

# Chapter 1 - Introduction

## 1.1 - Subject

The subject of this dissertation is the analysis of the political and ideological use of museums and temporary exhibitions as means of propaganda in Portugal, during the regime that is known as the "New State" (*Estado Novo*). It was a nationalistic and dictatorial regime that started in the late 1920s and lasted until the mid-1970s. Propaganda was then considered a crucial function of the State and therefore almost every means available (either literature, architecture, fine arts, music, cinema or cultural institutions) was used for that purpose. As far as nationalism was concerned, museums and temporary exhibitions were considered to be particularly efficient means of propaganda. Hence, as the *Estado Novo* was deeply grounded in nationalism, museums and temporary exhibitions must have had a very important role in the propaganda of the regime.

Recent research in the academic field of history has made some important contributions to the knowledge on the *Estado Novo*, but the role of museums and temporary exhibitions has not been regarded as a major theme. Moreover, although temporary exhibitions have already received some attention from historians, in particular those that were prepared to play a spectacular role from a propagandistic point of view, no systematic research has yet been made. The link between the role of museums and that of the temporary exhibitions in the 'theatre' of propaganda has not been made by historians.

One main objective of this research is to describe the propagandistic uses of museums and temporary exhibitions. A further objective is to evidence that the *Estado Novo* used museums and temporary exhibitions as means of political and ideological propaganda in many different ways; furthermore, there will be an attempt to answer the "how" and "why" questions on the political and ideological uses of museums and exhibitions.

## 1.2 - Methodology, Sources and Bibliography

In order to achieve these objectives three different kinds of sources had to be explored. In the first place, the bibliography on the *Estado Novo*, which is vast and provides the means for a global understanding of the epoch, was used as background material. Secondly, the legislation produced during the period under analysis, as well as the documents of the archives of the museums and Salazar's<sup>1</sup> political speeches are, as primary sources, of indisputable interest for an in-depth view of the subject. Thirdly, a significant number of persons who worked in museums during the *Estado Novo* are still alive and some were able to produce direct testimonies about the period under analysis.<sup>2</sup>

The methodological procedure developed for the research divides those materials in two parts. Bibliography was used as a means for establishing the theoretical framework. Primary sources, as well as oral testimonies, were used as sources for producing original results. The thesis is divided in chapters. Chapter two discusses the main theoretic concepts underlying the research. Chapter three grounds its basis in nationalism and nationalist historiography but then presents, in historical terms, the main features of the Portuguese case, especially on what concerns plans and legislation for the museums. Chapter four, five and six present with some detail characterisations of eight Portuguese museums of the period. Chapter seven presents the

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<sup>1</sup> António de Oliveira Salazar was the leader of the *Estado Novo*. He was a professor of economics at the University of Coimbra and began his political career in government as Minister of Finance; then he became *Presidente do Conselho* (Prime Minister) and remained in the post until he was to old to govern, late in the 1960s. On Salazar's biography see NOGUEIRA, Franco - *Salazar*, Porto, Livraria Civilização, 1977/81. On the recent Portuguese History refer to MATTOSO, José (dir.) - *História de Portugal*, Lisboa, Ed. Estampa, vols. 7-8; see also SERRÃO, Joel and MARQUES, A. H. de Oliveira (dir.) - *Nova História de Portugal*, Lisboa, Ed. Presença, vols. XI-XII. References in English: KAY, Hug - *Salazar and Modern Portugal*, London, Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1970; EGERTON, F. C. C. - *Salazar, Rebuilder of Portugal*, London, Hodder and Stoughton Ltd., 1943 (this book is almost a panegyric; nevertheless it is of some interest on what concerns the political ideas of Salazar in p.157-199 and on what concerns the analyses of the Portuguese Constitution of 1933, in p.199-241.). Also of interest GALLAGHER, Tom - *Portugal, A Twentieth-century interpretation*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1983, which has a very poor analysis of the Portuguese history before 1910 but gives detailed information of the period after that date; about the dictatorship before 1933, p.38-57; Salazar's period of power is referred in p.62-154. See also GRAHAM, L. S. and MAKLER, H. M. (eds.) - *Contemporary Portugal, The revolution and its antecedents*, Austin and London, University of Texas Press, 1979, p.3-47. MARQUES, A. H. de Oliveira - *History of Portugal. Volume II: From Empire to Corporate State*, New York and London, Columbia University Press, 1972 for a Portuguese history of Portugal written in English.

<sup>2</sup> The methodology used to gather information through oral testimonies is the one developed for oral history. The main references are: CONNERTON, Paul - *How Societies Remember*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995; DUNAWAY, David K. and BAUM, Willa K. (eds.) - *Oral History. An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, London, Altamira Press, second ed., 1996; PERKS, Robert and THOMSON, Alistair (eds.) - *The Oral History Reader*, London, Routledge, 1998; THOMPSON, Paul - *The Voice of the Past. Oral History*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2<sup>a</sup> ed., 1988; also used: *Oral History. Journal of the Oral History Society*, vol. 26 number 1 and 2, vol. 27 number 2, vol. 28 number 1, 1998/2000; KAVANAGH, Gaynor (ed.) - *Making Histories in Museums*, London, Leicester University Press, 1996.

temporary exhibitions. Finally chapter eight summarises the information previously presented and attempts to theorise on the standpoints of the museum practices of the *Estado Novo*.

A theoretical framework is never definitive and complete, yet an attempt was made to include all relevant concepts related with the theme of this thesis. The epistemological concepts of *history* and *historiography*, as well as the substantive concepts of *state*, *nation* and *nationalism* had to be clarified.

Chapters 4 to 7 provide an analysis of the museum case studies. As for temporary exhibitions, the decision was to include all those that had had nation-wide relevance and that had been seen by the regime as propagandistic events. The number of such events (approximately thirty) and the individual importance of each one in terms of the ideological discourse justify this criterion. The choice of museums to consider as case studies was much more difficult. Since it was impossible to include all Portuguese museums some criteria had to be defined. The intention was to produce an image, as complete as possible, of the Portuguese universe of museums. Three criteria were used to select the museums to be considered: the national importance of the museum (that included geographic location), the type of museum and the wealth of its archives. Within these criteria eight museums were chosen. They are: National Museums - *Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga* – MNAA (Lisboa); *Museu Nacional de Soares dos Reis* – MNSR (Porto); *Museu de Arte Popular* – MAP (Lisboa); Regional Museums - *Museu do Abade de Baçal* – MAB (Bragança); *Museu de Alberto Sampaio* – MAS (Guimarães); *Museu de José Malhoa* – MJM (Caldas da Rainha); Specialised Museums - *Museu Monográfico de Conímbriga* – MMC (Conímbriga); *Museu Nacional de Etnologia* – MNE (Lisboa).

Despite their differences in organisation, quantity and importance, the archives of these museums include far more documents than it is possible to use in a research of this type. Furthermore, a number of those documents are of minor or no interest at all for the purpose of the present work. It was imperative, therefore, to select the archive material in order to have core documentation that would provide useful information. In some cases, the archives are so huge it is impossible to read all documents; in these cases the selection was based on the typology of the documents (e.g. a letter sent to the Ministry should be of more interest than an invoice regarding gardening material). This was the case of the National Museum of Soares dos Reis. In other archives the lack of organisation and the non existence of an index or catalogue made the task

even more challenging (this was the case in the Museum of Abade de Baçal, Museum of Alberto Sampaio and Museum of Popular Art). In one incidence (the National Museum of Ethnology) bureaucratic and political/institutional questions prevented the access to the archive of the museum.<sup>3</sup>

The National Museum of Ancient Art is a completely different case. The archive of this institution is huge, far bigger than all the others used in this thesis. The main sections of the archive are the inventories, the bureaucratic section, the photography section and the folders of private documents of the former directors. Some of the main inventory books were made in the 1920s and the 1930s; others, however, were produced in different periods. The bureaucratic section includes all kinds of documents: copies of the letters sent and received, books of synopsis of those letters in chronological order, invoices, receipts, documents related with the payment of salaries, and other documentation that resulted from the normal administrative activity of the museum. The photography section includes a collection of photographs that documents the different epochs of the museum by showing the inside of the rooms, temporary exhibitions and special events such as official visits or conferences. It also includes a collection of negatives. Finally, there are several folders containing private documents that once belonged to the former directors of the museum (private letters, diaries and other documentation). It would have been an

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<sup>3</sup> During the research process of this thesis it was never possible to have access to the archive of the National Museum of Ethnology. In 1996 and 1997 permission to work in the archive of the museum was formally requested but there was no reply from the director; in 1999/07/28 the director of the museum gave the author an interview. There is no tape record of that interview because the director expressly asked not to use the tape recorder; then he explained why he would not allow the research in the archive of the museum: due to some institutional confusion he was uncertain about the hierarchical responsibility over the museum and was not sure whether he could officially allow the use of the archive; besides, he wanted the archive to be organised prior to any research. As a consequence, the text about this museum will not have the support of primary documentary sources. The only exception is the book, available in the library of the museum, where all acquisitions of the library were registered. Information about the National Museum of Ethnology was gathered from bibliography as well as from an interview with one of its 'makers', Benjamim Pereira, who belonged to the original team that developed the museum in the early 1960s. The main bibliographical sources are: DIAS, Jorge - "Museu Nacional e Museus Regionais de Etnografia" in *Cadernos de Etnografia 1*, Barcelos, Museu Regional de Cerâmica, 1964; "Museu Nacional de Etnologia" in *GRANDES Museus de Portugal*, Lisboa, Editorial Presença - Público, 1992, p.137-168; OLIVEIRA, Ernesto Veiga de - "Ainda a propósito da Exposição de Instrumentos Musicais Populares Portugueses na Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian", in *Revista de Etnografia*, nº 12, Porto, Junta Distrital do Porto, Museu de Etnografia e História, 1966; OLIVEIRA, Ernesto Veiga de - "Exposição de Alfaia Agrícola Portuguesa do Museu de Etnologia do Ultramar" in *Revista de Etnografia*, nº 26, Porto, Junta Distrital do Porto, Museu de Etnografia e História, 1968; OLIVEIRA, Ernesto Veiga de - "Museu de Etnologia do Ultramar" in *Revista Geographica da Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa*, nº 29, Lisboa, 1972; OLIVEIRA, Ernesto Veiga de - "Museus e colecções de etnografia de Angola", in *Garcia da Orta*, vol. 19, nº 1 a 14, Lisboa, Junta de Investigação do Ultramar, 1971, p.25-46; OLIVEIRA, Ernesto Veiga de - "O Museu de Etnologia", in *II Encontro de Museus de Países e Comunidades de Língua Portuguesa*, ICOM, Palácio Nacional de Mafra, 1989, p.55-68; OLIVEIRA, Ernesto Veiga de - "Perspectivas museológicas do Museu de Etnologia", in *Informática e Museus*, Lisboa, Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical, Museu Nacional de Etnologia, 1989; OLIVEIRA, Ernesto Veiga de - *Apontamentos sobre Museologia. Museus Etnológicos*, Lisboa, Junta de Investigação do Ultramar, Estudos de Antropologia Cultural, nº 6, 1971; OLIVEIRA, Ernesto Veiga de - *Povos e Culturas - Catálogo da Exposição*, Lisboa, Museu de Etnologia do Ultramar, Junta de Investigação do Ultramar, 1972; PEREIRA, Benjamim - "Ernesto Veiga de Oliveira e o Museu de Etnologia" in *Estudos em Homenagem a Ernesto Veiga de Oliveira*, Lisboa, INIC, Centro de Estudos de Etnologia, 1989.

impossible task to study all the documentation of this archive.<sup>4</sup> However difficult, the decision of excluding part of the documentation had to be taken. One of the richest sections of the archive is the one where mail and mail copies are collected. During the period under research mail was the most common way of communicating and now, the reading of these letters allows an in-depth view both of the museum's internal life and of its relations with other institutions, including the governmental departments. For that reason, this part of the archive was the object of a much more intense research than the others, although some research was also undertaken in other sections.

Another important source is the legislation concerning museums, national heritage and historical documents. It would be impossible (or at least fastidious) to analyse all the legislative pieces concerning museums that were produced during the period under study. Thus, it was decided to choose the decrees that had nation-wide importance and were really decisive for the existence of museums and for the organisation of temporary exhibitions.

The *corpus* of documents gathered due to this archive research is a coherent body of information that enabled an in-depth understanding of the internal life of the museums and of their external relations. A complete list of the documentation used and quoted in the text is available in the Sources and Bibliography section.

In order to obtain personal perspectives over the period under analysis, it was decided to use oral history techniques by interviewing some of the people that had been involved in the museums profession during the *Estado Novo*. Some of the interviewees are still working in museums while others have already retired. As the objective was to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the life inside each museum, different kinds of museum workers, from directors to guards, were asked to give their testimony. The interviews were not limited to a specific range of questions. On the contrary, the interviewees were left free to talk about what he/she considered of relevance; however, some questions were asked in order to understand particular points. The interviews varied in duration and in the themes explored, but all were relevant to

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<sup>4</sup> The archive of the National Museum of Ancient Art does not have a catalogue that would enable the researcher to access the total number of documents. Yet, for the sake of illustration, it should be enough to say that the number of letters sent during one single year, may amount to several thousands.

understanding the internal ambience of the museums under analysis. A synopsis of each interview is available in the Appendix number two.

In order to complete the image of the museums and temporary exhibitions used as case studies, research in several archives of photography (both national and private) was undertaken. As a result, it was possible to include in the thesis copies of photographs that document different aspects of the description. Photographs were used as documents, and not as illustrations, as a significant part of the knowledge about museums and temporary exhibitions is due to their analysis. All use of such documents had proper authorisation for academic purposes from the copyright owners.

### **1.3 - Chronological Limits**

The chronological limits of the study were also carefully established. A choice had to be made about whether to include the whole period commonly known as the *Estado Novo*, that is from 1926 to 1974. Two major difficulties had to be faced: firstly, and from a strictly institutional point of view, the *Estado Novo* only began in 1933, when a national referendum approved the Constitution; secondly, the final decade of the *Estado Novo*, starting in the middle sixties, is a very different period. The colonial war had begun in the early years of the decade. Salazar was then a very old man and became incapable of governing in 1968. But, most of all, the legislation on museums deeply changed in 1965.

Despite the formality of the approval of the Constitution, it is possible to affirm that the ideology of the *Estado Novo* and the roots of the regime had had their start in 1926, after the revolution that put an end to the First Republic. Some of the decisive legislative alterations concerning the museums that the *Estado Novo* implemented were produced between 1926 and 1933. It is therefore important to include that period for the present purpose. Hence, the chronological period under analysis in this study begins in 1926.

The final years of the regime are interesting because of all the changes museums were involved in. During the 1960s the legislation on museums suffered such important changes that it could be argued that this period marked the end of the long cycle that had connected the reality of museums to the political and ideological establishment of the *Estado Novo*. The number and importance of the changes is huge, in terms of legislation, mentality, political and economic facts

and even in terms of propagandistic goals and intentions of the regime. As it was necessary to choose a *terminus ad quem* for the research and as this is a thesis on museums, the year of 1965 was chosen. It is a symbolic date because it registered two major events in the Portuguese museological field: the approval of an entirely new legislation concerning museums and the foundation of the Portuguese Museums Association.

These chronological limits are not the result of an indisputable decision. It could be argued that the period of the First Republic (1910-1926) should be considered (because of its significant legislative improvements both in terms of cultural heritage and museums) and it is possible to sustain that the year of 1965 is not really a frontier (as, in spite of the new legislation, a significant number of political options and institutional decisions remained). But this study focuses on the *Estado Novo*, and that necessarily excludes the First Republic. As for the legislation of 1965 it did introduce, in a formal manner, absolute changes on what the definition of museums and museums role was concerned. These changes were, in part, the results of the international influence Portugal received via some national museums directors and they implied options that would have been unacceptable for the political and ideological settlement of the former decades.

It is imperative in a text of this sort to define limits. Even if no other arguments were relevant, the abundance of the primary sources would necessitate the establishment of such boundaries. The archives of the museums keep thousands of documents, and the more recent the dates the more abundant they are. It was imperative to make choices. The criteria used were defined according to a combination of three main aspects: relevant facets of the Portuguese political and ideological changes (as this is a text mainly about the political and ideological uses of museums), legislative aspects concerning the Portuguese museums (as they reveal political and ideological trends and intentions) and the quantity and quality of primary sources available. The delimitation of the period between 1926 and 1965 results from those criteria. Mentions to events prior to 1926 will only occur in the text to explain particular issues or events that would otherwise be incomprehensible. As for the period after 1965 and for some of the case studies it was necessary to extend the chronological limit in order to explain the results of actions and decisions taken before that year.

## 1.4 - Quotations and References

As this thesis is about a Portuguese theme, an important part of the bibliography and all the primary sources are in Portuguese. This situation makes quotation problematic, because it would be unacceptable only to quote in Portuguese. Nevertheless, it could also be considered as a lack of rigour to quote a Portuguese reference or primary source translated into English, without giving the reader the possibility of confirming the accuracy of the translation. Therefore, it was established, as general criterion for the Portuguese quotations, to translate them into English while mentioning the original text in italic within the text, or in a footnote. This criterion was adopted for references and primary sources (either printed material and manuscripts). Main theoretical references are in English. However, some bibliography was used from the original in French or from a Portuguese translation, whenever there was no English translation available. In some special cases Portuguese originals are translated into English; in these cases the quotation indicates the Portuguese original and the English translation.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> All references in English are between quotes " "; italics were used for all quotations in other languages, including Latin; when it was necessary to break the quotation the symbol [...] was used; when it was necessary to add words to a quotation they are in italic and between [ ]; all words that needed to be emphasised or have a particular meaning in context are between ' '.