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# Public Memory and Power in Portugal (1880–1960)

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Between 1880 and 1960, there occurred in Portugal a significant number of centenary commemorations related to the discoveries, the expansion and the building of successive Portuguese empires. Despite the vast chronological period involved, marked by many vicissitudes and changes in Portuguese society, it is possible to establish a nexus between two historical moments: the definitive turning to Africa, with the construction of the Third Empire, and the increasing affirmation of a nationalism of an imperialist nature that reached its peak in the political and ideological presentation of the Estado Novo. If the first centenary of this time was located in the decade when Portuguese colonial interests began to be the order of the day in national politics, the last one heralded the beginning of the end of empire.

10 June 1880 was celebrated as the tercentenary of the death of Luís de Camões. The author of *Os Lusíadas* was made the object of a cult of the romantic élite. Auguste Comte, for his part, included him in a calendar dedicated to the celebration of heroes of humanity, where he was commemorated in the eighth month which was devoted to Dante and the modern epic. The republican and positivist Teófilo Braga was the main supporter of the celebration of the tercentenary in the newspapers of the period, though there had been ample consensus as to the necessity to unite every effort for the celebration and to promote the life and work of the poet among ordinary people. After a meeting of the principal representatives of the daily papers and periodicals of the capital, a commission was established with the task of organizing the proceedings. Thanks to the mobilization of the whole country's press, it was possible to instil a sense of nationalism in the Camões anniversary. The general feeling that inspired the celebration was summed up by the royalist deputy, Simões Dias, in a parliamentary speech: 'relembrar os mortos é estimular os vivos; recordar *Os Lusíadas* é reviver a melhor época da nacionalidade portuguesa, e acordar um mundo onde Portugal foi senhor, foi grande, foi omnipotente'.<sup>1</sup>

The Camões festival in Portugal was the beginning of a fashion for civic celebrations of great events and achievements in national history. In the following years various commemorations took place. The fifth centenary

<sup>1</sup> Brito Aranha, *Diccionario Bibliographico Portuguez*, Estudos de Innocencio Francisco da Silva applicaveis a Portugal e Brazil, continuados e ampliados por. . . , 15 (Oitavo do Supplemento) (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional, 1888), p. 21.



of the birth of the Infante Dom Henrique in 1894 stood out, as did the fourth centenary of the discovery of the sea route to India in 1898. On the former occasion, various personalities from Porto claimed for the city the honour of organizing the festival, not only because the Infante was born in that city but because they wanted to compete with the capital in celebrations of this kind. On the latter occasion, all the preparation and organization of the commemorations was undertaken by the Sociedade de Geografia of Lisbon, under the energetic management of its Permanent Secretary, the writer and journalist Luciano Cordeiro.

In 1900, the fourth centenary of the achievement of Pedro Álvares Cabral passed almost unnoticed in a country where the national situation made it little disposed to festivities. The members of the committee of the Sociedade de Geografia blamed a certain exhaustion brought about by enormous financial difficulties and the obstacles they had had to confront to bring about, less than two years earlier, the so-called 'Centenário da Índia'. But no one offered to organize the celebrations and therefore they were reduced to a single gala session evoking the discovery of Brazil, in the presence of the royal family and principal dignitaries in the headquarters of the Sociedade de Geografia in Lisbon. Various separate events took place in other locales and with other public associations. The press, however, did not neglect to mention the anniversary.

Beyond the participation of a number of distinguished Portuguese in the commemorations of the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus, held in Spain in 1892, there was no further significant celebration connected with the discoveries and the expansion during the period of the constitutional monarchy. The establishment of the republic in 1910 brought important changes to the calendar of regular celebrations in the Portuguese state, but did not infer a different significance for the centenaries. Moreover, the unsettled political situation during the period of the first republic was not conducive to the organization of great public festivities. Only in 1915 was there an unsuccessful attempt to memorialize the double centenary of the death of Afonso de Albuquerque and the conquest of Ceuta. Beyond the traditional public events which marked the occasion, and a notable outpouring of publications under the patronage of the Academia das Ciências de Lisboa, there were no other celebrations marking these dates. The country was preoccupied with the prospect of mobilization for the European front in the Great War, which began early in 1917.

During the period of the first republic three further centenaries were also celebrated evoking figures linked to the heroic age of the nation: the fourth centenary of the death of Fernão de Magalhães in 1921, together with the centenaries of the birth of Camões and the death of Vasco da Gama in 1924. The organization of the first was claimed by the Instituto de Coimbra, a prestigious cultural institution, although the public commemorations of

the circumnavigator actually took place in Lisbon in the presence of the President of the Republic, António José de Almeida. The commemoration of Magalhães passed unnoticed by the press and by the general public, whose attention was focused on the homage, 6–10 April that year, to the unknown soldiers killed in action in Flanders and in Africa. Impressive processions, a solemn assembly of Congress, obsequies in the Estrela Basilica and civic and religious ceremonies at Batalha, where the mortal remains would rest in the mourning chamber, consecrated the anonymous heroes and the sacrifice of their lives for their country.

Three years later the Camões celebrations were organized by the Câmara Municipal de Lisboa which, as in 1911, declared 10 June a public holiday in the *concelho*. The public displays followed the customary pattern based on the model of the tercentenary celebrations, but given the difficult events of the period the programme was in the end a modest one. It took the form of a civic procession that followed the streets of the city and laid wreaths at the statue of the poet in Largo Camões. Among the ceremonies of remembrance and the cultural concerts, it is worth noting the new interest in gymnastic parades and physical exercises, as part of the cult of the physical perfection of the race. Special attention was paid to educational aspects, with the distribution to schools of busts of Camões and of a map of the Portuguese discoveries, of a popular illustrated edition of *Os Lusíadas* and of prizes for the best students. The organizers of the centenary recommended to the then Ministério da Instrução that they should study the best way of teaching the poetry of Camões, making it accessible to ordinary people. It was claimed by the president of the Câmara de Lisboa that it was necessary to popularize the cult of Camões and ‘os professores são os seus sacerdotes’.<sup>2</sup> The aim of this cult would be to instil in new generations the values of tradition and of past example. In the ideological atmosphere of the 1920s, the centenary of the epic was celebrated under the title ‘Festa da Raça’.

The fourth centenary of the death of Vasco da Gama fell that same year on 24–25 December.<sup>3</sup> The programme of commemorations had an official ring and became the pretext for exercising diplomacy and seeking to improve the country’s image overseas. Various international reports had accused Portuguese governments of tolerating forced labour and presiding over a deplorable situation in the colonies. Once again, the past was being commemorated with rhetoric about the glories of olden days to conceal the problems of the present. The public celebrations took place a month after

<sup>2</sup> 4º Centenário do Nascimento de Camões, 1524–1924 ([n.p.], [n. pub.], [n.d.]), p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Henrique Lopes de Mendonça, *Vasco da Gama na História Universal* (Lisbon: Portugal-Brasil, [n.d.]), p. 16.

the actual date of the centenary, 24–25 January 1925. Such an unprecedented situation, caused by the fact that the date coincided with Christmas, provoked caustic remarks in the press, because of the delay. The date of a centenary was 'solene e respeitável' and should not have been altered like any ordinary spectacle at the whim of the unprepared.

In 1922 the centenary of the independence of Brazil had been recognized in that country. The president of the republic and the republican government resolved to associate itself with the event. Portuguese participation took the form of hailing the role of Portugal in building the Brazilian nation. What the Portuguese wanted to record and bring before the eyes of the world, in the polemical turmoil of the 1920s, was the decisive importance of Portuguese colonization in forging the unity and identity of Brazil. Portugal had been responsible, as the colonizing power, for the marking out of the frontiers and for the territorial immensity of Brazil. Beyond this was the relative cultural unity that made possible the building of the Brazilian nation, thanks to the colonial and political purpose and action. This claim was expressed in the pages of *História da Colonização Portuguesa do Brasil*, which was edited by the monarchist Carlos Malheiro Dias, and which included contributions from both countries and constituted one of the most notable contributions to the centenary on the part of the Portuguese community.

However, no thought was given to recalling any colonial purpose or grievance in relation to the independence of Brazil. In a celebrated speech to the Congresso Federal, the President, António José de Almeida, thanked the Brazilians for proclaiming independence from Portugal in 1822.<sup>4</sup> The nation was, at that time, so weakened and exhausted it was in no position to continue supporting Brazil, with such rich territories which aroused the greed of foreign countries. For that reason independence was the best solution for both countries, because it preserved the Portuguese language, traditions, historical links and Portuguese immigration. The political emancipation of Brazilians was considered a 'facto normal e espontâneo', and the result of a process of evolution in relation to which the Portuguese had reason to take pride.

In this brief summary, we must not omit the first air crossing of the south Atlantic, made by Gago Coutinho and Sacadura Cabral, which had the greatest public impact of any initiative during that centenary. In Portugal it occasioned a great wave of national emotion and in Brazil too it created a huge impression. In Rio de Janeiro the aviators were welcomed with these popular verses:

<sup>4</sup> António José de Almeida, *Quarenta anos de vida literária e política*, 4 vols (Lisbon: Rodrigues, 1934), IV, 238.

Srs. Gago Coutinho e Sacadura Cabral  
 Que vindes de Portugal  
 Dentro desse passarinho  
 Ao morro do Corcovado,  
 Fica o mundo embasbacado  
 Pelo heroísmo português.  
 Acabou-se o nativismo  
 Eu sou irmão de vocês.<sup>5</sup>

They were compared to the heroes of the discoveries and viewed as the modern navigators of a new epoch. One curious commemorative stamp, issued in Portugal, connected the achievement of the aviators with the fleet commanded by Pedro Álvares Cabral. In the rhetoric and iconography of the period the journey assumed, therefore, the significance of a new discovery of Brazil.

In contrast to what had been normal during the earlier periods, the 1920s saw state intervention in the organization of ceremonies. State participation had been limited to financial support and the presence of officials at the main ceremonies; now the state began to emerge as the principal promoter of this type of public celebration. This tendency was reinforced during the period of the Estado Novo: the president of the Council nominated the main commissions responsible for the organization of centenaries, financed the initiatives and, above all, brought the machinery of the state into the business of great public representations of the heroic past of Portugal, with eyes firmly fixed on the present. What the Salazar regime wanted to show was, on the one hand, the continuity of a tradition of which it considered itself the legitimate heir and best champion and, on the other, the grand accomplishments of the regime in improving the prospects of the country then at the height of a glorious epoch in its history.

The fifth centenary of the passage of Cape Bojador in 1934 did not interest the government and therefore passed almost unnoticed. Attention was directed to the organization of the *Exposição Colonial* in Porto. Three years later, the *Exposição Histórica da Ocupação* re-evaluated, in the light of the Estado Novo, the colonial and military campaigns of the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, which were commemorated as an important part of the epic actions which made possible the building of the Portuguese empire. The *Duplo Centenário* of 1940 had as its pretext the *Fundação e a Restauração de Portugal*, but in reality it was an affirmation of the imperial idea of nation. The *Exposição do Mundo Português* was the paradigm of this, with its various sections exhibiting the history and ethnography of diverse regions of the metropolis and of the Portuguese colonies. The linking thread of the iconographic discourse

<sup>5</sup> Cit. Pinheira Corrêa, *Sacadura Cabral, homem e aviador* (Lisbon: author's edn, 1964), p. 212.

became the affirmation of a transcontinental identity, capable of integrating all the peoples of the vast Portuguese empire, from the Minho to Timor, into a single unity under the rule of Portugal. Even the Pavilhão do Brasil was included in this exhibition of the 'mundo português', with the blessing of the president, Getúlio Vargas, and the government of Osvaldo Aranha which was close to the Portuguese regime in ideological terms. The Brazilian élites, at least the more conservative among them, continued to take pride in their Portuguese origins. At the inauguration of the pavilion, General Francisco José Pinto, Brazil's representative at the event, made a point of affirming: 'Aqui estamos nesse Mundo Português, pela língua, pela raça, pelo sentimento cristão e pelo passado comum, cheio de feitos gloriosos'.<sup>6</sup>

The Duplo Centenário of 1940 became the paradigm of the centenaries of the Estado Novo and of the type of ritual, above all, that continued to haunt celebrations of this kind. In the 40s there were also several centenary celebrations promoted by governors of the Províncias Ultramarinas: the fifth centenary of the discovery of Guinea (1946), the third centenary of the re-conquest of Angola by Salvador Correia de Sá, and the first centenary of the birth of the journalist and governor of Mozambique, António Enes, who played a decisive role in the affirmation of Portuguese sovereignty in that region (1948). The first of these had the greater scope and nation-wide expression, thanks to the dynamism of the administration led by the naval officer Manuel Maria Sarmiento Rodrigues. In 1950, he became Ministro das Colónias, and was responsible for the emphasis on the evolution of political control along the theme of integration.

Finally, in the period under consideration, two centenaries were important from an ideological point of view and in terms of their impact on Portuguese society: the centenary of the birth of Joaquim Mouzinho de Albuquerque (1955), the cavalry officer who defeated Gungunhana, Emperor of Gaza, and the fifth centenary of the death of the Infante D. Henrique (1960). The cult of Mouzinho de Albuquerque had been encouraged at least since the 1930s by the military hierarchy and by the Agência Geral das Colónias, and he had already been honoured with a statue in Lourenço Marques and a film by the director Jorge Brum do Canto. It was the only Portuguese film that sought to portray the epic period of colonial occupation in grand scenes of military action set in an African landscape. The celebrations of the centenary seemed the logical corollary of this process of myth making and had a marked military stamp.

For its part, the centenary of the Infante Dom Henrique, organized at a period more than ever threatened by the independence of the colonies, represented a huge investment by the Portuguese government in celebrating

<sup>6</sup> *Boletim Geral das Colónias*, 17 (1941), 245.

a figure who was the major symbol of the idea of an imperial nation, with a Christian civilizing mission to redeem the world. The rhetoric of the occasion was defensive and extremely anachronistic, with constant appeals for the rebirth of the ancient spirit of the crusades. In the speech opening the commemorations in the Assembleia Nacional, the president of the organizing commission and former Ministro do Negócios Estrangeiros, José Caeiro da Mata, emphasized that they were living in an age of the 'liquidação de uma civilização', unless European countries were able to unite and fight for the preservation of their values and the power they had exercised over the world.<sup>7</sup> In his opinion, the western world had to confront the 'ondas de inundação soviética', the false doctrine of 'coexistência pacífica' and the 'crise da descolonização' in order to be able to preserve a model of society and of life that was synonymous with 'civilização'. Its overthrow would lead inevitably to barbarity and chaos. Caeiro da Mata then restated the tradition pillars of Portuguese overseas policy: the fraternal links with Brazil, the close relationship with Spain, and the secular alliance with Great Britain. These were the countries on which Portuguese governments had relied most to support colonial policy and, therefore, to save a model of civilization which they considered the legacy of the Infante D. Henrique.

The same tone was maintained in all the commemorative speeches. At the closing of the cycle of celebrations, the president of the Comissão Nacional emphasized even more bluntly the tenor of the political message. He spoke openly of the 'agentes da conspiração anti-ocidental' who sought to undermine 'unidade nacional' and prevent Portugal fulfilling her 'missão'. In his own words, 'o Ultramar português foi e será sempre para nós mais do que um património: foi e será sempre uma verdadeira missão'.<sup>8</sup> In this way, the government left no opening for any approach that was not an intransigent defence of Portuguese sovereignty in the colonies. In the following year, the war began in the African colonies that was to last thirteen long years.

After the Henrique celebrations of 1960, the centenaries lost their *élan* and had less prominence. The celebrations for the birth of Vasco da Gama (1969) were modest and those dedicated to Pedro Álvares Cabral (1968) were even more so (his actual birth and death dates are unknown). The dominant rhetoric of the time repeated unquestioningly a vision that sought to shape the national memory and legitimize the current policy of the rulers and the war itself. The present more than ever was imposed on the mediators of ceremonies and coloured their vision of the past.

<sup>7</sup> *Comemorações do V Centenário da Morte do Infante D. Henrique*, 4 vols (Lisbon: Comissão Executiva do V Centenário da Morte do Infante D. Henrique, 1961-63), II (1962), 28.

<sup>8</sup> *Comemorações*, III (1963), 343.

However, it is important to understand that such ideas were not the pure invention of the Estado Novo. Despite the ideological differences existing between the various political regimes and the periods in question that gave different nuances to the commemorative discourses, there is much they have in common. It is for this reason that we can speak of a public memory, sustained by cultured élites and by the Portuguese state, which found expression in the commemoration of the centenaries of the discoveries and of the establishment of Portuguese empires. Its logic, and that of its obsessive repetition, is the same: the same heroes, the same events, the same ideas about greatness, destiny and the mission of the Portuguese nation.<sup>9</sup> This being so, we move on to bring together the essential features of the representations constant in this public memory, which were fixed in authentic legends in the nationalist imagination.

### THE HEROES

Many centenaries commemorated the birth or death of an individual, and even those that focused on evoking an historical event did so in a personalized manner. The pedagogical objectives of moralizing and of setting an example for the new generations and for ordinary people were not alien to this personalization of history. The writer and politician Teófilo Braga had taken the matter even further when he affirmed that 'o sentimento de veneração é uma das principais forças coordenadoras das sociedades humanas; sem ele a ordem seria uma violência material e nunca um acordo harmónico das vontades'.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, the centenaries of great men had to be a form of substituting the traditional objects of religious veneration for others more adequate to a rational and positive vision of the world. This notion was borrowed from Auguste Comte and gained currency among Portuguese republicans who, as early as 1880, were engaged in organizing the Camões centenary.

From a very broad perspective, great men and heroes are characterized as super-human beings, superior to ordinary mortals and a species of lay saints. The tendency to exonerate them from the weaknesses of the human condition and from the defects that could threaten their perfect image turns them into ideal and legendary figures. The literal reading of records and contemporary reports contributed to forging many idealized images that are carried over into history texts and into the commemorations themselves. On the other hand, there was a strong tendency to project the values

<sup>9</sup> Mona Ozouf drew attention to the fact that the whole commemoration consisted of the obsessive affirmation of the same thing. Compare 'Peut-on commémorer la Révolution française?', *Le Débat*, 26 (1983), 162.

<sup>10</sup> Teófilo Braga, *Os centenários como síntese afectiva nas sociedades modernas* (Porto: da Silva Teixeira, 1884), p. 16.

of the present back onto historical figures, anachronistically, with the aim of 'touching up' the exemplary portrayal.

In such a manner, there was created an authentic imperial pantheon that had at its summit the figure of Luís de Camões, the symbol of nationhood and of a Portugal reaching across the world. *Os Lusíadas* became a site of memory for the Portuguese, its verses recited in all the commemorations.<sup>11</sup> Many wanted in particular to recall the 'memórias gloriosas' of those 'foram dilatando a Fé, o Império', as the poet claims in the first canto. The disturbed life of the poet and his work lent itself to appropriation: to the romantic image of the sentimental and loving seer; the popular figure of the powerful *Trinca-fortes*, restless, hot-blooded, valiant; the neglected man, persecuted by the powerful and by misfortune, who lived in poverty and dependent on alms begged by the slave Jau; the irreverent, fearless poet who never ceased to attack the great and powerful; the victim of injustice, of unhappiness and bad luck, the fellow of all who taste the bitter gall of disgrace; a noble individual by social origin and by his deeds and feelings. Finally, Camões was seen as a revolutionary and anachronistic defender of the cause of social democracy and liberty, or the extreme opposite, a man of religion and of faith, God-fearing and loyal to the crown and the order of the time. Above all, Camões was viewed as the eponym of Portugal, his course indistinguishable from his country's. His name was linked to moments of glory and tragedy for the nation, such as the discovery of the maritime route to India that had served as the theme for his epic, and the loss of national independence, in the year of his death. For this reason, he was especially remembered at moments of crisis and when national integrity was threatened. The supposed day of his death, 10 June, was declared 'Festa de Portugal' in 1925, and has been celebrated by the Portuguese state ever since.<sup>12</sup>

In a typology of national heroes commemorated in centenaries we have to distinguish, beyond the symbol of nationality, the founders, the restorers, the discoverers, the conquerors, and finally the heroes of colonial occupation at the end of the nineteenth century.

The founders belong to the creation of the kingdom of Portugal and to the first stage of the discoveries with the conquest of the territories in the north of Africa. The notion of founding is attached to the origins of nationality in the twelfth century, and with the beginning of expansion at the beginning of the fifteenth century, when the nation's imperial destiny

<sup>11</sup> The concept of a site of memory was defined by Pierre Nora as: 'unité significative, d'ordre matériel ou idéal, dont la volonté des hommes ou le travail du temps a fait un élément symbolique d'une quelconque communauté', in *Les Lieux de Mémoire*, ed. by Pierre Nora, 3 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), III/III, 1104.

<sup>12</sup> *Diário do Governo*, I Série, No. 114, 25 May 1925 (Lei No. 1783). In 1952 it was officially designated 'Dia de Portugal', and in 1976, 'Dia de Portugal, de Camões e das Comunidades Portuguesas'.

was set in motion. The nation was then, in a certain sense, founded again in the reign of D. João I, through the conquest of Ceuta and the beginning of the maritime explorations, which allowed the increase of its territory. It breached its peninsular limits and gave origin to the empire, extending to the Atlantic archipelagos and to the other continents. In this respect, the two most representative figures are D. Afonso Henriques, viewed as the founder of the nation, and the Infante D. Henrique, the creative force that conceived the vast scheme of the discoveries and of national expansion. The former is considered the founder of the nation and the latter of the empire.

The legend of D. Afonso Henriques was developed by the canons of Santa Cruz in Coimbra and by the monks of Alcobaça, at the start of the fifteenth century, as part of a strategy to legitimate the independence of the kingdom and protect the interests of their monasteries.<sup>13</sup> The king was presented as one touched by the miraculous, who always enjoyed a special divine protection, manifested throughout his life by miracles, apparitions, and prodigies culminating in the miracle of the Battle of Ourique. Christ's appearance on the eve of that battle, fought between Christians and Muslims, was proof of divine protection for the Portuguese nation and a demonstration of support in the struggle the Portuguese waged against the infidels. The Battle of Ourique was viewed, simultaneously, as the founding event of nationhood and the declaration of the sacred mission that it would have to fulfil as champion of the Christian religion. The myth of Ourique thus became a fundamental component in the affirmation of the Portuguese as an elect people and of the nation's imperial destiny. The historian Alexandre Herculano showed, in the nineteenth century, that he was dealing with a legend invented from apocryphal documents, but the idea of a people chosen to promulgate the faith survived as an important element in the nationalist and religious imagination as represented in the commemorations.

The Infante D. Henrique assumed, from the fifteenth century, the appropriate heroic characteristics, in accordance with the values of each age.<sup>14</sup> The chronicler and flatterer Zurara outlined the image of a hero typical of chivalrous and feudal society: a noble lord, courageous, dedicated, magnanimous and celibate, for whom the struggle with the infidels was the central purpose of his life. In the sixteenth century, he was represented as a renaissance prince, cultured and wise, thoughtful and full

<sup>13</sup> Ana Isabel Buescu, 'O mito das origens da nacionalidade: o milagre de Ourique', in *A Memória da Nação*, ed. by Francisco Bethencourt and Diogo Ramada Curto (Lisbon: Sá da Costa, 1991), p. 55.

<sup>14</sup> For a more detailed account see Maria Isabel João, *O Infante D. Henrique na Historiografia* (Lisbon: Grupo de Trabalho do Ministério da Educação para as Comemorações dos Descobrimientos Portugueses, 1994).

of determination, motivated by doubt, by the wish to discover and conquer the world to the supreme glory of the kingdom. By the 1600s, his legend was already firmly implanted and Manuel Faria e Sousa summed it up in the following terms: 'Valeroso Principe, y sabio, y santo, y digno da su origen'.<sup>15</sup> However, some authors continued to mention some aspects less praiseworthy in the behaviour of the Infante: the Tangiers enterprise, in which he was defeated, and the postures and omissions in his dealings with his brothers D. Fernando, who died a prisoner in North Africa, and D. Pedro, who went to his death at the Battle of Alfarrobeira, without D. Henrique doing anything to avert the tragedy.

By the eighteenth century, in the biography written by the Arcadian Cândido Lusitano, the hero and the saint were conjoined in a portrait of even greater virtues, in which there stood out his total detachment from material things, the excellence of his work and his total dedication to the service of God and of the kingdom. The romantic period conceived of the Infante Henrique as a visionary who fought, alone and tenaciously, against the obstacle of fear, of superstitions, and of the mediocrity of those who did not understand the scope of his undertaking. A man uniquely endowed with a remarkable knowledge and a capacity for planning, possessed of the spark of genius, who acted in the interests of science and of faith.

The powerful portrait drawn by Oliveira Martins in *Os Filhos de D. João I* influenced in a decisive manner the representations that followed. The writer compared him to Alexander, because 'deu a Portugal, com as descobertas a extensão dos mais vastos impérios, abrindo-nos um lugar eminente no épico panteão da História'.<sup>16</sup> He even considered him our Hercules: a sun hero, characterized by daring and the boldness of the enterprises he shouldered, symbol of the ascension and of the power capable of overcoming the greatest obstacles. The Infante D. Henrique had, in this manner, the wit to embody the 'génio latente de um povo inteiro' and to become 'intérprete do destino de uma nação'.<sup>17</sup> In a paper which, for reasons of ill health, he was not able to deliver in 1894, Oliveira Martins wrote that there had not been a more appropriate commemoration than his 'pois se um Henrique foi o fundador desta nação, outro Henrique veio, três séculos depois, abrir-lhe as portas da imortalidade'.<sup>18</sup> This was the image that prevailed in the commemorative speeches, despite a minority

<sup>15</sup> Manuel de Faria e Sousa, *Epitome de las Historias Portuguesas* (Madrid: Francisco Martinez, 1628), p. 465.

<sup>16</sup> Oliveira Martins, *Os Filhos de D. João I* (Lisbon: Guimaraes, 1973), p. 312.

<sup>17</sup> Oliveira Martins, p. 315.

<sup>18</sup> Oliveira Martins, *Portugal nos Mares, Ensaio de Critica, Historia e Geografia*, 2 vols (Lisbon: Parceria António Maria Pereira, 1924), II, 212.

undercurrent that, supported by other witnesses and interpretations, defended a position contrary to the 'lenda infantista'.<sup>19</sup>

In 1960, the commemorative speeches turned on three central ideas: first, the discoverers and Portuguese colonizers were driven by the most noble ideas such as promulgating Christianity and promoting civilization, downplaying the perspective of material advantages; second, the beneficence of Portuguese colonization, propelled by the most altruistic motives, had brought about the union of all the peoples of the Portuguese empire in a 'Nação una e indivisível'; and third, the forefathers responsible for the expansion and the empire were incomparable figures 'de missionários e santos, de heróis e de mártires ao serviço da Civilização e da Humanidade'.<sup>20</sup> At the head of this galaxy of heroes, as he appeared on the Padrão dos Descobrimentos inaugurated that year in Lisbon, was the majestic figure of the Infante D. Henrique, 'profundamente religioso, quase místico, tinha a fé viva de um cruzado e a disciplina rígida de um asceta'.<sup>21</sup>

The secular vision of the Infante D. Henrique that was dominant in the first centenary in 1894 gave way to a religious conception in which he appeared as a crusader and providential saviour of Christianity in the face of the threat from the Ottoman Turks prevailing in the Orient.<sup>22</sup> The myth served the ideological proposition of establishing a parallel with the double threat hovering over the Salazar regime: the independence of the colonies and communism. Both malicious dangers had to be exorcized through a new crusade in defence of the values of the Christian West. The Infante was raised to the status of inspirational figure in this new crusade and of founder of 'Nação transcontinental e multiracial', one of the formulas used to refer to the empire.

Much less importance was accorded to the heroic restorers of the nation, represented by the controversial figure of D. João IV. The names of the restorers who, in 1640, shook off the yoke of Philip IV of Spain were not individually remembered by the Portuguese. Only the Duke of Bragança and his wife, D. Luísa de Gusmão, seemed to embody those who fought to

<sup>19</sup> Teófilo Braga, *As Modernas Ideias na Literatura Portuguesa*, 2 vols (Porto: Lugan & Genalioux Sucres, 1892), II, 385; Teófilo Braga, 'A Lenda Infantista', in T. Tomé da Silva, *A Lenda de Sagres* (Porto: Porto-Gráfico, 1914); *Arquivo dos Açores*, 15 vols (Ponta Delgada: Universidade dos Açores, 1981), IV, 17–19.

<sup>20</sup> *Infante D. Henrique* (Lisbon: Comissão Executiva das Comemorações do V Centenário da Morte do Infante D. Henrique, 1960), p. 4.

<sup>21</sup> Speech by Lucena e Vale, Câmara Municipal of Viseu, Compare Presidência do Conselho, Comissão Executiva do V Centenário da Morte do Infante D. Henrique, *Comemorações*, II, 236.

<sup>22</sup> The historian Vitorino Magalhães Godinho has proved that the rise of the Ottomans in the Levant did not in any way affect the Portuguese discoveries and the political implications that determined the course of expansion up to the sixteenth century. Compare *A Economia dos Descobrimentos Henriquinos* (Lisbon: Livraria Sá da Costa Editora, 1962), p. 65. However, this idea was strongly rooted in the historiography and national memory. Curiously, however, Teófilo Braga was one of those who presented the Infante as saving Europe from the threat of the Turks, in spite of combating the 'lenda infantista': see his short poem 'Mar Tenebroso' (1894).

end Philip's domination and restore independence. Despite the efforts made in the commemoration of 1940 to praise the actions of the Duke and future king, the image of his indecision, of a certain weakness and pusillanimity marred the picture. He was felt to have shown a great lack of enthusiasm in assuming the task of governing the country. He had even proffered the following remark: 'Para me fazer rei, necessitou Deus de trabalhar com ambas as mãos. Com uma tapou-me os olhos, com outra trouxe-me pelos cabelos'.<sup>23</sup> According to legend, the Duchess countered her husband's hesitation at decisive moments with the words 'tinha por mais acertado morrer reinando, que acabar servindo', or according to another version, 'antes ser uma hora rainha, do que duquesa toda a vida'.<sup>24</sup> D. João had a reputation for prudence, tact, calm, good sense and being realistic. He knew how to lead and how to tackle the serious problems of the country. In the nationalist context of the Estado Novo, the consecration of the figure of the 'Restaurador' reached its height with the inauguration of a statue by the sculptor Francisco Franco in Vila Viçosa.

Among the military chiefs who stood out in the age of the 'Guerras da Restauração', the Salazar regime turned to the controversial figure of Salvador Correia de Sá e Benevides, a hard and bellicose soldier who spent a great part of his life in Brazil.<sup>25</sup> In 1647, he was named governor of Angola with orders to recapture Luanda and other areas occupied by the Dutch. He equipped and provisioned his squadron, largely with money raised through taxes levied on the inhabitants of the city. In August 1648 he secured the capitulation of the Dutch, exactly seven years after the occupation. He governed Angola with an iron hand until March 1652, dominating the indigenous rebel chiefs and imposing an onerous peace treaty on the kingdom of the Congo. Salvador Correia de Sá was chosen, in 1948, as a symbol of the determination that had enabled Portugal to maintain its sovereignty in Angola. His memory was a lesson to those present, leading the governor-general of Angola to affirm in a speech: 'Ficámos e ficaremos pelo decorrer dos séculos'.<sup>26</sup>

On an equally elevated level, there figured the heroic discoverers and conquerors that history and memory could not separate, seeing that both purposes were inter-connected. Discovery and curiosity about the unknown, navigation and commerce were not absolutely distinct from conquest, nor incompatible with it. For this reason they are often

<sup>23</sup> José Silvestre Ribeiro, 'D. João IV', in *A Restauração de Portugal*, ed. by L. A. Palmeirim (Lisbon: Occidente, 1885), p. 3.

<sup>24</sup> Rodrigues Cavalheiro, 'História parcial e história verdadeira', in *Revista dos Centenários*, Fasc. 9 (1939), p. 6.

<sup>25</sup> Compare C. R. Boxer, 'Sá e Benevides, Salvador Correia de', *Dicionário de História de Portugal*, ed. by Joel Serrão, 6 vols (Porto: Iniciativas, 1970-80), V (1979), 400-01.

<sup>26</sup> *Tricentenário da Restauração de Angola, Discursos e Alocuções* ([n.p.], Imprensa Nacional, 1948), p. 110.

commemorated just like the ancient heroes of the 'tempos áureos' of the nation. They were the 'varões assinalados' and men of arms who departed from Portugal's far western shores 'por mares nunca de antes navegados', as the poet says at the beginning of the national epic.

In general, information about many of these historical figures was scarce. Their lives are shrouded in mystery and their deeds not always properly documented. The gaps in the records, the uncertainties and inconsistencies of witnesses leave enormous room for speculation, for fantasies and legend. For heroes of a maritime age that led to the unveiling of a great part of the surface of the terrestrial globe, the drawing together of continents and the establishing of contact between even more different peoples, their legends obey a pattern in which the most exalted qualities are the spirit of adventure, courage, tenacity, the hunt for glory and for fame. As a rule, they are presented as honourable gentlemen, conscientious in serving well their king and lord, and men of faith bearing in one hand the sword and in the other the cross of Christ. Their patriotism, with the rare exception of navigators who acted in foreign service, is taken as given, emphasized and much praised in commemorative speeches. The darker side of the character and of the deeds of these men tended to remain in the shadows, ignored, forgotten or apparently justified by the attitudes of the period and by the difficult conditions in which their actions evolved. Heroes of the 'idade de ouro' of the nation are, as a consequence, symbols of the most noble virtues and exalted abilities of the Portuguese people.

A few names were preserved individually in the collective memory, but the majority remained in the shadows and were not commemorated. Vasco da Gama was, beyond doubt, the figure most revered, his accomplishment being presented as a symbol of all the maritime exploits of the Portuguese. The idea, in a certain form, is already present in *Os Lusíadas*, which has as its central theme the voyage to India of the fleet commanded by Vasco da Gama. He is the main personage in the whole tale, in whose mouth Camões places the narrative of the history of Portugal. Vasco da Gama is thus the central figure of the discoveries and of the Portuguese expansion, whom the writer Mendes Leal in the *Indianas*, compares to 'Nestor reflectindo' to 'Ajax a combater', and to Atlantis holding up the world. However, he never ceased to be a polemical figure, in which strong and vigorous will power, faith, and a strong and righteous character also included rage, ferocity and cruelty, when avenging insults or confronting the enemy. The image of Gama fluctuates therefore between two representations: the pleasant bust of a patriarch with a white beard, as in the Renaissance painting by an unknown hand, in the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga; and the fierce and frowning face of a hard man, one accustomed to command, as in the portrait that once belonged to the Conde de Vidigueira family, presented by D. Carlos to the Sociedade de Geografia library in Lisbon.

The version most promulgated at the centenary of 1898 and its successors was the former.

Pedro Álvares Cabral, on the other hand, is little more than a name associated with the discovery of Brazil. Almost nothing is known of this man, and therefore his legend remains totally dependent on the imagination of authors. He would be a forgotten figure if the lands discovered, whether by accident or deliberately, had not afterwards become so valuable. In a pamphlet on *A Descoberta do Brasil* published in 1900, the republican Faustino da Fonseca referred to his 'espírito sereno, tolerante e bondoso', manifesting the instinct of a colonizer.<sup>27</sup> This was pure speculation, woven to conform to an idealized image of the Portuguese colonizer.

The history of Fernão de Magalhães is very different. Camões's lines record him in the following incisive manner: 'O Magalhães, no feito com verdade | Português, porém não na lealdade'. His memory has always been tainted by the affront of his having enlisted in the service of the king of Castile. Thus in the year of his centenary an attempt was made to present him as 'portuguesismo essencial do feito',<sup>28</sup> because the commander of the enterprise was a Portuguese who learned the arts of navigation with his contemporaries. The glory of his accomplishment remained forever associated with a Portuguese name and, by extension, to Portugal. In the words of the historian António Baião, he was 'protótipo da coragem, da intrepidez, da pertinácia e do conhecimento lusitanos'.<sup>29</sup> The admiral, Vicente de Almeida d'Éça, after acquitting Fernão de Magalhães of accusations of misbehaviour, concluded he had been a great soldier and a navigator supreme, better even than the Infante D. Henrique, Bartolomeu Dias or Vasco da Gama.<sup>30</sup> His exploits were exceptional in the annals of navigation, especially the audacious crossing of the perilous straits that bear his name.

In addition to Bartolomeu Dias, the names of other discoverers were honoured on the occasion of their centenaries: the discoverers of the Atlantic archipelagos of Madeira, of the Azores and Cape Verde; Gil Eanes, who rounded Cape Bojador; Nuno Tristão and Diogo Cão, who explored the west coast of Africa; the Corte Real who navigated to the west and gave rise to various legends; João Rodrigues Cabrilho, who explored the coast of California and is remembered in *Cabrillo Day* by the Portuguese community resident in that part of the United States. Commemorative

<sup>27</sup> Faustino da Fonseca, *A Descoberta do Brasil* (Lisbon: Empresa do Jornal 'O Século', 1900), p. 260.

<sup>28</sup> Speech of Henrique Lopes de Mendonça, *O Instituto*, Número Comemorativo do 4.º Centenário de Fernão de Magalhães (Coimbra: 1921), pp. 48–49.

<sup>29</sup> António Baião, 'Fernão de Magalhães, o problema da sua naturalidade rectificado e esclarecido', *História e Memórias da Academia das Ciências de Lisboa*, 14 (1922), 31.

<sup>30</sup> Vicente de Almeida d'Éça, 'O feito de Fernão de Magalhães', *História e Memórias da Academia das Ciências de Lisboa*, p. 23.

rhetoric routinely repeated a series of stereotypes that placed them on the same pedestal with the heroes and symbols of the Portuguese 'raça', this term being much employed from the 1920s to 1940s.

Among the heroes of conquest Afonso de Albuquerque stood out. The main chroniclers of the annals of India, Fernão Lopes de Castenheda and João de Barros, did not give great prominence to the man who was never nominated viceroy by D. Manuel.<sup>31</sup> It was the publication of the letters that he wrote to D. Manuel, with commentaries added by his son, Brás de Albuquerque, that contributed to rescuing him from oblivion. In the second half of the nineteenth century, when the manuscript of *Lendas da Índia* by Gaspar Correia was published together with the first volume of *Cartas de Afonso de Albuquerque*, knowledge of his proper role in the Orient began to spread. So the cult of this historical figure dates from this period, with the Academia das Ciências and the Sociedade de Geografia making a decisive contribution. His legend as 'criador do império luso-oriental' and 'génio guerreiro', as a statesman of wide vision, devoted to justice and with a marked capacity for administration, as a man 'enérgico, justo e providente', was already established by the end of the nineteenth century, when the transference of the urn containing his mortal remains to Lisbon took place.<sup>32</sup> In the year of the fourth centenary of his death, António Baião published a biography in which he dismissed certain legends, such as that of his poverty, and did not spare words to describe the actions and violence that won Albuquerque the reputation of 'terrível'. Despite this he concluded with an acknowledgement of his greatness: 'Albuquerque é grande demais para fazer parte da história de um pequeno povo e o seu génio paira tão alto e tem tal irradiação que não admira ir muito para além das nossas fronteiras'.<sup>33</sup> He was compared to such mythical heroes as Achilles, and great military chiefs and statesmen such as Alexander the Great and Napoleon.<sup>34</sup>

Finally, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, there developed the cult of the heroism of the African explorers and soldiers who played a decisive role in the colonial occupation. There existed a long tradition of exploration of the interior of the African continent by backwoodsmen and black *pombeiros* that had preceded the nineteenth century expeditions.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão, 'Prefácio', in *Comentários de Afonso de Albuquerque*, 5th edn (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional Casa da Moeda, 1973), p. x.

<sup>32</sup> 'O túmulo de Afonso de Albuquerque', in *O Occidente*, 19 (1896), 197–98.

<sup>33</sup> António Baião, *Afonso de Albuquerque* (Lisbon: Livraria Ferin, Coleção Grandes Vultos Portugueses, 1914), p. 136.

<sup>34</sup> Compare *O Herald*, Nova Goa, 15 December 1915; Henrique Lopes de Mendonça, 'As duas políticas', in *Boletim Comemorativo do V Centenário da Tomada de Ceuta* (Lisbon: Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa, 1915), p. 92.

<sup>35</sup> Name given in former Portuguese Africa and in Brazil to agents that travelled through the hinterland to get slaves.

But the scramble for Africa and the beginning of modern colonialism necessitated the development of a systematic body of knowledge of the African interior and of effective occupation. It was in this context that, as with other European countries, the principal journeys of exploration took place and names such as those of Major Serpa Pinto, of Hermenegildo Capelo and Roberto Ivens, came to symbolize the adventurous character, the daring, the courage and the enormous sacrifice that were necessary to build a new empire, 'no chão virgem da terra africana', according to the 'Hino do Centenário da Índia'.

After the great expeditions of the first half of the 1880s, there followed smaller ones with more immediate aims, directed towards bits of territory that were disputed by other European colonial powers.<sup>36</sup> Thus men like Paiva de Andrade, Vitor Córdon, Artur de Paiva, Paiva Couceiro and António Maria Cardoso were the protagonists of expeditions with politico-military objectives. The echo of these deeds reached the national press and fed the imagination of the Portuguese with new epics.

Two men, however, ended up as symbols of these contemporary exploits and the supreme heroes of the occupation: the journalist, politician and royal commissioner António Enes, and Captain Joaquim Mouzinho de Albuquerque, who later became Governor of Mozambique. Their legend as great men is inseparable from the role they played in the preservation of Portuguese power in colonial Mozambique, in conditions severely adverse to the government's objectives and the national military forces. Although the admiration and respect for both figures derived from the period of their achievements, it was during the Estado Novo that their cult developed and that their respective centenaries were promoted. The imperial myth that the Salazar regime sought to create in the Portuguese was embodied, among others, in these two figures and in an heroic vision of the process of colonial occupation, which became patent in the *Exposição Histórica da Ocupação* in 1937.

António Enes was presented as an example to governors and administrators of the Portuguese colonies, 'nosso Mestre e o nosso Guia', in the words of the vice-president of the Câmara Municipal of Lourenço Marques.<sup>37</sup> His image as a colonial politician was projected as a firm ideal of what Salazar's administrators sought to impose as good government in

<sup>36</sup> Maria Emília Madeira Santos, 'O problema das expedições e da ocupação na África Central', in *Portugal no Mundo*, ed. by Luis de Albuquerque (Lisbon: Alfa, 1989), p. 176.

<sup>37</sup> 'Comemoração do Centenário de António Enes', in *Boletim Geral das Colónias*, 24 (1948), 121.

the Portuguese colonies. The report written by António Enes at the end of his rule was, therefore, often cited as a model.<sup>38</sup>

By then the legend of Mouzinho de Albuquerque was linked to his accomplishments as a soldier while his brief governorship was less praised. The cavalry officer appeared in the eyes of citizens as a prototype of the colonial hero, who had fought to impose Portuguese sovereignty with total altruism and contempt for his own life. He was the perfect 'chevalier sans peur et sans reproche' who had been overcome by malevolence and by meanness in the then political atmosphere in the capital of the country that brought about his tragic suicide.<sup>39</sup> A man unadapted to his times, he was a worthy descendent of the other Albuquerque and, like him, a founder of empire, this time African. When comparing him to foreign counterparts he evoked Robert Clive, 'o criador do império inglês na Índia'.<sup>40</sup> With the important exception that Clive grew rich while Mouzinho was 'fiel à tradição dos seus antepassados, dos quais se dizia serem muito valentes e muito nobres, muito inteligentes e muito pobres'.<sup>41</sup> Portuguese heroes were above temptation and the greed for gold, in contrast to the contemporary image of the English.

#### THE PEOPLE AND THE GREATNESS OF THE NATION

Portugal is the fatherland of Gama and Camões, two symbols of the collective accomplishment of the discoveries and of the building of empires. This being so, the Portuguese, viewed collectively whether as people or nation, are bearers of the same virtues and qualities that characterize the heroes of the 'idade de ouro'. These could be dormant, due to the influence of adverse circumstances, hostile to the expression of the true temper of the Portuguese people, but the evocation of the past is a comfort for the hardships of the present and a stimulus for the rebirth of the ancient heroic qualities of the Portuguese. The cult of national heroes is, in the last resort, a game of mirrors. These are the fruit of the nation and its most sublime expression, a kind of mirror where the people were taught to view themselves with pride.

<sup>38</sup> In particular, this passage was cited: 'Para governar a África Oriental Portuguesa, como ela deve ser governada, é preciso ter aptidões e zelo de administrador, saber de financeiro e economista, muitas vezes habilidade de diplomata, sempre actividade incansável, probidade inconcussa, muito tacto, muita prudência associada à energia, e até um temperamento refractário às paixões do clima, aos vícios do meio social e aos estonteamentos do poder. É preciso, em suma, ser um homem superior, e a superioridade não se cose à farda com galão dourado.' 'Comemoração do Centenário de António Enes', p. 125.

<sup>39</sup> The bibliography of Mouzinho de Albuquerque is vast, but the dominant image appears well synthesized in the contributions to his centenary year. Compare *Livro do Centenário de Mouzinho de Albuquerque, 1855-1955* (Lisbon: Casa Portuguesa Sucessores Lda, [n.d.]).

<sup>40</sup> Commemorative speech of Colonel Faria de Moraes, *Livro do Centenário de Mouzinho de Albuquerque* . . . , p. 75.

<sup>41</sup> *Livro do Centenário de Mouzinho de Albuquerque* . . . , p. 78.

In 1880, it was written in respect of *Os Lusíadas*, 'Sentimo-nos maiores, mais altivos, mais livres, ao ler aquela epopeia, que é a epopeia da nação'.<sup>42</sup> Camões's great work was seen as the expression of a 'nação cavalheirosa e leal', of a fatherland that had the 'sentimento varonil da própria grandeza, o brio ousado, a valentia extremada, que fizeram os heróis da velha história, os heróis imortais que vivem ainda na memória dos povos conquistadores'. The 'alma' of the people is that which had inspired everything that was 'bom e justo e santo e nobre e heróico' commemorated in the annals of the nation. The same ideas were repeated in the national celebrations and the sentiment was always the same: pride in belonging to 'uma nação que, embora pequena, soube erguer-se entre as demais nações, praticando feitos tão arrojados e tão inauditos'.<sup>43</sup>

The nationalist poet Silva Tavares repeated it in the 'Ronda da Glória', that he produced for the Cortejo do Mundo Português in 1940:

Portugal, tão bom Soldado  
como bravo Marinheiro;  
pequeno mas nobre Estado  
que, pelo seu Génio ousado,  
foi senhor do Mundo inteiro.<sup>44</sup>

The extension of Portuguese power across the world attained megalomaniac dimensions in the imagination.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the picture of the vast territories the Portuguese had possessed in the sixteenth century was the touchstone for castigating the present 'apagada e vil tristeza' and decadence of the nation. In relation to this period of mythical greatness all reality appeared insignificant, at a time when the political and financial difficulties of the Portuguese state commanded attention. The republican opposition to the monarchy deployed vigorously the idea of decadence, blamed on the Bragança dynasty, contrasting it to the ancient greatness of Portugal. The commemoration of the tricentenary of Camões was, therefore, viewed as an opportunity for an authentic national revival and the republicans sought to embody this ideal. However, the first republic did not live up to expectations, and the dispiriting image of a small, poor nation incapable of raising itself to past heights, continued to overshadow the more common representations. It fell to the Estado Novo to distance itself from this image and benefit from the epoch of national greatness, presenting itself as its natural heir and most faithful follower. The image of failure gave way to euphoric myth making. The rhetoric and iconography propagated the

<sup>42</sup> 'Homenagem a Camões', in *Comércio de Portugal*, Lisbon, 10 June 1880, p. 1.

<sup>43</sup> Costa Goodolphim, 'Camões e a Patria', in *Comércio de Portugal*, 12 June 1880, p. 2.

<sup>44</sup> Silva Tavares, *Ronda da Glória* (Lisbon: Edição do Cortejo do Mundo Português, 1940), p. 95.

image of Portugal's greatness in the most diverse ways. Commonest was the presentation of images that superimposed the map of the colonies upon the map of Europe to demonstrate that Portugal was not a small country.

The perspective of the commemorative discourses was ethnocentric, nationalist, and dominated by the idea of the superiority of European and western civilization. Nevertheless, between the republican conceptions expressed in the Camões celebrations imbued with the ideals of universal brotherhood of 1880, and the nationalist and imperial myth of the *Estado Novo*, there were significant differences in ideology. The patriotic speeches typical of the republican and liberal democratic view confirmed the idea of the historical and cultural uniqueness of nations, but emphasized the need for collaboration in the common task of 'solidariedade científica e civilizadora'.<sup>45</sup> Nobler values were ascribed to the nation, such as justice, science, reason and the co-operation of human kind. But the more conservative nationalist concepts subordinated everything to national interest and engaged in a traditionalist rhetoric that revived the providential idea of the nation that sent its 'milícia sagrada' to civilize Africa, Asia and America.

#### THE CRUSADE AND THE CIVILIZING MISSION

The image of the sixteenth century ancestors as a 'milícia de Jesus, levando numa mão a espada e na outra a cruz' is already present in the commemorative speeches of the late nineteenth century.<sup>46</sup> It was repeated 'ad laudes et per horas' in the celebrations of the *Estado Novo*. The origin of this vision is in the chronicles, which were gradually developing an ideological justification for the Portuguese expansion and, above all, for the advantages which the Crown claimed in relation to the division of the globe and its commercial monopoly over vast regions. The reaction of the King of France is well known: he asked which section of Adam's will excluded him from the division of the globe. From the Portuguese point of view the Crown took upon itself the privilege of fighting the infidels and of continuing elsewhere the peninsular crusade. The introduction of the idea of crusade in Portugal was 'tardia, adventícia e predominantemente aristocrática', but it was fortunate in being projected onto the ideology of expansion.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Teixeira Bastos, *Luiz de Camões e a nacionalidade portuguesa* (Lisbon: Nova Livraria Internacional, Bibliotheca Republicana Democratica), xv (1880), 19.

<sup>46</sup> Roque Barreto Miranda, *No jubileu do centenário. Portugal na Índia: Epopêia do Oriente (1498-1898)* (Nova Goa: Imprensa Nacional, 1898), p. 14.

<sup>47</sup> Luis Filipe F. R. Thomaz and Jorge Santos Alves, 'Da Cruzada ao Quinto Império', in *A Memória da Nação*, ed. by Francisco Bethencourt and Diogo Ramada Curto (Lisbon: Sá da Costa, 1989), p. 150.

The commemorative discourses generally reproduced ideas that were already present in the historical memory. First, there was the notion that the crusade had a remote origin and that it had played a fundamental part in the re-conquest of the Iberian peninsular. Second was the simple and Manichean vision of a territory divided between Christians and Moors, between two distinct religions and civilizations, confronting each other there and elsewhere in the world. Third, the origin of the nation was bound up with the expansion of the Christian faith, the promulgation of religion having been the principal mission of the Portuguese, entrusted to them by Providence itself. They came to be regarded as an elect people who could be seen as an 'alferes da fé', according to Gil Vicente, or as an 'apóstolo santo', in accordance with the more pacific and evangelical vision.<sup>48</sup> These ideas passed into the commemorative rhetoric, in spite of originating in the religious and traditional sectors. The Cross of Christ dominated these celebrations and the contradiction was noted that it was even used by secular institutions: it has appeared on the emblem of the Portuguese air force since 1916.<sup>49</sup>

The crusade was, however, the most common explanation for the beginning of expansion, for the plan to circumnavigate Africa to reach India (attributed to the Infante D. Henrique), and for the Portuguese conquests in Asia. Teófilo Braga repeated the legend of the letter the Infante D. Henrique had written to Mahomet II 'ameaçand-o — com a morte e notificando-lhe como cavaleiro o seu doesto', a supreme act of daring for a small state to challenge the greatest power then existing.<sup>50</sup> It was the Infante's fearless stance that would lead to the voyages of exploration, and the discovery of the sea route to India, thus plunging Portuguese swords into the eastern flank of Ottoman imperialism.

This thesis found its most complete expression in *A Cruzada do Infante D. Henrique* by Joaquim Bensaúde, which had an enormous influence and ideological success in the period of the Estado Novo — at a time when only the tradition of memory and the ideological motivations of the regime justified its adoption, seeing that more modern historiography had already demonstrated it did not correspond to reality. There remained, however, as a pillar of Portuguese nationalism the idea of Portugal as a saviour nation, first of Christendom, then of Europe and western civilization.

The theme of faith was strictly bound up with empire, and both interconnected with a sense of the greatness of the nation: moral, spiritual and physical greatness. Faith and patriotism had been the great motives of the Portuguese. Much importance was also given to the vision derived from

<sup>48</sup> Thomaz and Alves, p. 128.

<sup>49</sup> Rui Ramos, 'A segunda fundação (1890–1926)', in José Mattoso, *História de Portugal*, 8 vols (Lisbon: Estampa, 1993–94), VI (1994), 580.

<sup>50</sup> 'O centenário de Camões', in *Commercio de Portugal*, 9 January 1880.

sixteenth-century humanism concerning the discoveries and Portuguese expansion. The nation had also been responsible for the advancement of knowledge and of science, through geographical dominion over the globe. The pioneering nature of the Portuguese voyages of exploration and the role of Portugal as Europe's vanguard in this historic process were two themes often commented on in the commemorations. Portugal rose, practically alone, far beyond the limits expected of a small country with a tiny population, and managed to achieve a gigantic task, owing to faith, determination and energy.

Thus, it became 'cerca da gratidão do mundo inteiro':<sup>51</sup> Europe was saved from the threat of the Turks, a model of civilization was implanted into other regions of the world; European countries followed the road opened by the Portuguese and built their own great empires; and people whom the Portuguese helped to free from barbarity, from savagery, from superstition and oppression by local potentates, generously opened the way to social emancipation and civilization, in a secularized discourse. The Catholic sectors preferred to employ the keynote of the evangelical spirit of the Portuguese expansion, emphasizing the missionary work carried out by religious orders, and social assistance through charitable institutions.

Beyond the image of discoverers and conquerors the idea was promulgated of a colonizing people, above all in the commemorative speeches of the republican period and afterwards. The end of the nineteenth century was still dominated by the problem of conquest and occupation, as was notoriously evident in the anthem of the 'Centenário da Índia' by Fernandes Costa, but later the fundamental question came to be that of colonization.<sup>52</sup> As early as 1900, in a meeting of the Sociedade de Geografia commemorating the discovery of Brazil, Admiral Vicente Almeida d'Eça raised the problem, recording by way of example the colonization of that colony. Brazil was the land which Portugal 'fez primeiro uma colónia riquíssima, depois um Estado grande entre os grandes', and therefore 'áqueles que, ignaros ou invejosos, ousem dizer que Portugal não tem qualidades de colonizador, responderemos apontando-lhes o Brasil'.<sup>53</sup> It was this, in fact, that took systematic form and that explains why the republican regime had declared the day attributed to the discovery of Brazil a national holiday: to evoke the arrival of Pedro Álvares Cabral was a means of keeping alive the

<sup>51</sup> Lourenço Cayolla, 'A obra da colonização portuguesa', in *Boletim da Agência Geral das Colónias*, 2 (1926), 12.

<sup>52</sup> Fernandes Costa wrote: 'Inda somos a raça valente, | Que dos mares as ondas sulcando, | Seus caminhos andamos mostrando | As nações, que vieram apoz, | E hoje, ainda — quem d'isso duvida? — | Sopesar nos braços podiam, | As espadas que d'antes brandiam, | Denodados os nossos avós'. The chorus repeats the last two lines. What was the point of brandishing swords once more? Not to abandon the 'herança sagrada', and to found fresh empires on the virgin soil of Africa.

<sup>53</sup> 'Portugal e Brasil', in *Boletim da Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa*, 8 (1900), 407.

memory of the role of Portugal in the previous colonization, which was always presented as a source of legitimate national pride. From this came the often repeated suggestion of the need to create 'novos brasis em África'.

By current representations, colonization was seen in terms of the relation of a son to a father who has raised, educated, and cared for him until he has gained the capacity and right to be independent from his parent. To colonize consisted in sowing the seed in 'virgem', 'bravia', 'selvagem' land, just like the souls of its inhabitants, and making it germinate until the fruit was ripe and able to have its own autonomous life, which in an evolutionist perspective of history was generally considered inevitable. However, colonialists never indicated any conclusion to this civilizing process, nor the moment at which new nations, sufficiently forged, could acquire their emancipation.

The modern age had proclaimed the ideal of 'cristianização' that consisted in disseminating 'a religião revelada que recebeu do alto e constitui uma mensagem de salvação dirigida indistintamente a todo o género humano'.<sup>54</sup> The ecumenical perspective on Christianity gave way in the nineteenth century to the civilizing mission, the lay and eurocentric form of expression of an ideal of progress that it aspired to implant in the rest of the world. Finally, this principle came to re-invest itself in a more nationalist form, speaking frequently of 'civilização portuguesa' from the second and third decade of the twentieth century. The idea of creating 'uma civilização lusitana, autóctone, exclusivista' in the colonies, as far as would be possible in view of the universal reciprocity that characterized the twentieth century, was common to various nationalist political currents.<sup>55</sup> But it became a given fact with the Estado Novo, and a principal guide to colonial policy and ideology. The perspective was nationalist, Luso-centric and had in view the complete assimilation of the colonial peoples, in reducing the other to the same. By the time of the Acto Colonial of 1930, this nationalist conception served as the guiding thread of the document. Salazar himself emphasized as one of the salient features of the general law of the Portuguese empire the integration of the colonies and the metropole 'na unidade pluriforme da Nação Portuguesa'.<sup>56</sup>

In this manner the possibility, even in theory, of an emancipation of the colonies was discarded. According to the designation meanwhile adopted, the Províncias Ultramarinas formed part of the Portuguese nation. It was not only a 'herança sagrada' as had been repeated since the nineteenth century. Nor was it solely the guarantee of national independence and of

<sup>54</sup> Thomaz and Alves, p. 113.

<sup>55</sup> Carlos Selvagem, 'Literatura Portuguesa de ambiente exótico', in *Boletim da Agência Geral das Colónias*, 2 (1926), 16.

<sup>56</sup> Cited in Fernando Rosas and J. M. Brandão de Brito, 'Acto Colonial', in *Dicionário de História do Estado Novo*, 2 vols (Lisbon: Bertrand Editora, 1996), 1, 21.

an elevated place for Portugal in the concert of nations, as was asserted. The refrain was repeated that without the colonies, the small, weak and poor country would not be able to survive nor maintain a role in the world at the level of its past. Therefore, the logical step was to integrate the colonies with the nation, making them part of us like a valuable and inalienable estate. Which was what the Estado Novo did.

Various centenaries occurred at unfavourable times for Portuguese colonial interests. The organizers were driven by the same objective to commemorate an epoch of greatness and to project this heroic past into the present. The empire was sanctified and presented as an expression of the mission and destiny of Portugal. The colonial vocation was seen as a demonstration of a universalist tendency of the Portuguese nation. Universalism was expressed in this exploit of crossing the oceans and expanding into other continents, in this process of spreading the seeds of Christian and western civilization throughout the world. It meant, however, that Portugal was linked with other European colonial powers in pursuing its great work to the advantage of a universal civilization in its own image and likeness. Universalism was, in short, one of the ideological expressions of imperialism: in other words, of the will for power and for the cultural and political assimilation of other peoples.

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Public memory is selective and given to myth. It chooses its events and its heroes to be commemorated as a function of the interests of the present. Therefore, in the period analysed, the great commemorations, prominent in the whole country and eventually in the colonies, had as their principal theme the heroic age mirrored in the epic of *Os Lusíadas*, transformed into a site of the nation's memory. The relation with ideology is evidenced by the way the commemorative rhetoric reflects the various regimes and political conjunctures. Nevertheless, certain themes, ideas and images are repeated in all the celebrations. These constituted the nucleus and most enduring of the representations that the political élites, holders of power, were forging as an identifying image of Portugal and of the Portuguese.

This article has attempted to present the fundamental aspects of these representations that formed the public memory, supported by the state and by dominant social groups, from 1880 to 1960. We have left to one side the polemics and the opposing views that marked from the very beginning the process of the Portuguese expansion and the nation's memory. After all, Camões himself denounced, in the speech of the venerable figure of the Velho do Restelo, the evils of the 'glória de mandar', and the 'vã cobiça', 'desta vaidade a quem chamamos Fama' with which the 'povo néscio' are deceived (Cantos IV, XCV and XCVI). From both causes arise wars and

the restlessness of body and soul, the ancient kingdom is weakened and unpeopled in the search for riches and the attempts to be lords of India, Persia, Arabia and Ethiopia. Finally, the old man exclaims: 'Oh! Maldito o primeiro que, no mundo, | Nas ondas velas pôs em seco lenho!' (Cantos IV, CII). In this way he expressed an ever-present current of opinion against the discoveries and remote conquests.

In the commemorations this attitude was never prominent and the episode of the Velho do Restelo was not, in general, mentioned in speeches. Other stanzas and lines better served the aim of exalting the greatness and splendour of Portugal. The less luminous side of history tended to stay in the shadows or be neglected. The deplorable actions of the great men, the enslavement, the violence and massacres committed against other peoples were not remembered. At times, it was even hinted that the actions of the forefathers were tainted by 'injustiça e barbaridades'.<sup>57</sup> But, except in historical works where scientific rigour was exercised, the tendency was to accentuate those aspects that glorified the past and allowed an immediate and sympathetic identification with it. The past was a lesson and example to new generations, a source where was found hope and belief in the nation. Therefore, what mattered was to stress the positive aspects in accordance with values which in many cases were anachronistic.

The commemorations were tributaries of nostalgia for a past of ancient glories, of greatness and splendour. 'O espectro divinizado da nossa grandeza morta, prometendo o seu regresso, numa encoberta manhã', in the words of the writer Teixeira de Pascoais, glides by in the rhetoric of the institutional officers of the cult of history.<sup>58</sup> The celebrations of the past were simultaneously nostalgic and inspired with a desire for the rebirth, revival and regeneration of Portuguese society.<sup>59</sup> They seemed, moreover, a form of consolation in the face of economic and political difficulties. As the journalist Firmino Pereira said with reference to the centenary of the Infante D. Henrique in 1894, 'o esplendor do nosso passado era uma segura garantia da prosperidade do nosso futuro. E isto consolou-nos no meio das nossas amarguras'.<sup>60</sup> Nostalgia for this mythical age was conjoined therefore, with hope for the regeneration of Portugal.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Bastos, xv, 19.

<sup>58</sup> Teixeira de Pascoais, *Arte de Ser Português* (Porto: Renascença Portuguesa, 1915), p. 173.

<sup>59</sup> Mona Ozouf speaks of 'loi nostalgique de la commémoration': 'Célébrer, savoir e fêter', *Le Débat*, 57 (1989), 19.

<sup>60</sup> Firmino Pereira, *O Centenario do Infante D. Henrique* (Porto: Magalhães & Moniz, 1894), p. 314.

<sup>61</sup> This article summarizes aspects of my thesis: 'Memória e Império. Comemorações em Portugal (1880-1960)' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Universidade Aberta, 2000).

