



Igreja Nova, which survived 500 years of Moorish rule.

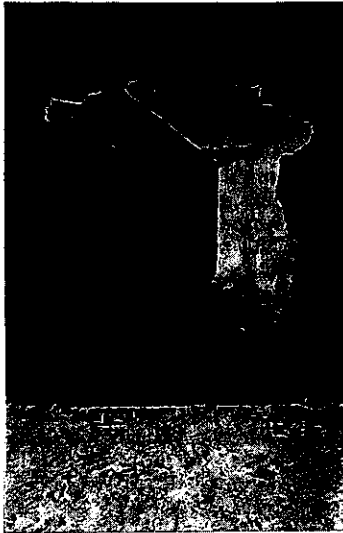
ida do Sado and Garvão, over the Serra at Foia, and through Bensafrim and Barão de S. Miguel to Boca do Rio. The other "road of the legions" came from Beja through Mertola and then crossed the province diagonally through Salir, Silves, and Lagos to Boca do Rio. A portion of this road can still be seen on the edge of the ridge north east of Praia da Luz, although year after year more of it is eroded and falls into the valley below.

The withdrawal of the Roman legions, consequent upon the relentless pressure of the barbarian world on the Empire, brought twenty years of pillage by the Vandals before they, in 429, crossed into Africa. They were succeeded by the Visigoths, an Arian Christian people, who despite constant and bloody dissension, ruled until the Moorish invasion in the 8th Century. According to Arrazi, an Arab historian and geographer who lived in Andalusia in the 10th Century, the Visigoths moved the ecclesiastical see from "the old Ossonoba" to Silves, transferring also the old name to the new location. In the 8th Century the Visigoths were displaced by the conquering Moors, and the name Ossonoba converted into an Arabic form, Exubona, which later became Exulba and then Xilbe, the present-day Silves.

The story of Boca do Rio does not entirely end with the abandonment of the Roman settlement. An old tradition, given some support by a statement of Al-Idrisi, an Arab geographer, places there a small Christian community of fisher-folk which existed throughout the five hundred years of Moorish rule. It was known as *Igreja do Corvo*, the Church of the Raven, and the

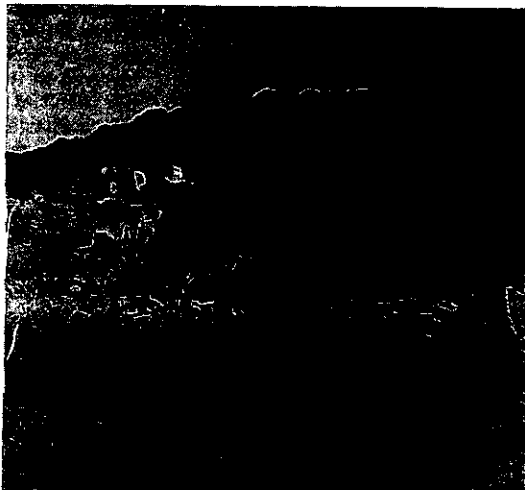
ruined chapel underneath the cliff to the east, may have served as its place of worship.

Now, centuries later, a new "city" springs up each summer at Boca do Rio, as hundreds of campers come there to pitch their tents and park their vans. Few are likely to give a thought to their predecessors who long ago peopled the lost and buried city. If they should, a comparison between the two civilizations might not be without odium. For here in Roman times had dwelt a mannered and orderly people, concerned about the decencies of life, who developed elaborate water systems and sanitary facilities and, from that we may presume, did not wantonly befoul their environment. What hopes they must have held for a settled and ever-prospering future, hopes to be dashed by sudden catastrophe, so sudden that a thrifty guardian of the temple did not retrieve the



The "armazems" built on the site of the old Roman temple, now a rubbish dump for campers.

treasure so carefully hoarded in the amphora that is now in the Lagos Museum. We can only conjecture at the nature of the catastrophe. The settlement may have been sacked and destroyed by the Vandals. A more likely explanation is that it was engulfed by a tidal wave; there is record of one battering the area around Setubal in 412. And so today all that remains are a few artefacts, some remnants of demolished buildings, and the stern, impartial sea.



This site on the eastern cliff face is said to be an early Christian settlement.

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