

Chapter 8 - Conclusions

This research has aimed at establishing how museums and temporary exhibitions were used as a means of propaganda during the *Estado Novo*. Since the regime was deeply imbued of a nationalist ideology, there were good reasons for looking for that agenda in the museums and exhibitions of the period. Very often in Portugal museums are associated with the presentation of history. Nationalism itself commonly bases some of its postulates on arguments drawn from history. Hence questions on the making of history in museums were also to be put. How museums and exhibitions, by making history, dealt with the themes of the propaganda of the regime was a key question for the research.

Against a political and cultural framework as background, the previous chapters have presented several cases of museums and of exhibitions of the *Estado Novo* period. It is fairly easy to find evidence that there was State propaganda, in temporary exhibitions – actually for some of them there was hardly anything else. Yet, it is not so immediately evident that the management of museums also conformed to the same propagandistic ends. With the exception of museums that have been partially closed, the collections of the present are not the same as in the past and are not displayed in the same way. The alternatives are the archives of the museums and, or, other sources of the epoch that may have described, or photographed, the buildings, the collections or even events in the museums. As a complement, interviews with the people who worked there may help to remember that past. However, there is no possibility of an integral reconstitution of that past. This is no new fact for historians as it keeps happening both for remote and for recent epochs and either because of the scarcity of sources or because of the difficulty arising from the need to choose some and eventually discard others. Hence, the making of the history of museums that made history themselves carries a double subjectivity – it is a construction about a construction.

Looking for evidence of propaganda in the archives of the museums some choices were to be made. These have to do with the concept of propaganda, itself. How does a State make propaganda? Propaganda brings to public knowledge the political options of the regime, while making the encomium of those choices. It was previously stated that history and heritage were major arguments in the construction of propaganda. Therefore, museums had the raw materials

for successful propaganda. Hence, the archives of the museums were researched for evidence of objects and of collections that had not only an artistic or historical value but also a symbolic value in the discourse of nationalism. Some did indeed come up. A further item of research was the public: propaganda is pointless without a public. Yet, statistics on public affluxes to museums for that epoch seldom exist. And yet there is some evidence that, with few exceptions, Portuguese museums were not regularly visited by a large number of people. Not even the fact that the educative role of museums was acknowledged and favoured by the regime resulted in a long lasting positive impact in the habits of cultural consumption of the population. Few people went to the museums. Who was then the State targeting, by protecting and enhancing its museums? A failure might be admissible but the dictator was not a man to live along with failures – and even less to spend the State’s money with them. Hence, the question about the role played by museums in community life remains. A deeper look into the archives of the museums brought with it another picture of the reality of the museums of the epoch. Apparently meaningless documents, on quarrels between directors and workers, about repairs that had to be done in the museum, or about the scarcity of money, if used for illustrating the day to day life of the museum reveal the image of a social (hence political) cell of the *Estado Novo* building – the museums as cultural institutions. Dictators are not expected to be naï ve and they will know that they must dominate the people either by force or by persuasion. As a sort of political architect, Salazar designed the Portuguese polity as a building, joining parts coherently, namely State and Society. A totalitarian State may go as far as to engulf Society in the State. But Salazar’s corporatism aimed at persuading the community of the advantages of living under the ordered rules and values of the *Estado Novo*. As a microcosm, museums were able to do so. They were supposed to live as ordered cells submitted to the ordered values, and to the budget and to the decrees of the central State. And this was also propaganda, as working for the State meant being integrated (ie. formally accepted) in a particular vision of the world that altogether was to make the identity of the “ordered” Portuguese citizen.

In the chapters above, the case studies were deliberately approached from a historical perspective, which already involves some interpretation. Yet, the aim of the present chapter, which finalises this dissertation, is to synthesise the context and evidence of the previous chapters and draw conclusions on the use of museums and temporary exhibitions as media for propaganda

by the *Estado Novo*. A brief revision of the political and cultural framework in which the museums were integrated, along with the main concepts used for the interpretation of that framework will be presented. Then the propagandistic use of museums and exhibitions will be interpreted, both in general terms and for the specific item of the making of history in museums. Finally it will be essayed to define the theoretical and methodological standpoints of the museum practice of the *Estado Novo*.

8.1 – The political and cultural framework and the use of history

The Republican Revolution of 1910 put an end to the monarchy that had lasted for almost eight centuries. Portugal hoped the Republic to solve some of the major national problems. However, the new regime proved unable to do so, and difficulties grew during the sixteen years of the First Republic. In May 1926 military action put an end to the First Republic and imposed a Military Dictatorship that led to the regime known as the *Estado Novo*. In 1928 a young and remarkable professor of economics of the University of Coimbra, António de Oliveira Salazar, became the strongest minister of the government as minister of finance. Four years later, in 1932, he assumed the role of prime-minister, a place that he kept until 1968. The mid and late 1930s were a period of consolidation for the new regime. Salazar was presented by the propaganda of the *Estado Novo* as the new Portuguese hero, the one who had been able to solve the economic and financial crisis, thus restoring national pride and the international autonomy of the country. During this period, Salazar not only presented what were to be the main ideological features of the long lasting *Estado Novo* but also put them into practice. Salazar was clearly the mastermind behind the regime, and the propagandistic apparatus that was set up was designed to inculcate his own options in the hearts and minds of the Portuguese people and thus make of those truly national options.

The Second World War upset Salazar's strategic and economic plans; nevertheless, he was able to keep Portugal out of the war, preserving the integrity of the European territory and the possession of the overseas colonies. This achievement was also seen as one of the major deeds of the incontestable leader of the *Estado Novo*. The opposition to the authoritarian regime of Salazar grew stronger during the late 1940s and the 1950s. The regime faced severe internal

political difficulties. In the beginning of the 1960s the pro-independence movements in the African colonies initiated a war that would last until 1974 and that was to become one of the main reasons for the collapse of the *Estado Novo*. In 1968 Salazar became seriously ill and Marcello Caetano was appointed as the new prime-minister. He tried to reform the regime from the inside, but the colonial war proved to be an insoluble problem without further structural change. In 1974 the militaries decided that it was time to end up with this war and the revolution of April put an end to the *Estado Novo*.

The ideological basis of the *Estado Novo* can be summarised in four words: God, Homeland, Family and Work. These were unquestionable pillars of the regime. Despite being a secular regime, the *Estado Novo* recognised the large majority of Catholics in Portugal and considered religion as one of the main characteristics of the Portuguese people. On top of that, the beginning of the Portuguese independence (back in the 12th century) was presented as a will of God. To the end of the monarchy and during the First Republic Portugal had gone through several decades of endless internal political disputes and the popular disbelief in national institutions was obvious. The *Estado Novo* wanted to restore national pride and so the word "homeland" became increasingly used in the political discourse. According to the ideology of the new regime, the smallest social cell was the family. This cell was considered as the social nucleus that should preserve morality and care for the transmission of the basic values of social life. Finally, work was both a pragmatic and a moral need: the husband had to work to provide for his family but also to be regarded as a respectable member of society, someone who contributed to the common well-being. Idleness was seen as a major "offence" against society. Altogether, these values led to another, which could congregate them all, thus conveying a particular aim and a meaning to the fact of living in society: the nation. The nation was one of the major concepts of the *Estado Novo*. The needs of the nation explained the existence of the regime, and the regime was presented as the only possible means for protecting and enhancing the nation.

For the promotion of the nation the *Estado Novo* based its ideological construction on three main themes: the very existence of a nation, the right to a territory and the venerable age of history and traditions. These symbolic values were proclaimed by the *Estado Novo* as the official and unquestionable truth. The *Estado Novo* selected some characteristics of the nation, some aspects of the territory and some themes of the national history and traditions to be used as

ideological issues of propaganda. For the regime, the nation was ancient, proud of itself, highly relevant for the progress of civilisation and therefore world-wide recognised. The territory was multi-continental, as a consequence of the maritime discoveries that had given historical rights of occupation to the Portuguese; the territory was therefore united and indivisible. Portuguese history and traditions were venerable and respectable, and consequently a motive for national as well as individual pride.

In order to explain these assertions, the regime emphasised some aspects of the Portuguese history that could endorse such characteristics. The nation was described as the oldest nation of Europe. Another important issue of the propaganda of the regime was the fact that the national territory had the oldest firmly established frontiers in Europe. The maritime discoveries had allowed the addition of large possessions that were Portuguese by rights of discovery and occupation. As a consequence, it was claimed, Portugal had become a country composed of a single nation and ruled by one state, though territorially scattered all over the world. The diversity of the territory was presented as a reason for unity, as each part was complementary to the others.

To strengthen this ideology the *Estado Novo* used history as final proof, even stretching some arguments in questionable ways. The historiography of the *Estado Novo* elected some national heroes, men that had performed “remarkable” deeds and that should therefore be seen as examples to follow. Salazar was presented as the last of those heroes whose financial “miracle” had saved the country from inevitable bankruptcy and consequent external dependence. This narrative of history, centred on individual “heroic” agents, was the result of a positivist conception of historiography. Therefore, history was presented as a positive sequence of indisputable facts, thus legitimising the ideology.

The *Estado Novo* would never accept the assertion that history is a construction, in the sense that the narrative of history is the result of the historian’s research and not directly the past “as it was”. The ontological gap between past and present was not acceptable for the essentialist conception of history that the regime upheld. On the contrary, the official history was ideologically oriented, for nationalist purposes. There was a normative aim, which was that of strengthening motherland moral values. The State itself was a concept entangled in the rhetoric of nationalism.

The State matched the Nation perfectly; it was the nucleus of the Nation's political power and therefore its political expression. It was also claimed that it had been so for the previous eight centuries, so Portugal was presented as an independent and stable, ancient nation-state aged eight hundred years. For the *Estado Novo* it was its mission to keep that historical past alive and the nationalist messages issued were one way of accomplishing that task. Besides, nationalism was presented by the *Estado Novo* as the only political solution in accordance with the history of the country. Furthermore, it was presented as the only pragmatic solution for the country's financial and economic crisis as well as for keeping the national pride, which was fundamental for internal cohesion and for re-orienting external relations. In theoretical terms, it can be asserted that the historiography of the *Estado Novo* (and the *Estado Novo* itself, for political purposes) subscribed the theses of the historical approach to nationalism, rather than the modernist approach. History was a means of legitimising the very existence of the independent Portuguese nation, so the eyes of the Portuguese people were deliberately redirected into the past (ever since primary school) so that they learnt the premisses of the syllogism that was to demonstrate that Portugal was "for ever" and that people should be proud of that.

The importance of ideology for the regime is well documented by the legislation it produced. On what concerns museums and cultural heritage, the *Estado Novo* followed at first the policies of the previous regime, preventing the exportation of artistic, archaeological and historical objects and acquiring for both the national and the regional museums. However, legislation on museums and national monuments was changed at an early stage of the regime. Propagandistic and ideological roles were attributed to museums and to cultural heritage, as the *Estado Novo* conceived the care for artistic, archaeological and historical objects as a nationalistic obligation. The most obvious example is the legislation that enabled the commissions in charge of national temporary exhibitions to request objects from museums to be used in the exhibitions. The separation of the museums into the national and the regional types was clear. The first were supposed to collect, preserve and exhibit collections that, for their meaning, were of nation wide importance, whereas the latter were to collect preserve and exhibit objects the importance of which would be mainly local or regional. Exceptionally, some regional museums kept objects or even collections of a larger, even national significance, a fact that might improve at least the symbolic importance of the museum in the national panorama. After the initial impulse for

the renovation of the museums, the distinction between museums of the regional and of the national types enabled the *Estado Novo* to decentralise budgetary responsibilities. In practical terms it means that local associations, along with local authorities, were asked to grant financial support for the museums. Another of the legislative outcomes was the increased importance attached to the training of professionals for working in the museums. Thus, the regime was aware of the necessity of making both the management of museums and the care for the collections tasks of a professional status, for the sake of efficiency. Specific legislation on temporary exhibitions was also produced, which reveals that the main concerns of the regime were those of propaganda, not strictly the care for the objects and collections. And yet the object was central in the logics of display during the *Estado Novo*, as will be mentioned further in this chapter.

To sum up, this was the panorama: a central, authoritarian State that sought the support of the Nation by gathering it under a nationalist ideology, which needed a propagandistic machine for being spread. Museums, as cultural institutions, were soon programmed by legislative measures to be part of that apparatus.

8.2 - The use of museums and temporary exhibitions

Hence, during the *Estado Novo* museums and temporary exhibitions were the mirror of the official understanding of the world. The positivist conception of history, above mentioned, conceived of time as a linear sequence, like a path, with a beginning and a predictable end. As history was seen as a group of indisputable facts, it should be possible to reconstitute the past from a core of tangible documents. Those facts, represented by those documents, were to be chronologically aligned, each one in its own place. In museums this was also the understanding of history. An immediate result of such conceptions was that many exhibitions were organised chronologically, with the objects aligned as the facts of positivist history (for example the MAB organised its archaeological collections this way). These exhibitions were considered as the exhibit of truth, because they resulted from the historical truth provided by documents – in this sense, the objects were documents, the material evidence of facts. But, beyond the strict rules of positivism, the main goal of history - for the *Estado Novo* - was to provide lessons from the past. As a result, museums and exhibitions were expected to make known those lessons. People who

would go to museums or temporary exhibitions were the target of those messages and were expected to learn that particular version of the past. Heroes from the past were presented as examples to follow, and their deeds were considered models of good behaviour. Besides, as history had a moral and political purpose, the act of making history should serve that purpose. The consequence is that producing history - for the *Estado Novo* - was a process imbued by ideology and museums reflected that. Museums and temporary exhibitions as places where history was made and presented were too to serve that ideological aim, that is, to serve the nation as the highest value. The interpretation of history was the process of achieving that goal. The state set the rules for interpreting history in a propagandistic way, combining documents and facts with ideology and propaganda. Museums in general and temporary exhibitions followed those rules in their making of history and were then used to pass the message. This was evident in the 1940 exhibition, especially in the exhibits on the achievements of the *Estado Novo*, but was also present in museums as the MAS.

Despite the fact that the legislation of the period defined several categories of museums, for the purposes of the present research the division between national and regional museums was a focus of attention. A third division that does not have a legislative basis, but which is helpful in analytical terms, was introduced under the designation of specialised museums. The distinctive characters of each will be synthesised below.

National museums, despite some effort exerted by the State to ensure minimum conditions for them to function, faced several financial difficulties that are evident at all levels of their day-to-day life. For internal and external purposes, the State wanted the museums, especially the national museums, to be the mirror of the nationalist dominant ideology, by disseminating the message that the regime was faithful to the historical past of the nation and that it took good care of its heritage. Yet, very often the national museums went through severe difficulties, such as those described in apparently minor episodes as that of the leaking roofs, or of the lack of funding for buying a typewriter, but also scarcity of means for paying the personnel museums absolutely needed and, most of all, for supporting a coherent and effective acquisition policy.

These were mainly the worries of the directors of the museums. They had to face permanently a central administration that was deaf to the claim of their difficulties. It seems that,

for the directors, the cultural function of museums was primordial, even above their political function of spreading propaganda. It does not necessarily mean that they were immune to that use of the museums; only for them those were second order questions that were preceded by the more immediate need for preservation of the objects. As for the government, their political reading of the situation was entirely opposite. That was fairly evident at the time of the organisation of several national as well as external exhibitions. The State would either stretch the budget attributed to a museum or cut it down, according to the propagandistic potentialities of the labour of the museum.

These museums were organised internally as a succession of valuable objects. The sequences of objects were either based on chronological or typological criteria. The displays presented the objects as treasuries, both for their intrinsic value and for the importance of the collection as a whole, often in terms of the nationalistic ideology. Labels were preferentially made for each of the objects and with factual information, such as date, authorship, raw material used and number in the inventory. There was no interpretation in those. Seldom would the museums exhibit a common label for a set of objects, interpreting the meanings resulting from the combination of those objects. Ancient art collections, historical or archaeological objects were the most common among the collections of national museums. Exceptionally the MAP and the MNE gathered objects of ethnographic significance. Hence, national museums were very much like mausoleums of a venerable past, reliquaries for treasuries that were the legacy of revered common ancestors. This was indeed the trend of the epoch, in museum techniques. But what is being highlighted here is the fact that the positivist discourse of history and of museums matched the essentialist conception of history and heritage that backed State propaganda.

As was previously stated the internal life of these museums can be read as a microcosm of the larger social organisation of the *Estado Novo*. Personal relations among the personnel of the museum were framed in the boundaries that the system set for them. The very first condition to be admitted as a worker for the State was the certification by the political police that the candidate's political record was clean, that is to say, that he had not been involved in political activities of a subversive nature, according to criteria set by the State. Then, day-to-day life, inside of the museum, established clearly hierarchical relations among the people. These hierarchies were both of a professional and of a more general social nature, reproducing differences that came from the

outside world. Frequently, it is hard to tell whether the ascendancy - dependency relations set inside of a museum, among workers and directors, for example, draw from professional or personal relations. According to the legislation, the directors were indeed supposed to be commanding in the museums – in practical terms some were more than others according to their personality and circumstances. Yet, the rigid hierarchy of the corporatist State established the ascendancy of those directors, according to the strict scheme of the *Estado Novo* that draw a pyramid of hierarchical dependencies. As the dictator upon the Nation, the directors of the museums ruled their institutions in a paternalistic manner, sometimes even getting involved in the workers private life, either for helping (what would usually result in pathetic expressions of thankfulness by the subordinates) or for imposing the moral patterns of behaviour set by the regime. In turn, the directors were supposed to show the same loyalty towards central government authorities. There is some evidence of expressed disagreement by the directors but it does not mean that, by the end, they disobeyed central orders. It is useful here to remember that whereas common workers at the museums were “common” people who had had few or no formal education, directors were chosen among the cultural elites of the country. In the museums, as well as in nearly all other institutions of the time, the tentacles of the social and political organisation set by the State were therefore present and active. In this sense, culture was dominated by politics.

As was hypothesised at the beginning of the research there is some specificity reflected in the life of regional museums. The first and perhaps major is the fact that these institutions went through even harsher budgetary difficulties. This was due both to the fact that they had less capacity of exerting influence upon the central State and to the fact that their propagandistic impact upon the people, especially that of peripheral museums, was estimated as substantially minor than that of the national museums. It is possible to know this through the points of view presented by the directors, whenever they were able to reach the central State, expressing arguments in favour of their museums. Such was the case for the period of preparation for the exhibition of 1940. Some museums that had for long been willing to acquire objects or collections or even to undertake works in the buildings, but had postponed those decisions due to the lack of money, were then able to fulfil those objectives. Unlike the usual contention of expenditure, the regime mobilised substantial material resources for the nation wide preparation of the

commemorations, the climax of which was to be attained with the Great Exhibition of the Portuguese World. There, in Lisboa, was the centre of the celebrations but all through the country the material evidences of Portuguese culture, heritage and history were also looked after with particular care. As a consequence, regional museums received temporarily financial support, which was far more substantial than usual.

Another major difficulty of these regional museums was the management of the heterogeneous collections that they usually kept. The reasons for that heterogeneity were mainly three. First, the acquisition policies of those museums were mainly determined by their regional and local roots that made them responsible for collecting all sorts of objects of historical, artistic, archaeological or ethnographic value. Besides, the directors were usually recruited locally, people with a fierce sense of the specificities of the local and of the regional levels of Portuguese culture and heritage, a factor that reinforced the tendency for acquiring a diversity of objects. Finally, these museums received several donations of private owners who wanted to perpetuate the memory of someone and, or, give public utility to a diversity of objects or collections that were considered by themselves as museum objects. Yet, that way, some of the museums managed to gather remarkable collections or exceptional objects, for their historical and symbolic value, that even a national museum would not despise to have in its collections. This was also used before the central authorities as an argument to ask for further material resources for providing adequate care for the collections. The rhetoric of nationalism was then used to evoke the symbolic value for the nation of this or that particular object.

The directors' personal qualities were fundamental in the management of these local museums. Their initiatives, strong will, capacity of persuading the others and of exerting influence were key factors for the success of the museums. Sometimes it was the local museum that led innovative experiments, in terms of museum practices. Some examples are the organisation of conferences and other cultural events that assembled the cultural elites of the time, or activities in the educational area, or the establishment of close relations with local communities, or the involvement of new publics, or simply the organisation of temporary exhibitions. It was not until the mid nineteen sixties that these programmes became part of national initiatives and of the national policies for the museums. Until then, they were exceptional and depended entirely on the performance of these individual directors who were able to mobilise local resources and good will

for their initiatives. Some local associations, known as "the friends of the museum", were born that way. The *Estado Novo* supported those initiatives, from a legal perspective, as they lessened the budgetary responsibilities of the central State. Some still remain.

The museums that we have designated as specialised emerged in a later phase of the *Estado Novo*, that is to say the 1950's and the 1960's. For the regime they were isolated investments in areas where there was a necessity of public intervention either by the specificity of the situation or for reasons of political opportunity. Two of these examples were previously analysed, each representing each of the situations mentioned. In Conímbriga it was the specificity of the place that made intervention urgent; as for the MNE it was what was thought to be a political opportunity that favoured the creation of a museum. Nevertheless, in both cases, the State aimed at creating exemplary museums that would be the proof that the regime took very good care of the national heritage and that might, that way, work as a support for renovated nationalistic theses.

The pillars of the nationalist ideology had emphasised the past of the nation, even a past as distant as the pre-roman age in the Peninsula, where from some theorists had been able to grasp the roots of independence. Hence the importance attributed to archaeological remains. Conímbriga, for the richness of the remains of the roman period that were found there and that arose the interest of the international archaeological community, had to be cared in a special manner, so as to prove that the State was indeed effective in its concern for the nation's historical past. Thus, the support to the excavations and the creation of a museum were seen as a political opportunity. Both inside and outside the country, there was a public of potential admirers of the State's cultural policy, if a proper and modern solution was found for Conímbriga. In Lisboa, the MNE was the result of a particular situation. By then, the *Estado Novo* was facing growing difficulties in keeping the overseas empire, at first in the ideological and then even in the military field. After World War II, the international community had started the condemnation of colonialism and therefore secessionist movements in colonies became ever more active. For the State, the creation of a museum that would propagate the thesis that there were permanent historical reasons for the link between Portugal and the overseas territories was vital. The museum was then planned as a cultural validation of the State's colonial policy. However, the museum was to become more a focus of criticism to the establishment than an ally. Still, for both cases, it was

the idea of taking political advantage of cultural dynamism that led the State to finance these initiatives.

As in the two types previously mentioned, the directors of these two museums and their teams played an important role in the definition of what the museums were to become. In Conímbriga, Bairrão Oleiro was essential to the creation of the museum and the definition of the initial project. Even after he had left, the new director, who had worked in close cooperation with him, followed the same guidelines. In the MNE, and contradicting the official plans for the museum, it was Jorge Dias, the director, and his team that together drew the guidelines for contesting rather than supporting colonialism and imperialism, hence facing the dominant ideology. It was high time for alternative ways of conceiving the world after several decades under the monochrome *Estado Novo*.

In fact, these two museums, born after 1945, were born in a new era, both for Europe and for Portugal. For the Portuguese State, the creation of “specialised” museums made it necessary to work in close relation with specialists, that is to say, cultural elites coming from the academic world. The social history on this particular period of the regime has shown that there was a growing internal opposition to the regime and a search for external alternative models. Cultural, urban elites led the process and the universities, for their inner attribute of reflexivity, were potential foyers for the mobilisation against the regime.

Temporary exhibitions were crucial for the propaganda of the regime. Their propagandistic language is self-evident, but they also carried other, less evident but still political messages. There were four main themes in these exhibitions: the colonial empire, Portuguese art, Portuguese history and ethnography, the achievements of the *Estado Novo*. Quite often the exhibitions matched all four items in a deliberate propagandistic combination. All of them were used in the rhetoric of nationalism: the empire as an indestructible part of the Portuguese soul and hence of the Portuguese territory; art as one of the greatest manifestations of the cultural grandiosity of the nation; history and ethnography as the proof of the historical essence of Portuguese cultural individuality and political autonomy; finally, the achievements of the *Estado Novo* (from infrastructures to cultural policies) were presented as evidence of the efficacy of the regime and

therefore of the necessity to maintain it, in order to proceed the construction of the new Portugal. The dark alternative presented was always Portugal as it had been before the 28 May 1926.

The themes mentioned all served the same objectives. In general, there were five main objectives: internal and external propaganda; ideological consolidation; the definition of the nationalist values; indoctrination of the population; stabilisation of the regime. Propaganda was clearly supported by the State as a legitimate activity and even an essential one, an assertion that led to the creation of the SPN and then of the SNI. The regime was aware of the necessity of divulging its vision of the world and of making it convincing. Salazar was ready to impose his reasons, but did a great deal for making them known and accepted rather than imposed. The exhibitions were part of this strategy. Besides they were also directed to external public opinion and to external political leaders, for Salazar wished the foreign countries to recognise the rightfulness of Portuguese positions. He claimed that Portugal needed to have its own coherent external policy rather than some external relations, and conceived of it in a setting of international recognition and respect. Besides, the regime claimed to be the result of a definite ideology and therefore there was a necessity of convincing the people of the rightfulness and advantages of that State ideology. Nationalism was a pillar for the State so it became central in the language of the exhibitions. Complementary themes, such as the hierarchies of the Portuguese society, the corporatist organisation, the thorough management of public economy and finance, were also patent. The country was repeatedly presented as taking good account of its material resources, and the regime as one that honoured its promises, unlike the precedent ones. So, political stability, that is to say the need for the continuity of the regime, was the logic conclusion to draw from the discourse of the exhibitions. Hence ideological inculcation was vital for the regime: exhibitions, where museum objects and other deliberate symbols were put together, according to a grammar imposed to the objects that transformed all of them into proofs of the nationalist discourse, were privileged places for indoctrination. Following B. Anderson's analysis of nationalism,⁷³⁵ this was a huge investment in the imagination of the Portuguese people.

⁷³⁵ See note 101, ANDERSON, Benedict - "Old Empires, new nations" in *Imagined Communities, reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism*, London, Verso, 1993, p.50-65.

The amount of material resources involved in these initiatives was indeed huge to meet the grandiosity planned for the exhibitions. In most cases, the sceneries and the artificial ambiences created were impressive and for that reason memorable. For national as well as for international fairs and exhibitions, the State made its best for producing remarkable images of itself. For the purpose, the sceneries were grandiose, the objects were carefully chosen according to their symbolic value, the texts inscribed in the labels well conceived, the contents of the speeches delivered thoroughly planned, the memory of the exhibitions edited in catalogues that collected significant texts and photographs. The objects and their sceneries attracted the public. But equivalent or even stronger impact was exerted by the texts in the labels, for their intense propagandistic message. A graph showing the State accounts was associated to a label where it could be read that the Estado Novo had rescued the country from bankruptcy; or a fishing boat had a label that appraised positively the State's fishing policies; or the drawings of the plan of a new bridge were illustration for a label on the efficacy of the regime's infrastructures policy. There were also some texts on the virtues of the national heroes of the past and of the present: the kings, the warriors, the governors and, among them, of Salazar himself. At inaugural ceremonies speeches delivered would always repeat the affirmation of the structural values of the regime and the principles of the prevailing nationalist ideology that supported the State. Perhaps the public was not abundant at these sessions. In 1940, however, the programme of events was planned with successive inaugurations all through the period of the exhibition, for the public to be there. The published materials resulting from those events were attempts to register and perpetuate the main aspects of the exhibitions. Their circulation would result in an increased impact of the exhibitions.

8.3 - Theoretical and methodological standpoints of the museum practice of the *Estado Novo*

The definition of the museum, for the *Estado Novo*, is patent in the legislation. However, it is the theoretical concept of the museum behind that model that is targeted here. For the definitions of the corporatist State, museums were institutions of culture. They are still considered to be so. For the present, it is quite uncontroversial that the function of museums, as cultural

institutions, has a political nature, in the sense that culture is not neutral when it comes to ascribing power to someone or legitimating authority. Hence propaganda is a way of ordering society, that is, of imposing, through persuasive language and arguments, models of societal organisation and of ideal polities. Made under the strict control of the State, propaganda will tend to introduce patterns of uniformity. Some authors will tend to read these facts in terms of cultural dominance.

The use of museums and temporary exhibitions by the *Estado Novo* can also be interpreted in terms of dominant culture. For the *Estado Novo*, academic culture was hierarchically superior to working-class culture. Museums and exhibitions were seen as opportunities of education for the low classes. That education would include the aesthetic contemplation of the work of art, the understanding of historical lessons as well as basic values of social relations. For the purpose, museums and exhibitions, as expressions of the dominant culture were used to pass its ideology and its values. Political propaganda was part of this strategy of domination.

Museums, as cells of the *Estado Novo*, reflected social cleavages: working-class, middle-class and elites were clearly separated both in social and cultural terms. Museums, as places of enjoyment, were for the elites, perhaps even for the middle-class; the workingman was supposed to learn from the museum, not to enjoy himself. The hierarchical organisation of the Portuguese society was evident in terms of museum practices, as the museum faced its visitors as members of specific social groups. From this point of view, museums were indeed loci of political pragmatics, as they reproduced a rigid social scheme.

Both national and regional museums were under national guidelines for almost all aspects of their internal life. These centralised policies were implemented due to two fundamental factors: first, the central government dominated almost all aspects of the Portuguese life, in a paternalistic way, deciding what was best and what was forbidden; second, museums' fundamental budgetary resources came from central administration. This second factor was decisive in terms of museums' policies, as each museum had a very narrow margin for self-decision. Main decisions and main policies came from above, and so did the propagandistic and ideological message the museums had to pass.

As for the methodological standpoints of museums, during the period, there are three main aspects to mention: a positivist logic of history and, by extension, of the work to be done with museum objects, which, for the sake of authenticity of the history narrated, should be “the real thing”; the exhibition of people as objects, mainly during some temporary exhibitions; finally the use of deliberate symbols of the national pride among real objects of the museums.

8.3.1 - Objects as 'the real thing'

The *Estado Novo* presented itself as a regime that was the guardian of the material remains of the past. As the respect for the national history was one of the main themes of the Portuguese nationalism, the *Estado Novo* recognised the need to care for historical objects, monuments and documents. The preservation of the material evidences of a "glorious past" was a necessary action of propaganda for the regime. It was imperative to match pragmatic action with ideological discourse in order to make it credible. The goals of the nationalistic propaganda were both internal and external, as the regime wanted to be persuasive both inside and outside its borders. The constructed image of a nation that was taking good care of its past was a main objective of the *Estado Novo*.

In order to enhance that image the regime focused on three main groups of objects: artistic objects, historical objects with exceptional symbolic value and ethnographic objects of the popular art, culture and traditions. The common characteristic of those remained in the importance attached to the object as 'the real thing'. That is to say that the authenticity and uniqueness of the objects put on display in museums or temporary exhibitions was one of their most important and emphasised characteristics. Objects with artistic or aesthetic significance were kept in museums like the MNAA, which was considered a very good example of the cultural policy of the regime. Displays of historical and archaeological objects were most common both in national and in local museums. Some very special objects, such as the sword of Afonso Henriques or the garment King John the First wore during the battle of Aljubarrota, were almost venerated for their quality of national symbols. These objects were used to evoke the national pride and to tell a story, interpreting history in a nationalistic way. Museums were conceived as 'reliquaries', where objects were to be kept and admired. The organisation of the displays

matched the positivist conception of history. Each object was the tangible proof of a certain historical fact, and valuable because of that very status. No structural interpretation was available and, as a consequence, each object was conceptually isolated from the others. Museums exhibitions were sequences of isolated objects.

With a slightly different use, ethnographic objects were also of great importance for the regime. It was the *Estado Novo* aim to affirm the originality of the Portuguese material culture as one of the characteristics of the national independence. Ethnographic material was also used to stress the belief that national unity was generated by regional diversity. Originally, this was used to explain the diversity inside the European part of the country. However, at a later stage, it was also used to justify one of the most important political and ideological statements of the regime – that of the indivisibility of the national territory, which included both the continental and the overseas provinces. In temporary exhibitions held in the late 1930s, and in the 1940 exhibition, the regime emphasised the indivisibility of the territory in an effort to indoctrinate all Portuguese people in the official truth.

The propaganda of the *Estado Novo* proclaimed that its policy concerning museums was based on a deep concern with artistic, historical and archaeological objects and with their conservation and cultural use. However, the regime allowed and encouraged other uses of such objects, even at the risk of jeopardising their integrity and against the advice of curators and museum directors. During official commemorations and temporary exhibitions with high political and ideological purposes, museum objects were used with propagandistic intentions, with very few or no concern at all for possible damages. The regime wanted to be identified with the care and devotion for art and history but did not hesitate to use museum objects to pursue propagandistic interests. Unaware of the technical aspects of the exhibition, the public would stare and admire the ‘things’ the nation possessed.

Despite the proclaimed concern with museums and heritage, the lack of financial resources museums had to deal with during the *Estado Novo* was directly reflected in the poor conditions of the buildings and in all sorts of material difficulties faced by museum directors. No coherent acquisition policy could be followed and even the smallest problems of the day-to-day life of museums became major issues. Central administration was extremely careful on what concerned

expenditure and museum directors did not have financial autonomy at all. Yet, contradicting this trend, temporary exhibitions were organised with important financial resources. The *Estado Novo* was aware of the fact that museums - with some exceptions - had few visitors and that their propagandistic impact was low. On the contrary, temporary exhibitions would attract a significant number of people, thus representing a much better propagandistic investment. It is also interesting to look at the fact that temporary exhibitions with propagandistic purposes were rarely organised by museum professionals. It was for the central departments of propaganda to organise them. Thus, the nationalistic message resulting is more obvious and much closer to the standard produced by the central state than it is in museums.

Nevertheless and in spite of the differences, both the museums and the temporary exhibitions were centred in the objects exhibited, both for the makers of the displays and for the public. The former planned the exhibition around the objects that were to be exhibited; the latter were attracted by the rarity of the objects displayed. And yet the choice of the objects obeyed to the symbolic needs of the nationalist and propagandistic discourse. The objects as “real things” were there but their meanings were not open to the interpretation of the public. On the contrary, the public was carefully guided into the particular meanings that it was important to highlight, for political reasons. A crucial example of this is the case of the sword of King D. Afonso Henriques. The “real thing” ought to be there, not a photograph or a replica. But it was not “the sword” equal to so many others that was important. It was the fact that the king had fought the war for the national independence with that sword (and the claimed authenticity of the object was of course crucial for the belief). These symbolic objects were relics of the national past.

8.3.2 - People as objects

The *Estado Novo* not only put objects that had ideological value on display but also transformed people into objects on display. This applies to the use of the national heroes as objects of national pride, used as models of good behaviour and presented as examples to follow. However, it was not possible to have those heroes physically present in the exhibits. As a consequence, their statues or portraits played that role. Another case is the use of real human beings as objects of display. Especially in some temporary exhibitions human beings were

displayed as curiosities. This occurred both with "natives" brought from the overseas territories and with other "natives", who lived in the European territory in rural cultural environments, at the time almost untouched by urban life. The two main examples of such practice were the exhibitions of 1934 in Porto and of 1940 in Lisboa.

In 1934 the Crystal Palace and its gardens became a miniaturised colonial Empire. Inside the exhibition area it was possible to admire animals and ethnographic objects brought from all over the Empire; it was also possible to taste exotic foods from Africa and Asia; to give the exhibition the colours of authenticity, "natives" from the colonies were also brought to Porto and lived in the gardens of the Crystal Palace for weeks. One of the reasons that attracted visitors to the exhibition was the possibility of seeing real "natives". Visitors were expected to stare in amazement at the sight of such "strange" human beings. In 1940, a Colonial Garden and a Section of Portuguese European Ethnography were two main parts of the Exhibition of the Portuguese World (Lisboa). Again, people from the colonies were brought to be displayed in the exhibition. But in the section of Portuguese ethnography other "natives" from rural villages of mainland territory were also on display. The similarities between these two sections of the exhibition question a possible interpretation of the presence of "natives" from the colonies as an act of racism. People were used as objects of display not because of the colour of their skins but because of their inner cultural significance as members of the "great nation" Portugal was to be presented as.

This use of human beings as objects of display demonstrates the importance of propaganda for the *Estado Novo*. The aims of the regime had to be served. To accomplish propagandistic goals the regime used objects as well as human beings without what would be considered today the due respect. The fundamental intention of temporary exhibitions - and of museums - during the *Estado Novo* was, first and foremost, ideological and political, rather than strictly cultural. Different display techniques were used in temporary exhibitions and in museums, although with almost the same objectives. Temporary exhibitions were meant to impress, to cause visual effect. The scenarios and the objects on display had to produce a vivid impression on the visitors and to engrave in their memories messages of ideological meaning. In museums, this kind of pressure was much weaker. It would not have been possible to have human beings permanently performing at the museums permanent exhibitions as in temporary exhibitions. The

rigidity of the museum exhibitions, the total absence of life, the lack of contact with the external real world were some of the main differences with temporary exhibitions. These, by exhibiting people, had the touch of life that the museums lacked. Probably, this was also a reason why they were more attractive for the public, and the public was fundamental for the success of the temporary exhibitions.

8.3.3 - Symbols

Museum objects were used as symbols, but inside museums and in temporary exhibitions the *Estado Novo* presented fabricated symbols of its ideology as well. Those symbols were amongst the objects on display, making it almost impossible to visit a museum or temporary exhibition without becoming imbued by their subliminal message. The symbols most commonly used were related with power, religious faith and socio-political values. The presence of such symbols in museums and in temporary exhibitions was not perceived as abnormal because they were common in day-to-day life. The two main symbols of the nation were the national flag and the national anthem, both used in official ceremonies at museums and temporary exhibitions.

Another symbol of the *Estado Novo* was the power of the army. Salazar stated repeatedly that only through force would it be possible to affirm and maintain the independence of the country. Immediately after becoming prime-minister, one of his decisions was the improvement of the army. The image of the Portuguese soldier, well equipped and prepared to fight for his country was an image of the *Estado Novo*, and its presence is documented in several temporary exhibitions. The comparison with Portuguese soldiers of other times evoked heroism, courage and discipline, all three characteristics that would enable Portugal to keep its independence against all enemies. Discipline was presented as a main civic virtue that led to respectable citizenship. Museums and temporary exhibitions would exhibit soldiers' uniforms, weapons and photographs of military parades, among others, as objects of display. The very notion of document and of museum object was stretched to include pieces of propaganda specifically manufactured for that purpose (an example would be the photographs of the Portuguese army in the 1940 exhibition). Again, this promoted the association of ideology to

historical facts. In some temporary exhibitions this process was taken even further, as the main theme of the exhibition was, for example, the military occupation of the overseas territories.

As well as in the army, in all other aspects of social life discipline was presented as necessary to the accomplishment of common good. Symbols were also fabricated for this purpose. The image of the tree or of the pyramid (as in the exhibition of Paris - 1937 - or in Lisboa - 1940) was used to symbolise the social and political organisation of the country. On top, there was the Leader (*O Chefe*) who ruled over all the society and all the political structure of the regime. The leader was, incontestably, Salazar. In temporary exhibitions he was often represented in his academic garments, as a Professor of the University of Coimbra (the oldest and most prestiged of the country) therefore a symbol of authority, intelligence and civic superiority. Salazar and the President of the Republic were the two symbols of the political organisation of the country and their photographs hung in most public places. At the bottom of the hierarchy, even in museum's day-to-day life, the strong presence of the *Estado Novo* would be perceived. Almost every act could be seen as either pro or against the regime and, therefore, interpreted as a political action. The Portuguese administration had a strong hierarchical organisation and all civil servants were submitted to rigorous obedience. The state acted in a paternalistic way, assuming that on what politics were concerned, all citizens were under age. The role of the state was the imposition of order and discipline, the regulation of all public expenditure and the defence of national rights. All these symbols of the regime could be found in museums and in temporary exhibitions. Their presence strengthened the ideological message of the displays and emphasised the presence and the role of the *Estado Novo*. The regime used propaganda as a powerful instrument to spread and to impose its ideology.

As this research has aimed to prove, museums (in their quotidian) and temporary exhibitions (whenever settled) were scenarios of propaganda, *loci* of politics and ideology. The *Estado Novo* was aware of the power of such media and did not underestimate its value. Since a very early phase of the regime, museums, monuments, heritage and temporary exhibitions were under the protection of the State. The chronology of the legislation on heritage and museums and the use of temporary exhibitions clearly demonstrate that the *Estado Novo* intentionally invested

money and effort in such means of propaganda. These were not options taken at a late stage of the regime, when trying to resist internal or external opposition; these were options taken since the late 1920's and kept constant, with minor adjustments, until the 1970's. Hence, all through that period, it was not possible to visit a national museum without being exposed to propaganda. Perhaps more than in any other domain of the politics and propaganda of the *Estado Novo*, museums and temporary exhibitions were, from the beginning, the veritable face of the regime.