

THE SCIENCE OF ARCHITECTURE REPRESENTATIONS OF PORTUGUESE NATIONAL ARCHITECTURE IN THE 19TH CENTURY WORLD EXHIBITIONS: ARCHETYPES, MODELS AND IMAGES

Paulo Simões Rodrigues
psr@uevora.pt

The influence of positivist philosophy on Portuguese intellectuals became evident from the 1870s. In a very symptomatic way, this influence exerted itself on the dearest values of romantic culture: nationalism. Indeed, it is in texts by authors for whom the positivist doctrine is most discernible that we find nationalist romantic idealism (based on a deitistic or metaphysical transcendence) is progressively replaced by a patriotic spirit rebuilt according to the parameters of positive science. In other words, it was based on a reading of History that now privileged the impermeable certainty of facts assessed by a methodology taken from natural science. It was believed that on the basis of a positive historiography, nationalism could achieve its main aim since romanticism: the regeneration of the nation – a belief deriving from the primordial objective of the positivist interpretation of social phenomena, the regeneration of societies. Within this context, and as had already been the case with romanticism, art in general and architecture in particular become of fundamental ideological importance as a material, figurative and aesthetic demonstration of the past's positivist interpretation.

It was Hippolyte Taine (1828-1893) who applied the positive scientific method to the arts using Auguste Comte's theory explaining social phenomena as his base. He did so in *Philosophie de l'art*, his most well-known work, published in 1866. Taine believed that a work of art was not an isolated phenomenon, that it depended on and was determined by a number of social conditions of the people who had produced it, made up of the exterior environment and the historic specificities of the time (number of circumstance that at a given moment make up the social environment and that act directly and forcefully on the individual) and the particular circumstance at the time the work of art is created (the conditions within society and the artist's family

or, at least, within the small social group where he works)¹.

Through Winckelmann, Herder and Hegel, both neoclassicism as well as romanticism had identified historic and environmental determinisms in the artistic creations. Positivism could be distinguished by its objective and material demonstration through scientific laws. As art was a product of the listed conditioning factors, it was possible to extract the law that regulated the development of the general forms of human imagination and which explained the stylistic and national variations and even the individual originality of the works.

This same law also enabled the present to see the characteristics of the past through a work of art because those same characteristics had determined its creation and thus become materialized in its morphology. As with every science, history was also ruled by a law which determined that an era's character conditioned and marked its artistic production. This meant that historians understood the monuments of the time as the best documents by which to understand the historical period in question. In this manner, the history of art established a similar process whereby the progress or decadence of the arts corresponded to the progress or decadence of the times. It was on this presupposition that the theses defending the existence of national architectural styles were based. The very concept of style –a system of rules that explains the evolution of art in time and space– meant that a universe of shapes and images had to be ordered according to criteria that went beyond the plastic dimension of the objects.

In Portugal, in 1877, the journalist and writer Abel Botelho stated that Man was not an independent being; he was subject to the outside world and expressed what he felt regarding his relationship with that world through art. Thus, art expressed unification between the *Ideal and the Real*, between *Me and the Environment*, and it was through this union that ideas would be revealed in art, especially in architecture. Based on this theoretical principle, Abel Botelho outlined a history of architecture parallel to social history, divided into five main phases. The first phase was the birth of architecture and had taken place during the Babylonian Empire period. The Youth phase followed with the Hebrews, the Chinese and the Egyptians; this was the phase when the first formal change took place in the history of art. The second change forced architecture to move into its virility phase, with Greece, Rome, Mexico,

1 TAINÉ, Hippolyte (s.d.) *Philosophie de l'art*, 19^{ème} éd, t. 1, Paris, Lib. Hachete.

the Aztecs, and India. The third change took place between the 11th and 14th centuries, the chronological period that corresponded to the architectonic splendor of the Middle Ages. Finally, the fifth phase –Renaissance– the decadence of architecture which, based on the French writer Victor Hugo's theory, Abel Botelho says was due to the emergence of printed books². This system is repeated in 1886 by the historian Vilhena Barbosa in the introduction of *Monumentos de Portugal (Monuments of Portugal)*. Vilhena Barbosa set out a similar number of phases to that of Abel Botelho³. Ten years later, in his text *O Culto da Arte em Portugal (The Cult of Art in Portugal)*, the writer Ramalho Ortigão stressed that his era had witnessed the beginning of the study of the history of architecture according to a new scientific methodology whose aim was to find the causes of its progress and of its decadence, thus creating a powerful link with the history of mankind. Ramalho Ortigão believed that architecture was "the great marble book, the immortal poem of the triumphant affirmation of an independent and definite nationality". The result was the complete change in historic science in light of this historiography, which made the population pay special attention to its old buildings and accept them as their constructed heritage⁴. In a dissertation on religious architecture in the Middle Ages in the early 20th century, in 1904 to be more exact, the engineer Augusto Fuschini established three major categories of causes for art based explicitly on Taine: the social, cultural and natural environments in which Man was found and which were forcibly reflected in the product of his creativity⁵. Consequently, authors at the end of the century believed that "architecture was the most perfect embodiment of aesthetic laws and scientific laws"⁶.

If we consider that the rereading of history in the light of the criteria of positive science aimed to allow Man to rationally control his own individual and collective fate (to do so he first had to control his past), now that industrial and capitalist society established other values, we can understand the

2 ACÁCIO [BOTELHO], Abel (1877) "Filosofia da Arte. I-VI", *Revista Literária do Porto*, n.º XIX-XXIII, 25 Nov., 2, 9, 16 and 23 Dec. 1877, and *Museu Ilustrado*, Porto, 1877, 158-159, 177-179, 209-210.

3 BARBOSA, Inácio Vilhena (1886) *Monumentos de Portugal. Históricos, artísticos e archeológicos*, Lisboa, Castro Irmão Ed., Préface.

4 ORTIGÃO, Ramalho (1896) *O Culto da Arte em Portugal*, Lisboa, Livraria Bertrand, 170.

5 FUSCHINI, Augusto (1904) *A Arquitectura Religiosa na Idade Média*, Lisboa, Imprensa Nacional, XI, XVI, XVII e XX.

6 ORTIGÃO (1896), 53.

fundamental importance obtained by the cognitive value of monuments in the response given to the needs and queries generated by the new social contradictions. The present needs a stable past to confirm its identity and find its meaning. There is nothing better to give meaning to a generation who is ready to conquer the future than knowing that the previous generations conquered the past on that same ground. In this way, we can understand the celebrational spirit of past facts and magnificent characters that marked the end of the 19th century. The art from glorious eras was also celebrated by complimenting it, by valuing its study and granting it protection, including the preservation of its good material state and repair when necessary.

The first attempt to scientifically define artistic nationalism took place in 1870, when the writer Teófilo Braga rooted national identity in the Mozarabic culture (*Introdução à História da Literatura Portuguesa. Introduction to the History of Portuguese Literature*). Five years later, Luciano Cordeiro classified Mozarabism as a *positive and safe deduction of our historic sense* and affirmed the existence of a national art resulting from the meeting of Hispanic and Arabic culture on the Iberian Peninsula from the 8th to the 12th centuries. If Mozarabic culture (which included Christians and Muslims) had produced a language, a history and a tradition, it may well have created a form of art⁷. The concept of Mozarabic art reflected the identification of a guiding influence in the history of Portuguese art which had already determined the first definitions of the 'Manueline' style still under Romanticism: the Gothic in Northern Europe under the influence of the Muslim presence in the south of the Iberian Peninsula.

Portuguese romantic historians felt that the Gothic style, contemporary of the foundation and consolidation of the kingdom's independence for which the Monastery of Batalha is its major expression, placed Portugal at the common civilizational genesis of European nationalities: the Middle Ages, the historic roots of most States. Identifying a national and regional variant of the Gothic style in Manueline art was meant to sustain Portugal's major role within the context of the general history of the European continent. From the 1870s, Portuguese artistic culture and historiography began to replace the predominant Gothic style with the Manueline style. Ramalho Ortigão actually accused the Portuguese romantic artists of having exalted a foreign archi-

7 CORDEIRO, Luciano (1876) *Da Arte Nacional*, Lisboa, Typographia do Jornal O Paiz, 12-13.

ecture, the Gothic of the Batalha monastery⁸. In fact, at the World Exhibition in Paris in 1867, Joaquim Possidónio da Silva, architect of the Royal House of Portugal, presented a wooden model of the Jerónimos monastery church – a masterpiece of Manueline architecture– whereby he proposed that the monument be restored to how it should have been according to the original plans. He was adamant these plans existed although no-one has ever seen them. Possidónio da Silva’s project included a new façade, located at the western end, which meant that the church had to be separated from the convent. The new façade would include a portal and two high lateral bell towers with three successive openings, crowned with a very steep pyramidal roof, following the model of major European Gothic cathedrals. It would therefore break away from one of the architectonic features which, according to the presumed author of the name given to the Manueline style, distinguished it from the international Gothic: its structural horizontality⁹.



Fig. 1. Possidónio da Silva’s wooden model for the restoration of Jerónimos monastery church, 1867

8 ORTIGÃO, Ramalho (1943) “Arte Portuguesa”. In: *Arte Portuguesa (Obras Completas de Ramalho Ortigão)*, Lisboa, Livraria Clássica Editora, vol. II, 141.

9 (1875) *Boletim de Architectura e Archeologia da Real Associação dos Architectos Civis e Archeologos Portuguezes*, Lisboa, vol. I, 60; SILVA, J. da (Le Chevalier) (1867) *Mémoire descriptive du projet d’une restauration l’église monumentale de Belem á Lisbonne bâtie en 1500 en souvenir de la découverte de l’Inde par les navigateurs Portugais. Modéle fait pour l’exposition de Paris*, Lisbonne, Typographie de la Gazette de Portugal.

According to the new positivist cultural framework, it was accepted that the Manueline style was a reaction to foreign aesthetics. Manueline architecture was conceived as a final Gothic style that was typically Portuguese and where ideas and artistic shapes could be seen to overlap; this resulted from the crossing of the various cultures that had established themselves on the Iberian Peninsula or which the Portuguese encountered during their maritime exploitations. Its 'Portuguese expression' was scientifically explained by an acculturation process of exterior architectonic elements that were connected to each other by a national artistic spirit: the Moorish style, the final Gothic style, the Spanish Plateresque style, Indian architecture and Renaissance. And so the Manueline archetypes became established as the Portuguese style, a historic reflex of the historic conjuncture in which monuments had been erected, patent in the artistic quality and quantity of constructions thanks to the economic, social and cultural development of the time, and their decorative wealth and originality that evoked the sea voyages and the fauna and flora of overseas lands conquered or discovered by the Portuguese at the time: ropes, armillary spheres and exotic fruit¹⁰. This is why in 1901, after a controversy about the choice of the Portuguese pavilion for the 1900 exhibition in Paris, when international cosmopolitanism of architect Ventura Terra's project was chosen in favor of the more historicist proposal by Raul Lino, the historian José de Figueiredo, member of the organizing committee for the Portuguese representatives said that the Portuguese pavilion in an international exhibition should be in the Manueline style so that it could represent Portuguese architecture as evocatively as possible. The silver medal won by architect Marques da Silva at this same world exhibition with a project for the south wing of the Jerónimos monastic building, put to public tender in 1896, showed that José de Figueiredo's proposal was in line with the spirit of the affirmation of nationality at major exhibitions¹¹.

At the time of the World Exhibition in Chicago, a few years earlier, in 1895, the Association of Portuguese Civil Engineers sent a series of photo albums with photographs of the main historic Portuguese monuments that were to

10 RODRIGUES, Paulo Alexandre Rodrigues Simões (1998) *Património, Identidade e História. O valor e o significado dos monumentos nacionais no Portugal de Oitocentos*, Lisboa, dissertação de mestrado em História da Arte Contemporânea, Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas da Universidade Nova de Lisboa, vol. I, 160-174.

11 FIGUEIREDO, José de (1901) *Portugal na Exposição de Paris*, Lisboa, Empresa de Historia de Portugal, 18.

be disseminated at this international event. The set of photographs included the main examples of Manueline architecture, such as the Conceição Velha Church, the Jerónimos Monastery, both in Lisbon, and the Convent of Christ in Tomar¹². The Jerónimos Monastery was of particular interest, ordered by King Manuel I to celebrate the discovery of the maritime route to India and which, according to Ramalho Ortigão, was “the most evocative, the most testifying, the most profoundly ethnic and the most genuinely Portuguese monument of all our monuments”¹³. A steadfast positivist, Ramalho Ortigão considered those we call artists to be nothing more than individuals with receptive faculties who were extremely capable of absorbing and bringing together exterior suggestions. Man exteriorized the aesthetic impulses emitted by his natural and cultural surroundings. Thus, Ramalho felt that the Belém Monastery was not the work of an individual artist, but the collective work of a people, of the “Portuguese laborers”. Therefore, the Manueline style was a product of the Portuguese genius –it was the art of the people. This artisan people included the Moors from Granada and Toledo, and Portuguese stonemasons, craftsmen and masters who had travelled as far as India with the architects of fortresses and churches erected overseas. With no technical training these craftsmen had been unable to absorb and rationalize the countless new and varied architectonic elements they came across. But Ramalho saw this incapacity to absorb everything as a virtue. He believed a people’s art was beautiful because it was a feeling and not an academic precept. It was not “correct”. On the contrary, it was free, expressive, arbitrary, disproportional and asymmetric. The people were the authors and the recipients of Manueline art¹⁴.

And so the Jerónimos Monastery is deemed a model of Manueline architecture, often an inspiring reference for national pavilions at international and world exhibitions. That was the case with the Portuguese pavilion in the “Rue des Nations” at the World Exhibition in Paris, in 1878, designed by the Frenchman Paul Sédille (1836-1900). It was also the case for the Portuguese pavilion at the National Exhibition in Rio de Janeiro, in 1908, provided by the

12 CARVALHO, A. Luciano de (1895) “Exposição Universal de Chicago. Contingente da Associação dos Engenheiros Cívicos Portugueses”, *Revista de Obras Públicas e Minas*, Lisboa, t. XXV, nº 307 e nº 308, Julho e Agosto de 1895, 418-445.

13 ORTIGÃO, Ramalho (1943) “Os Jerónimos (Belém)”, *Arte Portuguesa*, Lisboa, tome II, 105. First published in: *A Arte e a Natureza em Portugal* (vol. III, 1903).

14 ORTIGÃO (1896), 163-168.

Brazilian government and designed by the architect Francisco Isidro Monteiro and whose neo-Manueline style was reminiscent of the southern façade of the Jerónimos monastery¹⁵. Another example is that of the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exhibition, held in San Francisco, California, by the Portuguese architect António Couto (1874-1946) with the collaboration of sculptors Costa Mota Sobrinho and José Neto¹⁶.



Fig 2. Pavillon of Portugal of the Rio de Janeiro National Exhibition of 1908 by Francisco Isidro Monteiro

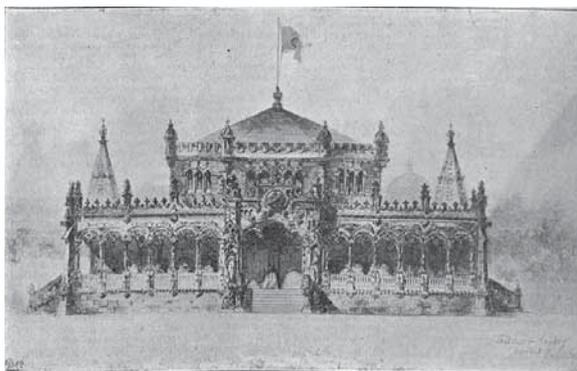


Fig. 3. Portuguese Pavillon in the Panama-Pacific Exhibition of 1915, by António Couto, Costa Mota Sobrinho and José Neto

15 SANTOS, Regina Maria Seixas dos (1999) *Portugal na Exposição Nacional do Rio de Janeiro em 1908. Significados e intenções*, Lisboa, dissertação de Mestrado em Relações Históricas Portugal, Brasil, África e Oriente, Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto, 14, 30, 65, 73 e 197; *O Occidente* (1908), nº 1060, 10 Jun., 124.

16 *O Occidente* (1914), nº 1794, 10 Dez., 402-403; *A Ilustração Portuguesa* (1915), nº 481, 11 Maio, 586-587.

The emblematic Tower of Belém was also worthy of note as an architectural model of the Manueline style, to which reference was made in the neo-Baroque pavilion at the Paris Exhibition in 1889; designed by the French architect Jacques Hermant (1855-1930), it was reminiscent of an urban palace during the reign King João V. Nevertheless, it was faithfully recreated by the project for a pavilion presented by Ph. Leidenfroste for this same exhibition but refused by the Viscount of Melício, chairman of the Royal Association of Agriculture, one of the corporations responsible for organizing the Portuguese representation. It seems the refusal was based on the preconception that the Restelo fortress –the ideal stage for the arrival and departure of the armadas– would be dishonored (even if only its recreation) by the exhibition of wine and colonial products¹⁷.



Fig 4. Portuguese Pavillon in the Paris World Exhibition of 1889, by Jacques Hermant

The portal of the Monastery of the Church of the Madre de Deus convent in Lisbon, depicted in the Altarpiece of the Saint Auta Relics –a 16th century work shown publicly for the first time by the Portuguese representation at the Ibero-American Exhibition in Madrid in 1892– was also used as the reference for the décor of the Portuguese section designed by Rafael Bordalo

17 (s.d.) *Pontos nos ii. Exposição Universal de Paris. O Pavilhão Portuguez do Quai d'Orsay. Album*, Lisboa, Lithographia Guedes; SOUTO, Maria Helena (1997) "Da Avenida da Liberdade a Paris. A Exposição Industrial Portuguesa em 1888 e a representação nacional na Exposição Universal de 1889", *Leituras: Revista da Biblioteca Nacional*, Lisboa, nº 1, Outono, 175-182.

Pinheiro (1846-1905) at that exhibition¹⁸; this had already been used by the architect José Maria Nepomuceno (1836-1895) for its reconstruction when the building was repaired between 1872 and 1874¹⁹.



Fig. 5. Décor of the Portuguese section of the Ibero-American Exhibition of Madrid of 1892, by Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro

The neo-Manueline style of the Portuguese pavilions and decor at world and international exhibitions established successive images of a country that managed to reconcile a solid national identity confirmed by the morphology of its architecture with the progress and development represented by the products exhibited. Progress and development that took place on the path towards the revitalization of a glorious past.

18 SOUTO, Maria Helena (2009) "Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro e a cerâmica industrial", *História do Design em Portugal I. Reflexões*, Lisboa, Edições IADE, 57-71

19 RODRIGUES (1998), 349.