INTRODUCTION: THE POLITICS OF FOLK CULTURE IN THE LUSOPHONE WORLD

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 Γ rom being, for more than a century, a central operative concept in areas such as folklore studies, European ethnology and more generally, in anthropology, folk culture has become, in the last decades of the 20^{th} century, a major object of reflexive interrogation in contemporary anthropological research. Two major lines of research characterize this reflexive engagement with the concept of folk culture.

The first one can be seen as a result of the growing interest within anthropology in the history of the discipline. Directed first at the history of mainstream anthropological thought, this interest soon widened to allegedly marginal fields within anthropology, such as folklore and European ethnology, where ideas about folk, tradition and roots have played an important historical role. Bausinger (1993 [1971]), Wilson (1976) and Stocking (1982) were among the first authors to address issues related to this thematicization of folk culture in diverse national traditions of European (and Western) anthropology. Later, in the late 1980s and the 1990s, the subject has become a favorite topic of research, not only among anthropologists, but also among historians. In anthropology, the importance of the work by Herzfeld (1986), Löfgren (1989), Cantwell (1993) or Bendix (1997) must be stressed. In history, especially in France, the topic has also been widely addressed by cultural historians such as Faure (1989), Thiesse (1991, 1997), Lebovics (1992) or Peer (1998). One of the common traits shared by these diverse approaches has been the attention paid to the role played by the concept of folk culture in the historical development of nationalist and regionalist movements as well as in processes of nation- and region-building conducted by the state.

A second line of research is related to investigations of contemporary uses of folklore, a field in which Richard Handler (1988) and García Canclini

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(1995 [1989]) have made important theoretical contributions. This interest in the contemporary uses of folk culture has also put a strong emphasis on the political aspects of the appropriation of folklore, stressing its contemporary uses by cultural activists and policy makers, and by nationalist, regionalist and-ethnic movements. This generalized recourse to the category of folk culture can be viewed as part of a more general trend in contemporary cultural and social life, which is characterized by a wide political appropriation of the anthropological concept of culture (Clifford 1988, 2000), of which the concept of folk culture is, as Handler (1988) has shown, a specialized extension.

These two lines of research on the political uses of folk culture have been present in several Lusophone contexts, especially in Portugal and Brazil. Thus, in Portugal, one of the major aspects of the recent development of a number of research efforts in the history of Portuguese anthropology has been a wide-spread attention to the entanglements of folklore (and ethnology) with nationalist and regionalist concerns (cf. Pina Cabral 1991, Branco and Leal 1995, Brito and Leal 1997, Leal 2000, Branco and Castelo-Branco 2003). In Brazil, Vilhena (1997) has also explored the relationship between the post-World War II folk-loristic movement and discourses on Brazilian national and regional identity. Contemporary political uses of folk culture have also been addressed in both countries. In Brazil, the research of Oliven (1996) on the *gaúcho* movement is one of the best-known examples of this trend. Within a larger Lusophone framework, Klimt and Lubkemann (2002), and Branco and Castelo-Branco (2003) have also recently edited volumes that, in part, address the politics surrounding deployments of folk culture.

The present volume further interrogates the political uses of folk culture by strategically juxtaposing cases from different corners of the Lusophone world. The at times startling contrasts as well as unexpected similarities between these historically particular debates help us identify and reflect on provocative questions regarding the politics of cultural self-representation and processes of identity formation. Given the variability in what was considered to constitute "folk culture" in each of the cases in this collection, key questions are how any particular cultural form is selected as representative of the "folk" and how the authenticity of that representativeness is validated. Another central issue that runs through the analyses is how the visibility of folkloric displays correlates to – and shapes – access to political power. In what kinds of political arenas does folk culture play and make a difference? Many of the articles also investigate the ways in which folk culture is turned into a commodity within local and translocal economies, and reflect on the impact of commodification on the nature of local, regional, national, and transnational identities. Finally, the question is raised as to how deployments of folk culture connect with other iconographies of collective self-representation. The variability of the cases brought together in this volume makes it possible to probe beneath taken-for-granted assumptions regarding the answers to these questions about connections between folkloric cultural forms, the dynamics of collective self-representation, economic interests, and relations of power.

Arguments from the Lusophone world

Folk culture, however it is defined, has long provided the symbolic repertoire through which claims of connection and continuity are made credible and emotionally potent (Bendix). The papers in this volume all explore how particular cultural forms representing a particular "folk" are deployed within historically specific struggles for visibility, power, and economic advantage. They all, in other words, query the complex relationship between "folk culture" and politics. All these cases also intersect, in one way or another, with arguments about "being Portuguese" and with histories of connection to Portugal. The Lusophone world, with its multiple intertwined relationships between diaspora, erst-while colonies, and Portugal itself, provides an ideal arena within which to explore the variable ways in which "folk culture" is used to assert collective identities, identities that often substantiate claims to resources and social position. The engagement in each of the cases with arguments about Portugueseness allows for productive inquiries into its highly variable nature.

The initial conference held in Lisbon in March 2004 that has led to this volume brought together anthropologists from Portugal and the United States.¹ All of us were investigating the politics of folk culture, but were working in different venues and in significantly different corners of the Lusophone world. Vasconcelos, Raposo and Medeiros focus on arguments around folk culture and identity within Portugal itself. Holton, Klimt and Sieber explore the dynamics of identity politics within recently formed diasporic communities in the United States and Germany. Leal and Sarkissian investigate concerns with "Portugueseness" in the temporally distant outposts of southern Brazil and Malaysia, where the Portuguese communities date back five generations and five hundred years respectively. Together, these analyses allow us, as Bendix points out in her final commentary, to

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reflect on how folk culture plays into specific local, regional, national and transnational negotiations over power and identity and to gain insight into the ways in which very different historical contexts shape how folk culture is configured and deployed.

In Portugal, dramatic transformations over the last three decades have introduced new dynamics into how folk culture has been used to assert regional and national as well as religious spheres of influence. Vasconcelos, for example, traces the story over the last half a century of a religious cult figure that began in the mid-1950s in the northwestern corner of Portugal. In heart of Alto Minho, an image of the Virgin Mary dressed in the regional dress of a lavradeira has become widely known as "Our Lady of the Minho" and serves as the focus of local religious rituals. Vasconcelos poses the fascinating question of how and why this image – one that merged religious symbols with what are now firmly entrenched symbols of regional folk culture - came to be a highly visible regional icon. His historical account demonstrates how the Roman Catholic Church both promoted and distanced itself from folk religion and how, in this instance, it was a local priest who decided to dress the Virgin in peasant clothes and a regional bishop who years later attributed the idea to the local peasants and helped facilitate its transformation into an aspect of "folk culture." He carefully lays out how the image, the shrine in which it is housed, and the associated religious pilgrimages played into various political arenas including intra-village jockeying for land and regional visibility, increasingly assertive displays of provincial distinctiveness, and shifting church politics and ecclesiastical agendas.

Taking on a more secular case, Raposo explores the revival and resemanticization of a winter mask performance called Caretos in the northeastern province of Trás-o-Montes. His analysis follows the complex process of transforming a particular set of cultural practices into a marketable "regional tradition." Raposo shows how anthropologists and folklorists until the 1960s played a major role in documenting what they considered to be an authentic, but disappearing local tradition and helped make it into "a specimen of rural cultural heritage" (Raposo, page 54 this volume). He relates how ethnographic descriptions and documentary films of the Caretos ritual encouraged local elites in the 1980s to revive, institutionalize, and eventually commercialize the tradition. This ritual, had, due to massive emigration and the dramatic shift away from agricultural ways of life in the last several decades, all but disappeared from local practice. We gain insight into the process by which a fading local tradition became inscribed with new meanings, incorporated new sets of actors, and moved into new venues. Audiences came to include tourists, scholars, and emigrants at cultural events well beyond the village as well as virtual visitors to the now well-established Caretos web site. This local cultural practice was recast over time into a wellpublicized and profitable commodity and codified into a widely accepted representation of a rural and regionally specific identity.

Medeiros takes questions about the relationship between folk culture and politics to Minho and across the border to Galicia in his comparative study of nation-building in Portugal and Spain. In Minho, the process of transforming rural dress into an entrenched and venerated tradition representative of the region as well as the nation as a whole has been underway for decades, and as Medeiros notes, was not significantly changed by the revolution and end of fascism. Across Portugal, the Minho peasant woman has become a ubiquitous and widely accepted iconic image and regional identities have not challenged the central state for symbolic primacy or political autonomy. Medeiros interrogates the striking contrast with the play of folk culture on the Spanish side of the border, where the relation between region and central state is quite different. The use of rural Galician cultural items as symbols of a distinctive regional identity and history has become a source of contention between Galicia's left-wing nationalist movement and the centrist regional government; folk culture has taken a prominent place within arguments about how to configure regional autonomy. In contrast to the process by which the codified folk culture of Minho has come to represent quintessential "Portugueseness" – or images from Andalusia have come to depict a generic "Spanishness" – enactments and representations of Galician traditions are strategically aimed at emphasizing difference and distance from the central state.

This variability in how folk culture plays into political argument and local arrangements of power is further illustrated in cases from recently established diasporic contexts. Holton investigates how folkloric performances figure prominently into the consolidation of a positive ethnic identity and audible political voice in the Portuguese community in Newark, New Jersey. She argues that participation in folk dance troupes – a very popular activity in Newark – helps keep subsequent generations close to Portuguese traditional values and elevates the status of Portuguese culture in local circles. Participation in Portuguese ranchos brings boys and girls and young men and women of Portuguese heritage together in supervised settings and, as Holton notes, "insures exposure to conservative values such as the respect for authority and the maintenance of traditional gender roles" (Holton, page 94 in this volume). The value attributed to these very public demonstrations of skill and knowledge also helps counter the negative stereotypes of the Portuguese as uncultured and uneducated immigrants who are only interested in conspicuous consumption. Given that New Jersey's - and Newark's - economic revitalization efforts are couched in discourses of multiculturalism, Holton points out that folkloric performances also give the Portuguese prominence and an increasingly audible voice within state-level politics.

In the case Klimt investigates in Hamburg, Germany, Portuguese folkloric performances also gained a very high level of visibility on the local scene. For the past ten years, the Ethnographic Museum, a very prestigious German space within the social landscape of the city, has hosted an elaborate and extremely well-attended celebration of Portuguese culture. The Arraial, as it came to be known, featured the performance of folkloric ranchos very similar to those described by Holton as well as demonstrations of codified rural traditions. This public display was couched in newly emergent concerns about the authenticity of cultural forms. Klimt, however, argues that the visibility of expressive culture does not always correspond to increased access to political power. Although these high-profile displays of Portuguese culture enhanced pride within the migrant community and countered some negative stereotypes, they also reinforced existing status hierarchies and, in this context where most Portuguese are not citizens and have no voting rights, cultural prominence did not translate into political voice or pressure to change the *status quo*.

Sieber's work with musical production within the Cape Verdean diaspora brings the complex dynamics of post-colonial relations and increasingly fluid global interconnections into our understandings of immigrant identity formation. The Cape Verdean musicians he works with who live in and around the Boston area assertively reject any histories of connection with Portugal and produce new musical forms that incorporate both traditional forms from the islands and contemporary innovations and music of other cultures encountered in the diaspora. His case challenges the widespread assumption that the cultural self-representation of immigrant populations always emphasizes tradition and an unbroken continuity with the past and the homeland. He points out that the question of how to be "Cape Verdean" is a matter of debate amongst first and subsequent generations and that the notion of "cultural authenticity" and allegiance to an ethnic identity can be constituted in very different ways. Folklore and the purported absence of change do not, in this case, encapsulate representations of Cape Verdeanness on local or transnational stages.

Examples from the temporally more distant diaspora further illuminate the complex relationship between expressive culture and historically particular relations of power and help us place the more familiar cases from the United States and Canada into a broader comparative framework. Sarkissian relates the fascinating story of the town of Malacca, a one-time Portuguese colonial outpost in Malaysia dating back to the 15th century. There, a community composed of people who are five centuries removed from any direct contact with Portugal and whose "blood" connections are tenable at best, actively promotes itself as "Portuguese." She shows how being "Portuguese" and performing "traditional Portuguese culture" has pro-

vided economic and political advantages in the postcolonial making of Malaysia. Sarkissian also points out that much of which, in this particular arena, is considered to constitute Portuguese folkloric dance and music, was in fact locally invented and imagined. Authority on the "authenticity" of cultural forms is vested in the recognized experts of the Malaccan community, not in the temporally and geographically very distant original "homeland" of Portugal.

Taking us to another temporally distant diasporic outpost in Santa Catarina, Brazil, where the original arrival of immigrants from the Azores goes back over five generations, Leal documents the revival of a cultural identity that had already largely been lost. In contrast to the Malaysian case, the process of identity formation initially drew on a discourse of continuity with the culture of the homeland and arguments about the "authenticity" of local forms relied on evidence newly imported from the Azores. Although this discourse on cultural continuity remains important, cultural activists have recently tended to develop a more autochthonous version of folk culture. The label "Azorean," which is now applied to several expressions of local folk culture, no longer depends on arguments about precise ethnic origin. Balanced between ethnogenealogical and autochthonous discourses, "being Azorean" has become an important asset within local struggles over political power.

Dialogues, debates, and future directions

Authenticity

The argument about what constitutes "authentic" folk culture plays out very differently in the various corners of the Lusophone world under consideration here. In some of the cases, the authority for deciding what constitutes the "culture of the folk" is vested in the homeland and the validity of identity claims in the diaspora rest on demonstrations of continued connection to and cultural similarity with the place of origin. The emphasis on unbroken links to time-honored traditions of the homeland as the underpinning of collective identity in the diaspora was the predominant discursive frame in the Portuguese communities of New Jersey (Holton) and Hamburg (Klimt). In both places, claims to "being Portuguese" were substantiated by cultural performances that were purportedly the same as rural traditions in Portugal. An interesting twist on this apparent similarity is that authenticity in Germany – in contrast to New Jersey – is a relatively new concern, one that has only emerged over the past decade with direct encouragement from folk culture "experts" in Portugal. During the initial decades in Germany, enactments

of "Portugueseness" consisted of generic and invented images of rural peasants and nobody engaged in comparisons with "real" folk culture in Portugal. Given that the New Jersey and German communities have very similar histories, it becomes apparent that situating the locus of authority as to what counts as "Portuguese" in Portugal and the prominence of criteria based on proven similarity with origins is not simply a matter of temporal proximity to the original exodus from the homeland.

The contrast with the Malaccan case is helpful for thinking through the puzzle of how the authenticity of folk culture is validated (Sarkissian). Although some influences and information from Portugal entered into the contemporary scene in Malaysia, local musicians and local memory were vested with the authority to declare cultural forms as "Portuguese" and arguments about whether folkloric dance and music in Malacca had similar counterparts in Portugal are largely irrelevant to assertions of "Portugueseness." Lyrics were often in Kristang, dance moves were often stylistically very Malaysian, and the cultural traditions of different continents were often mixed on stage. In contrast to more recently established communities in the United States or Germany, identity discourses in Malacca incorporated mythic accounts of continuity with the colonial settlers some five centuries earlier, but freely fused Portuguese and Malaysian forms and did not insist on persuasive images of unbroken or current connection with the original homeland.

The Brazilian case stands in between the tendency to locate authenticating authority in the original homeland and the emergence of locally-based experts and criteria (Leal). While the ethogenealogical discourse on "being Azorean" in Santa Catarina is very similar to the past-oriented discourse of authenticity among the Portuguese immigrants in Hamburg and New Jersey, the autochthonous thematicization of "Azorean" folk culture implies, as in the Malaccan case, an emphasis on the creativity and transformation of folk culture.

This emphasis on folk culture as a medium that is open to change and oriented towards the future is particularly striking in the Cape Verdean case (Sieber). Claims to being authentically "Cape Verdean" in the diaspora included – and in fact embraced – innovation and fusion. In contrast to discourses framed by strong assertions as to the absence of cultural change – even in the face of the passage of long periods of time and encounters with new and very different places and cultures – discussions of what did or did not count as "Cape Verdean" music and dance followed more ambiguous and open-ended criteria. Faithful replication of "old" musical forms found in the islands was not the essential or most persuasive point of the argument. In fact, the ethnicity of the musician, performance context, and language of the lyrics often counted as much, or more than evidence of continuity with Cape Verdean "traditions," a category which has in any case long been relatively

fluid. In contrast to second-generation immigrants asserting their Portugueseness by dancing in Newark's or Hamburg's folkloric *ranchos*, Cape Verdean youth in Boston dance in nightclubs and parties to contemporary music they consider "Cape Verdean."

Within Portugal itself, the arguments about authenticity have proceeded rather differently than in the outposts of the diaspora. The challenge is to fashion a repertoire of cultural forms that persuasively evoke an enduring and all-encompassing Portugueseness out of ordinary, changing, and often regionally specific ways of life. The solution, actively orchestrated by the state, has been to codify and elevate 19th century rural costumes, dances, rituals as representative of the Portuguese nation (Raposo, Medeiros). The "authenticity" of folk culture rests primarily on evidence of continuity with "old" traditions and change and new influences are excluded from the picture. Sometimes that connection with designated historic periods draws on the work of ethnographers and local historians. Other times, as was the case with Our Lady of the Minho (Vasconcelos), a relatively vague mythic past validated by local talk and the Church authorities was persuasive enough. In any case, geographic distance from the cultural source and encounters with the dominance of other cultures are not, as is the case in diasporic contexts, dilemmas in need of resolution.

The intriguing question is what accounts for these different trajectories in arguments about the authenticity of folk culture. Whether it is based on images of geographically rooted continuity or encompasses possibilities for change and outside influence; whether it validates identity claims locally or privileges experts in the Portuguese homeland; whether it draws on the language of evidence and proof or vaguer mythical origin stories, the discursive frame of "folk culture" is obviously shaped by multiple factors.

One of the important dynamics that account, at least in part, for the striking contrast between discursive frames in various corners of the Lusophone world is the histories of nation-making and minority-majority relations. Ethnicity has only recently entered into the political jockeying for power in Brazil whereas official ethnic designations have long been part of the Malaysian political scene. Movements for regional autonomy and arguments supporting regional distinctiveness have, in contrast to Spain and many other countries, been relatively muted in continental Portugal, where folk culture has generally been deployed to represent the Portuguese nation as a whole. In the process of expanding beyond its small corner of Europe, the Portuguese state exerted a great deal of effort to bring the erst-while Azoreans of Brazil as well as the more recent migrants in the United States and Germany into the transnational fold, whereas relatively little state attention has been paid to the small group of descendents of Portuguese colonists

in Malaysia (Feldman-Bianco 2001). And in contrast to emigrants from the Azores or Madeira, Cape Verdean migrants have not been legally considered "Portuguese" for over a quarter of a century and post-colonial nation-making has largely turned on the active rejection of the cultural identities and influences of the one-time colonizers. The codification of "Cape Verdean" folk culture thus involves actively cutting out references to Portuguese traditions.

A provocative point that Bendix raises in her reflections on this collection is how persuasive are renditions of "folk culture." That is, do enactors and consumers of folk culture think it has anything to do with the essence of the "folk?" This, as she notes, raises the question as to who constitutes the social base of any particular form of collective self-representation – a question, she observes, that calls for more systematic attention. Bendix also suggests that we pay more attention to the sensory impact of folk culture – that is, to how folkloric performances or displays make people feel and how those feelings persuasively connect to arguments about identity. In thinking through questions about authenticity, we need to further explore the kind of distance that is perceived between enacting the "real thing" and actually feeling like the "real thing."

Political power

An obvious question raised by the reflections in this volume on the politics of folk culture is whether its deployment in public arenas contributes to the empowerment of the "folk" – whoever the "folk" happen to be. Differences in the organization of political representation and the legal position of new arrivals within the national body appear to be pivotal factors. In the case of the Portuguese-American community in New Jersey, the visibility of Portuguese folk culture played directly into local and state politics (Holton). Dancing at venues such as the governor's mansion and contributing a high-profile presence to the cultural renaissance of the region supported the establishment of this ethnic community's political voice. In Germany, on the other hand, displays of Portuguese folk culture within prominent German forums did not translate into greater access to political power (Klimt). In contrast to a political system that has long courted ethnic votes and actively incorporated immigrants into the citizenry, Germany's Portuguese residents largely remain outside its formal political system.

In diasporic contexts, where "the Portuguese" are all citizens and long established residents, folk culture has clearly been used to consolidate group identity and garner influence and power in local arguments. The Malaccan community has mobilized as "Portuguese" in its efforts to resist development projects that threaten their way of life as fishermen – and dancing "Portu-

guese" dances and playing "Portuguese" music lends credence to their claims (Sarkissian). In southern Brazil, ethnicity has emerged as a central discourse in local jockeying for power and being "Azorean" is substantiated by focused attention within popular as well as academic circles on the "Azoreanness" of local folk culture (Leal).

Within Portugal, folk culture has been strategically used to consolidate national identity and, ironically enough, elite power in various arenas. The revival of a mask tradition in Trás-os-Montes was organized by regional elites who stood to benefit from its eventual high profile commercialization (Raposo). The Catholic Church linked ecclesiastical practices to regional cultural forms in its efforts to establish influence over local religious practice (Vasconcelos). And the codification cultivated under Salazar of a "Portuguese" culture as a rural unchanging folk culture was aimed at enforcing conservative values and maintaining the *status quo* (Medeiros). By looking across the border to Spain, we also see how folk culture is mobilized by political elites on the right as well as the left in arguments about political autonom.

In developing a comparative analysis of the connection between the visibility of folk culture and access to political power, we need, as Bendix urges us, to be more systematic. She clearly lays out the wide range of arenas in which folk culture has been strategically deployed in the support of political agendas (Bendix). Just in the cases in this collection, political "actors" include everyone from an ambitious member of the village elite (Raposo) or local priest (Vasconcelos) to regional and state governments (Medeiros). And the agendas have ranged from very local arguments to national and transnational debates. So, if we are to develop a deeper understanding of how folk culture plays within political maneuverings, we need to more systematically examine who is doing the acting and for what end.

Commodification

The selling of folk culture makes for profitable business and the commodification of artifacts, rituals, and ways of life is a ubiquitous and far-reaching process (Bendix). Many of the articles in this collection make the point that commercial incentives contribute to the maintenance or revival of folkloric forms of culture. It is clear that the codification and commodification of winter mask performances in Trás-os-Montes for audiences and consumers well beyond the local village contributes to the establishment of a regionally specific identity (Raposo). Cape Verdean music is in part such a key element of Cape Verdean identity throughout the diaspora because it is produced and widely circulated by the global music industry (Sieber). Folkloric versions of Portuguese dance and music contribute to ethnic pride in Newark, but are

also part of the state's vision for the economic redevelopment of the region (Holton). And being publicly Portuguese in the folkloric events across Malaysia means extra income for individual performers and profitable enticements for the local tourist industry (Sarkissian). As Bendix points out in her reflections on this collection, it is crucial to follow the money trail as economic interests clearly play into the politics of folk culture.

Other iconographies

Regardless of historical or geographic context, all of the identity narratives that draw on representations of folk culture coexist – in harmony or in conflict - with other modes and practices of cultural self-representation. A central question is thus how the symbolic repertoire of "folk tradition" articulates with other competing sets of images (Klimt 2000). In this volume, we see how rural traditions combine with religious images (Vasconcelos) and how modern and traditional rhythms are intertwined in the production of Cape Verdean music (Sieber). However, the rest of the analyses focus almost exclusively on articulations of forms known as "folk culture." That is, of course, the thematic focus of the volume, the purpose of which is to move us towards a vigorous interrogation of how folk culture is constructed and deployed. "Tradition" and folkloric versions of culture are, after all, a ubiquitous and extremely powerful element of many identity discourses, be they local, regional, national, or transnational. It is important, however, to also remember the other identity narratives operative within lusophone contexts, such as the history of the 15th century explorations and colonial expansion; the story of endemic and ubiquitous emigration; or the more forward-looking accounts of Portugal's modernity and emergent Europeanness. Intense controversy surrounds each of these narrative themes and competing stories exist in tension with each other (Brettell 2003, Sieber 2001). Perhaps the next conference can explore how folk culture articulates with other versions of "being Portuguese."

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