

## **Encyclopedia of Romantic Nationalism in Europe**

### **Commemorations, festivals : Portuguese**

Author: Melo, Daniel

Among the various ritualistic evocations of the national past, celebrations and festivities became central only in Portuguese late-Romanticism, i.e. in the last quarter of the 19th century. These followed the European trend, established since the days of the French Revolution, of quasi-religious, liturgical occasions celebrating *homines illustri* (and the nation-state's connections with the past) or collective ideals.

Among the "great men", writers were consensus figures since they were considered to have revealed the Portuguese "national character". Portuguese Romanticism began by idolizing **Camões**, culminating in the inauguration of the statue dedicated to him in Lisbon in 1867, and the design of a pantheon in which he figured as the prince of Portuguese poets. This was complemented by the poet's centenary commemoration of 1880 (inspired, as Teófilo **Braga** testified, by similar centenaries in Italy and France), a benchmark for the doctrine and shaping of such festivities to come, with their conferences, exhibitions and civic parades. In addition, the poet's remains, together with those of the navigator Vasco da Gama, were moved to the Jerónimos Monastery (nationalized in 1833), turning that location into a national pantheon. The occasion was used by Republicans to strengthen their role as alternative to the monarchy in the shaping of the nation-state. 10 June, then celebrated as the day of the poet's death, evolved into a public holiday, first for the city of Lisbon, then nation-wide.

The Republicans' Romantic inspiration had been outlined in Teófilo Braga's **Comte**-influenced *Os centenários como synthese affectiva nas sociedades modernas* ("Centenaries as affective synthesis in modern society", 1884), which also stressed their ethical and social utility.

Subsequently, the civic sacralization of national literature by celebrating authors continued with **Herculano** (in 1888 and the centenary of his birth in 1910); António **Vieira**, António Feliciano de **Castilho** and Gil **Vicente**, honoured on the centenaries of their death in 1897, 1900 and 1902; **Garrett** (centenary of his birth, 1902-03); **Eça de Queirós** (statue, 1903). The Jerónimos Monastery enshrined a number of writers: Herculano (with a grand mausoleum in 1888), the poet João de **Deus** (1895) and Garrett (1903); they were followed, in the interwar years, by Guerra **Junqueiro** (1923), Teófilo Braga (1924), and, exceptionally, the statesman Sidónio Pais (1918).

The Camões Centenary contained many features which were to echo in later events of the type: the presentation of a Camões library; the compilation of a Camões bibliography; the presentation of a painting (Domingos **Sequeira's** *Death of Camões*); the reading of Garret's poem *Camões*; the performance of excerpts from **Bontempo's** *Requiem*; and the establishment of a Camões Society, dedicated to the study and historical and philological criticism of the poet's work. But the scope of the Republican celebration of Camões in 1880

indicated a broader national agenda: to regenerate the declining nation and to preserve its integrity and its colonial empire, coveted by other European powers.

Hence the celebrations addressed a fourfold thematic: [a] the overseas expansion of the modern era; [b] the “religious question”; [c] revolutions; [4] military heroism.

The first theme expressed itself in the celebrations of Henry the Navigator (1894), Vasco da Gama’s opening of the sea route to India (centenary of India, 1897-98), and the taking of the strongholds in North Africa (centenaries of Ceuta and of Albuquerque, both in 1915). The discovery of the Brazil sea route was celebrated in its fourth centenary, 1900, even though Brazil by then was an independent country.

The “religious question” was addressed in secularist celebrations with an anti-clerical and anti-Jesuit tone, linking Portuguese backwardness (including cultural backwardness) to the nefarious legacy of the Catholic Church. Figures who by actions or in writings had militated against Church domination, with its Inquisition, its cultural obscurantism, its privileges, etc., were celebrated: the Marquis of Pombal (centenary of his death in 1882), Joaquim António Aguiar (1875 and 1890), Herculano (1910).

The self-celebration of the revolutions expressed itself in civic festivals commemorating the Iberian uprising against the Crown and the “Restoration” of national independence in 1640 (Monument to the Liberators, Lisbon, inaugurated in 1886); the Liberal Revolution of 1820; and the republican revolution of 5 October 1910. The Monument to the Liberators was a symbolic nationalist response to the growth of Iberianism, in a process that gained momentum after 1861 (when the annual celebration of 1 December 1640 was compounded by the commemoration of the Liberal Revolution, featuring a “Tree of Liberty” and public processions). This led to an annual round of many different events: parades and civic banquets, military parades, donations of food and clothes for the poor, and various cultural activities including poetry recitals, concerts, theatre performances and dances.

Due to the Europe-wide scramble for colonies and the growing importance of military education, a militaristic climate marked the increasing celebrations of martial heroism. Mouzinho Albuquerque was commemorated in Mozambique in 1895, and the uprising against the Napoleonic Invasions was marked by the Centenary of the Peninsular War (1908-14). Prominent topics were the Portuguese military expeditions to African colonial territories, and the alliance with Britain. Popular resistance to the armies of Napoleon was honoured by the construction of an obelisk and the reconstruction of a Catholic chapel (1873); and again in 1876, when that chapel was consecrated.

Andrade, Luís Oliveira, Luís Reis Torgal; 2012. *Feridos em Portugal: tempos de memória e de sociabilidade* (Coimbra: Coimbra UP) [“Holidays in Portugal: memory times and sociability”]

Catroga, Fernando; 1993. “Nacionalistas e iberistas”, in: *História de Portugal*, ed. José Mattoso, Regina Anacleto, João Lourenço Roque (Lisbon: Estampa), 5. 563-567 [“Nationalists and iberistas”]

Catroga, Fernando; 1996. “Ritualizações da história”, in: *História da história em Portugal sécs.XIX-XX*, ed. Luís Reis Torgal, José Amado Mendes, Fernando Catroga (Lisbon: Círculo de Leitores) 547-671 [“Rituals of history”]

João, Maria Isabel; 2002. *Memória e império: Comemorações em Portugal, 1880-1960* (Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian) [“Memory and empire: Celebrations in Portugal, 1880-1960”]



All articles in the *Encyclopedia of Romantic Nationalism in Europe* edited by Joep Leerssen are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. Permissions beyond the scope of this license may be available at <http://www.spinnet.eu>.

© the author and SPIN. Cite as follows (or as adapted to your stylesheet of choice): Melo, Daniel, 2017. "Commemorations, festivals : Portuguese", *Encyclopedia of Romantic Nationalism in Europe*, ed. Joep Leerssen (electronic version; Amsterdam: Study Platform on Interlocking Nationalisms, [www.romanticnationalism.net](http://www.romanticnationalism.net)), article version 1.1.1.1/a, last changed 25-10-2017, consulted 06-11-2017.