

## Heritage processes: rituals, spirits and pantheons

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In the first part of this study, I adopted the proposition, previously put forward by other scholars (see, for example, the Colloquium Chastel 1990), that there is a correlation between heritage and the sacred. I then examined the similarities between the processes of patrimonialisation and sacralisation.

This idea led me to examine Chastel's analysis of the sacrificial nature of patrimonialisation, accepting its presuppositions (relationship to the sacred, consecration ritual) but challenging the idea that sacrificial objects are the costs of heritage conservation. In this first part, I have shown that the sacrificial object can only be the heritage object itself, while at the same time trying to demonstrate that the famous *Denkmalkultus* (Riegl) is not a cult of *the* monument, but a cult of memory to which the monument is consecrated. The monument thus appears in the cult of the monument as an object of mediation between society (and its privileged agents in charge of the cult) and the extra-natural entities to which the sacrifice is addressed. As a first approximation, and to evoke P. Nora's expression ("lieux de mémoire"), I have called these entities the "gods of memory".

It has become evident that the process of sacralisation does not merely entail the relocation of a novel category of objects from the domain of the profane to the domain of the sacred (or, conversely, the transfer of the heritage object from the realm of profane objects to the realm of sacred objects). This approach fails to recognise that the boundaries and definitions of these realms are not static and may shift during and after the process of sacralisation. In contrast, the emerging processes of patrimonialisation (which, when viewed in the context of the long history of memorial inscriptions, can be seen as relatively recent) appear to be contributing to the reorganization of the entire set of relations between the profane and the sacred, both in terms of conceptualization and practice. However, the involvement with the sacred does not conclude with the ritualised process of patrimonialisation. Conversely, the establishment of new objects and places of worship gives rise to new emotional investments, devotional practices and rituals of worship.

In order to characterise the *reconfiguration* of contemporary societies' relationship with the sacred that accompanies and results from the proliferation of patrimonialisation processes, I have proposed the use of the notion of a "regime of sacredness"<sup>3</sup>. This concept emphasises the regulated nature of oppositions, the acts that facilitate the transition from one status (e.g., "profane" or "sacred") to the opposite and allow for a return to the previous status. The term "regime" signifies not only the (re)definition of the distinctive attributes of each domain of objects, but also the existence of regulations governing their interrelationships and the rituals that must be observed in the "management" of transitions or in the celebrations associated with them.

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<sup>3</sup> This notion has been used in certain sociological analyses, although not in relation to patrimonialisation, unless better informed. A similar but clearly different notion is that of the "transfer of sacredness" (cf. LAHIC 2008; Poulot 2006), which does not enable us to consider the *reconfiguration* of the whole field in which the profane/sacred opposition operates.

In this context, the analysis of heritage rituals and cults should not be limited to a mere "transfer" of the previous regime. Instead, it should be viewed as the establishment of a new regime of sacredness, characterised by a distinct system of relationships, conceptions and practices.

### **Rituals of patrimonialisation: the three stages of patrimonial sacrifice**

In the initial section, the three stages – or steps – that typify the consecration of objects upon their designation as heritage were outlined: separation, purification, and concentration (or intensification). It is now imperative to conduct a comprehensive examination of each of these sub-processes.

#### **1. Separation: interdiction (*sanctificatio*), enrolment in the lists, creation of physical distance (delimitation),**

The initial stage involves the isolation and designation of the object that is to be removed from the profane realm. By affecting a previously profane object, a process of sanctification is initiated. In the context of Roman categorisation, the act of becoming *sanctus* represents a ritual of separation from the domain of common objects<sup>4</sup>. But above all, it is an act that invests the object with interdictions and stipulates the sanction incurred by those who violate them. The *sanctificatio* is a gesture of authority, a magical act of instituting difference, which belongs to power and is always external to the private sphere. In the private sphere, consecration produced religious things, as we have seen: an individual or family sacredness (a grave, etc.). In contrast, the concept of *sanctificatio* serves to delineate the boundaries between the sacred and the profane, establishing a clear distinction that is integral to the functioning of the community. The separation that *sanctificatio* produces implies the suppression or, at the very least, the conditioning of profane, private uses, of common and intimate access, and of contiguity with the world of ordinary things.

Sacralisation, as we have seen with regard to the Roman conception, by *consecratio*, excludes from the "*commercium*" (that is, the right to contract by exchange, sale, purchase and even donation) things *sacrae* which are simultaneously *res extra commercium* and *res extra patrimonium*. It is understood that the act by which the object is invested with sacred value is always an act of separation, which consists of "setting aside" the thing henceforth excluded from the condition of common object. For its part, the gift, which, being formally gratuitous, implies reciprocity of the obligations it produces and reproduces, does not include the *sacra* either. In fact, by taking up the analyses of the gift since Marcel Mauss, Maurice Godelier shows that an essential aspect of the system of obligations and reciprocity that bind the participants in the gift has been overlooked: sacred things are left out of the system. They are excluded because, according to Mr. Godelier, the debt to "the gods" (the supernatural powers) cannot be repaid, nor can the gods be bound by a "contract" that implies reciprocity. This explains a series of "aberrant" facts (concerning sacrifice and offering in particular) that Mauss is unable to integrate. The material used by Godelier is mainly Melanesian and Asian, but what we have said about Roman antiquity shows that his analysis is applicable and indispensable for understanding both the status of

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<sup>4</sup> In the ritual of the Catholic Mass, the priest designates the triply sacred and forbidden character of the consecrated host with the formula "*sanctus, sanctus, sanctus*" (addressed to God, the Lord of the Armies). The sacred space is the counterpart of this triple circle of increasing sacredness: *sanctus* is the space of the church, *sanctus* the altar, *sanctus* the tabernacle.

the *res sacrae* (excluded from the "*patrimonium*") and that of contemporary "patrimonies", consecrated objects excluded from exchanges (Godelier 1996: 7-16 and 233 sq.).

If the reversal of symbolic valences between the profane and the sacred that occurs in the modern notion of "heritage" is indeed accurate, then it can be anticipated that the operations to which common objects (in Rome, the *patrimonium*) are subjected in order to consecrate them will be found to be symmetrical to those that comprised the process of sacralisation.

### **The list: a ritual of inclusion / exclusion**

From a very early stage, the French "*Inventaire*" service<sup>5</sup> classifies and lists objects destined to be removed from their common destiny (exchanges, alterations or outright destruction). The list becomes the fundamental management tool: "entered in the inventory", or "classified", the object loses its status as a common thing. The reasons for its inscription vary, as do the practical consequences. But it is part of a special domain, to which numerous prohibitions are attached, as we will see below.

However, the inscription on the lists is not a simple act of writing; rather, it is the result of a technically complex and agonistic process. From a historical perspective, Ch. Bortolotto retraces the stages of the constitution of the separate domain of "world heritage" objects, from the Athens conference (1931), which defined a mission for the community of states – that of "guardians of civilisation" – to the UNESCO convention in 1972, which inherited its "Eurocentric and monumentalist" character from the first. Bortolotto proceeds to delineate the trajectory that leads from this convention to the initial references to "intangible heritage" (1982) and to the "definition of a new paradigm" in the 1990s. This paradigm shift de-centres attention from the *more occidentale* "monument" to encompass new categories of heritage objects, including "folklore" and "living cultures." (Bortolotto, 2008, p. 16). And if the "list" is from the outset the instrument for separating the ordinary, commonplace from the "exceptional", it reveals itself in Hafstein's terms as a "structural device of the heritage system" that combines selection and exclusion and operates "by alienating the selected cultural expressions from the cultural contexts in which they fulfil a social function", "the list juxtaposes them arbitrarily in the symbolic and virtual space of an international showcase" (Bortolotto 2008: 31; **translated by me**).

It is no coincidence that "the list was the greatest source of controversy in the negotiation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage", writes Hafstein (2008). In fact, the list (i.e. the creation of a list and the inclusion of the various objects in it) is "at the heart of heritage practices, which are inevitably selective": "the structure of the heritage system is based on exclusion: it gives value to certain things over others by referring to a set of criteria that can never cease to be indeterminate" (Hafstein 2008: 95). "Heritage as a category and the list are similar in many ways. Both depend on selection; and both disintegrate their objects from their previous contexts" (Hafstein 2008: 110; my translation). There is therefore a double separation that operates in this way with regard to heritage goods: firstly, a separation between the items that are included in the lists and those that are excluded from them; secondly, and in our view more importantly, a separation between the "listed" objects and their cultural and social contexts.

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<sup>5</sup> Pursuing a census and safeguarding endeavour, the urgency of which the destruction of the French Revolution had made more evident, the work of the various Commissions set up throughout the 19th century culminated in the publication of *L'Inventaire général des Richesses d'art de la France* (21 volumes between 1878 and 1913).

The object thus consecrated by the ritual of solemn listing is definitively endowed with a status that "sets it aside", as Godelier put it. It is no longer "merely" an object existing independently, but rather becomes a conduit for the veneration and cult practices that were previously directed towards it. In this way, the object becomes a shield that saves, or alternatively, a target designated for destruction<sup>6</sup>. Through the process of listing, heritage is offered to the currents of the globalisation of the new sacred.

### Drawing the line

One of the most interesting material processes in the context of the process of patrimonialisation is that of the demarcation of the object. Consecration is not compatible with ambiguous areas; rather, it entails a process that, in addition to separation, consists of inscribing a system of marks around the object, thereby establishing both symbolic and physical boundaries. It is important to note that this was already the case with the "monument" in its narrow European and elitist sense, because the "monumentalisation of an object always involves the definition of a boundary".<sup>7</sup>

If the "monument" appeared to be eternally isolated in its splendour (due to the process of its individualisation becoming naturalised and invisible), it became a privileged object of worship for those elites capable of understanding its value, and for the masses who were either more or less stunned by its admiration. It is evident that the cultural forms of the "immaterial heritage" present a significant challenge, given that they are not only the product of a separation from the passage of time and the delimitation of the "authentic," but also the result of their disposition to the masses.

Although materiality has been put forth as a potential source of support, immateriality presents an unparalleled challenge. The cultural forms included in the lists are rarely codified works and practices of complex, inhomogeneous social groups, even if they present themselves as such for strategic reasons (Bortolotto 2008: 33). Their popular and oral nature has constituted an obstacle to their inclusion in the list of "noble" forms. Furthermore, the process of delimitation is not only more difficult but also much more violent. What are the defining characteristics of a traditional festival or a specific type of song? What constitutes an "authentic" variant? At what point do alterations that deviate from the established "tradition," which is inherently multifaceted, become evident? (Giguère 2008: 141).

It is important to highlight that the process in question operates in a manner that is contingent upon the specific circumstances at hand. These circumstances may include, but are not limited to, the geographical location, the relationship between the state and the community in question, the relationship between the community of **practicians** and the

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<sup>6</sup> In the words of Dario Gamboni: "World Heritage: Shield, or Target?" quoted by Hafstein in 2008, which emphasises the complementarity between listing / safeguarding and surrendering to "natural" destruction in societies in which technology provides increasingly powerful means of transforming the material environment.

<sup>7</sup> « La conservation *in situ* offre d'autres avantages, autant que d'inconvénients. La première difficulté est de délimiter le site en question. La loi limite à 500 m le *périmètre dans lequel l'État s'autorise à contrôler l'environnement du monument protégé*. Certains ont souhaité étendre ce périmètre selon les cas, les champs de blé autour de Chartres depuis lesquels la cathédrale est visible, mais aussi le point de vue que l'on a de la Beauce du haut des flèches ». (Melot 1999 ; **my emphasis**).

local elites, and so forth. In addition to the variety of actions, a key element remains constant: the presence of a symbolic or physical barrier (cleaning and emptying the surroundings, signage, fencing, etc.). As Hafstein notes, the consecrated object must be "disembedded," detached from its physical and social context.

### Prohibit

It has frequently been observed that the process of patrimonialisation is characterised by the emergence of interdicts that seek to restrict the object in question<sup>8</sup>. As Vernant (1988: 137) posits with regard to the concept of divine power, the degree of sacredness associated with a given object is contingent upon the number and stringency of the prohibitions that pertain to it. Consequently, the intensification of the sacred character of a heritage object is accompanied by an increase in the number of prohibitions that affect it. It is evident that the specific prohibitions associated with an object vary depending on its intrinsic nature, whether it is considered to be "natural" or constructed, and whether it is tangible or intangible. Nevertheless, the accumulation of prohibitions consistently results in an escalation of the object's sacralisation. However, the prohibition inevitably establishes a relationship of forces between the entity that prohibits and the users of the object, regardless of whether they are local or external, actual or potential. In the Icelandic case observed by Doutreleau (2006), access to a newly formed volcanic island is prohibited, except by special permission from the group of scientists who carry out an expedition there each year. This can be seen as an example of an agonistic form of appropriation of territory. The author notes that this example of the complete sanctification of a natural site illustrates the concept of the patrimonialisation of nature and the relationship that Icelanders have with nature. ~~(Translated)-~~

In their 2009 study, Fernandez and Fernandez identified a series of prohibitions affecting heritage natural areas in Asturias. The park in Asturias presents the visitor with a minimum of nineteen prohibitions. The designation of "heritage" is accompanied by a separation from the previous owners, namely the local communities. This can be considered a form of expropriation, albeit one that is either formal or informal. If, in lieu of examining parks designated as "natural," we instead consider the fate of "historic" urban centers<sup>9</sup> it is evident that the list of prohibitions would be even more illustrative. In these cases, it's not the habitat of rare, fragile or endemic species that's at stake, but the livelihoods of thousands of people. The process of patrimonialisation encompasses the enclosure of everyday practices, even the most mundane, within a network of prohibitions that alienates the material framework of life by consecrating it to the gods of memory. This reifies the external memories of populations who have been suddenly alienated from their daily lives by the consecration of their cities, which has resulted in a process of *Entfremdung*.<sup>10</sup>

## 2. Purification: redefining purity, eliminating the impure

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<sup>8</sup> «La stratégie traditionnelle de gestion est d'appliquer des tabous aux sites pour contrôler les visiteurs, mais la déclaration des sites et le tourisme qui en découle transgressent ces tabous. » (ICOMOS 2003, **my emphasis**).

<sup>9</sup> The "historic centers": a neologistic use is being forged to emphasise the exceptional...

<sup>10</sup> This process of alienation through patrimonial consecration is similar to the alienation of the object that is invested with the value of a "work of art" (**Esperança**) (Ref.). As a work of art, it becomes part of the paraphernalia of the cult of Art and is removed from its original context. This process is even more visible when it comes to the art of "primitive peoples", to which museification assigns a sacred value emanating from new gods.

The inversion of the symbolic value attributed to "Heritage" (which was profane in Antiquity and, as we have previously discussed, has become sacred in the present) implies a restructuring of the relationship with the past, with the legacy of parents, and with the marks of memory. The re-elaboration of this relationship was contextualised in the initial section through an examination of the shift in the regime of opposition between the sacred and the profane valences.

A similar argument can be made regarding the relationship between "pure" and "impure." In light of the significance attributed to this second axis of opposition, which can be considered to exist in a state of constant interplay with the sacred/profane contrast<sup>11</sup>, it is essential to provide a schematic overview of the semantics of "pure" and "impure" in ancient Rome in relation to the notion of the sacred. This will facilitate an understanding of the profound transformations that affected it.

### **The pure and the impure**

As previously stated, the sacred in Rome constitutes a vast and differentiated domain of *extra-patrimonial* things. According to the Roman concept of the sacred, sacred things are the domain of the *impure* (*impurus*). Pure objects and places, on the other hand, are profane (thus including *patrimonium*): "(P)*urus locus* is that which is neither *sacer*, nor *sanctus*, nor *religiosus*." (Roby 2000: 409).

In the Roman conceptualisation, property is regarded as a "pure" thing, thus escaping the contamination that renders things *sacrae* impure. It is indubitable that this value of "purity" renders them suitable for incorporation into the quotidian, facilitating their utilisation in secular transactions such as purchasing, selling, bestowing, administering, and so forth.

In the classical tradition, as exemplified by Greek and Roman thought, the human world, ordinary things, the body, its needs and functions, ordinary feelings, desires and actions are regarded as essentially pure. The term "profane" is applicable to such phenomena as long as they remain within the limits of the human experience. Passions and desires, extreme love and hatred, madness, excessive violence (*Ubris*) border on the divine and are impure. Purity is a natural and normal state, and impurity arises from *excess* which brings us closer to the gods and is of a sacred nature.

However, Vernant notes, with a hint of perplexity, that the relationship between pure and impure does not appear to be entirely captured by the notion of two mutually exclusive, distinct, and static categories of objects. The inversion of the value (pure / impure) takes place according to the place and the agent, and even according to the state of the agent (dirty or purified).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> « Autre exemple, qui vaut pour bien des cultures : celui des interdits qui frappent la femme menstruée. Ici, la relation sacré/profane se conjugue avec la relation pur/impur : l'impureté se lie avec le sacré puisque la femme impure (durant ses menstrues ou entre une naissance et le rituel de « purification » des nouvelles mères) est censée posséder une force sacrée, néfaste, qui justifie son exclusion des espaces sacrés (Y. Verdier). » (Schmitt 1992).

<sup>12</sup> See the examples of the relationship between the sacred grove and the characters of Oedipus and Antigone, in Vernant 1988: 136 sq. « On comprend mieux ainsi qu'il puisse y avoir des puissances surnaturelles qui se présentent à la fois comme des souillures et comme des formes de sacré. »

If it is indeed the case that "in one perspective of religious thought, the 'purity' of a divine power is in fact measured by the number and severity of the prohibitions that protect it", then it follows that the occasions for this sacrilegious defilement can only increase "in God's relations with man". An additional dimension of this striking ambivalence can be observed in the relationship with death, for "while the dead defile the living, death sanctifies them" (Vernant 1988: 137). It is not the distinction between pure and impure that is of primary importance; rather, it is the act of contact itself, the engagement with that which is deemed to be beyond the pale. The sacred is that which cannot be approached directly, without the mediation of ritual.

In a universe of representations in which "first and foremost a torment is expressed: dirt is in everything to which disquiet is transported" (ibid.: 127), it is not useful to look for a logical unity. Hubert and Mauss ((1899) 1929) had also emphasised that there is nothing static or essentially exclusive about this opposition. The inversion of the values of purity/impurity is a phenomenon that is frequently observed, as evidenced by the examples cited by these authors.

Vernant's thesis makes it evident that in ancient Greece, the concept of the sacred was viewed as fundamentally impure, and its influence was considered to be a taboo. Sacrifices intended to communicate with the superhuman world were therefore extremely dangerous acts<sup>13</sup>. The sacred, which is impure, could, without the mediation of the sacrificial object, fatally contaminate human beings. Hence the mediating function of the **sacrificial object**.

### **A new purity regime: from "original" to "authentic"**

The Catholic religion, especially in its popular versions, stabilises the conceptions of antiquity by giving them a more fixed form. It inverts the valences of purity without completely eliminating the ambivalence: in late antiquity (Le Goff 1994) and the Middle Ages, it is the divine that becomes pure, and the profane impure. In his own contribution to the discussion, J.-C. Schmitt (1992) shows that, while ambivalence persists<sup>14</sup>, the medieval regimes of the sacred represent new configurations within the system of relations.

Schmitt highlights three characteristics of the new medieval configurations. Firstly, the institution of the Church as the "administrator" of the sacred, which "tended to reduce the sacred to acts of consecration: these conferred (or removed) a character of sacredness from people thus torn from the profane order (...), objects (...), places (churches, cemeteries), times (...)". Secondly, the sacred tended to be not "diffuse (according to the polytheistic model), but rather concentrated in *loci* (places of pilgrimage, sanctuaries) or in *loculi*, i.e. reliquaries, where a privileged relationship between men and God was established." Finally, medieval Christianity established "a hierarchy of the (con)sacred, arranged in concentric circles of increasing intensity", in objects as well as in people.

However, the "institution of the sacred (the Church) could not claim to dominate all forms of the sacred in Christianity". "We would have to take," writes Schmitt, "the measure of a "wild" sacred that was even more beyond ecclesiastical control" (1992). This popular sacred, sometimes demonised by the clergy and sometimes assimilated and transformed into "popular culture", is the other major component of the medieval regime of the sacred.

<sup>13</sup> Impurity as danger: cf. (Douglas 1991 (1966)).

<sup>14</sup> « Il y avait donc moins une opposition terme à terme du sacré et du profane, que deux pôles entre lesquels de telles notions n'ont de cesse de se chevaucher » (Schmitt 1992).

It will be demonstrated that the coexistence of two distinct forms of sacredness (the ecclesiastical, representing a manifestation of centralized institutional authority<sup>15</sup> and the "popular," or "wild," encompassing pagan traditions and practices pertaining to sacred entities, objects, locations, temporalities, and the profane realm of humanity) is a hallmark of the contemporary phenomenon of patrimonialisation. This phenomenon is characterized by a unique blend of spontaneity and institutionalization, and it will be crucial to elucidate the manner in which this duality is maintained and transformed.

A "regime" of purity/impurity can be described, in summary, as the set of relations established within a society and at a given moment in its history, between what is considered pure or impure in the world (people, things, spirits); the set of rules that organise the separation, the modalities of contact and the mutation between one state and another<sup>16</sup>. The set of rites that facilitate the expression, activation and maintenance of the distinction; the social effects of these rites, not only in the limited context of the ritual gesture, but also in the more general context of the needs they fulfil and their consequences on the state and/or status of the people and objects involved in the rite, and finally on the state of the world and of society. With regard to the concept of "patrimony", which originated in Rome as a secular and, therefore, in Roman logic, a pure entity, we observe that it subsequently became regarded as sacred (consecrated) through the performance of purification rites. This indicates that its original state, as a secular entity, was considered impure.

As previously indicated, purification represents the oblate moment, encompassing all operations aimed at eliminating superfluous and spurious elements to free the patrimonialised object and retain the "authentic", rejecting the "inauthentic" to the extent of creating a void around it. This process bears resemblance to the sculptor's gradual "release" of a form from a coarse block that "contains" it, as Rodin is reputed to have observed.

The purification rituals are of diverse nature. Elimination of elements that are considered inauthentic (in the case of listed buildings, additions from different periods, alterations due to profane use, paintings, decorations, etc. that do not correspond to the canonical - normative - form defined by the entity that has the authority to preserve an object). It is interesting to note that the same concept (regimes of sacredness, purity) is needed to explain the processes of elaboration (and application in social action) of notions of "authenticity". As with other processes of categorisation and reference systems, the authentic/inauthentic polarity plays the role of a symbolic operator that guides the organisation of objects and designates them for contrasting actions. Lucie K. Morisset (2009) "procède à l'observation de *régimes d'authenticité* successifs – clin d'œil aux régimes d'historicité débusqués par François Hartog – portant l'un dans l'autre la signification des objets et des actes patrimoniaux" (Noppen, 2009; **my emphasis**).

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<sup>15</sup> This led Durkheim, following Henri Hubert, to see religion as the "administration of the sacred" (Hubert 1904; Schmitt 1992).

<sup>16</sup> There are many examples of *purity regimes* specific to a society (Christian Europe at different times, India, Islamic societies), a social group (clergy, castes) or an organised community (monastic order). In all cases, in addition to defining the boundaries of what is pure and what is impure, there are rules of purification required to come into contact with the sacred.

It is important to note that when dealing with an object that has undergone numerous modifications, the crucial and somewhat arbitrary decision is to select an era that aligns with the prevailing social norms and values of the historical period in which the decision is being made.

The issue of the necessity to purify heritage objects, coupled with the concomitant concern about the inevitable destruction that results from this act, has been a fundamental tension in the field of contemporary archaeology since its inception. This tension can be conceptualised as a dichotomy between two opposing approaches: the destruction of heritage objects in order to preserve them, and the preservation of heritage objects through the act of destruction. In the archaeological exploration of the remains of Classical Greece, there is a temptation amongst archaeologists to destroy everything in the remains that does not date back to the 5th century BC, as well as anything that surrounds, hides or distorts them.<sup>17</sup>

The process of material purification is of significant importance, as it establishes the definitive form of an object that is to become part of the heritage collection. This form is, in a sense, provisional, as it is subject to change and adaptation throughout the purification process. The issue at hand concerns the transformation of objects that were previously considered profane and even trivial into "monuments," in accordance with the current intention of retrospectively constructing an "adequate" memory. As this is a normative process, it requires the forgetting or obliteration of elements that remain in time and are deemed to be inadequate, useless, or inconsistent with the established version: inauthentic.

### **Purification as social decontextualisation**

Moreover, the process of purification also affects the narrative memory conveyed by "monuments," particularly in the case of buildings or objects of a "noble" nature (e.g., castles, palaces, precious objects). The structures and forms of these monuments, as well as the discourses that accompanied and commented on them, expressed an ancient social order, which could be considered the "*Ancien Régime*", or the ancient kingdoms of Southeast Asia. Furthermore, the process of purification also affected the symbolic content associated with the objects, which was perceived as oppressive. This was done in order to highlight the technical and/or formal quality of the objects, transforming them into "works", at best works of art detached from their original function. These were then offered for disinterested aesthetic contemplation or, as we shall see, for new cults. The source of legitimacy shifts from traditional authority to technical and aesthetic recognition, which forms the basis for the classification of heritage.

Once serving as instruments of symbolic power, affirmations of the irreconcilable differences between disparate social orders (such as "states" and castes) and, at best, mere props of the preceding social structure, heritage objects are now subjected to a ritual of

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<sup>17</sup> An interesting example is the discussion between Maurice Barrès travelling to Sparta and the archaeologist from the French School in Athens about the destruction (on the latter's initiative) of the palace of the dukes of Athens (13th century AD), the remains of which were on the Acropolis next to the Propylaea. The archaeologist claims that he is a classical Hellenistic archaeologist and is doing nothing more than practising his trade. Barrès retorts that he wanted to examine controlled documents and criticises the archaeologist for destroying certain and secure documents. Only that they bore witness to an era that did not interest the classicist (SCHNAPP 1998). Image of the free tower: [http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/eb/Bonfils%2C\\_F%C3%A9lix\\_%281831-1885%29\\_-\\_Athens\\_-\\_Propylaea\\_1868-1875.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/eb/Bonfils%2C_F%C3%A9lix_%281831-1885%29_-_Athens_-_Propylaea_1868-1875.jpg).JPG

memorial purification. This process involves the neutralisation of the old symbolic and social charges, thereby transforming them into simple testimonies of human ingenuity and genius, pure fruits of *Kunstwollen*.

It is important to note that this process of purification also affects much more recent objects, not only those that are considered "ancient," such as palaces and castles that are centuries old and possess a high degree of "antiquity," which is one of Riegl's categories. Buildings erected to symbolize the grandeur of power, whether by fascist or Soviet regime<sup>18</sup> are also subject to this process (Berthold *et al.*, 2009).

It is important to recall the ongoing debate surrounding the fate of architectural works that were not created as neutral legacies but rather served the purposes of affirmation and propaganda for totalitarian powers. If it were not possible to "neutralise" the symbolic charge with which they were endowed *ab initio*, how should such works be treated? The purification process, therefore, serves a similar function in this context as it does in the case of religious or "noble" buildings. It acts to separate the intrinsic elements (the form and structure of the technical realisation) from the extrinsic elements (the *a priori* intention, *a posteriori* speeches and comments, and associated practices). This can be seen as a purification process.

The ritual of oblation, whether material or merely narrative, serves to reactivate the opposition between purity and impurity in a new light. As previously stated, it is the object itself that is consecrated to the divine powers, thereby becoming pure. This represents a reversal of the classical relationship between the object and its purifying agents.

### 3. Concentration: processes of symbolic intensification

The third type of ritual operation involves a series of actions aimed at *concentrating* the symbolically valuable properties of objects. The process of *intensification*, distributed over time in a multiplicity of actions, aims at both the distinct, separate character of the consecrated object and its evocative power, reinforcing the coherence and accumulation of the significant elements that concentrate the object's symbolic charge.

Indeed, the separation, which is the first step, even if it can be ritualised, can remain "symbolic", for example by a simple decree, by inclusion in a restricted list, whether or not accompanied by a material signal.

However, objects do not function as memory supports outside of the contexts in which they are inserted or embedded. The relationships that are established between heritage objects and the contexts in which they are situated are always highly complex. The interventions on the structure of the object, as well as its insertion into functional contexts, are significant factors that contribute to the establishment of complex relationships. These relationships are shaped by the diverse perceptions and uses attributed to the object, which may range from a mere material support to a raw material or utilitarian object. Furthermore, the act of combining the object with other elements to create composite objects adds another layer of complexity to the web of relationships. These relationships are constantly

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<sup>18</sup> Examples abound. With all due respect, it is worth noting the similarity between A. Speer's projects in Germany in the 1930s and Coimbra's old uptown area (destruction of the popular urban fabric and construction of the "big" projects in Berlin or the small Salazarist grandees). The evolution of these constructions - banal and stereotyped, but a memory of times of oppression - remains an uncomfortable problem... of heritage, if only as a "document" (Huyghe 1999).

evolving and can be seen as a result of the rituals of separation, which seek to unravel, redesign, or suppress them.

The individual (final) object, whether a stone, fresco, castle, wall, landscape, forest, or dance, assumes a new and distinct meaning when it is decontextualised and isolated. The distance traversed around the object, which may be conceived of as a progression of emptiness, serves to reinforce the object's signifying value by displaying it in a way that forces the perception of its uniqueness. The investment in environmental elements that are not "neutral" (square, wide road, lawn) is, at the very least, a voluntary act of abstraction. These elements present themselves as "empty" in contrast to the "fullness" of the "monument". Furthermore, the work on the structure of the object is an action of symbolic intensification.

This operational step is inextricably linked to the problems of restoration, conservation, reconstruction, or even reconstitution of the hypothetically "missing" elements. These problems are, to varying degrees, informed by a range of perspectives, including those that are wise or naive, and are shaped by the specific context and time period in question. In some instances, the approach to these problems is based on an imagined representation of the past, or a past that, due to a lack of available documentation, is only imaginatively reconstructed. Consequently, these reconstructions are projected into the future.

The intensification of objects does not merely entail their material manipulation (a "façonnage") to adapt them to their new ritual role. It also entails the construction of symbolic experiences, which are imbued with greater significance when it comes to intangible heritage objects. This is achieved by recomposing memories, bringing together discourses, and reinforcing affections. The actors, institutions or local groups are called upon or impose themselves, join forces or oppose each other, in a process of symbolic elaboration of the object that takes place at the level of representations and practices rather than in the materiality of the object. In the past, the material object – whether a building, an artefact or a landscape – was both the justification for heritage and the raw material for the process and its intensification. However, we are now looking beyond materiality to the meanings, rites, affections, "aura" and even the "spiritual" aspects of the heritage object. The focus is not merely on the physical location, but also on the intangible, the "spirit of the place". Indeed, a formal perception has led to a displacement of architectural thinking from its strict domain to a wide range of objects (landscapes, festivals, rites), which in turn has prompted an interpretation of the subjective value and meanings that surround, connote, the heritage object. The concept of a "monument" or a "historic centre" is now understood in terms of the perceptions and emotions associated with them. Consequently, the objective of conserving a place is no longer merely to maintain its physical form, but rather to safeguard the entire network of representations and practices that surround it and contribute to its significance.

Despite being declared *for humanity*, this importance is *always localised*, as the "spirit of the place" is constituted by local practices and represents the symbolic power of the groups whose "spirit" is the collective memory.

It is noteworthy that universalisation is manifested explicitly through hyper-localisation. It is not feasible to generate a "spirit of the place" from a distance or to disassociate it from its bearers in situ. The "genius loci," or the more or less individualized spiritual entities with intensified projections, are, as their name suggests, local phenomena that are specific

to a particular "locus"<sup>19</sup>. The sacralisation of heritage is most evidently exemplified in these expressions.

Throughout and at the conclusion of these processes, the heritage object becomes the object of collective practices of a votive nature, rituals of approach and contact, and acts of devotion. These contribute to the socially established and reinforced consecrated character of the object (or of the place, which may be considered an "object" in the sense adopted here). The ritual practice (visit, pilgrimage, devotion) affects the object "by virtue" of its sacred character (because it has been consecrated). However, this is reinforced and intensified by the practice, whereby a place or object that becomes the target of the most intense devotions is regarded as the most "sacred". Such practices are essential for maintaining the object's sacred character. Once the new social modalities of its control have been defined (in other words, once the bodies that have the power to decide on its fate have been established in the arena of symbolic power), it is, so to speak, ready for the rituals of ostentation. These include staging, illumination, publicity (and even, often, propaganda) and finally, regulation of access (*sanctificatio*).

It is evident that these processes do not occur in isolation within an abstract conceptual realm. Instead, they engage a diverse array of actors within an inherently imperfectly defined competitive landscape. These actors are situated within the broader strategies of one or the other, which are ultimately shaped at the local or societal level.

### **Extension and spread of "Heritage": a contagion**

The process of patrimonialisation has resulted in the extension of the concept to an ever-increasing number of objects, which has led to a blurring of the traditional boundaries of what is considered to be "heritage". This has in turn rendered the traditional criteria for defining heritage obsolete<sup>20</sup>. In contrast, the concept of the "Ancient, the Exceptional, the Beautiful" has been defined by a limited set of objects, primarily buildings and works of art, and has been legitimised by state-affiliated institutions. This has resulted in a distinction between what is considered "heritage" and what is not, despite ongoing discussions and criticisms. However, the current context is characterised by the expression "everything is heritage". This is what Michel Melot characterises as the **transition from "monument" to "heritage"** in a process in which each of these two concepts is prone to "suffocate" the other<sup>21</sup>.

« La catégorie de « monument historique » voit son registre s'élargir jusqu'à l'infini. Sous la poussée patrimoniale sont décrétés « monuments historiques » des édifices ou objets les plus modestes du patrimoine rural – lavoir moussu ou croix de chemin, affinoir à fromage ou four à pain –, du patrimoine industriel, usines fracassées, silos vides, grues géantes, etc. » (...) De dérive en dérive, parce qu'il est grandiose, beau, ancien, ou rien de tout cela, mais tout simplement menacé de disparaître ou coûteux à détruire, le monument historique devient « ce qu'il nous faut conserver » et se confond alors avec la notion de « patrimoine » (Melot 1999).

This is also identified by the authors assembled by M. Drouin in the aforementioned volume, where he states: « Le patrimoine n'a plus de contours précis et n'a plus de

<sup>19</sup> I'll return to this idea later with regard to the subject of paganism.

<sup>20</sup> A process that Nathalie Heinich calls "patrimonial inflation", an expression with which she titles the Introduction to her book "*La fabrique du Patrimoine*" (Heinich 2009).

<sup>21</sup> « S'il fallait appliquer la même politique aux monuments et aux objets patrimoniaux, l'un étoufferait l'autre » (Melot 1999).

frontière. L'expression du « tout patrimoine » résumerait d'ailleurs le constat posé depuis quelques années » (Drouin 2006).

The movement to expand the domain of heritage is accompanied by a first expansion in the domain of cultural objects. This expansion can be observed in the shift from the "noble" and erudite (monumental architecture and erudite works of art) towards objects from vernacular cultures. These include both those found in imperial or ex-imperial metropolises and those in the peripheries. The latter can be described as popular, pre-industrial, and popular. A second step in this same direction is taken by extending to "immaterial" objects, knowledge, practices, and representations a set of cultural forms whose definition is less directly dependent on the material support on which they are inscribed.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, we remain within the domain of culture.

It is also noteworthy that the concept of "heritage" extends beyond the boundaries of culture, encompassing "natural" objects, whether ecological or biological in nature. Natural environments that have been influenced by human activity, ranging from the "landscape," where the aesthetic perception of space still dominates, to forest groves, mountain ranges, wetlands, rivers, etc., have also given rise to the establishment of "parks" with diverse legal statuses, and thus become the subject of heritage rituals.

On a different but related scale, the concept of "biodiversity" has emerged as a measure of biological wealth. This variable is linked to a specific space, which may be one or more ecosystems. However, in contrast to other forms of *wealth*, it has become a type of asset that is readily subject to patenting. As a further consequence, the concept of "genetic heritage" has emerged, perhaps most unexpectedly. Given that biodiversity encompasses both the diversity of species and their intrinsic variability, this can be considered to fall within the domain of genetics.

The phenomenon of patrimonialisation is not confined to the realm of collective or collective-owned resources; it also affects the individual genome. Intensive discussions and disputes emerge concerning the utilisation and commodification of genetic resources. The symbolic charge of genetics (of non-human organisms and humans) has continued to grow as a result of the processes of consecration and appropriation (private, collective, public), and the tensions surrounding its control have also increased. The subject will be discussed in greater detail in a subsequent section. For the time being, it is proposed that the hypothesis be regarded as a postulate, with the understanding that it is still in its nascent stages of development. *It is observed that the rituals of patrimonial sacralisation and the cults derived from them that are associated with "natural" objects are structurally similar to those that prevail in relation to "cultural" objects (material or "immaterial").*

Nevertheless, although I acknowledge the phenomenon of the exponential expansion of the concept of "heritage," which gives rise to this assertion, I put forth an alternative interpretation, building upon the aforementioned analysis, that challenges the notion that "everything tends to become heritage." If the above analysis regarding the symbolic equivalence between patrimonialisation and consecration is indeed correct, then the extension of the concept of heritage, however broad it may be, will inevitably fail to

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<sup>22</sup> Heinich (2009: 18), describes the extension of patrimonialisation in three directions: chronological (moving towards the present, topographical (from the building to contexts and landscapes) and categorical (new types of objects, namely modest, from popular cultures, etc.).

encompass the entirety of material and immaterial objects that constitute the contexts of life in society<sup>23</sup>.

The existence (formation, reproduction) of a domain of "sacred" objects presupposes, by logical structural necessity, the existence of a contrasting domain of "profane" objects<sup>24</sup>. The theoretical hypothesis that informs our research is straightforward: the formation, maintenance, enactment, and evolution of regimes of sacredness are shaped by sets of rules governing the transition of objects and individuals from the profane to the sacred and vice versa. This implies the coexistence of both realms, regardless of their concrete delineations, within a society and at a specific historical juncture. From an alternative perspective, if the entities established to serve as recipients of heritage sacrifices are indeed "gods of memory," as previously proposed, then the system's functionality necessitates a corresponding process of forgetting. In order to facilitate memory, it is necessary to engage in a process of forgetting. In order to recall a memory, one must also be capable of forgetting it. It is similarly conceivable, though I will refrain from elaborating, that in order to forget, one must first remember<sup>25</sup>. In other words, remembrance, memory and forgetting are co-functional. What's more, if "heritage" is what must be "conserved", the profane, extra-patrimonial is what can (and sometimes must) be destroyed (Hafstein 2008): because the regulated destruction of memory opens up the possibility of invention. In Greek myth, two entities epitomise this extraordinary complementarity: *Mnemosyne* and *Lethe*. If, in the context of Hades, the former is interpreted as symbolising Memory, the latter is understood to be the river that the deceased must traverse. This river is said to erase the memories of their former lives, enabling them to be reborn with a different identity. This concept is reflected in the idea that the deceased can truly be reborn when they reincarnate and begin a new life.<sup>26</sup>

In light of the aforementioned perspective, it becomes evident that neither the process of patrimonialisation nor the subsequent conservation of "everything" is a viable proposition. This realisation necessitates a shift in focus, and consequently, in the task at hand, towards the selection process that operates between memory and forgetting.

The significant growth of the patrimonialisation phenomenon does not imply the elimination of the fundamental duality. I posit that a portion of the solution to the tension (a greater emphasis on heritage, but not an exclusive focus) can be discerned in an

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<sup>23</sup> It is also remarkable that if "heritage" has a contiguous (congenital?) relationship with "wealth", we can see that certain riches are never candidates for patrimonialisation. For example, in the context of "natural" objects: the forest, the mountain, the river are all recognisable. But not oil, minerals, GMO seeds, etc., even though they are "riches". These objects seem (for the time being) to retain a necessarily profane character which, if we follow my interpretation, is consistent with the inversion of symbolic valence in relation to the Roman opposition.

<sup>24</sup> « C'est le détour du sacré qui fonde la possibilité du profane », wrote Durkheim (in Vidal 2009). We can safely say that the reverse is true: it is the profane (and its persistence) that makes the sacred possible.

<sup>25</sup> It would take us a long way to explore this statement. But it is clear that the "memory work" in which Western societies have consciously engaged in recent decades demonstrates that certain historical traumas can only be forgotten if a peaceful memory is built around them. To remember in order to forget, and to avoid the "savage" return not of the *forgotten*, but of the *hidden*.

<sup>26</sup> Or, in the words of L. Febvre: Un instinct nous dit qu'oublier est une nécessité pour les groupes, pour les sociétés qui veulent vivre. Pouvoir vivre. Ne pas se laisser écraser par cet amas formidable, par cette accumulation inhumaine de faits hérités. Par cette pression irrésistible des morts écrasant les vivants...": forgetting, saving what can be moulded into tradition, or poured into a "history", these are the alternatives (Febvre (1952: 496) 1995).

implication that Drouin leaves implicit when he adds: "L'extension de la notion aurait entraîné un flou conceptuel et, possiblement, un relativisme patrimonial. "À chacun son patrimoine", pourrait-on désormais affirmer sans ambages. "

It is, indubitably, a form of relativism; nevertheless, the fundamental principle is "to each his own heritage." Consequently, all forms of objects are liable to undergo a process of *patrimonialisation*, which may be defined as the "*tout patrimoine*". Furthermore, this is no longer a limited set as previously defined by Western thought. However, it is not the case that all objects of each type will be effectively patrimonialised, nor *can* they be. The fundamental issue, which will *always* be a source of contention between competing social groups, is clear: namely, the question of what can and should be considered heritage and what cannot and should not be. It is therefore evident that any solution will inevitably be the result of a compromise, which will in turn be as unstable as the power relations between the actors involved. These compromises will be made on the basis of symbolic arguments, such as those pertaining to antiquity, form, quality, or others.

### **From the "noble" to the "plebeian" and from the Eurocentric to the global**

One notable phenomenon was the formation of memorial cults centered around objects that, due to their material composition, were closely associated with the ancient places of worship (such as churches and cathedrals). The objects of the initial heritage cults were evidently imbued with a privileged relationship with the "great" gods of memory, including figures of power, kings, lords, heroes, nations, and battles.

The relationship between monuments that are intentionally produced for memory and celebration, such as *memorials* (Riegl), and objects that are inextricably linked to the discourses that precede and justify them even before they are constructed, as well as the interpretative discourses that comment on the meanings that the memorials should convey, and monuments that are not intentionally created as supports for memorial discourse (castles, profane palaces), but invested, at a given moment in their history, with this valence, can be seen to have a potential continuity that derives from the formal characteristics of the monuments themselves, namely the remarkable, the spectacular, and the exceptional.

The structure of these objects (deliberate, realised according to prior plans and calculations like that of pantheons, mausoleums, triumphal arches, columns, statuary), reactivated existing models, from which it borrowed some sacredness. We can consider that the notion of "transference of sacredness" adopted by LAHIC researchers in the wake of D. Poulot applies well to these cases. It is also possible to think that the formal structure of the objects, whose special coherence and symbolic density characterises the "patrimonial class" that Régis Debray calls "forms" (following closely behind Riegl, who saw it as the category of monuments guided by aesthetics), made them suitable for receiving the "transfer of sacredness" that comes from sacred objects.

Furthermore, the incorporation of rural landscapes merits consideration. These landscapes are, for the most part, the consequence of the secular actions of the peasant classes and are situated alongside artificial landscapes created by the powerful. These landscapes are designed, planned and maintained in accordance with the need to symbolise power and exist because of the exception they represent. As objects produced without an overall plan or monumental or memorial intent (but rather following functional and utilitarian

requirements derived from everyday activities) by dominated populations over the centuries, rural landscapes allow - like the Herderian rediscovery of vernacular languages and cultures - the evocation of other gods of memory: those of the "peoples", the quasi-ethnic gods, the spirits of places.

In the face of the "monumental" and "artistic" concept of heritage that emerged in Europe at the end of the 17th and 18th centuries, and especially during the 19th century, the field of what can be recognised as heritage expanded in the 20th century to include objects of a new kind - *landscapes* - where the sedimentation of human actions can be seen. As the result of human intervention on "natural" spaces, the *landscape* appears simultaneously as an inscription of human and social processes, and as a space inhabited by memories, the support of narratives and experiences: and all the more precious because the societies that produced them have died out, or are dying out. The value of the rural landscape, a precious asset in a world that has seen the "end of the peasants" (Mendras).

The question thus arises: whose memories are they? In the case of the rural landscapes<sup>27</sup>, which are undoubtedly emblematic of the new heritage surge, it is evident that these sentiments are not merely the sentimental memories of the romantic elites, which were elaborated in a cultural complex whose affective basis was the emergence of a new feeling for Nature<sup>28</sup>. Nor, after all, were they the main ones, but rather the memories of the peasant societies that produced them. The Romantics perceived the landscape as a representation of both the past and the present. In the present, they sought to engage with the past exclusively. In the new phase of patrimonialisation that emerged at the end of the 20th century, local communities, for whom landscapes are not merely a historical construct, but a framework for life, external anchors for cognitive and practical reference systems (classifications, naturalistic knowledge and technical know-how), including the system of social relations (plots, boundaries and landmarks, routes, coordination of cultures, rights and obligations linked to space, etc.), have emerged as increasingly prominent actors in the arena of patrimoniality. This introduces further complexity to a field that is undergoing a profound and radical redefinition.

### **The "immaterial": anthropology and culture**

A further noteworthy phenomenon is the expansion of the patrimonial domain, or the sacralisation of cultural forms developed by oral tradition cultures within subjugated populations. Whereas anthropology had previously assumed a universal equality between cultures, based on the relativity of ways of perceiving the world, we now find that, half a century after the first decolonisations, there exists a universe of cultural forms that are either already the object of sacralising investment and therefore already designated as "heritage" for those who practise them, or are susceptible to receiving this investiture.

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<sup>27</sup> Here again, Marc Bloch's "*Les caractères originaux de l'histoire rurale française*", Bloch (1931), 1999, is worth mentioning. It shows how the genesis of the landscape emerges from the system of social relations linked, in particular, by inheritance regimes and crop rotation regulations.

<sup>28</sup> It was the crisis of the conception of nature developed throughout the 18th century (Ehrard 1981) by the Enlightenment that opened up the space for an idea of nature based on feeling rather than reason, despite the progress of the scientific spirit in the 19th century. We know how successful the new conception condensed into the romantic *Sturm und Strang* was. And what role these new ideas played in the symbolic constitution of the German "Nation" and the nationalism that accompanied it.

This is another genealogy, which leads from the "discovery" of vernacular cultures in the French peri-revolutionary period by the "*Antiquaires*" to the signing in 2003 of the UNESCO Convention on "Intangible Heritage". In the Germanic cultural domain from the 17th century onwards, the Herderian conceptions of vernacular languages and cultures as repositories of the profound identities of "peoples"<sup>29</sup> and in the Latin domain from the 16th century onwards, the movement of the "*Antiquaires*", opened the way for the constitution of descriptive linguistics, archaeology and ethnography. From the 19th century onwards, Ethnology and Anthropology inaugurated the elaboration of the notions of "folklore" and "Culture" as a set of *all* the elements, material and immaterial, processes and products of the process of creation of societies by themselves. By abolishing the aristocratic equivalence between the notion of "culture" and "high culture", by including all manifestations of human activity, anthropology prepares the ground for a reconsideration of the scope of heritage. This prepares the way for the identification of objects susceptible to symbolic heritage investment, despite the almost always modest, often marginalised nature in industrial societies, of these manifestations of dominated European ("popular") cultures, or the cultures of dominated populations throughout the world.

The new concept of culture, as extended by anthropology to encompass all manifestations of human material and symbolic activity, presents us with a question that we have already encountered when evoking the vertigo of "*tout patrimoine*".

This issue is related to the consequences of renouncing the traditional equivalence between culture and what is commonly referred to as "high culture". This notion entailed an evident hierarchical structure of values between "banal" or "vulgar" cultural manifestations and erudite, "high value", noble manifestations. Simultaneously, it established a hierarchical structure between the cultures of different societies, proclaiming the superiority of "Western" – European – culture over all others. In addition to the comprehensive definition of culture in each society, anthropology also posits a relativist assumption, which rejects the notion of absolute cultural superiority. The ostensibly reasonable conclusion that all cultural forms and associated practices within a given culture are of equal value introduces a sense of vertigo. Such an assumption is wholly inaccurate. All known cultures establish a hierarchy of values attributed to the various cultural forms, customs, and practices that constitute and give shape to social life. They all identify, cultivate and preserve cultural forms which, from their own point of view (or from the point of view of the groups involved in them), represent particularly elaborate, valuable, often consecrated forms.

In other words, if "heritage" is conceptualised as a transcultural category and, in any given society, a differential category (as opposed to what is *not* heritage), the remaining issue is an empirical one: determining the systems for valuing cultural forms within any given society. In contrast to the expectation of a "uniform", indistinct cultural landscape, as defined by anthropological theory, the reality is one where distinctions between cultural forms are a fundamental feature. These distinctions are often based on subjective evaluations of "strength", "beauty", or "value", with the only exception being that these valuations are localised.

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<sup>29</sup> See for example Herder (1770) 1977 and Herder (1791) 1991 and the "rehabilitation" of the "barbarian peoples" and their cultures: a form of vindication of the Germanic "cultural heritage" in the face of the Hellenistic and Romanesque classicism that dominates the Renaissance and prevails in 17th century Europe, on the one hand, and the (French) Philosophy of the Enlightenment, on the other.

As an absolutely inevitable consequence, the identification of the most "meritorious" or "exceptional" cultural forms and their significance will now take place in the context of a new relationship with the elites and, if not truly within the social groups that are the bearers of these forms, at least with their increasingly firm contribution, increasingly imposing the idea that it is the group that defines (or should define) according to its own criteria what its "heritage" is, what it should be.

**The extension of the heritage phenomenon to the global level is only possible because its structure is equivalent to a polytheism - a paganism**

As previously stated, the process of patrimonialisation can be defined as a consecration to memorial entities. Consequently, it is inherently limited to the scope of the societies or groups that participate in each local cult, namely those *whose* memory it is. The concept of the gods of memory, as previously proposed in the context of pagan polytheism, is inherently localised. This is arguably the primary source of their strength, as it renders the process autonomous from central and inherently distinctive definitions, in accordance with the tenets of monotheistic belief systems. At this juncture in the investigation, it is valuable to reiterate the structure of the system of practices and representations that emerges with the generalisation and expansion of heritage as a structure that is analogous to that of pagan polytheisms, as Marc Augé posited (Augé 1982): a system of relationships between societies and the world, and between social actors, that is characterised by an openness to the existence of multiple pantheons, each with its distinctive and incomplete set of deities; to a plurality of interpretations and styles of practice, which always leave open the possibility of new ritualisations.

In conclusion, it can be proposed that the sensation of conceptual ambiguity may represent a residual manifestation of Eurocentrism: what is difficult to conceptualise is all the processes of patrimonialisation if we take them as mere extensions of "our" own official conception, a result of the elaboration of European national myths from the 18th century onwards. A narrow idea, developed in a certain context, of which we export the image and the term more than the conceptual core, because the latter escapes the actors: monotheisms are the essence of the powers of nation states and these are the materialisation of the unique and universal meaning of a "forgotten" divinity<sup>30</sup>. For the secularised West, which sees itself as rational and technical, "heritage" was what represented a secure value, guaranteed by instances of symbolic and material power, imagining that it is a process that is intended to be uncontroversial, of wealth accumulation, homologous to economic growth and technological progress and managed as such. The partial loss of control over the definition of heritage by legitimate organisations means that autonomous definitions, produced and implemented by groups or societies hitherto excluded from the game of Memory, are liberated. The monopoly on sacredness guaranteed orthodoxy, as is the case with religions organised in churches, especially centralised churches. Breaking the monopoly also opens the way for claims to access the definition of the sacred and the autonomous practice of ritual in the field of "heritage".

If humanity's memory is no longer the same as the West's, and if the West is no longer able to impose its definition of what belongs to the gods of memory (its own), then the processes of claiming "heritage" (worthy of preservation, enshrined) by social groups at every conceivable scale (from the village or neighbourhood and from the local minority group to

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<sup>30</sup> J.-C. Schmitt (1992) suggests this idea in his critique of M. Gauchet's thesis on the secularisation of contemporary societies.

the city, from the city to the country, etc.) become free. They free themselves: these are the new players entering the game. They reveal themselves: many of the processes of patrimonialisation (in the sacrificial sense that I am defending here) existed at a local level, but they now acquire visibility and a new legitimacy.

Over the past two decades, the formation of a heritage arena has occurred at an accelerated pace. This arena is characterised by groups with disparate and often conflicting definitions of heritage. These definitions encompass what heritage is, what it should be and what it should not be. The concept of "sacred" is open to interpretation and can be perceived as profane or worthless by others. Furthermore, if "patrimonialising" is defined as the act of conserving, then the refusal to patrimonialise something inevitably results in its deliberate alteration or destruction.

None of these phenomena, nor the new complexity of the heritage field thus expanded, should lead us to fear any "flou conceptuel": it's enough to conceptualise "heritage" and patrimonialisation as *processes of consecration*, whose modalities (symbolism, rules, rituals, consequences) and actors vary, as do the gods of memory to whom heritage is consecrated. Furthermore, these processes are inherently contentious, a quality that has always been present but is now more pronounced than ever.

It's clear that the formidable extension of the patrimonial realm is bound to change the sacred status of memorial objects in contemporary societies. The issue is made all the more complex by the fact that the processes of patrimonialisation are spreading in two directions simultaneously: by multiplying the *types of* objects that can be patrimonialised and by extending them to all contemporary societies across the globe. In all cases, an investigation into the configuration of the new regimes of sacredness is an indispensable element in the comprehension of a phenomenon that has acquired global dimensions.

### **Heritage paganism, cultural relativism and globalised cults**

The complexity of the issue increases when we attempt to transition from the societal level to the global level. In this area, comparison is simply impossible, as is the establishment of a single scale of evaluation: in approaching universality by extrapolating local hierarchies, World Heritage lists find their Tarpean Rock: the "Point of View of Humanity" resembles, in terms of evaluating cultural forms, the "Point of View of God": the *"en surplomb"* vision that characterised the old European hegemony, and which turns out to be a void that nobody can legitimately fill. Where the "bottom-up", inductive emergence of heritage centred on values and corresponding to local forces was expected, it is a set of "metacultural artefacts"; "the lists emerge from operations that convert selected aspects of heritage of local descent into a heritage of translocal consensus - the heritage of humanity" (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 2004. 56-55) that project them: 56-57) that project them into the globalised sphere of world heritage; the "metaculture" draws up a plan of visibility and legitimation that operates deductively, downwards, or if you like, in a top-down movement. It is not possible to reverse the process, concludes Kirschenblatt-Gimblett (2004:61), because "there is no way back, only a metacultural way forward."<sup>31</sup>

Nevertheless, the creation of UNESCO's "lists" requires a postulate of comparability. The restrictive nature of the list presupposes alternative choices between isolated items, judging

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<sup>31</sup> See also Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 2004-2005

not only the absolute value of each one, but also their relative values. Despite efforts to circumvent the implications of designating a single form as "exceptional on a global level" (Bortolotto, 2009), this characterization inevitably entails a political dimension. The "recognition" mechanism becomes a structure of continuous negotiation and conflict, which may lack legitimacy in the eyes of the most vulnerable, namely the majority who lack access to the arena or the means to influence it.

The riddle is thus solved: how is it possible, on the basis of local (and arguably necessarily local) definitions relating to a (more or less numerous) social group, to establish a common cult, given the obvious impossibility of establishing a single hierarchy of cultural forms worldwide that would play the role of the single god of monotheisms - a common reference for all sacralisations? How is it possible, based on the new epistemological foundations of cultural relativism, to substantiate the universality of the values that it wants to recognise in a given cultural form, which is the product and integral part of a reality that is always local?

It is my contention that the answer can be found in the structure of the new regime of sacredness, a notion that is particularly illustrative of its potential here. This is based on the multiplicity and even multitudinous nature of the figures of the sacred, the radical opening up of pantheons and the equivalence of references. Not that "great" gods of memory can't emerge and coexist with "small" gods. This has consistently been the case in all pagan cultural systems, with certain cults spreading over more extensive areas, others less so. Perhaps this almost quantitative dimension (the different "contagiousness" of each local cult) is a decisive plane of description for understanding the new configurations, even the most unstable ones.

Far from any idealisation<sup>32</sup> or projection of values about such a situation, about losses or benefits (material, symbolic or even metaphysical), about whether or not it is desirable from the most varied points of view (social, political, ethical), the paganism under discussion is simply an empirical fact.

### **From the spirit of place to the place of the spirits**

If the process of patrimonialisation is, as argued here, a consecration, and if the sacred character refers to the relationship between an object (building, place, landscape, cultural form) and the "gods of memory", it is perhaps unsurprising that the notion of "*spirit of place*" should emerge as a logical necessity in the process of elaborating world heritage sites. The concept of the "spirit of place" is more than a metaphor evoking a simple feeling or a set of representations. It is also more than a force of expression. As the concept develops, the "spirit of place" becomes the "spirits who inhabit a place" and then the "geniuses" who possess it. This progression leads to the realisation that the "spirit of place" is a set of entities to which a cult should be dedicated.

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<sup>32</sup> It is permissible to read the references to "paganism" in certain works by J.-F. Lyotard in the 1970s and 80s as the establishment of a "programmatic" paganism, which Lyotard wanted without God, without Grace, without Hope, a door to liberation from any metaphysics (see in particular Lyotard 1977). The ambivalence of the project and its possible and uncomfortable confusion, in less attentive readings, with contemporary neo-paganisms (revivalist political-religious ideologies, some of which served as inspiration for certain Nazi and fascist delusions), in addition to the contradiction that a "programme" (albeit emancipatory) without "hope" entails, led Lyotard to distance himself from the subject. However, recognising the impossibility of preserving a common central reference - and the multiplicity that results - is the basic intuition that leads him to the notion of the "postmodern" condition.

A relatively neutral definition is that of Prats and Thibault, who describe it as "a synthesis of the different elements, material and immaterial, that contribute to the identity of a site" (Prats et Thibault, 2003). Viel, meanwhile, evokes "... une émotion, un aura, un esprit qui transcendent le présent, défient les modes d'intervention, interpellent la mémoire et obligent à pénétrer l'univers de la complexité" while for Latin America ICOMOS "l'esprit" est le souffle vital qui exprime une telle identité, et qui est le résultat du rapport entre une culture déterminée et l'endroit où elle se développe." (VIEL 2003). In his analysis of representations of Roman antiquity, M. Petzet proposes that cities, landscapes and monuments should be examined as bearers of their "*genius*". This quality, which is attributed to certain locations, is what imbues them with a sense of sacredness. (Petzet 2008).

However, Laurier Turgeon employs an even more explicit configuration of a patrimonial paganism, evoking the polytheistic or animistic conceptions that are found in a multitude of cultures. These classic objects of anthropology, therefore, emerge from the penumbra of ethnological museums or the exoticism of peripheral spaces to provide a model for interpreting heritage that is universally applicable. L. Turgeon's conceptualisation of the "esprit du lieu comme une dynamique relationnelle entre des éléments matériels (sites, paysages, bâtiments, objets) et immatériels (mémoires, récits, rituels, festivals, savoir-faire), physiques et spirituels, qui produisent du sens, de la valeur, de l'émotion et du mystère." He goes on to argue that the concept is interesting because "elle est de tous les temps et elle existe sous une forme ou une autre dans pratiquement toutes les cultures. Dans la tradition occidentale, l'esprit ou le génie du lieu remonte au moins à l'Antiquité romaine, connu alors sous le nom de *Genii Loci*. Les *Genii* de la mythologie romaine sont des êtres immanents qui habitent non seulement les lieux, mais aussi les individus (Grimal 1976, entry on "génie"). Ils symbolisent l'être spirituel des choses et des personnes, et ils ont pour fonction essentielle de les conserver en existence. Le génie, par sa nature unique, veille au lieu et lui donne son identité propre, plus encore, le rend sacré. Le génie anime le lieu d'un principe vital." (Turgeon 2008). These "spirits" are supernatural in nature: and the concept of these entities, if not universal, at least is present in many cultures<sup>33</sup>.

In a world that has become increasingly disenchanting, the search for what we can identify as a heritage enchantment has not remained a marginal trend. Rather, it has led to a series of official declarations by UNESCO, which serve to confirm the importance of the new sacredness. An important step may have been the Declaration of X'ian in 2005, in which UNESCO insisted on the importance of the "contexts" from which the meanings" of heritage objects emanate: "Les traditions culturelles, les rites, les pratiques ou concepts spirituels tout comme l'histoire, la topographie, l'environnement naturel, les usages et autres facteurs contribuent à décrire l'éventail des intérêts et des dimensions matérielles et immatérielles du contexte" (ICOMOS 2005). If ritual and spiritual elements were already at the forefront here, in 2008 they became the central core of the patrimonialisation that resulted in the "Declaration of Quebec on safeguarding the spirit of place". "Cette Déclaration s'inscrit dans une série de mesures et d'actions entreprises depuis quelques années par ICOMOS pour sauvegarder et promouvoir l'esprit des lieux<sup>34</sup>, principalement

<sup>33</sup> « Même si les formes et les fonctions de ces êtres surnaturels varient beaucoup d'une culture à une autre, on constate que la notion de l'esprit du lieu est répandue dans les mythologies d'un grand nombre de cultures du monde ». (Turgeon 2008). An abundance of examples follow.

<sup>34</sup> « Rappelons que l'esprit du lieu peut être défini comme l'ensemble des éléments matériels (sites, paysages, bâtiments, objets) et immatériels (mémoires, récits oraux, documents écrits, rituels, festivals, métiers, savoir-

*leur caractère vivant, social et spirituel* "(emphasis added). UNESCO thus recognises the sacredness of the local object, according to the local concept, which gives "meaning, value, emotion and mystery to the place". Ritual, spirit, mystery: the ingredients of sacralisation are finally present in their own right. Now, rituals, mysteries, spirits are, as the... genius of paganism allows - and demands - as we have already indicated, fundamentally local<sup>35</sup>.

We thus move away from what might be perceived as an obligatory deployment of terminology when proposing the interconnection between contemporary heritage and pagan sacredness. This is done in order to identify a concept of the sacred that is condensed, on occasion in individualised deities of memory, other occasions in localised "genies", at other times in polytheisms, and still other times in animisms. The concept of "paganism" (a term that was, after all, the result of a pejorative view of representations of the sacred prior to monotheism, characteristic of monotheistic Eurocentrism, of the urban elite in relation to *the pagus*, the peasant) can now be broken down into a set of cultural forms of the sacred that are constructed either as transcendence or based on immanence. This encompasses both the recognition of individualised figures (gods, spirits, genies) and animist cults of non-individual, impersonal forces. Consequently, heritage cults are more diverse and localised than paganism, with a shared quality of encompassing a multitude of forms and figures. The local autonomy that is evidenced in the elaboration of cults simultaneously produces a considerable variety of forms and a regularity that appears to result from a common fundamental matrix, namely that of paganisms.

It is notable that cultural forms (material or otherwise) that have been designated as heritage by local societies (including European ones, now considered in a global context) can be accorded a higher level of significance, namely that of "World Heritage". The new gods of memory are numerous and, as in ancient paganisms, it doesn't matter that interpretations, versions, vary: the inclusive genius of paganism, which becomes, with "world heritage," both local and global, is exemplified by this phenomenon. Its manifestations are local in concrete form, yet its reach extends to all contemporary societies on a global scale.

It can be argued that this is an early example of a cult that aspires to a truly global reach. It exhibits a number of distinctive characteristics, including a focus on planetary extension, the performance of rituals on a worldwide scale, and the incorporation of a vast pantheon of deities.

**Working version.**

**José Rodrigues dos Santos, January 2010.**

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faire, valeurs, odeurs), physiques et spirituels, qui donne du sens, de la valeur, de l'émotion et du mystère au lieu. » (ICOMOS 2008).

<sup>35</sup> « 9. Considérant que *les communautés locales sont généralement les mieux placées pour saisir l'esprit du lieu, surtout dans le cas des groupes culturels traditionnels*, nous soutenons qu'elles devraient être intimement associées à tous les efforts de conservation et de transmission de l'esprit du lieu. » (ICOMOS 2008). **I emphasise.**

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