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The Silence of Ventimiglia: The Balzi Rossi Case

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The Silence of Ventimiglia: The Balzi Rossi Case and the Memory Erased by Progress
A Crossroads of Civilisations
Ventimiglia is not merely a border town; it is a historical palimpsest where every age has left its mark. The Discovery: A Treasure Buried Among the Riviera Rocks
The Balzi Rossi site, located in the Ventimiglia area, represented a crucial node for understanding the prehistoric dynamics of the western

Mediterranean. Excavations had revealed an exceptional stratigraphic sequence that allowed researchers to observe, with rare continuity, the evolution of Mesolithic and Neolithic cultures.
These were not merely isolated artefacts, but a complete and coherent living context. Remains of encampments, evidence of butchering activities, polished stone tools displaying remarkable technical mastery for the period, and above all, proof of sophisticated management of local natural resources were all uncovered

Scientific Significance: A Reclaimed Chronology
The importance of Balzi Rossi lay in its capacity to offer a nearly uninterrupted timeline. Archaeologists had identified a fluid transition between hunter-gatherer economies and the earliest forms of agriculture and animal husbandry. This site provided crucial data on diet, material processing techniques, and the earliest forms of social organisation across the Ligurian and Provençal territory.

In essence, Balzi Rossi was not merely a local site, but a fundamental piece in reconstructing the mosaic of human history across the entire Mediterranean region. Each excavated layer was a page of a book that was finally being read correctly.
The Tragedy: When the Railway Erases History
But this narrative was violently interrupted.
The expansion of the railway line — necessary to connect the coastline and facilitate trade — collided with the very existence of the site.

Rather than rerouting the tracks or implementing comprehensive preventive excavations, the political and economic decision was one of removal. The earthworks for laying the rails and constructing the embankments acted as scissors cutting through a millennia-old fabric.

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Sedimentary layers that could have told stories of migrations and climate adaptation were mixed, compacted, and buried beneath tonnes of gravel and concrete. Balzi Rossi did not simply disappear physically; it vanished as a scientific unit, making any systematic study of its original stratigraphy impossible.

The Lost Legacy: An Open Wound in Archaeological Research
The damage suffered by Balzi Rossi was not merely material, but cognitive. Every destroyed layer represents an unanswered question, a truth that can never again be extracted from the earth. The loss of this chronological continuity deprives the international scientific community of a unique reference point for studying the transition to the Neolithic in Western Europe.

Today, as trains rush along those tracks, they run over an archive that has been sealed forever. This is not simply a matter of stones or obsidian fragments; it is the loss of part of our collective identity, a puzzle piece we will never find again to complete the picture of who we once were.
Conclusion: A Warning for the Future of Heritage Protection
The Balzi Rossi case must serve as a lesson for every major infrastructure project proposed in the coming years. The challenge is not to choose between progress and conservation, but to learn to make them coexist through planning that integrates archaeological protection from the very first stage of design.

True modernity is not that which races over its own roots, but that which knows how to respect them in order to build a conscious future. Only through mandatory preventive excavations and greater political sensitivity towards cultural heritage can we prevent other extraordinary sites from becoming, like Balzi Rossi, mere ghosts of history — buried beneath the weight of speed and indifference.

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