

LUSITANIAN PATRIMONY IN THE WORLD

Few are the countries in the world which may afford to present, on the one hand, an enormous built patrimony and, on the other hand, not to divulge it nor be proud for having erected it.

Portugal is one of those countries, or rather, Portugal must be the only nation that does this.

When we talk about a historical Built Patrimony, we are immediately reminded of the Greek, Roman, English, Dutch, Spanish or Italian patrimonies. Among all these, however, the Portuguese Built Patrimony may be the biggest, the most scattered and the less dictatorial. All the others were colonialists, that is, they imposed on the peoples they came in contact with a fierce architectural and urban tutelage. Portugal, on the contrary, was more of a catalyser of patrimonies, transforming and adapting them, than a coloniser of patrimonies.

If we look at a map, we realize that these affirmations are true. Look at what Europe knew about the world until the 15th century. It only had a thorough, scientific knowledge of its own territory and of those countries lapped by the Mediterranean. It was known that this or that site existed, but that knowledge was permeated with legends, stories and prejudices.

With Portugal, the knowledge about the world and the capacity of an European people to build in that world ceased to be regional or continental and became worldwide... and that first world patrimony was built by Portugal.

One curious thing to note, however, is that, if we did have a Built Patrimony in every continent (even in Australia), we are afraid, or rather, we have sufficient ignorance capacity not to know that it exists and that it was a magnificent one.

There are few people who have the synthetical ability to integrate all this patrimony throughout the world.

We all know that we built churches in Brazil; but how many know that they numbered 300 in Japan, and likewise in Sri-Lanka? We all know that we built a beautiful fort on the Island of Mozambique; few people are aware that we did the same in Indonesia, in Kenya, in Ghana and in China.

We all know about the existence of Macau, but who knows that we built two other cities in China and that one of them was as big as Macau 30 years ago?

We all know that two atomic bombs destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki; but few people know the reason for the low mortality rate in the latter (when compared to the former). Nagasaki was planned by the Portuguese, and the city was even Portuguese at a certain point. Its implantation was done, not following Japanese models but in accordance with Portuguese castrensian and mountainous ideals.

We all read the newspapers to know the latest news on the Persian Gulf war. We know that Basra (now in Iraq) has had several owners, but who is aware that the city, which boasted a magnificent church, has already belonged to Portugal? The same thing happened in the Island of Bahrein and in the capital of Oman - Muscat.

We all remember, some better than others, that Ethiopia exists and that it was the legendary nation of Prester John; but few people know that deep inland our Patrimony boasts of forts, churches, palaces and pictures. Such is the case at Gondar. Which of you know where Gondar is?

We all know Uruguay. If we ask any citizen what he thinks about this country, he will answer that Uruguay is a Southern American nation and a former Spanish colony. This is incorrect, however. Uruguay was never a Spanish colony. Uruguay belonged to Portugal, so much so that its Constitution, taking pride in the country's independence, states that it will not be dependent of the Kingdom of Portugal or of the Empire of Brazil ever again.

Do you remember the colony of Sacramento? The fort of St. Miguel? The forts of Coimbra or of Vila Bela? I truly believe you do not remember. All this is Lusitanian Patrimony scattered throughout Uruguay and Southern Brazil.

You will perhaps remark that nothing escaped from Portugal. But, as clever as you are, you will conclude that something has escaped - the United States of America.

Maybe, maybe not. It would be convenient to inquire at this moment whether there is a Lusitanian Patrimony in Florida, in California and on the Atlantic Coast. We would do well to investigate the matter, as something might be found through the territories of the Cortes Real or belonging to João Alvares Fagundes, João Fernandes or Pedro Barcelos.

It is true. The Lusitanian Patrimony is spread out throughout the world. It has adapted itself to the climate, to the building techniques, to the culture of the various peoples where it has existed.

We now need to widen the vision of Lusitanian Patrimony that leads to its importance as Europe's first patrimony anywhere in the world, apart from Spanish America, antecipating its construction by about 100 or 200 years when compared to any other Patrimony, be it Dutch, English, Danish and Spanish.

To sum up, we can say that the Lusitanian Patrimony reached North Africa in 1415, the Gulf of Guinea in 1481, the East African coast in 1506, Persia in 1511, the Industanic Peninsula in 1506, the Malayan Peninsula in 1512, the Gulf of Bengal in 1532, Indonesia in 1518, China in 1556 and Brazil in 1502; it reached Japan at more or less the same time.

We may infer, then, that before any other ancient European nation had erected a Patrimony outside Europe (excepting Spain in America), Portugal had already built the plan of the whole world.

We end by asking all the participants at this Congress to extend all its resolutions to the oldest European Built Patrimony in the world, contrary to what may be read in its initial publication, where only the Spanish, English and French Patrimonies are spoken about.

What about the Portuguese Patrimony?

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