

Heritage Policies and Sensitive Pasts: Between Ambiguities and Rights from Global to Local¹

ABSTRACT: This article analyzes the cultural heritage policies and the uses of the past in Brazil to reflect on the social function of cultural heritage, which will be done on three scales of observation. On the smaller scale, I will examine UNESCO and the presence of Brazil in its lists of World Heritage and Heritage of Humanity, both material and intangible. The intermediate scale will offer a reading of the heritage policies in Brazil, implemented by the National Historical and Artistic Heritage Institute, which will seek to identify their conceptual roots that reverberate in the country's global image. On the third scale, I will observe the heritagization of the Ruins of São Miguel das Missões in Brazil, reflecting on new paradigms in dispute in this process. The state, understood through the extended perspective of Antonio Gramsci, and the specialist, in the relational perspective of Pierre Bourdieu, are the key categories for analyzing how classification struggles operate in this cultural arena.

KEYWORDS: World Heritage and Heritage of Humanity, UNESCO, Brazil, material and immaterial cultural heritage, São Miguel das Missões/Tava Guarani, scales.

RESUMO: Esse artigo analisa as políticas de patrimônio cultural e os usos do passado no Brasil para refletir sobre a função social do patrimônio cultural, o que será feito em três escalas de observação. Na escala menor, será observada a UNESCO e o Brasil nas Listas de Patrimônio Mundial e Patrimônio da Humanidade—de natureza material e imaterial. A escala intermediária servirá para uma leitura das políticas de patrimônio no Brasil, implementadas pelo Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional, buscando raízes conceituais que reverberam na imagem global. A terceira escala observa a patrimonialização das Ruínas de São Miguel das Missões, no Brasil, refletindo sobre novos paradigmas em disputa. O Estado, entendido na perspectiva ampliada de Antonio Gramsci, e o especialista, na perspectiva relacional de Pierre Bourdieu, são as categorias chave para analisar como as lutas de classificação operam nessa arena cultural.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Patrimônio Mundial e Patrimônio da Humanidade, UNESCO, Brasil, patrimônio cultural material e imaterial, São Miguel das Missões/Tava Guarani, escalas

Introduction

The growth of competition around the World Heritage designation, within the framework of the 1972 Convention on World Cultural and Natural Heritage of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), unequivocally demonstrates the expansion of the field of heritage in its global definition as well as in the arena of symbolic and material disputes that surround it. The same can be said about the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

According to Chiara Bortolotto (2010), the paradigms governing the two conventions differ substantially, due to the criticisms the former convention attracted in the wake of its practical application and due to new demands for change in the field of heritage. The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity adopted a culturally relativistic perspective, conveying a critical stance toward the modern universalism that underlies the World Heritage Convention and UNESCO itself. For Bortolotto, the major distinction of the 2003 Convention is the requirement that assets to be included in the list must be established by their bearers in dialogue with specialists. This requirement legitimates the presence of new subjects entrusted with the attribution of value in the processes of heritagization implemented by various states, whereas according to the norm established by the World Heritage Convention such attribution is solely the responsibility of specialists.

This article aims to analyze heritage policies and the uses of the past in Brazil to contribute to a reflection on the social function of cultural heritage in global terms, carried out at three levels of observation. For the initial level, I have selected the collection of assets that became World Heritage and Heritage of Humanity in Brazil, respectively material and immaterial. Two reasons guided this selection: Firstly, I intend to illuminate the hegemonic thinking that guides the heritage policies in Brazil, as reflected in the World Heritage List with its established and recognizable image. Secondly, it is interesting to reflect on the action of the state, which outlines strategies for participation in the politics of world heritage, a forum in which an image of Brazil is defined for itself and for the world.

In making this selection, I do not intend to erase the specificities of heritage policies at the national level, as opposed to those involving UNESCO, but to connect the two spheres so as to give agency to the local. For this reason, the article's second part, which operates on an intermediate scale of national scope, will offer a reading of the heritage policies in Brazil implemented by the National Historical and Artistic Heritage Institute (IPHAN—Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional) in order to understand its conceptual roots, reproduced in the image of Brazil's heritage that reverberates globally.

In the third part, observation will be local. On a larger scale, the process of heritagization carried out by the Brazilian state, through IPHAN, will be observed in order to understand and reflect on new paradigms in dispute that come into play in specific empirical situations. The notion of classification struggles proposed by Pierre Bourdieu (2011) is operational here for the understanding of these disputes as a form of competition, since it situates the issue of heritage in a field of power struggle. In this case, the focus is on submerged identities and sensitive pasts, with the intent to determine the ways in which groups operate their identities and their ability to decenter dominant narratives. With this objective in mind, I will analyze the emblematic case of heritagization of the Ruins of São Miguel das Missões, which underwent significant modifications since the first action in 1937 until becoming Tava, Place of Reference for the Guarani People (Tava, Lugar de Referência para o Povo Guarani), in 2014. This third scale of analysis is based on the following assumptions. In order to understand the politics of heritage, one must focus on the processes of attributing value and meanings to assets, as well as on the subjects who act in these processes, so that the tensions and disputes waged in the course of heritagization may become visible. Thus heritage ceases to be seen as something given a priori and, at the same time, different meanings, values, and feelings are revealed in relation to the same cultural asset, which can then be compared with those produced on the previously examined scale of World Heritage.

This analysis relies on two key categories. The state is understood, based on Antonio Gramsci's theorization, as produced by the interrelation between the civil society and the political society. The former relates to the notion of legitimacy and the latter to the notion of coercion, with dynamics and disputes for hegemony and consensus, seeking consent and adherence through cultural means (Gramsci 1978). As theorized by Norbert Elias (1993), national states are the result of integration efforts towards more intertwined societies. Such efforts proceed through structural conflicts and tensions, and through struggles for the

balance of power. The Brazilian state has constitutional obligations to protect the Brazilian cultural heritage. To ensure correct application of preservation measures, it can rely on its political power, thus acting through coercion. At the same time, the participation of different agents and entities of civil society in official positions, serving as experts on advisory boards or in technical capacity, among others, confers legitimacy on public policies (Chuva 2009).

The other key category, that of specialist, is here understood from the perspective of Pierre Bourdieu. In his relational view of the social world, Bourdieu refers to the formation of networks of material and symbolic ties in which social agents act. These relationship networks exist in the form of objective positions that people occupy institutionally, which shape their perceptions and actions, and in incorporated form, which relates to the notion of *habitus*, as embodied acquired attitudes or habitual ways of being (Bourdieu 1983). The heritage specialists possess a *habitus* acquired through formal education and the heritage field in which they work, engaging with its mechanisms of prestige and promotion. They participate in the field through the formulation of discourses and practices of recognition, belonging, and exclusion. They occupy positions of distinction that correspond to their legitimacy, and they labor to impose a social view of the world aligned with their interests (Bourdieu 2011).

The decision to analyze the heritagization practices of the state does not imply that this is the only way in which heritage is constituted, as different groups develop their own narratives of identity and belonging that materialize in cultural assets (objects or practices) recognized by the whole group. However, this reflection focuses on public heritage policies whereby the state, through its agency and its specialists, maintains a monopoly on the definition of cultural assets that will receive its seal of approval. The same procedure is repeated on a global scale. What makes this approach fruitful is the analysis of the ways in which this monopoly operates to construe the legitimacy of its specialists, through its interaction with civil society, as well as of its resonance, as explored by Stephen Greenblatt (1991): not as a stable and fixed social background but as a network of social forces that often find themselves in conflict.

1. UNESCO and the Brazilian Lists of World Heritage and Heritage of Humanity

UNESCO, created within the United Nations after the Second World War, is the agency responsible for the establishment and coordination of an international heritage system, which has played an important role in shaping a global

Table 1. List of Brazilian World Heritage

Name	Registered by UNESCO	Registered by IPHAN	Notes
Historic Town of Ouro Preto, Minas Gerais	1980	1938	
Historic Center of Olinda, Pernambuco	1982	1968	
Jesuit Missions of the Guarani (in Brazil, Ruínas de São Miguel das Missões, Rio Grande do Sul)	1983	1938	The same UNESCO asset registration includes San Ignacio Mini, Argentina.
Historic Center of Salvador de Bahia	1984	1985	
Sanctuary of Bom Jesus do Congonhas, Minas Gerais	1985	1939	
Brasília, Federal District	1987	1990	
Serra da Capivara National Park, Piauí	1991	1993	
Historic Center of São Luís, Maranhão	1997	1974	
Historic Center of the Town of Diamantina, Minas Gerais	1999	1938	
Historic Center of the Town of Goiás, Goiás	2001	1978	
São Francisco Square in the Town of São Cristóvão, Sergipe	2010	1967	
Rio de Janeiro: Carioca Landscapes between the Mountain and the Sea	2012	from 1938	IPHAN protection applies to several isolated assets plus a small cluster.
Pampulha Modern Ensemble, Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais	2016	1948–97	IPHAN protection: 1948, Church of São Francisco da Pampulha; 1997, Pampulha Ensemble.
Valongo Wharf Archeological Site, Rio de Janeiro	2017	—	
Paraty and Ilha Grande—Culture and Biodiversity	2019	1958–74	IPHAN protection applied in 1958 to the town center of Paraty, in 1974 to the entire county.

perspective on cultural heritage (Abreu and Peixoto 2014). The agency has achieved a high level of popularity worldwide, although its operations are based on a series of ambiguities, three of which I will identify here. The first ambiguity has to do with UNESCO's role in globalization. According to Marc Askew (2010), for a long time UNESCO held that its cultural programs aimed to mitigate the destructive effects of cultural globalization, represented by the culturally homogenizing industries of capitalism, with the organization turning its practices towards compensatory forms of globalization and positioning it outside of the harmful globalizing processes. But is it even possible to clearly distinguish between good and bad globalization, without considering the intricate networking and the nuances of such processes (Labadi and Long 2010)?

Another aspect of UNESCO's ambiguity concerns the technical legitimacy on which its practices are based. The power of the technical discourse enunciated by the specialist silences, in most cases, any other possibility of knowledge production in different sites, while it also imposes a Eurocentric and West-centric scientific logic, from which the agency has struggled to disassociate itself. For Labadi and Long (2010), this is because the agency presents as canonical the technical and symbolic legitimacy of its World Heritage List and, more recently, of its Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. UNESCO professionals and consultants, referred to here as specialists, are its greatest apologists, as they reproduce their own status, identity, and legitimacy in the technical order of their work in the field of conservation while at the same time enshrining the agency.

Therefore, if on the one hand UNESCO has tried to move away from a Eurocentric conception of culture and cultural heritage toward a perspective that effectively promotes the diversity of the world's cultures through the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, on the other hand, as Bortolotto (2010) suggests, the very nature of the UN system gives national states the power to determine their representative cultural expressions, thus limiting the perception of cultural diversity to the lenses of state agents and agencies. According to Bortolotto, this generates a tense relation with the determination to involve local communities in the nomination process for inclusion in the UNESCO list, with which member states must deal.

The third ambiguity lies precisely in the fact that UNESCO's popularity comes from its support by nation-states, even though the agency imposes technical and formal standards to which they must conform, which makes the members'

support for this supranational body seem surprising. Askew (2010) believes that this can be explained by the use of the universalism of the World Heritage Convention for the member states' own domestic agendas of cultural hegemony (Santos 2002).

1.1 The Brazilian World Cultural Heritage

The 1972 World Cultural and Natural Heritage Convention has been extremely popular, with the participation of 193 states (Londoño 2017). Brazil is a member of this group, actively participating in the forum, with fifteen assets registered in the cultural or mixed category, from 1980 until its latest registration in 2019.²

Analyzing the Brazilian presence in the UNESCO World Heritage List yields a very homogeneous image of Brazil. Of the fifteen registered assets, ten relate to the Portuguese colonial period (from 1500 to 1822), European civilization, the Catholic faith and/or related Baroque art; two are examples of modern Brazilian architecture;³ and two are archeological sites: the National Park Serra da Capivara (with pre-Cabraline, i.e., pre-sixteenth-century, rock inscriptions) and the Valongo Wharf Archeological Site, a site of sensitive memory. Finally, the city of Rio de Janeiro is registered in the Cultural Landscape category. Table 1 lists the fifteen Brazilian assets.

In this listing, the white Portuguese heritage is clearly predominant. What we see represented on the global level, therefore, is a particular type of Brazilian asset, continuously guided by Western civilizing narratives, with an emphasis on its aesthetic attributes. This reading is confirmed (more or less subtly) in the entries describing each of these assets on the website of IPHAN, the body responsible for the preparation and submission of world heritage dossiers to UNESCO (IPHAN 2014).

Brazilian UNESCO registrations have occurred with some regularity over time, the first in 1980 and the latest in 2019. Their predominantly colonial origin has given them homogeneity, maintaining the same aesthetic pattern that suggests the hegemony of a national imagination that was first outlined in the 1930s within the scope of heritage policies, and has been continually updated and reaffirmed. This selection is obviously inadequate to present an image of the plurality of the nation or represent the diversity that exists within Brazilian borders. From the first to the most recent registration, Brazil's activity within the scope of UNESCO's 1972 World Heritage Convention has spanned forty-one years, with the last registered asset being the town of Paraty. The image of Paraty posted on

IPHAN's website shows the oceanfront of a historic, colonial coastal city and has a strong aesthetic appeal. It should be noted, however, that the arguments for its inclusion in the UNESCO list as a mixed (cultural and natural) asset have changed significantly, as can be seen in its official description (IPHAN 2014b).⁴

1.2 The Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in Brazil

Affirming the popularity of the previous convention, 174 countries ratified UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (Lodoño 2017). The following analysis of the Brazilian cultural assets included in the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity sought to determine whether this selection might address the gaps in the representation of Brazilian cultural diversity mentioned above.⁵ Table 2 below lists assets registered by IPHAN and UNESCO.

Table 2. Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in Brazil.

Name	Registered by UNESCO	Registered by IPHAN ⁶
Oral and graphic expressions of the Wajapi	2003	Forms of Expression 2002
Samba de Roda of the Recôncavo Baiano	2005	Forms of Expression 2004
Frevo, performing arts of the Carnival of Recife	2012	Forms of Expression 2007
Círio de Nazaré (The Taper of Our Lady of Nazareth) in the city of Belém, Pará	2013	Celebrations 2004
Capoeira circle	2014	Forms of Expression 2008
Yaokwa, the Enawene Nawe people's ritual for the maintenance of social and cosmic order ⁷	2011	Celebrations 2010
Cultural Complex of Bumba-meu-boi in Maranhão	2019	Celebrations 2011

Brazilian registration of these assets took place between 2003 and 2019. At first glance, the realm that appears here might as well be from another country. On this scale of observation, the two UNESCO lists, taken in their totality, reveal very different images of Brazil. One explanation for this would be that the recognition of this intangible heritage is directed by a Eurocentric vision, as if these assets were the remains of an exotic people in the twenty-first century. However, the fact that many assets included in the two lists were registered in the same time period, and within the same institution, but with no apparent interaction and a total lack of intersection between the two sets, leads me to formulate another hypothesis. The parallel lists may be the evidence of struggles about classification in the Brazilian heritage field within the same state agency, that is, of different and possibly competing conceptions of heritage, indicating the existence of disputes between worldviews within the field and the agency itself (Bourdieu 2011).

Conflicts over the meanings of the past for Brazilian society are, in fact, outside UNESCO's purview, and therefore to attempt to understand these conflicts by focusing the research only on the assets listed as World Heritage may not fully capture the range of tensions and confrontations in the field (Askew 2010). Thus, although these lists function as significant indices, other scales of analysis may point out singular aspects of these practices and struggles that have not been clarified from the viewpoint adopted thus far in this paper.

2. Imagining the Nation: The Intermediate Scale

The convergence that took place in so many Western countries between the writing of the nation's genealogy and the establishment of legal protections for national heritage also occurred in Brazil. The 1930s saw the creation of the National Historical and Artistic Heritage Service (SPHAN, now IPHAN) and the implementation of the Decree-Law 25, in 1937, which organized the protection of public and private material assets, imposing limitations on the right to property, with the introduction of the legal and administrative instrument of asset registration.⁸ The legislation remains in force today and gives the institution relative autonomy to define what it selects as representative of the Brazilian nation. A group of intellectuals linked to one of the directions of the literary modernist movement, such as Mário de Andrade, Carlos Drummond de Andrade, and Rodrigo Melo Franco de Andrade, as well as Lucio Costa, who led the modernist movement in architecture, held positions at the institution, bringing in a select

group of architects and becoming the principal mentors of Brazilian heritage. They positioned themselves as the experts who would reveal Brazil's identity to the nation. The nation's origins became materialized in Baroque art and colonial architecture, with a strong Catholic accent, seen as pure and genuinely Brazilian and free from the foreign influences introduced in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In this form of the nation's genealogy, modernist architecture was elevated as the legitimate heir to the Baroque colonial architecture originally produced in Brazil. This vision, which favors aesthetic and formal values, was realized through asset registrations of the 1930s and 40s—almost a third of the total number of assets registered by IPHAN until today—and enshrined its particular image of the nation, whose resonance retroactively continues to nurture heritage policies in Brazil (Chuva 2009).

Several studies have pointed to this emphasis on architectural assets from the colonial period. Portuguese roots, especially evident in Catholic religious buildings, had the privilege of protection (see Chuva 2009, Fonseca 1997, Rubino 1996, and Marins 2016, among others). Such studies have also abundantly demonstrated that a certain kind of modernist architectural production, championed by Costa and its main practitioner, Oscar Niemeyer, had two objects registered as heritage assets as soon as they were built—the building of the Ministry of Education and Health, today called Gustavo Capanema Palace, in Rio de Janeiro, and the Church of São Francisco da Pampulha, in Belo Horizonte—owing to Costa's intellectual leadership of the federal agency.

This interpretation of the nation's origins was in tune with the ideas of racial democracy forged by the sociologist Gilberto Freyre, beginning with the publication of *Casa-grande & senzala* in 1933, which were dominant in Brazilian social thought during the first half of the twentieth century and still resonate in the present. According to this view, the miscegenation between the Portuguese, Africans, and Brazilian natives, with the predominance of European whites, produced a genuinely mixed population and a country without racism. It can be said that this interpretation was, at the same time, certified by the absence of explicitly segregationist laws in Brazil and, perversely, justified the absence of laws that could have favored processes of inclusion of formerly enslaved people and their descendants in the Brazilian society. In the same period, the policy implemented through the Indian Protection Service (SPI), created in 1910, placed Indigenous Brazilians under the guardianship of the state, which became responsible for their protection until their incorporation into society as national workers (Souza Lima 1995).⁹

Public policies for the protection of heritage, founded on the same interpretative matrix of Brazilian society, also contributed to camouflaging the contradictions of a country that had recently emerged from slavery and barely knew how to deal with its material and symbolic estate. The homogeneous image construed by patrimonial policies—although not only by them—contributed to obscure other ethnic groups present within national borders. It is a fact that, in Brazil, in relation to the rights of memory and the uses of the past, processes of exclusion, silencing, or erasure cannot be dissociated from skin color. The structural racism that still prevails in Brazilian society affects Afro-descendants and Indigenous people, treating them as incapable or primitive. Until the 1980s, the inclusion of elements of Black, Indigenous, or immigrant cultures among the assets protected as national heritage would have been unlikely.

Since the second half of the 1970s, urban social movements and residents' associations in Rio de Janeiro have appropriated asset registration as a tool in their struggle for rights, especially the right to quality of life in the city (Nascimento 2016). Some Black movement activists also demanded the registration of the *Terreiro da Casa Branca*, in Salvador, which took place in 1984, in a struggle for the right to diverse cultural expression and the right to memory and identity, and as a result managed to guarantee their continuing occupation of the site when threatened with eviction (Fonseca 2003; Chuva 2017). In 1988, the high point of the redemocratization process after twenty-four years of military dictatorship in Brazil was the new legal framework consolidated with the promulgation of the new Brazilian Federal Constitution, which condensed earlier reflections and struggles.

Brazilian cultural diversity has become the predominant value since this landmark document, which created the state's obligation to safeguard Brazilian cultural expressions, guaranteeing the full exercise of cultural rights, including by Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities. In article 216 of the Constitution, three points stand out: the reference to the different groups that form Brazilian society, the mention of material and immaterial cultural assets, and the community's participation in the definition of its heritage. These provisions created an opening for changes in the heritage sector's public policies, which have progressively moved closed to the field of human and civil rights. The expansion of the notion of heritage did not only imply the inclusion of assets that had previously been neglected; it also meant the recognition of new subjects determining the attribution of value. In this way, the aesthetic and stylistic

perspective—educated, cultivated, civilized—that saw intrinsic value in colonial Baroque art, considered the expression of the nation’s origins, would have to coexist with other logics that were starting to operate in the world of heritage.

The new Brazilian Constitution also had unexpected effects, for example in relation to the characteristics of the Brazilian population. Some recent population data show interesting evidence of this: according to claims of self-identification gathered by the population census, the numbers of Indigenous, mixed-race (*pardo*), and Black people have been growing since the 2000s. The Brazilian census revealed a growth of the indigenous population well above expectations; this increase has not been due to demographic growth but to the increase in the number of people who recognize themselves as Indigenous, mainly in urban areas of the country, currently representing 0.4% of the total. Similar growth can be seen in the Black population. 2010 census data showed that 50.7% of the Brazilian population declared themselves mixed-race or Black, a higher percentage than registered in previous decades (IBGE 2021). The reasons for this are complex and varied. It is possible that they are related to cultural inclusion programs that have empowered populations hitherto silenced, such as quotas for Black students in public universities and the existence of higher education institutions serving Indigenous peoples, and may have produced these changes in self-identification.¹⁰

New heritage policies in Brazil began to be formulated in order to meet the new constitutional requirements. In the year 2000, Decree 3551 implemented the instrument named Registration of Cultural Assets of Immaterial Nature with the aim to safeguard these assets. The methodology of the National Inventory of Cultural References (INRC) aimed to map cultural assets, supporting proposals for inclusion in the registry of immaterial assets.¹¹ As we have seen, this Brazilian legislation predated the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention of 2003, including some elements present in the Brazilian laws, such as the direct participation of the relevant community in the preparation of the registration application, which is also featured in the convention. This item was crucial for the inclusion of new legal subjects into the process of the attribution of heritage value, as we will see in part three of this article.

In Brazil, although the hegemonic narratives impose themselves even today, themes that fall under the category of “sensitive pasts” have been brought into the patrimonial debate by social movements demanding that the state take a position on such issues and summoning it to act in this delicate area. As already

noted, the state and its agency are not cohesive and monolithic blocks but are constituted by the interaction between political and civil society, and initiatives of this nature may take off due to loopholes or more or less casual opportunities. This was the case of the archaeological site of Cais do Valongo, which was discovered during major reconstruction works in the port area of Rio de Janeiro. Initially, the municipal government considered burying the site after the archeology team concluded its work. However, the immense resistance from researchers and the Black movement led the city to revise its plans, resulting in the inclusion of Black heritage among the tourist attractions of the Porto Maravilha project.

The next step was the struggle to nominate the archaeological site for the World Heritage List. Among the various controversies surrounding this process, I will highlight two to illustrate its main tensions. Firstly, the site revealed the Valongo Wharf, built in 1811, at its deepest level of excavation. On top of it was the Empress's Pier, built in 1843 to receive the future Empress of Brazil, Princess Tereza Cristina. The controversy was about which name would be put forward for UNESCO candidacy and how the object would be presented. In the midst of intense disputes, the name Valongo Wharf prevailed and the justification of its recognition classified it as a "historic site of sensitive memory," in reference to the fact that almost one million enslaved Africans entered Brazil through this pier, brought in slave ships between 1811 and 1831, the year in which the traffic became illegal (Honorato 2008; IPHAN 2017).

As for "sensitive memories" of the military dictatorship, there are movements in Brazil and also in other countries, such as Chile, that demand preservation of buildings used as political prisons known for practicing torture. Such sites are called Memorials of the Resistance, as in the case of the old DEOPS building in São Paulo (Almeida 2017).¹² The Indigenous sites may also be framed as heritage in the category of sensitive memory, as we will see in part three of this article. In this last section, with the intention of reflecting on the social function of heritage, I will explore a particular case of heritagization in Brazil, seeking to understand the subjects who are legally entitled to attribute patrimonial value. I propose a reflection at the local level as a contribution to deconstructing the false idea that heritage value exists in and of itself, that it is fixed and determined, and that it must be discovered or revealed by the specialist who has studied to attain this competence. In this way, I intend to demonstrate how submerged identities and sensitive pasts can decentralize dominant discourses and to identify how the state (in Gramsci's amplified perspective) operates in such a process.



Fig. 1. Indigenous people selling handicrafts on the balcony of the Missions Museum in 2017. In the background, Tava, the ruins of the Church of São Miguel das Missões. Photo by Leandro Kibisz, Wikimedia Commons.

3. Tava, a Place of Reference for the Guarani People in Southern Brazil

Population estimates indicate that there were about five million Indigenous people living on Portuguese-occupied lands in America in the sixteenth century. Much of this population was killed when the territory was occupied. According to the population census conducted in 2010, the Indigenous population of Brazil currently counts around 800 thousand. Of this total, about fifty thousand Guarani natives live in southern Brazil, making them the largest native ethnic group in the country. The Guarani people also live in the neighboring countries of Paraguay, Bolivia, and Argentina.

Tava, a Place of Reference for the Guarani People, was registered as belonging to Brazilian intangible cultural heritage in 2014, following demands issued by representatives of the Guarani community.³³ Surprisingly, Tava is materially the same asset that was registered in 1938 by SPHAN as the Ruins of the Church of São Miguel das Missões and included under this name in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1983.

Tava's registration was not foreseen when IPHAN started working on the INRC of the Mbyá-Guaranis in the region. According to testimony by Beatriz Muniz Freire, an anthropologist from IPHAN who works in Rio Grande do Sul,

INRC started in 2004 because a group of specialists from the agency criticized the way in which the history of the Missions was told and reproduced through institutional actions (Weissheimer 2017). They then initiated historical research, which took the researchers to the indigenous Guarani who since the 1990s have sold handicrafts at the door of the Museum of the Missions. It is worth mentioning that the museum was designed by Lucio Costa in 1938 and soon afterwards built by SPHAN next to the ruins.¹⁴

For anthropologist Rodrigo Lacerda (2019), who carried out an ethnographic study on the heritagization of Tava, the Indigenous people realized that by collaborating with the researchers they could open a negotiation channel with a view to finding solutions to the land problems they faced. Several meetings were organized during the Inventory, with the intention of understanding whether the place had any symbolic meaning for the Guarani. It was in this way that the specialists responsible for the execution of the INRC learned, at a meeting held in 2006, that the ruins were called Tava Miri, Miri meaning perfect and heavenly, in reference to those who arrived on Earth without evil. According to Lacerda, among several proposals for cultural assets subject to heritage recognition, the ruins emerged “as a synthesis, not of a culture, but of a past and present colonial situation understood through Guarani metaphysics” (2019, 155) because they condensed the most sensitive aspects of the Guarani’s existence: the ever-present colonial violence, their expulsion from their territory, and past and present racism, along with the difficulties in demarcating their lands.

The Advisory Council of IPHAN, the highest decision-making body on applications for registration and protected status, chaired by the president of IPHAN, met in 2014 to analyze the application for registering the ruins of São Miguel das Missões as Tava and approved it unanimously.¹⁵ Attending the meeting were the representatives of IPHAN in Rio Grande do Sul along with Ariel Ortega, Patrícia Ferreira, and other Mbyá-Guarani representatives. The minutes of the meeting contain Ortega’s explanation of the land issue that affects the community:

[T]oday we only have 234 hectares in São Miguel das Missões, when before this vast territory was all ours. I am very grateful to Nhanderu for this moment, for enlightening each one of you on the council. I am sure that all Caraís, spiritual leaders, were also meditating to make this moment happen. So I want to thank you for this moment, thank you. (IPHAN 2014a, 74).¹⁶

The Guarani people believe that their ancestors left their marks on the stones of the ruins of the São Miguel das Missões Jesuit church, which they worked hard to build in the eighteenth century. These marks incorporated their ancestors and made them immortal, allowing them to reach the Earth without evil. Tava demonstrates the way in which contemporary Guarani people interpret the historical events of the Jesuit Guarani missions of the past by incorporating their own narratives of ancestral wisdom. During the INRC, the Indigenous people were consulted about their interest in having a reference asset for them registered as a Brazilian cultural heritage site and asked what they would like to be recognized and certified by the state in this category. In response, they brought to the table their knowledge of their own cosmogony and elected Tava because that was the place chosen by Nhanderu for his people to live.

Lacerda calls attention to an essential aspect in reference to the reflections of Rodney Harrison (2013), who defends the constitution of “hybrid forums” in thinking about expanding the concept of participation. In the case of Tava’s heritagization, Lacerda claims that it involved the creation of a hybrid forum, in which human and nonhuman beings (such as Nhanderu) as well as material objects (such as the ruins) participated in the process of choosing the ruins as an asset to be registered, producing “a more dialogical democracy that takes into account different ways of building the world” (Lacerda 2019, 160).

Thus, the well-known Jesuit processes of civilizing and evangelizing the Guarani people, enshrined since 1938 by Brazilian heritage policies as a glorious past event that represents one of the most important symbols of Western civilization in Brazil, took on a new meaning through the lens of the Guarani in the present—as a present problem. Not a past that was left behind, well-defined and distant, but indeed a present reality. Until then, the protection of the ruins ignored the Indigenous people as if they too belonged to a distant past. However, even in the 1930s, the natives were there, albeit regarded as invisible. They were present all the time, traveling around the region, as is the custom among the Guarani. Not to mention that they have been selling handicrafts on the terraces of the Museum of the Missions, in search of resources to survive, since at least the 1990s. These individuals have found an opportunity there to make use of public policy-building tools in their search for affirmative policies that would recognize them as part of a whole. They understand, as can be inferred from Ortega’s words, that the inclusion of diverse cultural identities in nationally consecrated spaces is perhaps one of the first steps towards other demands, such as

the demarcation of their lands. Undoubtedly, this case contributes to the deconstruction of canons forged in the modern paradigm of Western Europe (which subordinates other epistemic models) and to the recognition of different types of knowledge without a governing hierarchy.

Although it has not become the dominant rule in institutional practices, it was possible to observe in this case a process of decolonization of heritage, brought about by legitimate agents, through relationships between specialists and Indigenous people, by way of new meanings attributed to material heritage. That is, in the ruins of the church of São Miguel das Missões, sensitive pasts are on stage as narratives in dispute, facing different meanings, agents, and public policies implemented for the same asset. It is a complex case, a continuing and disputed process of heritage management, in which new subjects presented themselves legitimately and new meanings were attributed to a consecrated material asset, producing unexpected effects on patrimonial policies.

Final Considerations

Can heritage in its different modalities and scales be used to deal with sensitive pasts and heal historical wounds in communities marked by secular violence and the lack of broader strategies for security, protection, and reparation? The main critics of World Heritage condemn its agents and authorized global experts (UNESCO in particular) for being part of a regime of power.¹⁷ In fact, it is necessary to explain that heritage work is forged by cultural practices in the present, which, as seen in this study, do not reflect a consensus or a hegemonic understanding. Such criticism has been widely shared since the seminal works of Eric Hobsbawm, David Lowenthal, and Pierre Nora, in the 1980s, who understood heritage as a process of political and cultural construction being worked out in the present. For this reason, the persistence of practices that deal with heritage as a given, relative to the past but with intrinsic value in the present, is surprising and must be questioned. Therefore, a possible answer to this has to do with the network of power relations that involves heritage agents and specialists, who prefer to remain in their safe and recognized spaces.¹⁸

As this article has sought to demonstrate, World Heritage is formed through the power granted to national states in the global order that is still formed by them; therefore, the critical organizational level on which heritage policies and discourses are framed is still the national, with the practical and symbolic consequences being discussed among members of national bureaucracies. UNESCO

ratifies this arrangement by requiring asset nominations to be presented by the state because as a supranational agency it could not disrespect national sovereignties, and it legitimizes the entire path of recognition and enshrinement through its specialists.

The social function of heritage, in the perspective advocated in this article, in global terms concerns the overcoming of sensitive pasts, symbolically and socially, creating conditions of possibility for the conquest of other rights. The demands that connect sensitive pasts and heritage come from several fronts. In Brazil, they involve Indigenous peoples who demand intergroup dialogues, as seen in the case presented here, but also the descendants of Africans, who have suffered from the symbolic violence present since the abolition of slavery and its perverse effects. Until the 1980s, public heritage policies in Brazil seemed unaware of this issue and did not regard it as their concern. Contributing to change this scene, social movements have sought recognition using normative instruments in the field of heritage for the production of counterhegemonic actions through which they have gained rights. These struggles also employ tactics to combat structural racism present in institutional practices. Thus, when illuminating the ambiguities that constitute the field of heritage, perceptible on the three scales of observation, I have sought to highlight real, and not ideal, dynamics, movements, gaps, and spaces of action.

Considering what was examined for this article, popular movements will have a chance to occur and even to reach the global level only if they are built locally. Such limits frame heritage on the side of order, obedience, strategies. Once again, however, if the intention is to expand rights based on public heritage policies, the forum for this must be the democratic rule of law from the vantage point of the interrelationships between political and civil society and the heritage classification struggles that take place within them, in the context of these relationships and at the different levels analyzed here. It remains to guarantee the rule of law, in which civil society can find openings to act.

The modern paradigm gave specialists the task of revealing to everyone their heritage, which in this configuration has a static and intrinsic value in relation to assets, maintaining nostalgic practices to deal with the past in the illusion of being able to integrate the civilized Western European world. As long as national heritage policies and their global counterparts through UNESCO do not overcome this paradigm, progress in the direction of inclusion, participation, reparation, and paths for dialogue between different fields of knowledge with the aim

of creating practical provisions for living with difference will be limited. For this reason, it is necessary to confront what Aníbal Quijano (2005) has termed the coloniality of knowledge to produce a conceptual revision of the field of heritage. The sacred quality conferred on the specialist's utterances, constituted within the modern scientific epistemology, as seen in the procedures of UNESCO and also of IPHAN, needs to be put in check. The specialist integrated into the world of order accepts a series of divisions in a naturalized way: between practice and theory, subject and object, technique and politics. The requirements of the present time are the construction of bridges to deal with other forms of knowledge and other, nonhierarchical epistemologies, as the hybrid forum that harbored the registration of Tava sought and managed to accomplish.

NOTES

1. This article is part of the project ECHOES—European Colonial Heritage Modalities in Entangled Cities that has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under grant agreement no. 770248.

2. The additional seven Brazilian assets registered as natural heritage will not be discussed here.

3. In part two, the heritage of modernist architecture will be briefly discussed.

4. I have drawn on this source because it functions as the institutional showcase, which communicates to the public IPHAN's official values, principles, and mission. Several earlier proposals for Paraty's inclusion in the World Heritage List had been presented and failed. Only in 2019, with the dossier submitted by IPHAN to UNESCO renamed as "Paraty and Ilha Grande: Culture and Biodiversity" (thus fitting into the category of a "mixed" site—cultural and natural), was a new approach that formulated a broader view of the region, encompassing a wider area besides the historic town center, which may be an indication of evolving heritage management perspectives. It was an innovative proposal, describing a territorial culture that encompasses areas and assets that integrate the region's natural and cultural heritage. It covered the entire municipality of Paraty and an important part of Angra dos Reis, as well as small portions of neighboring towns, on the margins of protected natural areas such as parks and environmental conservation units.

5. For an institutional perspective on this subject, see Fonseca (2013). For images and descriptions of the assets, see IPHAN (2014c).

6. The Decree 3551/2000, which created the registration instrument, organizes the safeguarding of Brazil's intangible cultural heritage in four registers: Celebrations, Forms of Expression, Knowledges, and Places.

7. The treatment given to this asset differs from the others, since its registration was made only on the UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding.

8. As defined in the Decree-Law 25/1937, *tombamento*, or asset registration, is the term adopted in Brazil for the legal and administrative instrument for the protection of heritage, similar to “classification” used in other countries, such as France and Portugal. It is applicable to any material property and prohibits the destruction of the protected property. Before any modification to the property can be made, the heritage agency must be consulted. The institution has a supervisory duty and, as such, may use its policing power to embargo illegal works (Chuva 2009).

9. In 1967, the former SPI was replaced by the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI), as an indigenous body responsible for the guardianship, protection, and demarcation of indigenous lands.

10. These programs are threatened by the setbacks in the current political context in Brazil, with the Indigenous populations being targeted as victims by the government and agribusiness’s neoliberal, fascist, and racist politics.

11. The methodology of INRC (National Inventory of Cultural References) was developed and tested in 2000, in the Porto Seguro region in Bahia, through a partnership between IPHAN and anthropologist Antonio Augusto Arantes. It is organized into three successive stages—preliminary, identification, and documentation—and proposes to map cultural references related to groups, based on cultural practices or defined territories. For more information, see Arantes (2009).

12. DEOPS (Department of Public and Social Order of the state of São Paulo) was an institution created during the Brazilian military dictatorship (1964–85) to carry out social control, censorship, imprisonment, and torture of the regime’s opponents.

13. The meaning of community for the Guarani, according to Lacerda (2019), encompasses all individuals and villages spread throughout different regions of the South and Southeast of Brazil. In this case, I’m using the term “community” as it appears in the Brazilian legislation and the registration dossier of Tava (IPHAN 2014a), with a Western meaning, restricted to the group with which the INRC was negotiated, which lives and circulates in the territory of the Missions. See also Souza et al. (2007).

14. For more on the Museum of the Missions, see Chuva (2014). Lucio Costa produced a report, dated 12/20/1937, about his trip to the region of the Seven Peoples of the Missions, in Rio Grande do Sul, his first assignment for SPHAN. The report is reproduced in Pessoa (1999).

15. The Advisory Council for Cultural Heritage was created in 1937 as a deliberative body responsible for the final decision on all the registrations made by IPHAN. The institute’s website (<http://portal.iphan.gov.br>) archives the minutes of all the Council’s meetings.

16. In May 2015, the Jesuit missions of Guarani, Moxos, and Chiquitos were declared Cultural Heritage of Mercosul (PCM). This category, created in 2012, aims to strengthen the Mercosul countries’ cooperation and integration. At the XVII Meeting of the Mercosul Cultural Heritage Commission, in 2018, in response to the demands of Guarani representatives, Tava was recognized as Mercosul Cultural Heritage (Tagarro 2019).

17. According to Labadi and Long (2010), Laurajane Smith and, before her, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett have been the main critics of World Heritage and its power system. See also Smith (2007).

18. David Lowenthal published *The Past is a Foreign Country* in 1985; the Brazilian edition dates from 1989. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's *The Invention of Tradition* (1983) was published in Brazil in 1984. Pierre Nora's provocative *Between Memory and History: The Problematics of Places*, published in 1992, was translated in Brazil in 1993.

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