

Curating Culture and Religion

Lusotropicalism and the Management of Heritage in Portugal

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Introduction: Heritage Making and Lusotropicalism

Like the rest of Europe, Portugal partakes in a global regime of heritage (Bendix, Eggert, and Peselmann 2012) and follows the general principles established by UNESCO and other transnational institutions, having signed the World Heritage Convention in 1979 and the Intangible Heritage Convention in 2008. But UNESCO's marked presence in heritage studies has contributed to the neglect of national and regional dynamics that, in a more lateral sense, explain the particular configurations of patrimonial regimes¹ and religion management in different countries. The origins of a modern heritage regime in Portugal precede global directives and followed the historical constitution and legal steps of the *patrimoine* in France. This lent it specific contours that reflect national historical and political specificities, different ways of managing mainland and empire, culture, territory, and people. Nowadays these specificities can be summed up in a reprocessing of heritage making and national curatorship toward what we can consider, at the same time, one of its most celebrated cultural legacies: that of lusotropicalism. Lusotropicalism was a narrative about identity imported from Brazil² and integrated by the Portuguese dictatorship preceding the 1974 Carnation Revolution—the Estado Novo—to accommodate and nationalize racial diversity and thus to legitimize Portugal's colonial mission in the post–World War II world, in the face of international criticism of Portugal's late colonialism. This national narrative is predicated on the idea that Portuguese colonialism was a soft one, promoting cultural and religious tolerance as well as miscegenation.

This discourse ties into a rhetoric of the magnificence of the “Portuguese Discoveries,” which is still today another important vector for curating and displaying national identity.

While describing the Portuguese specificities of heritage management and religious diversity in the recent past, this chapter will analyze the endurance of the lusotropicalist national narrative, going beyond the self-congratulatory discourse that plays a major part in its persistence and that, ultimately, allows us to approach it as a sacralized heritage in itself. The discursive similarities between Portuguese lusotropicalism rhetoric and UNESCO directives (which both took shape after World War II) may partly justify the persistence of this discourse of Portuguese exceptionality of an assumed tolerance toward cultural and religious diversity (Cardeira da Silva 2013: 64–65). This was refined in the later Declaration on Creative Diversity (2001) and subsequent conventions that globalize liberal cosmopolitanism. But beyond its compliance with global norms and neoliberal politics, lusotropicalism as a vernacular discourse seems to smoothly enable bottom-up processes of cultural or even religious claims through heritagization, and this may be another reason for its resilience.

Vernacular lusotropicalism can be thought of as a way to think of and conceptualize the Portuguese colonial past as exceptional by laypeople who never read its inaugural text but have absorbed notions that have lingered in the national rhetoric for decades, based on an understanding of Portuguese colonialism as marked by great deeds and “natural” tolerance. This vernacular lusotropicalism is not explicitly or coherently articulated, but it is hidden in lusotropes (cf. Bastos 2018) that linger in people’s thoughts, discourses, and actions, also with regard to heritage. Lusotropicalism can be considered a tentative whitewashing of Portuguese colonialism by formulating it as “exceptional,” and it can be updated as a cosmopolitan rhetoric of national identity.

In order to test and justify contemporary lusotropicalist purification, resilience, and endurance (and, ultimately, sacralization), we present a concise overview of the entangling and disentangling of religion, culture, and heritage and their management throughout Portuguese recent history. We will also analyze the entanglements of state and religion in this process: behind a formal process of secularization, Portugal, allegedly a secular country, treats the Catholic Church with partiality behind a veneer of religious diversity and rights.

With this scenario as context, we will follow the path of heritage management in the emblematic sites of Sintra and Mértola, using data from fieldwork undertaken from 2016 to 2019.³ We will look at these from (1) a diachronic perspective, which summarizes state and church attitudes concerning both heritage and religion in the country since the end of nineteenth

century; and (2) a more ethnographic perspective by describing the present situation, including some tensions and contradictions between top-down and bottom-up approaches to heritage management.

From Heritage to Religion, or Portugal's Incomplete Disenchantment

The first heritage regulations in Portugal, while formulated during the monarchy, were already inspired by liberal movements and tainted, from the beginning, with the monumental and celebratory fashion that still infuses national display to this day. The first liberal historians (at the time of the late monarchy) created the *monumentos pátrios* (motherland monuments) with strong nationalist purposes and established the Conservation Society of National Monuments (1840). In a scenario already molded by anticlericalism, the extinction of religious orders, and the confiscation of their properties in 1834, the positions of Portuguese liberalists were, nevertheless, ambiguous regarding religion, as they declared the unequivocal importance of religious belief and Catholicism as a “network of affections” indispensable to freedom and social cohesion.⁴ This relates to a heritage genealogy that legitimizes and crystallizes an unclear position—which, up to the present day, has not suffered much contestation—despite the formal separation between the church and the state proclaimed in 1911 by the republicans. In fact, it is leading up to the establishment of the Portuguese Republic in 1910 that the first associations for the study, conservation, and restoration of the national heritage are founded and the classification of emblematic national monuments begins. These are, mainly and significantly, convents and churches and confiscated religious goods; the dying monarchy in a last-ditch effort sought to outflank the Jacobin movement by enacting anticlerical measures of its own.

The Estado Novo dictatorship established by Salazar two decades later definitively ended the period of liberalism in Portugal. And while strategically maintaining the law of separation of church and state, the new regime's relations with the church were always close even if ambiguous. In 1940 a new concordat with the Vatican reinforced the relations between the state and the Catholic Church, using particular contexts, such as the recognition by both of the importance of Fátima (Vilaça 2006; Vilaça et al. 2016: 31; Fedele and Mapril, this volume). This agreement implied a regime of privilege awarded to the Catholic Church and a hierarchy of religions, which resulted in the persecution of different minority religious groups (Mapril et al. 2017). With a strong nationalist ideology, Salazar used and abused both heritage and religion as a form of propaganda, placing them at the service of the nation and its display, founding in 1929 the Directorate-General for National

Buildings and Monuments, which would be abolished only in 2007. The continued use of heritage—very often religious heritage—and the educational and aesthetic efforts of what came to be known as the “policy of the spirit”⁵ led by the masterful hand of Salazar propagandists were indelibly printed on a collective, self-congratulatory image of the Portuguese.

By the end of the *Estado Novo*, the lusotropical rhetoric of a “soft colonization” was used to project a positive external image, especially among multilateral organizations where Portugal was viewed with suspicion for its racist policies in its colonies. After a brief strategic participation in UNESCO (1965–72) as a way of guaranteeing the right to respond to such accusations, Portugal ended up withdrawing, following the approval of a UNESCO resolution that, according to the Portuguese state, allowed the allocation of funds to anti-Portuguese terrorist movements (Rodrigues 2006). Only after the 1974 Carnation Revolution, and the subsequent independence of the colonies, would Portugal resume its place in UNESCO.

Two convergent narratives persisted until the end of the *Estado Novo*: one concerning the nation, and another one legitimizing the empire, with the latter—explicitly expressed through lusotropicalism—strongly impregnating conceptions of national identity and of heritage, even if not explicitly formulated in national heritage vocabulary. This dual narrative forced the regime to make, and exhibit to the world, some compromises—accepting, for instance, the category of Portuguese Muslims in the colonies (Vakil, Machaqueiro, and Monteiro 2011), while in the metropole maintaining the unescapable association of “Portugueseness” with Catholicism intact. The state and church invested in a strong heritagization and enshrinement of the Sanctuary of Fátima and promotion of other Catholic monumental sites under the auspices of the church, while strategically discarding Islamic remains in archaeological national policies.

After the Carnation Revolution, which brought democracy to the country in 1974, the postrevolutionary governments proclaimed the intention to, as formulated in the Fifth Government Program in 1975, “break the traditional separation between erudite culture, mass culture, and popular culture, institutionalizing means of commingling between these different layers and of overcoming the dichotomy between culture understood as legacy or acquired heritage and the living expressions of cultural creation of today.”⁶ The program proclaimed the support to the growing and pluralistic mobilization of cultural dynamics, mainly through the “active participation of local authorities, public-interest foundations, cultural, recreational, and youth associations, as well as schools and the media,”⁷ and in 1980 the Portuguese Institute of Cultural Heritage was created. These were the first efforts for democratizing heritage, intended to be socially inclusive, although still lacking concerns for cultural diversity and religious integration.

The 1976 constitution reiterated the freedom of consciousness and religion, condemned all religious persecutions, and clearly separated the state from the church, but it was only in 2001—the very same year when the Basic Law for Cultural Heritage regarding policies and regimes for its protection and enhancement was passed⁸—that the Law for Religious Freedom was enacted (Vilaça 2006). Still, Catholicism kept a regime of privilege that was legitimized, emphasizing its primacy in the constitution and the essence of Portuguese culture and heritage.

As elsewhere in Europe, a real heritage fever broke out in Portugal from the 1990s on (Fabre 1996), largely due to European Union incentives for regional development following Portugal's entry into the European community. By this time there were already several local and regional heritage and development associations, many of which had sprung from a post-revolution impetus for decentralization and subsequent impulses for regionalization.⁹ Some of these promoted heritage as resource for local development inspired by laic utopias and, paradoxically, played a fundamental role in the preservation and restoration of religious heritage, as was the case in Sintra and Mértola.

A progressive criticism regarding the exaltation of national identity based on the idea of the Portuguese Discoveries grew in many sectors. Nevertheless, in 1986 the National Commission for the Commemoration of the Discoveries was created, only to be dissolved in 2002. Similarly, more than a decade later, the 1998 Lisbon World Exposition had as its theme “The Oceans, a Heritage for the Future,” which in fact commemorated five hundred years of the Portuguese Discoveries.

The persistence of colonial ideas alongside the presence of the Catholic Church in the national genealogy and its celebration is also evident in the number and type of Portuguese heritage sites nominated by UNESCO. Beyond these national sites, there are twenty-six other sites in eighteen different countries, all of them integrated in the Network of World Heritage of Portuguese Origin—and thus directly tied to the Portuguese colonial empire—managed by Portugal (Cardeira da Silva 2013: 63). Regardless of the progressive spread of a multiculturalist rhetoric that is well matched to liberal cosmopolitanism and suitably supported by lusotropicalism, Portugal diplomatic engagements continue to favor relations with former colonies and celebrating *lusophonie*—thus exalting its colonial roots—even today. This multiculturalist rhetoric continues to be strongly inspired by the lusotropicalist discourse tied into an alleged Portuguese pioneering globalization with its most positive effects (Cardeira da Silva 2013: 63, 2015), especially at the cultural level—the early flourishing of “creative diversity” that neoliberalism would later come to celebrate and that is still one of its proclaimed corollaries.

Being traditionally a country of emigration, Portugal started receiving new flows of immigrants in particular after integration into the EU, in 1986.¹⁰ It thus became possible to find a diverse religiouscape where Brazilian charismatic Catholicism coexists with Punjabi Sikh and Hindu temples, Jewish congregations, Islamic groups, Evangelical, Neo-Pentecostal, and African churches (Sarró and Blanes 2009), Afro-Brazilian religions (Pordeus Jr. 2009; Saraiva 2008, 2013, 2016), Orthodox, Buddhists, as well as Neo-Pagan, Neo-Shaman, and Neo-Druid groups (Fedele 2013; Roussou 2017). These new migrants are people who no longer follow the colonial routes, and this has definitively rendered the cultural and religious diversity of the country more complex. With the acceleration of neoliberal politics, different governments engaged in what we could call (with Vertovec 1996) a public space of multiculturalism, giving visibility, at last, to ethnic and religious “minorities” and displaying layers of religious heritages in harmonious (or not so harmonious) ways. Would lusotropicalism be resilient enough to accommodate this new and, for some, disruptive “superdiversity” (Vertovec 2010)?

In 2004, the Commission for Religious Freedom was eventually established, with the objectives of denouncing the violations to religious freedom and promoting the dissemination of issues and events pertaining to religious liberty, and remains active to this day. Most minority religious groups try to organize themselves as NGOs to achieve empowerment as official religious associations and then apply to become “official religious entities,” recognized by this commission. Beyond the legal and economic advantages, what they really seek is official recognition as religious groups (Saraiva 2013). In spite of such achievement (since the creation of an official institution to handle religious diversity was discussed for decades before it was finally established) and the fact that the Portuguese religious universe is nowadays a plural one, the presence of the Catholic Church in the public sphere has by no means weakened. The incompleteness of an alleged disenchantment in Portugal is brought out by the over-presence of Catholic heritage in the public space (and in heritage nomination lists), which clearly overshadows the actual religious diversity of the country.

Sintra: Magic, Heritage, and Religious Freedom

On a hot summer day in July 2019, hundreds of visitors queue in front of the Pena Palace gate. Some of them take a *tuk-tuk* to reach the top of the hill, others even a carriage; coming from all over the world, they expect to see the grandiosity of the Romantic fairy-tale-like palace and later be able to still visit the Moorish castle, on the opposite side. They probably do not know enough of Portuguese history to see it as a testimony to the Portuguese Re-

conquest and early affirmation of nationality, but it is part of the tourist itinerary of Sintra and therefore “a must” for a selfie or a group portrait.

The enormous inflow of tourists who crowd the narrow streets of Sintra is considered very beneficial by shop and restaurant keepers, as well as by the enterprise that manages the site, Parques de Sintra-Monte da Lua (PSML), which uses the revenue from tourist entrance tickets to pay wages, restore monuments, take care of the landscape—and make a profit. It is considered detrimental by local inhabitants and Sintra aficionados (which includes the religious groups that use the mountain for their rituals), who feel such an invasion is overwhelmingly excessive and that the commodification of the site brought with it rules that are neither pleasant nor fair for them: there is hardly any traffic circulation, they have to pay to enter sites that are now fenced off and were previously open to all, and the surrounding landscape is also overrun, as Sintra loses its Romantic and elite touch.

In fact, known for its specific climatic location, with cool summers and mild winters, Sintra was the preferred space of nobility since the Middle Ages. But it was the Romantic period of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that, making use of Sintra’s long-standing mountain reputation as the sacred and magical “Moon Hill,” glorified it as a privileged destination and a center of European Romantic architecture and spirituality. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the consort King Ferdinand II of the Saxe-Coburg-Gotha dynasty, created an Orientalist Sintra of great scenographic impact. He transformed a ruined Hieronymite monastery—the former monastery of Our Lady of Pena from the early sixteenth century, damaged by the 1755 earthquake and vacant since the 1834 extinction of



Figure 7.1. Tourists taking selfies in Sintra. © Left Hand Rotation.

religious orders—into a Romantic castle, built a park that mixed local and exotic tree species, and reforested the Sintra mountain. The aristocracy and high bourgeoisie followed this Romantic impetus, and the palaces, quintas, and villas multiplied. Sintra attracted artists, writers, intellectuals, and travelers from all over the world and was cited in Beckford’s, Lord Byron’s, and Richard Strauss’s writings. As part of the Grand Tour of the Romantic era, it thus confirms itself as an Orientalist destination, maintaining the perfect corollary of the double position of Portugal, simultaneously object and subject of Orientalism (Vakil 2003; Cardeira da Silva 2005).¹¹

The liberal and secular ideals of the late nineteenth century and the 1910 republican revolution, both quite influential in the Sintra area, did not stop the manifestations of popular religiosity, despite the anticlerical initiatives (Silva 1993). In 1929 the Estado Novo founded the General Directorate of National Buildings and Monuments. Sintra was advertised as a national destination, part of the Portuguese soul and identity, where kings and nobility left their marks, and a living trope, a material trace of the glorious past of the country and its overseas feats. The Moorish Castle was a testimony to the triumph of Christianity, and in 1947 an important ceremony took place at the Sintra Town Palace to commemorate eight hundred years since its conquest. In 1970 the European Year of Nature Conservation was celebrated, and the Serra de Sintra was classified as natural heritage. The years following the 1974 revolution, however, were not so auspicious for Sintra. The separation between institutions in charge of the monuments and those in charge of the parks and forests would lead to decades-long poor management.

From Local Associations to UNESCO Classification

The situation of mismanagement and neglect persisted after 1974, and in the words of the president of one of the local heritage associations, there is still nowadays a memory that the monuments were “very much uncared for during the years following the revolution, as heritage was considered as something Fascist, tied to the memory of the great deeds of the Portuguese nation and colonialism.” Nevertheless, there was a local consciousness of the value of Sintra and its heritage, and this triggered the organization of several local civic associations, which preceded the official UNESCO heritage nomination: the Association for the Sintra Heritage Defense was founded in 1981; Veredas, the Cultural Cooperative of Sintra, in 1991; the Association of the Friends of Capuchos, the Association of the Friends of Monserrate, and the Association of the Friends of the Old Village all date from the 1990s; the Alagares Cultural Association was created in 2005 but had as predecessors many others. All these associations were (and are nowadays) crucial

to enhancing a heritage consciousness. Meanwhile, new state heritage regulations began to appear. The Monserrate Palace and park were classified as “public interest buildings” in 1975. The Pena Palace was restored in 1994 with its original colors: pink for the old monastery, ochre for the nineteenth century palace built by Ferdinand II. Environmental concerns arose, and the Sintra-Cascais Natural Park was created in 1994.

Sintra was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1995, after UNESCO expanded the World Heritage categories and established the cultural landscape criteria. The nomination of a cultural landscape to the World Heritage List requires an exceptional mixture of natural and cultural sites within a distinct framework. The Serra de Sintra represents a model of Romantic landscaping and is also an index for different architectural periods and historical groups that inhabited the country. In 2000 the enterprise Parques de Sintra–Monte da Lua (PSML) was created to manage the UNESCO-classified area, to safeguard the main cultural and natural public goods located in the area covered by the World Heritage Site. In 2017, the parks and monuments under management of Parques de Sintra received close to 3.2 million visitors.

The description of Sintra as a model of Romantic monumental and natural heritage is reproduced in a 2013 Portuguese UNESCO Commission/Ministry of Foreign Affairs publication, to celebrate thirty years of good practices in World Heritage management in Portugal (CN 2014: 7). It is stated that the document’s objective is “telling the Portuguese and our partners at UNESCO what Portugal has been doing to support the implementation of the World Heritage Convention and the projects that our World Heritage Sites have developed and which constitute good heritage practices” (CN 2014: 7). The enterprise Parques de Sintra–Monte da Lua is included in the list of acknowledgments, and under the title “The Virtuous Circle of Heritage Management,” the text describes its cultural and natural heritage management model as generating revenues through regular inflows of visitors, while preserving the outstanding universal value of the property, and rehabilitating monuments and parks, as well as improving the visitors’ experience.

Mass Consumption and Mysticism

One evening in 2018, after sunset, while tourists still shop for “typical” Portuguese artifacts, such as the renowned tiles (*azulejos*) or the famous Sintra pastries, another group gathers in front of one of the local coffee shops. They soon set off on a four-hour-long walk through the hills, as the guide says, “Relax and feel the special energy fill your body and soul, while you embrace a 200-year-old tree or climb up the hill.” This group is one of the

various religious groups that praise the mystical aura of Sintra, using the space for rituals, ceremonies, and contemplation. This has increased considerably in the last thirty years, in line with the increase in religious diversity in the country. Buddhists, Catholics, Pentecostals, Africans and Afro-Brazilians, Neo-Shamans, Neo-druids, Neo-Pagans, Masons, satanic groups, as well as many other New Age practitioners, all make use of this heritage site and claim the right to enjoy it. They support their claims by invoking the Portuguese Law of Religious Freedom (2001), their identities as religious groups, and the way their religious essences tie in with the “magic of Sintra” and how, as citizens, they are therefore entitled to benefit from a space that they postulate was used by their ancestors, practicing worship in the area for centuries. They therefore criticize the way PSML has fenced out many of the spaces previously used for rituals, as well as the way the enterprise has security guards patrolling the area throughout the night, thus constraining their practices. As Astor, Burchardt, and Grier (2017: 129) state for the Spanish case, what minority religious groups do when they try to acquire the status of official religions is that they use their counter-hegemonic discourses on freedom of religion rights and combine it with heritage discourses in order to challenge existing power relations.

In Portugal, as elsewhere in Europe, there has been an increase in public discussions on the proliferation of religious diversity as problematic and as an obstacle to modernization, democracy, individual liberty, and civic rights, in parallel with discourses that frame religion as cultural heritage (Astor, Burchardt, and Grier 2017: 127). On the one hand, several articles in the constitution proclaim religious freedom; on the other, individuals feel that their rights are under attack if they go for a walk in the Sintra park and find a *despacho*, an offering made by members of an Afro-Brazilian congregation. Such *despachos* often include unpleasant items, such as bones, blood, or daggers, which cause panic and discomfort, especially to individuals with a mainstream Catholic affiliation (Saraiva 2013). To reinforce this displeasure, the use of candles or fires in the rituals presents a real fire hazard. The question of whether the expansion of official heritage discourses to include minority heritages necessarily generates an expansion of minority rights (Astor, Burchardt, and Grier 2017: 130) is a suitable discussion to have in this case, as is the acceptance of religious heritage as a basis for collective recognition and group rights (Astor, Burchardt, and Grier 2017:132).

Besides the groups that have more religious or philosophical approaches, other such events, with stronger historical components, stress the exceptionality of Sintra and of the Portuguese. Various episodes involving “holy individuals” throughout the centuries, as historical or invented characters, come to life in the explanations of tour guides. For instance, in the words of one of them, “Here we are now in the cave where the holy man Friar Honório lived

and died, a man unique in the world, and of course, Portuguese,” or “This is the spot where king D. Manuel saw Vasco da Gama’s fleet arriving from India, and so decided to build a monastery to thank Our Lady for this glorious accomplishment.”¹² Such introductions lead to long stories based on the Portuguese feats, thus drawing on the “hidden” vernacular lusotropicalism and, by reiterating these lusotropes, adding a “layer of exceptionalism to the theme of the great early empire” (Bastos 2018: 257).

Besides the reactions to and criticism of PSML from the various religious groups, the other spheres that strongly oppose that management are the local heritage associations. They criticize the excessive commodification of Sintra, which takes away its magic and mystery, as well as their comfort and peace as residents.

Many local heritage associations are active, both promoting debates, seminars, public interventions, and various events and trying to balance the positive effects of the UNESCO classification—as the conservation and rehabilitation actions of PSML—with the negative consequences of the tremendous tourist flows that collide with the everyday lives of local inhabitants. One such association stopped the planned construction of a large parking lot in the village center and fights against the construction of new hotels, which, according to them, might take the UNESCO classification away.

It was also one such association that fought to preserve the Capuchos convent in the 1990s, when several Sintra monuments were not cared for by the local or national entities and were illicitly occupied by homeless people and others, resulting in fires that would actually destroy some of them. As one of the founders of the Association for the Defense of Capuchos stated, “That very same day I went there with the apostolic nuncio and saw all the burned candles, the empty bottles, and the still-warm fires; I knew we had to do something to preserve the space before it was too late. That very same day I and other local friends created the association.”¹³ In fact, many advocate that it was the role of this association that enhanced the awareness that something had to be done to prevent the destruction of both natural and monumental heritage and triggered Sintra’s submission to UNESCO World Heritage classification.

Nevertheless, both religious groups and local associations make use of a discourse informed by vernacular lusotropicalism: a history invoking the lusotropes of religious and cultural tolerance and of the glorious Portuguese history, where notions of the past often suppress multiple constituencies (Geismar 2015: 72). New Age groups talk about the religious connection with nature already present in the prehistoric rites and medieval religious orders (as is the case with the Capuchos convent), while they invoke the law of religious freedom to highlight their right to worship and practice their rituals. Members of local heritage associations emphasize the Portuguese

achievements, especially the way this is a pivotal region to observe the richness and diversity of national cultural stratigraphy (the various groups—Celts, Iberians, Romans, Muslims, etc.—that, for centuries, contributed to the formation of the Portuguese nation), which is ultimately the cement of lusotropicalism. When several associations defend different heritage regimes in opposition to that of the State (De Cesari 2013), they often end up doing the same and forgetting the multiple contributions from people who make up the country’s present ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity. Even religious groups resort to (vernacular) lusotropicalism when they invoke Portuguese traditions and history and, very explicitly, lusotropical ideas of the importance of the Portuguese in the establishment of the relations between Africa, Portugal, and Brazil, which was in fact a colonial era slave route. While extolling the cosmopolitan diversity represented by the World Heritage Site, all such groups and associations forget that Sintra municipality—which includes a large area between Lisbon and the village, populated by working-class immigrant minorities—is the most diverse in Portugal in ethnic and religious terms; those immigrants hardly visit or feel connected to the nearby World Heritage Site. As Bastos (2018: 257) puts it, lusotropicalism “not only masked the harsh and bitter reality—past and present—it also continues to provide a language, an appealing evasion, that makes the speaker feel good and special.” Even without consciously acknowledging it, this is what local guides, visitors, associations, and stakeholders do when they invoke Sintra’s heritage as directly connected to the exceptional Portuguese past, thus repeatedly appealing to the lusotropical Portuguese trope of grandiosity and tolerance.

Mértola: Islam as Heritage, Resource, and Performance

A major flood of the Guadiana River in 1876 uncovered important ruins in Mértola, and the archaeologist Estácio da Veiga was sent by the government to implement the Recognition of the Antiquities of the Right Bank of the Guadiana, placing the village for the first time on the national heritage scene. Estácio da Veiga’s heritage conceptions corresponded to those of a positivist archaeology at the service of national but also regional ethnogenesis,¹⁴ criticizing earlier Romantic para-archaeological initiatives that lacked systematic and methodological organization (Veiga, in Cardoso 2007: 350). And his vision led him to the systematic and intensive collection of all traces of “antiquity,” including that of the Moors. His discoveries herald the archaeological treasure that would unfold in its splendor just a century later.

Looking at the list of monuments classified already in 1909, we see a topography that privileges the northern regions of the country, corresponding

to an asymmetric conception of national history and typology of heritage: the North was (1) “the cradle of the nation” and (2) the landscape of Roman and Christian monumentality. This is an asymmetry that still exists today, and to confirm it, we have only to look at the maps of the distribution of the classification of built heritage.¹⁵ However, in this map, Mértola was already under consideration, with its Roman Bridge and Mother Church. The church, in fact, was the mosque that, like other Islamic peninsular temples, was transformed into a church after the Reconquest.

From 1910 onward, and with the republican willingness to collect cultural resources, the first archaeological charts and monographs with ethnogenetic concerns came to stay, especially in areas neglected by the central power, such as the southern provinces (like the Alentejo, where Mértola is located). Thus, this period of patrimonialization can be summed up, with regard to the Arab and Islamic traces, as a set of heritage procedures (mostly restricted to inventorying and classification) that had the purpose either of spicing up national history or of displaying these regional ingredients with a view to moderately enhancing a southern autochthony. But in the ethnogenealogical narrative that presided over this positivist period—in which archaeology was the scientific warranty of the national roots, authenticity, and heritage—religion was subsumed under the idea of *civilization*, just as beliefs and traditions were neglected in favor of more material and monumental remains, which gave body and substance to the emerging idea of modern heritage.

With the advent of the Estado Novo led by the dictator Salazar, local pride and regional fervor were neglected in favor of a nationalist, centralist, and authoritarian spirit. Although medieval heritage exalted by the Romantics fitted well with the Estado Novo nationalist perspective, the Islamic and Arab vestiges were not archaeologically explored, in order to better exhibit the previous Roman roots or the Reconquest that led to the nation’s creation. Even so, it was not until 1943 that the castle of Mértola, a Gothic castle erected in the late thirteenth century over an Arab *alcáçova* (fortified palace), was classified as a building of public interest. Only in 1951 did it become a national monument, and it was later included in the vast consolidation and restoration campaign of the General Directorate of National Buildings and Monuments. Indeed, although Mértola was included in the national heritage road map, the little that was exhibited and promoted during the Estado Novo was never its brilliance and prosperity throughout the Islamic period, but always the monumentality of the previous epoch or the military success of the Christian Reconquest that overcame Muslim rule, opening the doors to the constitution of the Christian Portuguese nation. Even when the rehabilitation works of the church in 1949 revealed an Islamic mihrab behind the Catholic altar, the true thickness and cultural continuity it testified was not acknowledged.

During the *Estado Novo*, the Alentejo was also a territory with a strong revolutionary symbolism, marked by the conflict between the rich landowners and the exploited rural workers. Contributing to its regional exaltation was therefore not in line with the regime's cultural and heritage policies, and much less the display of important traces of the impressive Arab presence. Paradoxically, as we have seen, the same regime would resort in its final phase to the lusotropicalist narrative to justify its late colonialism—a narrative that based part of its original genealogical argument on the Arab and Islamic heritage that the Portuguese had absorbed so well in the inaugural moment of the construction of the nation in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

From Left-Wing Utopia to Cosmo-optimism: Mértola Vila Museu

Following the 1974 Carnation Revolution, the Agrarian Reform would begin, in 1975, with the occupation of land by the workers and great revolutionary engagement. Cláudio Torres, a professor at the University of Lisbon, founded the Archaeological Field of Mértola (*Campo Arqueológico de Mértola*) and proposed to survey the Archaeological Charter of the Municipality. Due to the articulation of the Archaeological Field with the Heritage Defense Association and the city hall, Mértola became, in the 1980s, an example of the convergence of multidisciplinary academic practice that placed the material and immaterial heritage at the service of regional and local development. The archaeological and cultural stratigraphy of the village was explored to denounce previous nationalist history, recovering and integrating the Arab and Berber (Amazigh) presence in the past and displaying it in the present as a cultural and economic resource for the region. The label of Mértola Vila Museu (Museum Village) was created, and between the late 1990s and early 2000s several museological nuclei were founded. In the same period, contacts with North Africa (particularly Morocco) multiplied, and partnerships were developed with other similar developmental and regionalist projects in Spanish Andalusia, such as Almonaster, which already promoted an Islamic festival.

Beyond the revolutionary impetus that drove it, the breadth of regional development in Mértola was determined by Portugal's entry into the European Union. While on the one hand this made it possible to use the EU's structural funds for development, on the other it obliged leftist partisans—reticent to accept European integration—to politically affirm the roots and ties in and with the South and the consequent rehabilitation of the role of Muslims in national history and identity (Cardeira da Silva 2005). Paradox-



Figure 7.2. Islamic Festival, 2019. © CRIA.

ically, it is also the Mértola Archaeological Field that—leading its secularist local development project—collected, rehabilitated, restored, and today exhibits—one could say re-sacralizes—the scattered pieces of sacred art of Alentejo Catholicism formerly abandoned by the church and the state. One of its museums is dedicated to it and placed right in front of the Islamic Museum. Both were inaugurated in 2001.

From the 1990s—with particular emphasis on post-9/11—and until at least the first decade of the twenty-first century, Mértola fed into the national multiculturalist rhetoric and progressively got into what Geertz (1986: 257) designated as the “desperate tolerance of UNESCO cosmopolitanism.” Both in diplomatic discourse on approaching Islamic countries and in formulations for inclusive citizen administration when it comes to Muslims, Mértola emerges as the undisputed icon of an atavistic Islamophilia, which finds its roots in the national foundation itself. The village epitomizes the old colonial lusotropicalist trope that Portugal recovered in the post-revolution era as a formula for national identity. The Islamic Community of Lisbon—the Muslims’ privileged interlocutor with the government—adopted the same discourse and gave Mértola the same centrality (Cardeira da Silva 2005). This was especially useful at a time when Portugal redefined the Religious Freedom Act (2001). As a result of all the investments of the last two decades of academic, heritage, and museological venture, the scenographic conditions for the cultural spectacle are created: since 2001, and every two years, Mértola holds a so-called Islamic Festival.

The Way to Commodification of Heritage and Aesthetic Cosmopolitanism

Today, we can say that the Campo Arqueológico de Mértola has seen better days. Funds for local development and scientific research are scarce, and revolutionary impetus has faded since the first edition of the Islamic Festival. Margarida and José, who in their youth actively participated in conservation and the first museographic ventures and enthusiastically supported the first Islamic Festival, hosting artisans specially invited from Morocco, are now public servants at the municipality in different terms: it is more their technological skills than their integrated cultural knowledge that matters today. We have followed (and filmed) their engagement and work before, during, and after the preparation of the two last editions of the festival (2017 and 2019). They are the ones who currently lead the festival production (responsible for its curatorship, cultural programming, and scenography in all the details and often building and painting the sets themselves), but always with a nostalgic vision of the first editions back in 2001, when everybody participated, *genuine* artists and artisans came from Morocco, and science, economy, and culture merged together in a very egalitarian vein, according to them.

During the festival days it becomes increasingly clear how different political, religious, and economic projects converged over the years into a symbolically dense site, making use of different displays and scenographies, on different stages, to exhibit their often contradictory ideologies. With a resident population of no more than twenty-five hundred inhabitants, Mértola welcomed more than forty thousand visitors during the May festival in 2019, and when asked what the biggest pilgrimage in the region is, people often answer, “The Islamic Festival.” Mértola quickly entered the circuit of commodification of heritage and aesthetic cosmopolitanism, and the municipal mode of production fulfills a calendar of regular fairs and festivals.

The Mértola Islamic Festival might well be seen as a mere commodity of the aesthetic cosmopolitanism market. Like many other festivals and historical re-creations, it follows the pattern of re-enactment of the past and heritage claims and, like some of them, claims and commoditizes *authenticity* as a value and consumable good, while not refusing *replica* and *merchandizing*. Its vernacular and fluid Orientalism, mingling “vintage and antique” objects with “natural” goods and products of Andalusian inspiration or “Oriental” performances, endorses a deceptive apolitical scene that, in fact, overshadows different modern paradoxes under its festive and folkloristic atmosphere. Religion and heritage, faith and science, academic and vernacular Orientalism, relics and replicas, ritual and performance share the same stages, and this evinces the random character of all these categorization limits.

But the recent history of Mértola and its founding project of participative development grounded in archaeology are nowadays Mértola heritage in and of themselves. Those particular actors who strive to exhibit and safeguard this specific heritage are probably the main actors responsible for the success of the Islamic Festival. Beyond their expertise on restoration and cultural exhibition—which they had acquired in the 1980s from working at the archaeological site and now apply to the festival production—they actually act as the *living* (and *endangered*) heirs of that particular heritage, one that allows us to reach and re-create a deeper legacy: that of Al-Andalus and the cosmopolitan Mediterranean.

An “Islamic Festival”

After becoming the subject of some discussion, the 2019 edition of the festival was scheduled within the month of Ramadan. Commercial interests took precedence over religious obligations. Muslim participants—mostly immigrants working with Moroccan firms specialized in fairs and markets held all over Portugal and Spain—were tired and not happy; but then, “It was work, and we cannot refuse it,” they said. Since the first Islamic Festival, alongside archaeologists and academics, suq vendors and municipality employees, different participants have conquered the scene. In a country where the Muslim community does not exceed fifty thousand, very few are Mértola residents. At first, the Islamic Community of Lisbon had a symbolic, merely sanctioning presence. In the last edition, only the Portuguese Ismaili Community was present, but merely through the performance of its choir group. However, since the first edition, the Almorabitun of Seville (and some others from Granada, all of whom are also participants in the Islamic Fair of Almonaster) have been protagonists of the festival, ensuring that all activities and goods stay within what they consider halal—demanding, for example, a ban on the sale of alcohol and pork inside the suq and leading the prayers around the church/mosque (demands that they did not achieve at the festival in neighboring Spain).

At the tenth edition of the festival in 2019, the members of the Islamic Junta de Sevilla participated as always, albeit after some hesitation due to Ramadan. At sunset they made the call for prayer to mark the end of fasting, just outside the mosque, with their backs to the mihrab and Mértola at their feet, a nice framing and photo opportunity that many tourists rushed to seize. The Andalusian scenario that the Campo Arqueológico team builds every two years is attractive for the exercise of *dikhr* (Sufi rituals) and *dawa* (Islamic predicament) of these neo-Andalusian communities, whose reli-

rious performances, in turn, provide extra authenticity to the stage. In Mértola's festival, religion, heritage, and market (the *suq*) seem to be detached, but only as much as necessary to better feed off each other, without apparent contamination. Nevertheless, the fact that its stage is mainly occupied by neo-Andalusian rather than by other Portuguese Muslim communities shows us that it is the patrimonialized scenario of Andalusia rather than the plot—its historical narrative of national and local culture, religious roots and their contemporary configurations—that is attractive here.

Conclusion

One historical reason for not being able to separate the concept of heritage from that of religion is the fact that it was, paradoxically, the impulse of secularization that enabled the constitution of the first large heritage collection: that which resulted from the destruction of religious orders and the nationalization of their properties. The first patrimonial assets were, in fact, of religious origin. As we see in the cases presented here, despite the separation of church and state, the Catholic Church has, for a long time, maintained ambiguous and close relations with the state and still holds, today, a dominant presence in national representations. Both seek to adapt to the basic values of human rights and to the liberal international norms of public policies in contexts of multiculturalism: the Catholic Church, with its relative autonomy in relation to the Portuguese state, using the discourse of ecumenical Christianity; the state, recycling the old lusotropicalist rhetoric, which in so many other historical and political occasions served as the nation's cement, first to legitimize its late colonialism, nowadays to declare and exhibit its "natural" and uncontested compliance with cultural and religious rights.

The celebration of the Mértola Islamic Festival from 2001 onward helps us to rethink the concerted action of various agents with different objectives in an arena of liberalization and commodification of multiculturalism, simultaneously marked by the calendar of a local production and the agenda of international agencies such as UNESCO.¹⁶ The current narrative around Mértola, transcribed into the justification of its outstanding universal value, replicates effortlessly the lusotropicalist trope of national identity, as in the file of UNESCO's tentative list: "Knowledge of the past is indispensable for understanding current phenomena and it may be an important tool used in the service of awareness for such important values like multiculturalism, tolerance, and respect for others." In the case of Sintra, such multiculturalism, fully present nowadays in the municipality, is in the books, brochures, and discourses about the UNESCO classified site, transformed into an Orientalist and nationalistic scenario where conflicts over the recognition of various

identities (Geismar 2015) are not present. Even local associations, with various ideas concerning what Sintra's heritage regimes should be, abide in the end to such consensual lusotropes.

With these examples, it could be said that, as in other matters, Portugal is a good follower of liberalization policies and that cultural and religious diversity is progressively celebrated in the public space, despite the evident centrality of the Catholic Church. The pervasiveness of heritage rhetoric is rooted in the continuous production of imagery, practices, discourses, and institutions that sustain its principles. Heritage places are used to perform and overlook the nation's conformity with universal cultural and religious rights. Better than spaces of "culture" or of "history," spaces of heritage, as *curated* culture and history, serve the purposes of an imagined transnational community and the normative cosmo-optimism of a global heritage regime (Geismar 2015; Von Oswald, Lidchi, and Macdonald 2017). On the other hand, "recognition is cheaper than representation or equality. Identity is a soft substitute for sovereignty" (Noyes 2005: 171), and the Portuguese cases presented in this volume show that what is celebrated is not necessarily the diversity or the experienced religiosity (much less by the believers of minority religions).

In Mértola, a village where hardly any Muslims live, an inclusive ethno-genesis is celebrated, with an Islam that does not relate to the different ways in which it is lived and celebrated in Portugal. In Sintra, a municipality that is one of the most culturally and religiously diverse in the country, a mere aesthetic Orientalism for the consumption of tourists is displayed, enhanced by a strong commoditization of heritage. In fact, in both cases, it is true that religion and diversity are promoted, but as heritage and hence as curated national history.¹⁷ Looking back at a curated past and disregarding the actual present, vernacular lusotropicalism embedded in heritage practice persists as an inclusive and conciliatory myth of both nationalist and cosmopolitan conformity, with a value-added service for tourism (hospitality and safety) and for national conciliation, pacification, and self-esteem, as well as to justify (controversial) heritage management policies. Therefore, we may understand lusotropicalism as a sacralized heritage in itself. And yet, paradoxically, its endurance and omnipresence testify against what it claims to celebrate: its capacity to provide a place for other heritages and religions.

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Islamophobia and national and European public policies regarding Islamic heritage in Europe, focusing on the ways that Portuguese state, academy, and Muslim communities make use of Islamic heritage to assert and disseminate its religious and political identities and legitimacy.

Clara Saraiva is a social and cultural anthropologist and senior researcher at the Centre for Comparative Studies, Lisbon University. She was a visiting professor at the University of California, Berkeley (2013) and Brown University and a research fellow at the Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown (2001–2, 2008). She researches the anthropology of religion and ritual, also in relation with heritage studies, and has conducted fieldwork in Portugal, Brazil, and several African countries. She is coeditor (with Peter Jan Margry) of the Lit Verlag series on Ethnology of Religion. She is president of the Association of Portuguese Anthropology, and a board member of both the World Anthropological Associations (WCAA) and of the WCAA Ethics Task Force. She is also past vice president of the Society for Ethnology and Folklore (SIEF), where she is board member of the Working Group on Religion.

NOTES

1. The word “heritage” is established in UNESCO only in 1950 (Desvallées 2003), translating an allegedly consensual and transnational idea of what is understood as *cultural heritage* under a global heritage regime. To talk about “heritagization” before that may thus be misleading. The French word and semantics as an international driver in these matters prevailed until then. It is important not to assume that under this global regime all nations and people *perceive* heritage (or *patrimoine*) in the same ways or that all states make use of and manage it in similar forms. A politically shared world does not engender semantic homogeneity. See, among many others, Oulebsir and Swenson 2015 and Bendix 2011.
2. The lusotropicalist theory was engineered by Gilberto Freyre, a Brazilian sociologist, to inspire the idea of a Brazilian “racial democracy.” This was subsequently imported by the Portuguese dictatorship (see, among others, Castelo 1998).
3. The text is based on archival research and fieldwork undertaken in the scope of the HERILGION project The Heritagization of Religion and the Sacralization of Heritage in Contemporary Europe, funded by Humanities in the European Research Area (HERA), grant 5087-00505A), carried out from September 2016 to January 2020 by the Portuguese team. In Sintra, it was led by Clara Saraiva, with the participation of junior researchers Roberta Boniolo and Francesca di Luca. Besides participation observation with visitors, activities organized by associations, NGOs and other stakeholders, in-depth interviews were carried out with representatives of local associations, stakeholders, and various religious groups. In Mértola, the work was headed by Maria Cardeira da Silva. Interviews were undertaken with researchers (and former researchers) of the Campo Arqueológico de Mértola, mem-

bers of the Junta Islâmica de Sevilla, City Council employees, festival staff, and visitors. These were recorded and filmed with consent, with the support of Jonas Amarante and Virtudes Tellez. Visual and documental archives of Campo Arqueológico de Mértola, city hall, and National Museum of Archaeology were explored. Several field trips were carried out to follow the preparation of two editions of the (biannual) Islamic Festivals and three editions of the (annual) Jornadas Islâmicas de Almonaster.

4. This is particularly evident in the work of Alexandre Herculano (1810–77), a central figure of Portuguese Romanticism, regarded as the founder of both modern historiography and the development of the idea of heritage.
5. The *política do espírito*, created to shape and exhibit the national character through the arts, craft, and heritage, was led by António Ferro, responsible for the propaganda of the Salazar regime.
6. Fifth Government Program on Culture 1975, <https://www.historico.portugal.gov.pt/pt/o-governo/arquivo-historico/governos-constitucionais/gc05/programa-do-governo/programa-do-governo-constitucional-5.aspx>.
7. Sixth Government Program on Culture 1975, <https://www.historico.portugal.gov.pt/pt/o-governo/arquivo-historico/governos-provisorios/gp06/programa-do-governo/programa-do-vi-governo-provisorio.aspx>.
8. This was later followed by the signing of the UNESCO Intangible Heritage Convention in 2008.
9. Despite the complaints by academics about the lack of participation of civil society (and academia itself) in the processes of legislative definition regarding the definition of intangible heritage, it is in the register of this type of heritage that we find a greater social participation today, a definite bottom-up approach.
10. Among numerous studies on the condition of the country as a host nation see, for instance, Bastos and Bastos (2006), Vala (1999), and Machado (2002).
11. Both these authors, Vakil and Cardeira da Silva, discuss this issue, that is, the way Portugal was Orientalized—in the Said sense—as object but also subject of Orientalism: Portugal Orientalized the South but in turn was also Orientalized by central and northern European elites.
12. Examples taken during some of the organized walks through the site in 2019.
13. Interview with one of the association leaders in 2019.
14. We are talking about “ethnogenesis” and “ethnogenealogy” in the sense Díaz-Andreu and Champion (1996) and other historians of European archaeology and ethnography use them to describe the role of positivist archaeology, along with positivist ethnography, to legitimize the roots of “national” and/or “regional” cultures in the making of nationalisms and regionalisms in nineteenth-century Europe.
15. Something that replicates the asymmetry of UNESCO World Heritage maps.
16. Mértola is now on the tentative list of UNESCO.
17. In 1995 there was an unusual flow of Iranian Shiite pilgrims to Fátima, triggered by a book that sought the origins of Portuguese religiosity in Muslim Fatimism. Called to intervene publicly as a representative of the Islamic Community of Lisbon, the imam of the Sunni mosque, having been surprised by the inclusion of Fátima in the itinerary of such an unusual visit, suggested the alternative diversion via Mértola: “There, yes, there is a clear Islamic heritage” (Cardeira da Silva 2005; Vale de Almeida 2004).

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