

# Nationalism and archaeology in Europe

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## CHAPTER FIVE

# Archaeology and nationalism: the Portuguese case

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### Introduction

The topic of archaeology and nationalism is one that demands a clear distinction between what I call “the author’s speech”, the specific opinions and beliefs of an author, and the “regime speech”, the official appropriation of an author’s speech for ideological purposes. The former should embrace all archaeological writings, including this one, given the involvement of any author with his or her beliefs and with the time when he or she lives and writes. Obviously, whenever “archaeology and nationalism” is concerned, attention is drawn to the “regime speech”, despite the difficulties of defining the limits between the two areas of speech.

Generally speaking, there have been no remarkable cases in Portugal of a nationalistic appropriation of archaeological interpretations or of uses of archaeological monuments as national symbols. Portugal was a kingdom with stable boundaries from the thirteenth century onwards, and lost her political autonomy for only a short period, from 1580 to 1640, when combined with other kingdoms under the Castilian crown. Thus, centralized power has a long tradition in Portugal, despite the lack of a geographical unity to the country. In Portuguese nationalistic speech, some issues received special attention, such as the foundation of the country and its defence against both the other peninsular Christian kingdoms and chiefly the Muslim power, the several conflicts with Castile and, of course, the overseas exploration in the “Age of Discoveries”. Such a context helps to explain the small role of prehistoric, Roman and Muslim issues (the latter intentionally banned from the Portuguese historical heritage, especially by the authoritarian regimes from 1926 to 1974) in the making of any nationalistic “regime speech”, since they refer to a political geography and to a time when Portugal did not exist as an historical subject. On the contrary, all those “glorious

moments” were used by different regimes, despite some obviously ideological variations – for example, the “diffusion of Christian faith and empire” during the “Age of Discoveries” claimed by the authoritarian regimes of the first half of twentieth century, becomes, today, “a pioneer action of the North/South dialogue” . . .

Nevertheless, there are enough examples of authors writing in a tone of nationalistic speech, most of the time emphasizing their own archaeological researches, or even the archaeological evidence itself, as something socially relevant in the face of a supposed public and official indifference. So, the present text will be confined to cases that give good examples of “author’s speech” with a nationalistic tone.

During the nineteenth century, as in other European countries, three main “schools” might be identified in Portuguese archaeology: the most important and innovative of all was the naturalist school, mainly related to the Geological Commission created in 1857, which carried out important fieldwork on sites such as caves, shell middens and hill forts, but not in a nationalistically oriented manner; secondly, the antiquarian school, represented by educated gentlemen or clergy concerned with antiquities, particularly those related to the classical period, collecting them for personal purposes, or to create local museums; and thirdly, the palaeo-ethnological school, not so different from the antiquarian one in its procedures, but especially concerned with ethno-historical subjects. Naturally, the authors that one may ascribe to the last of these scientific purposes provide the most interesting picture of nationalistic approaches.

There are also examples of explanations and accounts ascribing to some monuments an emblematic or symbolic function, which lacks archaeological or any other empirical support. In such cases, Portuguese scholars have by their silence contributed to the survival of those legends. They represent a few examples of the fragility of Portuguese archaeological research as well as its inability to reach a wide public.

### **Archaeology and national identity**

The widespread idea of Portugal as a country caring about her past is the greatest paradox of contemporary Portuguese culture. This idea, shared by foreign observers, by the public and even by many Portuguese writers, is dramatically contradicted by historians and archaeologists. As a matter of fact, monuments, archives and historical or archaeological research have not attracted real attention in Portugal, despite the systematic use of some historical periods, as cited above, for political goals. So, the “use and abuse of

history” has been a common practice from the absolute monarchy of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to the new democratic republic of today, a long period of Portuguese history filled with different political regimes: constitutional monarchy during the nineteenth century, democratic republic in the early twentieth, military dictatorship from 1926 to 1933 and an authoritarian regime called *Estado Novo* (New State) from 1933 to 1974. Some of these political regimes appeared to have a genuine interest in protecting the cultural heritage, even promoting innovative ideas by promulgating important laws. However, the lack of effectiveness and of consistent implementation have inhibited the development of research and of a coherent cultural policy.

The Real Academia de Historia (Royal Academy of History) was created by royal initiative in 1720, in a peculiar cultural context, with an absolutist king, João V, with strong Catholic beliefs; it was the first institution with an important role in the making of a national identity. The writing of the ecclesiastical and secular history of the kingdom was its aim, having collected and registered both prehistoric and historic archaeological data. Within the scope of its activities, the first national record of the cultural heritage was promoted and the earliest law for the defence of the archaeological heritage was enacted on 20 August 1721 (Almeida 1965; Fabião 1989: 16–18). A few aspects of the law deserve some comment. First, it was stipulated that the protection of ancient monuments that go back to the time of “Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, Goths, Muslims” was an interesting matter for the “glory of the Portuguese Nation”; secondly, it was established that all the remains from those times until the reign of King Sebastião – the last Portuguese king before the Castilian annexation – should be protected too. So, for the first time, all the remains of ancient civilizations were assumed to be a subject of cultural interest for the nation and, on the other hand, all the issues that could be seen as memorials of a past, which could enshroud the glory of the nation, were rejected.

Among the Academy’s publications there were several papers dealing with ancient history, including works on prehistoric evidence, namely megalithic tombs. These were thought to be important ecclesiastical structures, since they were seen as the most ancient Catholic altars. Nevertheless, the Academy’s activities did not go any further in the study of ancient history, since its main goals were in fact to establish the historical legitimacy of the ruling dynasty as well as to glorify the very ancient Catholic tradition of the kingdom. Here lies the reason for the special interest in the megalithic tombs. In the context of eighteenth-century Europe, the King of Portugal wanted to proclaim his true devotion to the Catholicism and the very old Catholic tradition of his people.

But, of course, the most important intellectual movement for the historical construction of national identity emerged in Portugal with the Romantic liberals in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Breaking up the humanist paradigm, the Middle Ages were promoted as the real era of the foundation of the nation. Alexandre Herculano (1810–77), the first Portuguese historian in a modern sense, defined the birth of the nation as an act of political will, thus denying any relationship between the Portuguese people and any other preceding populations on Portuguese territory (Herculano 1868: 46–8). Herculano's civic and pedagogic attitude extended to a theory of cultural heritage, claiming special protection for the truly Portuguese monuments rather than for the relics of remoter ages.

As happened elsewhere, in Portugal the humanists had also been the first to have regard for the "antiquities", especially for the Roman heritage. Though some intellectuals, such as Fr Bernardo de Brito (1569–1617), had directed their attention to more ancient times as a topic of research, attributing biblical origins to the populations of the Portuguese territory – something quite common among European intellectuals at that time – others such as André de Resende (1500–73) regarded these concepts as useless, given the absence of empirical evidence. Resende, following the trend of his time, looked at the Roman archaeological remains of Evora as convincing proofs of the nobility of his home town. The linkage of the ancient Lusitania with Portugal is due to the work of these authors, but rather on the basis of erudite rhetoric than any historical foundation. Resende was the creator of the word "Lusíadas" as a neologism of "Lusitanians" (i.e. the Portuguese), a word that became the title of the great epic poem by Luiz Vaz de Camões, first published in 1572, the greatest nationalistic symbol of Portuguese culture. However, as will be shown below, such an identification met different goals, not always just rhetorical ones.

Herculano's thesis on the medieval origins of the Portuguese state was reinforced by Oliveira Martins (1845–94) in his two very popular syntheses, both published in 1879, one dealing with the general history of Portugal and the other with the general history of the Iberian civilizations. The author not only elaborated the thesis of the political foundation of Portugal in the medieval period but also stated the existence of a cultural background with common features shared with other regions of the Spanish territory. So, to Herculano and Martins, the origins of the Portuguese nation were medieval, with no connections with other ancient political or cultural features.

Ever since, all Portuguese archaeological work with nationalistic purposes has been trying, without great success, to integrate the ancient heritage into a concept of historical identity contrary to the thesis of Herculano and Martins. José Leite de Vasconcellos (1858–1941), the first director of the

National Museum of Archaeology and Professor of Archaeology in the University of Lisbon, was the first to contradict the eminent historians. His arguments were not very consistent. Using linguistics, he claimed Portugal as the continuation of the ancient Lusitania, since the Portuguese language is the natural development of the Luso-Roman language. This was certainly a circular argument, valid for any Latin nation, from Romania to Italy. Reinforcing this idea, he asserted that there were many modern toponyms with a pre-Roman origin, as a matter of fact all known from Latin epigraphy or from references in classical authors. Last but not least, he believed that many popular traditions, of certain pre-Christian origin (pagan, in his words), could go back to pre-Roman times (Vasconcellos 1897: xxv-xxvii).

Francisco Martins Sarmiento (1833-99), a wealthy gentleman from north-western Portugal and another pioneer of Portuguese archaeology, had already made an important contribution to the Lusitanian question. In his historical-philological studies he argued for a pre-Celtic origin of Lusitanian. That pre-Celtic character gave to the Lusitanians a kind of certification of ethnic purity, not affected by later contaminations, attributable to their peripheral geographic setting (Sarmiento 1933: 129-52; first published in 1884). Denying any ethnic linkage with the Celts and ascribing Lusitanian origins backwards, Martins Sarmiento was asserting the origin of the Portuguese in the context of the Iberian Peninsula, given the assumption of a common Celtic background in a great part of that geographical area. The same author, studying two hill forts in northwestern Portugal - Briteiros and Sabroso - which he thought to be Lusitanian settlements, believed that a well preserved cultural identity linked to a first wave of pre-Celtic Aryan peoples had survived untouched until the Roman conquest (Sarmiento 1933: 41-60, 100-28, 338-415; the articles were first published in 1880, 1882 and 1890). Sarmiento was also the first author to connect megalithic tombs to hill forts (1933: 290-5), a thesis that was later used to "prove" the character of the "ancient Portuguese". Nevertheless, the main difficulty for the Portuguese archaeologists of the late nineteenth century was, obviously, the lack of empirical data to present as convincing arguments, as very few archaeological sites had been excavated and studied.

In the early twentieth century, António Augusto Mendes Correia (1888-1960), in an important work that was for many years the only synthesis of Portuguese prehistory and protohistory, presented one of the most genuine examples of a nationalistic interpretation of the "remote Portugal". The title of the work was sufficiently clear: "Pre-Roman Lusitania" (Correia 1928a). Such a title took Lusitania and Portugal as synonymous and, since it dealt with prehistoric archaeological remains of the entire country, assumed that a pre-figuration of the Portuguese nation should be found in prehistoric times.

Mendes Correia, inspired by the first works of the Spanish archaeologist Bosch-Gimpera, intended to contradict Herculano's point of view in the light of new archaeological evidence, taking into account the large number of megalithic tombs in Portuguese territory. He focused his attention on megaliths and on the Lusitanians and Viriatus as symbols of the Portuguese nation.

### *Megalithic Portugal*

There were several attempts to use megalithic tombs as a convincing proof of an historical process that would lay the foundations for the emergence of the Portuguese nation as well as its imperial endowment. Those ideas were particularly important as the Portuguese seaborne empire was threatened, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, by the expansionism of the great European powers, England and Germany, and the defence of the empire and its legitimation became a very popular subject among the Portuguese elites.

António Augusto Mendes Correia, falling into an anachronistic analysis, thought that the megalithic monuments could be the remains of a great western European empire, which had spread eastwards from Portuguese territory (Correia 1928a: 156, 172). On this particular point, he diverged from Martins Sarmiento, who thought that the megalithic tombs were a demonstration of the first Aryan migration, coming to Portugal from the east (Sarmiento 1933: 290–5; first published in 1885).

This curious thesis of Mendes Correia was based on some fake evidence provided by the megalithic tombs of Carrazedo de Alvão (northeast Portugal), comprising some stones with alphabetic symbols and engraved animals – naturally, the best parallels for those stones are those from Glozel, France (Correia 1928b), also faked artifacts. The artifacts from Alvão provide a supposed “proof” for a western (Portuguese) invention of the alphabet and so for the high cultural level of the megalith builders of the Portuguese area. As a matter of fact, this peculiar thesis of the “Portuguese” invention of the alphabet is recurrent in Portugal, but of course nowadays is expressed only by amateurs.

But the idea of Portugal as a particularly rich area of megalithic monuments was also attributable to the lack of information about similar structures on Spanish territory. This idea of a peculiar Portuguese megalithism would survive in Portuguese archaeology.

Some years later, a new approach was developed in the work of Manuel Heleno (1894–1970), Professor of Archaeology and Director of the Faculty of Arts in the University of Lisbon, keeper in the National Museum of Archaeology and ultimately Vasconcellos's successor as its director. For 30

years he was the official face of Portuguese archaeology and he carried out many excavations but published little. He claimed, on the basis of data collected from many megalithic tombs he had excavated, that the Portuguese nation dated back to Neolithic times. In a press interview, he argued that, from the time of Herculano and Oliveira Martins, a confusion had been made between state and nation. Thus, Heleno agreed with the theory of the medieval foundation of the Portuguese state. The Portuguese nation, however, was already a fact a long time before that, in the light of the "megalithic culture" of the westernmost part of the Iberian Peninsula (Heleno 1932). Despite the place where it was published, a press interview rather than an academic publication, or just because of it, Manuel Heleno's thesis had a powerful impact. It was printed, or at least implicitly expressed, in schoolbooks and in a footnote of the Portuguese translation of the general prehistory edited by Varagnac (1963: 385-6). While a teacher, Heleno had promoted his point of view to more than a generation of future schoolteachers. So, even today, many well educated middle-aged Portuguese are still convinced that Portugal had a special role in a "megalithic era".

However, this theory did not receive official endorsement. The *Estado Novo* (New State, the authoritarian regime from 1933 to 1974) did not care about megaliths or Heleno's thesis. Political rhetoric made no use of this supposed remote forerunner of the Portuguese nation, and the megalithic tombs did not receive any special protection during all those years. Some megalithic tombs were classified as "national monuments" by the law of 1910, but since then it has only been in the last 20 years many of them have received similar recognition (Moreira 1989: 95-122; Património 1993; see also below). During all the years of the popularity of the "megalithic Portugal" thesis, few megalithic tombs were classified as national monuments or "monuments with public interest" (the new legal formula), despite the large amount of new data.

#### *Lusitanians, Viriatus and the Portuguese*

The synthesis of Mendes Correia followed on the heels of Martins Sarmiento in relating the remains of a supposed "megalithic empire" to the Iron Age hill forts of northwest Portugal. Since the work of Martins Sarmiento, the northwestern hill forts had become one of the best known Portuguese archaeological site types. As hand-made pottery and stone axes had been found in them, Mendes Correia thought that the first inhabitants of those hill forts had been the megalith builders, and claimed that the people met by the Roman soldiers were a decadent lineage of the "great ancient empire". But the decadence had not extinguished the character of that people, "its vigour, energy and its national aims", and they thus resisted for 200 years

against the Roman armies (Correia 1928a: 156). The chapter in which these ideas were expressed had the suggestive title: "The epic of the castros (hill forts)". Recent research has clarified the different archaeological contexts of the artifacts from those archaeological sites, misunderstood in the past for lack of careful stratigraphical analysis. Actually, many of these Iron Age hill forts were first occupied only in the Bronze Age, so they were not related to the Neolithic megaliths. However, these hill forts were used as proof of the linkage of the megalithic builders with the historical Lusitanians.

The Celtiberian and the Lusitanian wars were the most remarkable episodes of the Roman conquest of Hispania. The former occurred on a more restricted geographical stage than the latter, and is symbolically connected with the city of Numantia. The Lusitanian wars, whose geographical limits were much less precise, evoke a hero, Viriatus. As mentioned before, an association between Lusitania and Portugal had been established, the Portuguese state having claimed the Lusitanian wars and Viriatus as its heritage (Guerra & Fabião 1992). The appropriation of Viriatus as an individual was based on his brave resistance to Rome, which was taken as a symbol of a patriotic struggle for political independence. Such virtues illustrated a particular feature of the Portuguese character. The roots of such an association can be found in the historically and geographically vague definition of Lusitania. Often, Portuguese authors have wrongly wished to equate pre-Roman Lusitania (i.e. the territory of the Lusitani), with all the area of the so-called Lusitania of the Roman period, despite the lack of a complete coincidence between the Portuguese territory and the Roman province that had Augusta Emerita as capital, a town in what is nowadays Spanish territory. These mismatches were intentionally played down. Furthermore, the fact that the northwestern region of Portugal between the rivers Douro and Minho, her historic cradle, had been outside the Roman province was often forgotten.

The first great appropriation of Viriatus, as an ancient Portuguese, is attributable to Braz Garcia de Mascarenhas, governor of a Portuguese frontier town, during the war against Castile after the restoration of Portuguese independence in the seventeenth century. Mascarenhas had composed a long epic poem on Viriatus's struggle against the Roman army, with obvious parallels to the seventeenth-century situation. In the fifteenth part of the poem, Viriatus saw in a dream the whole history of Portugal, from Roman times to the seventeenth century. The poem has a "popular" simplified version published in the twentieth century (*ibid.*: 1992: 17-18). This "legend" has some kind of archaeological "basis" provided by Portuguese archaeologists.

Once again, Martins Sarmiento was the first author to assert a general cultural unity embracing the northern part of the country and central Portugal in pre-Roman times. In a scientific expedition in 1881 to Serra da Estrela

(central Portugal), the place where, according to tradition, Viriatus was born, he found the local hill forts to be similar to those he had studied near Guimarães, in the north of Portugal (Sarmiento 1933: 129–52; first published in 1884). In another work he explicitly declared that all Portuguese hill forts were similar (*ibid.*: 165–72).

The argument that Lusitania extended from the River Minho to the River Guadiana was in fact rather common, in a clear attempt to force the coincidence between a vague political identity of the past – although usually it was not explicit that it was the Roman province – and the modern Portuguese borders. Curiously, in a posthumously published work, André de Resende, the pioneer of the identification of Lusitania and Portugal, wrote that there was no absolute coincidence between the ancient Roman province and its remote inhabitants and the modern Portuguese kingdom (Cardoso 1971: 17–18). Such deliberate mistakes and false identifications between ancient Lusitania and Portugal were supposed to have the hill forts of the northwest as their archaeological proof, and the very typical warrior statues of the region were supposed to be the representation of the Lusitanian warrior (actually, those statues were made after the Roman conquest, thus showing the cultural attributes of the local warriors). Such confusion – which can still be found in recent works, certainly by mistake (Ferreira & Ferreira 1969; Alarcão 1988: 5) – compels us to ignore the other northern ethnic identities that are also mentioned by the classical authors. Thus, Martins Sarmiento proclaimed the Lusitanian character of the warrior statues, in opposition to Aemilius Hübner and other authors who called them “Calaic warriors”, as they were found in the area of the Calaic people, according to the classical authors, since all their attributes accord with the description of the Lusitanian warrior provided by Strabo (III.6) (Sarmiento 1933: 36–40; first published in 1896). Since Sarmiento’s work one can notice some hesitation: Leite de Vasconcellos related them to the Lusitanians, despite the systematic use of the word “statue” without an adjective (Vasconcellos 1913: 43–62), and Mendes Correia designated them as “Calaico–Lusitanian statues” (Correia 1928a: 180, 184, 191). On the other hand, though the Douro and the Tagus rivers are the geographical limits of Lusitania, an archaeological research programme for this region is still lacking and the Iron Age is far from being studied. Nevertheless, correct references to the Lusitanian area are frequently illustrated with archaeological artifacts from the northwest region as if they were good material examples (Ferreira & Ferreira 1969).

As I have written elsewhere, every twentieth-century nationalistic speech about Viriatus is essentially indebted to Adolf Schulten, the German scholar who had studied Numantia (Guerra & Fabião 1992: 19–21). His biography of Viriatus, in fact a secondary work, was translated into Portuguese after its

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Spanish version in 1925. Such a delay in the publication of a Portuguese version was regretted by Mendes Correia (1940), in the prologue of the Portuguese translation, as the work provides a powerful “independent” argument for the Portuguese origin of Viriatus, and it was already published in Spain. The question of Viriatus’s “nationality” – Spanish or Portuguese – is one of the most curious of the nationalistic appropriations of the past, but it is mostly confined to secondary authors, as the most important specialists preferred silence on the subject. Traditionally, the Portuguese claim Viriatus to be the earliest hero of their independence, a legend divulged in school books until the end of the 1960s (Guerra & Fabião 1992: 21–2); but there are also examples of a similar appropriation in Spain, denying his Portuguese origin (Arenas López 1900; see also Díaz-Andreu forthcoming). The last episode in the Portuguese nationalistic defence of the ancient “hero” was the name chosen for the volunteer brigade that fought on the nationalist side in the Spanish Civil War of 1936–9, called “Viriatos”.

The idea of a remote sense of Portuguese independence foreshadowed by the Lusitanians in the west of the Iberian Peninsula has been recurrently glossed over by conservative secondary authors and it suited well the ideology of the totalitarian regime of the time. But even an historian such as Jaime Cortesão, unsuspected of co-operation with the authoritarian regime since he was a leading democratic member of the opposition, adopted this thesis (Cortesão 1974: 34–7). If one can understand the survival of these creeds under an authoritarian regime, given its peculiar relation to the past, it is surprising how Viriatus and the Lusitani are still topics of research waiting for a scientific approach not committed to nationalistic perspectives. Of course, nowadays a great part of the Portuguese people is proud of such brave Lusitanian ancestors, and a modern romance on the subject, *The voice of the gods: memoirs of one of Viriatus's warriors* (Aguilar 1984), was a best seller with 17 editions in 10 years and a comic strip version recently published.

### **The painful birth of a national heritage list**

Despite the very ancient and firm legislation on the protection of the national heritage, indifference towards historical monuments also has a long and sad tradition in Portugal. The laws dating back to the eighteenth century, and later reiterated in the first decade of the nineteenth century, were too generic and were, in fact, not firmly applied. The royal law of 1721 determined the preservation of all kinds of artefacts and monuments from the Phoenicians until the reign of Sebastian, the last king before the Spanish

annexation in 1580. The Royal Academy of History had the responsibility for applying this law and of making the first national inventory, which was finished in 1721 and revised in 1758, after the great earthquake of 1755, with the co-operation of the local royal officials and priests (Fabião 1989: 16–18). However, the law was not really applied, as we can learn from many cases of destruction in the process of rebuilding Lisbon after the 1755 disaster (Silva 1944: 10–30; Fabião 1994: 149–51). The Royal Academy of History was dissolved in 1760 and for many years nobody was in charge of protecting the national heritage. In 1802 such responsibility was taken up by the Royal Library of Lisbon (Fabião 1989: 25; Custodio 1993: 38–49).

As happened in other European countries (Chastel 1986), it was only after the liberal revolution (1820), political instability and the civil war (1832–4) – when the ecclesiastical properties were secularized – that the national heritage question became a matter of concern (Custodio 1993). The Romantic nationalistic feelings of the Portuguese intellectuals were indeed an important factor, as all the cultural heritage that was the property of the church became a secular national heritage.

In view of this situation, Mouzinho de Albuquerque (1792–1846), Alexandre Herculano (1810–77) or Almeida Garrett (1799–1854), just to cite the most remarkable individuals, argued against the lack of protection for the national heritage and its consequent destruction, but without great success. Special attention was devoted to the ancient monasteries and their contents, many of which were sold by public auction (Património 1993: xiv–xvi). Herculano, besides his political and historiographic activity, was particularly concerned with the national heritage, claiming a special protection for the real Portuguese monuments (i.e. the medieval ones), rather than for the relics of remote ages or for the nasty baroque palaces and churches (Custodio 1993: 36–43). As we will see, his ideas would be taken into consideration by the authoritarian regime established in Portugal in 1933.

In 1863 Joaquim Possidónio da Silva (1806–96), an architect who had had a French training, created with other colleagues the Associação dos Architectos Civis Portugueses (Portuguese Association of Civil Architects), later (1867) called Real Associação dos Architectos Civis e Arqueólogos Portugueses (Royal Portuguese Association of Civil Architects and Archaeologists), which had a specific concern for the cultural heritage. Despite its existence and its location in the heart of Lisbon, the association had no official role until 1880 (Santos 1909: 5–6; Património 1933: xvi–xvii).

From 1870 onwards, several commissions were nominated to set up a record of the national monuments, but none was in fact made and some specific protection activities, such as those undertaken by Ferdinand Saxe-Coburg Gotha (1816–85), a German prince and the consort of Queen

Maria, were mere exceptions (França 1974: 486–7). Later, in 1880 Posidónio da Silva's society was officially invited to prepare the national list of monuments and he was personally nominated in 1882 as president of the new commission for the national monuments (Custodio 1993: 49–50). However, in 1889, at the International Congress for the Protection of National Cultural Heritage in Case of War between European Nations, held in Paris, Portugal presented a very poor and deficient list, due to the Royal Portuguese Association of Civil Architects and Archaeologists (Veiga 1891: 5–6, 19–20). Nevertheless, new laws were published in 1894 (Custodio 1993: 51), at about the same time that other nations were enacting their own, and in 1884 the Museu Real de Bellas Artes e Archeologia (Royal Museum of Fine Arts and Archaeology) was founded in Lisbon. It received paintings, statues and other artifacts from the extinct monasteries previously kept at the Fine Arts Academy since 1836 (Moreira 1989: 54). Once again, the law and its cultural environment seemed to be different realities.

New commissions were established in 1890, 1893, 1897 and 1901 and, finally, the 1904 commission set up a national heritage monuments list. It covered a wide-ranging list of archaeological remains, including Latin inscriptions, hill forts, and megalithic tombs. The list was published by royal decree on 16 July 1910, a few months before the republican revolution.

As far as the development of archaeology is concerned, one could mention several important features, such as the activity of the Geological Commission, mentioned before, and the work of many researchers, such as Martins Sarmiento, Estácio da Veiga (1828–91) and Santos Rocha (1853–1910) among others. But the most relevant fact was the foundation of the Museu Ethnographico Português (Portuguese Ethnographic Museum) in 1893. The museum owes its creation to a proposal by Leite de Vasconcellos, supported by the minister, Bernardino Machado, who was the professor of the first archaeological course held in a Portuguese university. In fact, the foundation of the museum was attributable solely to the personal will of these men. The museum had explicit nationalistic aims, and its exhibitions of its archaeological and ethnographic collections had specific patriotic purposes. Leite de Vasconcellos wrote that the museum was important for showing the national identity to an urban population divorced from its own cultural roots and for educating the artists in genuine Portuguese values (Vasconcellos 1915: 14). Such initiatives were lacking in the official cultural policy, and the growth of the museum's collections and its development were the result of Vasconcellos's interest (Machado 1965).

Thus, national heritage was not a vital question for the state during the period of liberal monarchy. Neither was it for the new republican regime, despite the reorganization of the national heritage commission in 1911 and

in 1915 (Custodio 1993: 54; Património 1993: xvii–xviii), and the creation of several local museums (Nabais 1985: 20), particularly due to individuals and local associations in a context of political decentralization. Portugal in fact reached the second quarter of the twentieth century with its historical and archaeological monuments in a general state of decay. The task of preservation was firmly proclaimed and undertaken by the authoritarian regime.

In 1929 a new official organization, the *Direcção-Geral dos Edifícios e Monumentos Nacionais* (General Direction for National Buildings and Monuments) was created, with its powers later reinforced by the 1932 law (Rule for Excavations and for the Defence and Classification of Sites, Monuments and Artifacts of Archaeological Interest to the Nation). This organization was in charge of the restoration of monuments and indeed it performed all over the country. One could say that for the first time in Portugal a national heritage policy was established with true nationalistic perspectives, besides the historicist speech glorifying the nation and its imperial destiny. It is not easy to explain why the first Portuguese democratic republic was not so interested in a policy for cultural heritage, but the great political instability of those 16 years (1910–26) – 41 governments, many revolutions and insurrections, the First World War – and the economic crisis were certainly strong reasons.

The goals of the General Direction for National Buildings and Monuments were clearly defined by its director Henrique Gomes da Silva, an engineer, who presented a paper in 1933 at the first congress of the *União Nacional* (National Union), a sort of political party and the only one allowed by the regime. In his thesis he stated that “for the highest cult of religion, nation and art” (in this order in his text), the organization promoted the restoration of national monuments (i.e. medieval buildings, especially religious and military structures) in order to recover their original purity (which meant removing seventeenth- and eighteenth-century features), the former related to the so-called traditional religiousness of the Portuguese people, despised by the secular democratic republic, the latter taken as symbols of Portuguese defence against the Spanish (Silva 1935: 19–20). For many decades, churches, monasteries and castles, which formed the greater part of the classified monuments (Moreira 1989: 111; Património 1933), were restored by a large team of engineers and architects with no feeling for archaeological problems, destroying all the remains of ancient uses and structures (Custodio 1993 and, for the Lisbon case, Fabião 1994: 151–2). In this way, many years after its formulation, Herculano’s thesis on the true nature of Portuguese monuments had found its defenders and, despite the new general law of 1932, which considered the possibility of a new classification of many archaeological features, such as palaeolithic sites, no decisions were

made for the defence of the archaeological heritage. For instance, the first palaeolithic site classified was Casal do Monte, by decree of 1971 (Património 1993). The texts of Manuel Heleno make clear the conflict between archaeologists and architects and engineers inside the commissions for cultural heritage (Heleno 1966). Only in the past 20 years has the list of classified archaeological remains been significantly increased (Património 1993).

The task of restoration and protection of the cultural heritage was actually an ideological weapon of the totalitarian regime (Lemos 1992: 62). In a series of propaganda posters entitled "the lesson of Salazar" one may see on the top of a hill a restored castle with a Portuguese flag fluttering; in another one, from the same series, two pictures are side by side: one, evoking the democratic republic, shows a ruined village; the other, representing the Estado Novo's regime, figures a prosperous village with its restored church and castle. Those posters gave, as a matter of fact, a correct idea of the regime's goals: to produce scenic images, rather than to promote scientific research on monuments, sites and conservation.

Restoring the monuments was "for the highest cult of religion, nation and art": the castle to remind the people how high was the price of independence and the absolute need to watch out for the enemies of the nation; and the church to evoke the catholic tradition of the Portuguese, once menaced by the liberals and agnostic democratic republicans.

### **What history for the nation?**

In the late 1930s a great monument restoration campaign was developed, to prepare all the country for the great celebration in 1940 of the double centenary (foundation of the Portuguese state and restoration of independence after the Castilian domination). While Europe was lacerated by the Second World War and neighbouring Spain had been ruined by the Spanish Civil War, Salazar's regime undertook a magnificent celebration, "the great feast of the Portuguese family" (Anais 1956: 115). The double centenary celebration programme included a presidential grand tour around the symbolic monuments, previously restored, and places of the country, an historical procession in Lisbon (beginning with an evocation of Lusitania), a great historical-ethnographic exhibition, and an international congress, among other features, everything personally directed by Salazar (*ibid.*: 116-50).

It was obviously one of the highest peaks of the nationalistic historical construction of identity. But it is important to stress that the Estado Novo regime was not particularly concerned with historical research. After Peres's

history of Portugal of 1928, no synthesis worthy of note was published until the 1970s (Godinho 1971, Gonçalves 1993, Torgal & Roque 1993). Actually, in the 1940 Historical Congress of the Portuguese World, very few relevant papers were presented and in the huge volume dealing with the pre-history and protohistory of Portugal the papers were actually very poor (Congresso 1940). The regime had its own version of Portuguese history and was very suspicious of new research or fresh data, perhaps because some of the leading Portuguese historians of the time were notorious members of the democratic opposition. Even Salazar, despite the so-called personal direction of the double centenary celebration, was not really interested in historical or archaeological subjects and, for instance, Heleno's proposal for the renewal of the Museu Etnológico (Ethnological Museum, today The National Archaeological Museum) was not considered (Heleno 1965). In Salazar's large personal archive, with thousands of papers, letters and reports, one can hardly find anything related to cultural themes (Garcia 1992).

This peculiar relationship with the past, calling it up just whenever it suited the regime's political goals, may be clarified by an interesting episode related to archaeological research: the archaeology of "The Battle".

On 14 August 1385 a remarkable battle between the Portuguese and the Spanish took place in Aljubarrota (central Portugal). Such a fundamental episode in the history of national independence is ordinarily referred to simply as "The Battle" and it is attributed to the infantry of the Portuguese army. Known from different chronicles, whose details are not always coincident, "The Battle" has been an important subject for military historical research. In 1950 the Portuguese Ministry of Defence created a Commission to establish "an official version of what might have happened during the battle after removing all doubts and having all the different and opposed opinions clarified". Afterwards an archaeologist was linked to the Commission, but in fact he was a military man: Afonso do Paço (1959, 1965).

Taking into account every chronicle version, an area was delimited and several budgets were presented from 1951 to 1957 in order to start the excavations. These were vain efforts, however, since none of the funds required were available. In 1957 the Mocidade Portuguesa (Portuguese Youth, the official semi-military organization of the regime) and the Direcção-Geral dos Edifícios e Monumentos Nacionais (the official institution for preservation and restoration of historical heritage) raised a platform for military parades on the site of "The Battle" to commemorate the historic event. The military historical Commission tried to interfere, changing the position of the platform, as it was expected that *in situ* remains of the Battle would be found. One year later on his own behalf Afonso do Paço visited the place where the platform was being raised and he found signs of moats, disclosing

doubtless the marks of a defensive structure, probably specially planned for the battle. Only then did the Ministry of Defence supply the money for the excavations that began in that year (Paço 1959, 1965).

Many defensive structures were found on the left side of what could have been the position of the Portuguese forces. Afonso do Paço argued, without success unfortunately, for excavations on the opposite side before a road would destroy any evidence (Paço 1965: 8). On the other hand, the archaeological record of "The Battle" site, actually very relevant for the military history of the late Middle Ages, stirred up some surprising reactions. Some scholars and military men wanted to believe that the moats were more recent, having nothing to do with the battle (Paço 1965). Apparently, to the most passionate nationalists the existence of defensive structures diminished the nobility of the great Portuguese victory. Such an anecdote is a good clue to help us understand the official indifference towards new archaeological data taken from a place with high symbolic relevance. It seems that there is a general fear of confronting established ideas with new evidence that eventually will corroborate them. It seems easier to repeat what is already known than to submit it to empirical confrontation. No wonder that the place of "The Battle" and its archaeological remains have never been classified as a "national monument" or even a "site of public interest".

In a country such as Portugal, with a very long history, located in a geographic space (the Iberian Peninsula) where no reasons besides the political ones could justify its independence, it seems quite normal that nationalistic speech has always preferred historical periods other than prehistory, classical antiquity or the early Middle Ages. Even so, Portuguese archaeologists with nationalistic aims have tried, with little success as we have seen, to relocate the roots of the nation deeper in history, chiefly as an attempt to achieve social relevance in the eyes of both political power and public opinion. But, in a country with so many national "glorious events" to celebrate, who needs some poor and controversial archaeological remains from remote ages?

It is clear that the idea of the need to defend the "truly Portuguese" monuments, already expressed by the nineteenth-century liberal authors, became a powerful trend in Portuguese cultural heritage policy, under both democratic and authoritarian regimes, with apparently little real concern for archaeological subjects. So, the Portuguese case could be considered as a good example of what one may call the neglect of archaeology for nationalistic reasons.

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