read more at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5894/rgci317>



◀ Postcard
Portimão. (Algarve)
– (Portugal). Descida
para a praia da Rocha
[descent to Praia da
Rocha]. n.1444
Arriaga Correia Guedes
family archive

Portimão. (Algarve) — (Portugal). Descida para a praia da Rocha.

1444

NEWS AND EVENTS

HISTÓRIA. JORNAL DE NOTÍCIAS
N.º 7, April, 2017

The Portuguese magazine *História* from *Jornal de Notícias* published in its last edition an interview with Professor João Paulo Oliveira e Costa, responsible for the UNESCO Chair “The Ocean’s Cultural Heritage”. Part of the interview is dedicated to this new project.

<http://jnhistoria.jn.pt>

COLLOQUIUM “SINES, THE HARBOUR AND THE SEA. HISTORY AND HERITAGE”

Sines (Portugal), 7-9 September, 2017

This colloquium, promoted by the Municipality of Sines, aims to disclose the Atlantic past of the city, discussing the role of its harbor through history and debating, at a national scale, some themes like ships and maritime routes, harbor structures and heritage, fishing and commerce, slavery and privateering.

www.sines.pt

VII MEETING of BRASPOR NETWORK

Seas and Coastlines: transdisciplinary perspectives
Sesimbra (Portugal), 18-21 September, 2017

The deadline for presenting abstracts to the VII Meeting of BRASPOR Network was extended to June 5. Those interested should submit a communication proposal to the email: braspor2017@gmail.com

<https://ielt.fcsh.unl.pt>

PUBLICATIONS

THE SEA IN HISTORY
4 vols., Boydell & Brewer, 2017

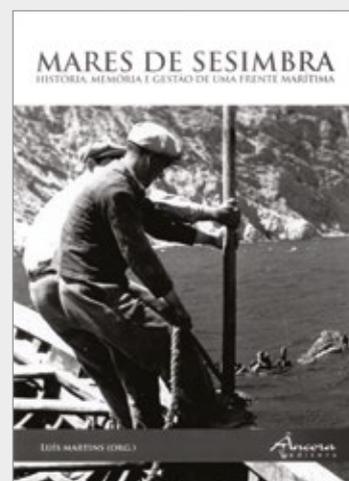
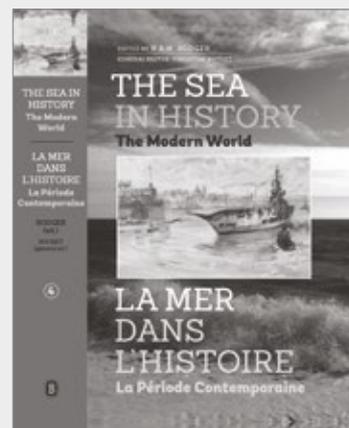
The Oceanides Association, an international research programme in maritime and naval history, sponsored by the French Minister of Ecology, Sustainable Development, Transport and Housing, was created in 2012. The aim of this association is to provide scientific evidence of the key role oceans have played in human evolution, culture and history. In 2017, Oceanides and Boydell & Brewer published a four volumes edition about the sea since prehistory until the present. Specialists in Maritime History from all over the world wrote about the relevancy of the sea in the development of human history.

<https://boydellandbrewer.com>

MARES DE SESIMBRA. HISTÓRIA, MEMÓRIA E GESTÃO DE UMA FRENTE MARÍTIMA
Âncora Editora, 2013

Based in a report made by the navy officer Baldaque da Silva about fishing in Sesimbra, in 1896, several researchers, from different knowledge areas, coordinated by Luís Sousa Martins, wrote a book about the village of Sesimbra and the sea. Using a main historical source and the testimonies of fishers this work provides a reflection about the meaning of fishing and the impacts of the creation of the Maritime Park Professor Luiz Saldanha, in 2005.

www.ancora-editora.pt



COMMUNICATING HERITAGE

The Fábrica da Baleia of Porto Pim (Azores)

In Horta, Faial Island, Azores, an old whaling station was converted into a museum and a sea center in 2002. The factory was created in 1942-43 and it worked for about thirty years, producing whale oil. The animals were towed by boats to the station, located in the beautiful scenery of the bay of Porto Pim. There, they were dismantled in the yard, the blubber and the bones were put in autoclaves, to extract the oil, using steam pressure. After it ceased activity in 1974, the building was abandoned for almost twenty years. Today, the space is dedicated to the preservation of this relevant heritage: the old machinery was recovered and information is provided so that the visitors can see (and imagine) the activities that used to take place here. In this process, the archives of SIMAL – Azorean Industrial Maritime Society were digitalized and are now available to researchers. Since 2004, OMA – Observatory of the Azores Sea is using the factory as a base for their dissemination activities regarding the protection of the maritime fauna of the islands.

See photos at: <http://oma.centrosciencia.azores.gov.pt>