

# EMERGENT ICONOGRAPHIES: REGIONAL IDENTITY AND RURAL ICONS IN NORTHWESTERN IBERIA

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The article is focused on the history of the parallel production of iconic representations of nationality in Portugal and Galicia, and explores the ways in which the contemporary political process has conferred different destinies to the use of such images, according to the different political and administrative frameworks institutionalized in Spain and Portugal.

In recent years, the city of Santiago de Compostela, the government seat of the *Comunidade Autónoma de Galicia* since 1982, has been the center of the large vibrant public demonstrations of the Galician ethno-nationalist movement. In the forefront of the celebrations marking *25 de Xullo* (25<sup>th</sup> of July), as “Galician Fatherland Day” is informally called in militant Galician circles, stands the *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* (BNG), a coalition of small left and extreme left wing parties and associations.<sup>1</sup> The events of the day are infused with political argument as to the appropriate form and legitimacy of Galician nationhood and regional autonomy.

At all the *25 de Xullo* celebrations I attended between 1997 and 2000, I noticed a woman dressed in the most iconic of Portugal’s regional costumes: the “traditional dress of the Minho woman” (cf. Basto 1930). Her bright red presence was always highly conspicuous at one of the stages of the nationalist celebrations. The fact that her presence – so normal in Minho – was strikingly out-of-place in the Galician context points to key differences between the politics of identity and nation-building in Portugal and Spain. In this paper I explore this contrast by reflecting on representations of regional and national identities in the neighboring areas of Minho (Northwest Portugal) and Galicia (Northwest Spain) where I carried out fieldwork in recent years.

Claudio Lomnitz-Adler has noted the widespread “analytical incompetence” of social scientists in documenting and understanding national cultures (cf. Lomnitz-Adler 1992). This incompetence involves the analysis of

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<sup>1</sup> On the 25<sup>th</sup> of July, Compostela actually hosts a wide variety of commemorations, in addition to the militant nationalist celebrations marking Galician Fatherland Day. Some are religious in character, and very ancient, such as James the Apostle’s day. Others, also centuries old, have a state significance – since the 17<sup>th</sup> century the commemorations of the *Patrón de España* (Patron Saint of Spain) have been a very solemn state occasion with the necessary military and religious ceremonies. On the other hand, in 1978 an element celebrating self-government was made official, after being legalized by the Spanish constitution in the same year: this is also the *Galician National Day*. The city reflects the tensions occasioned by the overlapping of so many commemorative acts in the restricted conditions of the historic center. In this paper, however, I direct my attention, above all, at the nationalist Fatherland Day celebrations.

both national and regional cultures, since, as Richard Handler has argued, the region can be viewed as a “nation writ small” (Handler 1988, cf. also Williams 1988 and Bourdieu 1989). In both cases, we are facing products that have the same matrix: “modern” and “erudite” cultures (Gellner 1983), whose enunciation involves the manipulation of items in a “do-it-yourself kit” (using Löfgren’s proverbial expression) which was already in cosmopolitan circulation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Löfgren 1989, Thiesse 2000, Wilson 1976).

In contrast to the often less than successful efforts of scientists, Lomnitz-Adler notes the curious prominence and public success of what he calls interpretative essays. These essays, often focused on the interrogation of *national character*, “are made to be consumed in a particular conjuncture. After they are consumed, they merely sink into the past and sit on the sediment of reusable stereotypes” (1992: 13). I would like to note the suggestive use of the word “reusable,” although Lomnitz-Adler fails to explore the mechanics and reasons connected with repeated use. In contrast to this hasty dismissal of stereotypes, Herzfeld argues that stereotypes are one of the most promising subjects of research on ethnic “character” and nationalism (Herzfeld 1992: 67). Lomnitz-Adler also pays little attention to the intriguing importance that interpretative essays have in efforts to define the national *being*, a central theme not only in the Mexican examples he alludes to, but also in other quite diverse contexts. (For Iberia, in particular, there are several examples, both historical and contemporary, of essays aimed at defining the “identity” or “national being” of Spain, Portugal or Galicia.) Handler’s powerful theoretical argument about the processes of individualization used by nationalist rhetoric suggests a more productive line of enquiry (cf. Handler 1988). Even such apparently trivial events such as a folk dance performance – or the image of a single individual dressed up in traditional costume – can, he argues, provide an entrée into understanding the processes of identification with images or practices that objectify national or regional cultures.

Drawing on the two cases from either side of the border, I examine the use of traditional costumes as icons and analyze their rhetorical importance within nationalist discourse. Traditional costumes have a long history of being appropriated by efforts to symbolize the individuality of nations and are often used to represent the national “being” (see Handler 1988). Traditional costumes can be seen as particularly conspicuous signs, icons or symbols (Eco 1980) in the international circulation of national images, only matched by the flag or by the image, captured on a map, of the territory – or “body” (Assayag 1997) – of the nation-state (cf. Anderson 1991, Löfgren 1989, see also Herzfeld 1997).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, traditional costumes – like maps and flags, among the different examples – have also been particularly significant resources for what, still in 1953, Eric Wolf called “internal acculturation” or more simply “mak-

Herzfeld's focus on the controversial nature of the politics around the production of similarity that recur in nationalist rhetoric helps frame my analysis of the political uses that traditional costumes and folklore performances continue to have in Portugal and Galicia. Hannerz' four major frameworks – "life, market, state, and movement" – which, as he says, "should take us at least a long way toward a comprehensive accounting of present-day culture flow" (1992: 47) also provide an important structure for my argument. These overlapping and reciprocal frames for the "circulation of culture flow" are ancient and very effective and evident in the processes of constructing national cultures from the 19<sup>th</sup> century on, particularly in Portugal and Galicia.

### States, provinces and nations

Through my fieldwork in Minho and Galicia, I have learned that most people in both regions only refer to stereotyped differences between Spain and Portugal when they are asked about the neighboring region and its inhabitants. I think that these answers tell a great deal about how effectively the Spanish and Portuguese states worked to diffuse national cultures inside their territories and to produce new ethnic identities.

When considering the Iberian political experience over the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we should remember how long autocratic regimes lasted in each state. The dictatorship lasted from 1926 to 1974 in Portugal, while in Spain it endured from 1939 to 1976. During these periods, a common public culture was produced in each state with unprecedented effectiveness. Increased resources and new technologies were invested in propaganda that was infused with totalitarianism. This state of affairs was clearly evident in the 1930s – in the Portuguese case – and in the 1940s – in both Spain and Portugal.

In those decisive decades, a conspicuous iconicity emerged in modernist fashion using rural motifs that had been gradually established since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Knowledge of these images was then spread among the masses by the most diverse means. As will become apparent in the following analysis, contemporary acceptance of these dated representations is generally unproblematic in Portugal, where their circulation continues to expand, while in Galicia, even today, they provide the grounds for bitter disputes.

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ing a nation." Most interestingly, even at that time Wolf noted the scant preparation and the hesitations with which anthropologists faced a similar and, to a great extent, new task, considerations that we see echoed by Lomnitz-Adler three decades later (cf. Wolf 2001).

Minho and Galicia share an impressive array of similarities in terms of climate, geography, culture, linguistic traditions, etc. These similarities have not, however, resulted in similar ways of imagining community (Anderson 1991). The trajectories of conceptualizing and representing the region and the nation in each of these state contexts operated in parallel over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and different sets of objectified motifs (Handler 1988) have emerged to serve as contemporary forms of representation.

In both Spain and Portugal, the production of icons of rural origin have engaged the best efforts of ethnographers as well as literary figures, photographers and diverse kinds of image-makers. The symbolic use of folklore in projects of nationalization in both countries – a movement that became particularly intense between 1880 and 1940 – should be understood as a parallel and mutually alien process. The similarities between the two projects mainly derive from their both being appropriations of procedures that have proved effective in the nationalization of cultures in other European contexts (Löfgren 1989, Thiesse 2000).

Various nationalisms besides the one developed by the central state have developed within Spain since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In Galicia, for example, the nationalist claims are long-standing, although until recently, they have enjoyed only limited popularity. In contrast, the nationalist movements in the Basque Country and Catalonia, have long played decisive roles. Under Spain's democratic Constitution of 1978, Galicia is, along with the Basque Country and Catalonia, recognized as one of the three "historic nationalities" of the "State of Autonomies" (*Estado de las Autonomías*). However, the burden of "proving the originality of their culture" is the responsibility of each of the eighteen institutions of autonomous government (see Fernandez, in Medeiros 1997). In several cases, that task is a new one and, therefore, makes very specific demands. Things are different in the "historic nationalities," where historical, sociological and linguistic particularities have been thematized since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (cf. Álvarez Junco 2001).

The historical and political situation in the Portuguese provinces, the largest territorial divisions commonly recognized in Portugal, is quite different. The pluralism evident in Spain is largely absent in Portugal where the state and the nation have to a very great extent been co-extensive (cf. Sobral 1999). To the present day, Portuguese provinces have not been granted devolved powers of self-government nor any notable political status.<sup>3</sup> The emergence of regional claims of any significance has thus been very limited. In fact, it was only at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the provinces began to

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<sup>3</sup> With the recent exception of the Atlantic archipelagos, termed the "Autonomous Regions" of Madeira and the Azores since 1977. However, their powers of self-government are more restricted than those which Spain has granted to the "historic nationalities" since 1978.

be thought of as focal points for discussion of national identity, a process that stimulated research on their alleged geographic and cultural particularities. As I have already suggested, it has only been since the 1930s that these regional classifications have actually become common knowledge. This identification of the cultural distinctiveness of each province has entailed the ascribed enumeration of traits from the outside. This ascription is part of the process of the nationalization of Portuguese culture that began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (cf. Ramos 1994, França 1993). Paraphrasing Marx (1984), we can say that in Portugal, knowledge of the provinces “in themselves” always remained scant or superficial and that the provinces were never “for themselves,” i.e., they did not produce regionalist claims or, using terms proposed by Bourdieu (1989), performative claims of social identity.

Taking Handler’s theory on regionalist and nationalist metaphors as a reference (1988), we can say that in the descriptions of Minho – and of the other Portuguese provinces in general – all attributes of individualization which seek to identify their whole “being” are decidedly missing. In Portugal, as a rule, these metaphors are only assigned to the “Portuguese nation” as a whole. To quote some of the most commonly used metaphors that draw on anthropomorphic or tree images (cf. Handler 1988), Minho is alluded to in a fragmented manner: as the roots, trunk or heart of the Portuguese nation.

It can thus be said, both in the case of Minho and of the other Portuguese provinces, that there are no performative social identity claims that correspond to those the predecessors of the Galician nationalist discourse already used to speak of Galicia at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Spain was characterized by the early development of a political and cultural movement connected to regionalist claims, which, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, had produced a distinctly nationalist discourse (cf. Beramendi and Nuñez Seixas 1995). In contrast, Portugal had no history of regionalist or nationalist claims at this sub-state level. The popularization of stylized representations of provincial diversity, stimulated by the authoritarian regime from the 1930s onwards, completed a process of national-level incorporation that had begun peacefully at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The 1974 democratic revolution had no decisive impact on the representations of the Portuguese provinces that had been “naturalized” in the preceding decades under *Estado Novo*. The most emblematic forms of the regions’ folkloric representation – songs, dances and the “regional” dress worn on festive occasions – remained intact and, even in the years immediately following the revolution, the criticism or contempt for the supposed artifice of *Estado Novo* “folklorisms” had relatively little impact.

In Galicia the experience is, as I suggest below, rather different. In this case the use of rural emblems that was established throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century is currently linked to ambiguities that are highly significant, involving

surprising and particularly tense disputes over the legitimacy of the ways in which Galician national identity is represented.

### **In the Minho style**

In the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, images of rural Minho have become particularly prominent in middle-class representations of the nation. Indeed, some of the most conspicuous, pioneering emblems of rural Portugal were constructed using Minho – which in a certain way came to be thought of as the national landscape *par excellence* (cf. Medeiros 2002, also Löfgren 1989) – as the source of inspiration. Rural Minho was used, for instance, as the background for some of the most well-known 19<sup>th</sup> century Portuguese novels; its landscape inspired painters and photographers; and its history provided the pretext for speculations about the birth of the Portuguese nation. Furthermore, a trip to Minho or a summer holiday in the province came to be thought of among the more affluent classes as the epitome of contact with an exotic reality tinged with quaint associations, an experience that allowed for an encounter of the most ancient national traditions. Thus, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a specific “descriptive tradition” (cf. Said 1990) of the province was established, one that pioneered the process of “nationalization” of Portuguese middle-class culture.

Since the 1890s, the rural dress considered to be “in the style of the Minho woman” was adopted as the “national costume.” The precise model of this folk costume was established through its use by aristocratic and upper middle-class women in Lisbon. These ethno-mimetic practices (Cantwell 1993), initially highly elitist, were gradually imitated by the middle and lower middle classes during the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

With the aid of extensive photographic documentation and published reports of celebrations and other social events, we can understand how these uses of the Minho costume as a national dress became popular in the capital after the First World War. In the 1920s, the daughters of barbers, workmen and shopkeepers in Lisbon had already begun to dress “in the Minho style” when they had their formal photographs taken. In other Portuguese cities, the practice was less widespread, and only adopted by the more prosperous local groups such as property-owners, liberal professionals and the upper ranks of public service employees.

At the end of the 1920s, the “Minho style” costume lost some of its pre-eminence, as representations of other provinces began to be established and other regional folk costumes, in particular, began to be codified. This was one of the results of the meticulous work of ethnographers, whose efforts to classify and provide images of the internal diversity of the country were greatly

intensified during this period (cf. Medeiros 1998, Leal 2000). Thanks to printing techniques that were becoming widely accessible, exact reproductions of these images could be widely disseminated through monographs, newspapers and magazines. In this way, new authorized reference points for the identity of the Portuguese provinces could emerge.

With greater or lesser enthusiasm, those references were gradually incorporated into middle-class habits of consumption in different provincial cities. Along with the establishment of regional costumes, architectural motifs and typical landscapes, various new “regional” craft industries also appeared. As a rule, these motifs were rigidly codified according to the division of the national territory into provinces, which was gradually becoming clearer on the maps. But even today, the Minho-style costume has retained important allegorical uses as a symbol of the Portuguese nation as a whole, a fact that has recently been illustrated in the official advertising for important events such as the Expo 98 or the 2004 European Cup.

In recent years, for the Portuguese, traditional dress and folklore displays have seemed quite a natural way of showing collective identities. Although to a certain extent traditional costumes have lost the recognition that they had enjoyed during *Estado Novo*, they have been maintained and have even spread in the decades since the 1970s. We can thus follow an interesting course connecting the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when Minho-style dress was first worn or used by the elite of Portuguese society, to its present appropriation by a large number of small rural communities in Minho. In this province, in particular, these appropriations form “ways of life,” to use a concept proposed by Hannerz (1992). This movement is still developing, assuming its most characteristic form in the way in which the now-educated strata in Minho rural areas have committed themselves to local politics of identity. In this process, the iconic image of the “Minho woman” appears everywhere as a segmentary identity device repeated at all administrative levels by representatives of all political tendencies.

### **One facet of Galicia’s “being”**

In the case of Spain, there has been no evident appropriation by the central state of rural images from Galicia. This destiny has mainly been reserved for the images of Andalusia, the region that has been more extensively used to represent Spain and the Spaniards in the market of images that represent nation-states at a worldwide level (cf. Fernandez 1988). On the other hand, from an early date, some rural icons produced in Galicia have been inserted into what Hannerz calls “frameworks of the circulation of culture flow” that

overlap and influence each other. In the Galician case, the local nationalist movement played a prominent role in this process.

One of the significant proposals for representing the nation and people of Galicia was produced by Manuel Murguía (1833-1923), a late-romantic Galician historian and author of the pioneering and clearest definitions of Galician nationhood. In 1888, he published a sumptuous, well-illustrated book entitled *Galicia*, whose pictures – two engravings representing women dressed in traditional costume – helped establish the important icons of the rural Galician population. The volume was published in Barcelona as part of a collection interestingly called *España: Sus Monumentos y Artes, su Naturaleza y Historia* (Spain: Its Monuments and Arts, its Nature and History). The author of the preface to a recent re-issue of *Galicia* notes that,

It is not very usual in a book for general circulation that nothing less than 220 pages are devoted to prehistory, mythology and folklore or that [...] Murguía's best contributions to the study of Galician history appear in the chapters focused on the main cities, implicitly linked to his concept of the country's existence and right to exist. This suffices to show us that we are dealing with an uncommon text (J. Beramendi in Murguía 1998: I-II).

In offering knowledge of Spanish “art,” “landscape” and “monuments,” this project aimed to provide “nationalizing” reference points for the affluent classes in the whole country. This initiative emulated others throughout Europe, including significant examples in Portugal. It also demonstrated the vitality that print capitalism (Anderson 1991) was experiencing at the time as a vehicle for “nationalizing” the upper and middle classes in Spain.

The objective of providing an overarching – and extremely well illustrated – view of the Spanish nation justified the publication of *España: Sus Monumentos y Artes, su Naturaleza y Historia*. However, the project was developed on a modular basis (cf. Anderson 1991) and was composed of monographic surveys of the most clearly discernible parts of the Spanish territory. In *Galicia*, Murguía confirmed the possibility of recognizing not only a “landscape,” an “art” or “monuments” defined as Galician, but also of recognizing a Galician pre-history, history, and folklore.

This work is a good example of the conflicts Raymond Williams (1988) mentioned when he commented on the different uses of the words “province” and “region.” The objective of the book was to define Galicia as a province, or, to use Williams' terms, a “definitive part” of a more global whole. However, Murguía's contribution also articulated a clear assessment of differences, based on the arguments of the region's particular history, folklore and archaeology. It can thus be viewed as a definitive registration of the claim that Galicia constituted a culturally and historically bounded regional entity. Finally, implicit in Murguía's work was the performative claim (Bourdieu



1989) that asserted “his concept of the country’s existence and right to exist.” Taking Handler’s notion that a region is “a nation writ small” (1988: 117), we can easily see that Murguía’s *Galicia* systematically articulated some of the most powerful metaphors of nationalism’s “do-it-yourself-kit” (Löfgren 1989). We can also say that, with the publication of *Galicia*, the existence of the “national entity” or “being” of Galicia began to be articulated, leaving open the disputes about its “history,” “character,” “culture” (cf. Handler 1988).

### A picnic in the woods and an apparition

Let us return now to the *25 de Xullo* celebrations that I mentioned at the beginning of this article. The commemorations for “Galician Fatherland Day,” the high point of the annual cycle of events organized by the Galician nationalist movement, are centered in Santiago. As has already been mentioned, the movement is comprised of several left wing and extreme left wing parties and organizations, most of which are grouped into a coalition called the *Galician Nationalist Block* (BNG). This is significantly different from the situation in the other “historic nationalities” of Catalonia and the Basque Country, where the large nationalist parties – which are in power – are associated with the center right and, above all, are accepted on the political stage as large “national parties.”<sup>4</sup>

The establishment after the 1978 Spanish Constitution of a more general autonomous political framework forced the “nationalization” – or “Galicianization” – of all the most important “national” parties in Galicia. The terms of this Galicianization are, however, ambiguous and constantly denounced as insincere by left wing parties that maintain more explicit positions on regional autonomy. It is important to note that the executive power in Galicia has been under the control of a center-right and non-nationalist party – the PPdeG (“Galicia People’s Party”) – whose legitimacy as a genuine Galician government is systematically denied by the left wing nationalists in the BNG.

The events organized on the “Galician Fatherland Day” not only commemorate nationhood but also advance political demands. They follow a complex sequence and over the years I have been impressed by the stability of their forms and the reiterative “semi-ritual” nature (Connerton 1989) of the

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<sup>4</sup> The present, practically absolute ascendancy of the left wing in the Galician nationalist movement is recent. Generally speaking, it dates from the 1960s. At this time, the end had already arrived for the project of a “national party,” embodied at the beginning of the thirties by the Galicist Party, with its well-known weaknesses and leaders or ideologists that were prominent, very conservative Catholics. Maryon McDonald (1989) and Sharon MacDonald (1997) report comparable cases in Bretagne and Scotland. In fact, there are various examples of this transition, explained by the Marxist appropriation of nationalist claims throughout the world (cf. Nairn 1997).

various stages. The parade always takes the same route, starting in *Alameda*, the meeting place until 1971 of peasants coming from the villages for the weekly livestock fair. Dressed faithfully in the traditional white with red waistbands, bagpipers take the lead while nationalist leaders and foreign guests follow ahead of the crowds. The parade winds its way around part of the old city, passing through a gate in the old walls and finally arrives at the *Praza da Quintana*, close to the city's famous cathedral, where a large rally is held. As a rule, the prophetic expectations promising the salvation of the Galician Fatherland along with other simpler political objectives are re-asserted every year.

At this point I should like to describe a large picnic that marks the closing of the nationalist celebrations. It is also organized by the BNG and takes place in a large oak grove near the city, the *Carballeira de San Lorenzo*. At the BNG picnic we can recognize the almost exemplary composition of the ethnomimetic proposals supported by the contemporary Galician movement (Cantwell 1993). These elements constitute a particular way of appropriating Galician tradition: elements that underscore the presumed eternity of what is popular and anonymous and that can thus be situated outside the contingencies of history.

Most of the people I know at the picnic live or work in Galician cities and are senior technical staff, actors, trade-unionists, university staff or professionals. They are mostly still young and join the festivities with a notable vivacity. Allowing for a touch of irony – and this was my first impression when I first attended the picnic in 1997 – visitors might think they have come to country festivities with a vaguely Celtic atmosphere recreated for a Hollywood film (cf. Chapman 1978, McDonald 1989 and Dietler 1994; on the importance of Celtism in Galician nationalist discourse, cf. Medeiros 2004). One sees white cotton or even linen shirts; many of the youngest women wear their hair loose; revelers wear rustic straw hats – all images that help create an atmosphere of a timeless country celebration, only disturbed by the book, CD and propaganda stalls. Traditional music is played on the instruments characteristic of the region to the accompaniment of songs in Galician. The frequent earthy and sexual allusions increase the delight of the crowds gathered around the musicians. In the loud commentaries between groups of acquaintances, in particular between men and women, obscene expressions can be heard. These are curious examples of the *mimesis* of loose talk among peasants and workmen, which would be censured in the daily lives of most of those who are present. In short, the scene in the *Carballeira de San Lourenzo* constitutes the mimetization of a timeless rustic *communitas*.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this article, a person who attends the BNG picnic every year is a Portuguese woman dressed in “Minho style.” She is accompanied by a band whose members also wear stereotypical ver-

sions of traditional costumes. At this picnic, there were no analogous representations of Galicia that draw on traditional rural culture. The woman is an architect with a certain fame in northwestern Minho for being the only woman linked to the Communist Party to lead a local council. This is a doubly unheard-of state of affairs in an area where the influence of the Catholic Church predominates and the influence of the Communist party is negligible. As it happens, she is the sister of one of my most important informants in the field. Among this informant's circle of relationships, I had begun to observe the untroubled relationship that the children of peasants with the most schooling and left wing party connections had with conventional representations of rural traditions, conventions that were deliberately fixed by Salazar's autocratic regime in the years 1930-40 (cf. Melo 2001).

In contrast to the undisputed use of rural traditions in Portugal to represent nation and region, within the left wing Galician nationalist movement traditional costumes are usually looked down upon as indicative of *regionalismo bien entendido* or "well-understood regionalism" – an ironic cliché Galician nationalists use to express their disdain for the positions of more moderate regionalism or the perceived hypocrisy of centralist politicians who make claims to regionalist tolerance. Under Franco's autocratic regime, the phrase was actually used as a kind of threat, setting limits on the public expression of regional particularities.

### **Eight thousand bagpipers and thousands of dancers**

One of the most prominent occasions for the left wing nationalists' expressions of disdain for "well-understood regionalism" is at large gatherings of bagpipers which have been quite regularly promoted by the regional right-wing government over the last fifteen years. The largest of these gatherings took place on a winter morning in 1998, when I was living in Santiago. To celebrate the recent re-election of its president, the autonomous government of Galicia assembled thousands of bagpipers in full traditional costume before the cathedral. This amazing gathering was reported by the foreign press and television. It was even said that it would be included in the *Guinness Book of Records* as the world's largest ever gathering of bagpipers.

Many were the sarcastic tales, on the one hand, and enthusiastic official newspaper reports, on the other, that circulated in Santiago in the days before and after the event. I encountered forthright disdain but also embarrassed apologies, reactions that varied in accordance with the political opinions of the individual informant. To this day, there are wildly differing calculations of the real size of that famous gathering. The organizers have maintained their triumphant attitude, insisting that all their greatest expectations

were exceeded and that there were almost eight thousand pipers in the square, significantly more than the five thousand originally anticipated. On the other hand, a friend with links to the nationalist movement, who was embarrassed at having to give importance to something he considered a discredit to the image of Galicia, adamantly assured me that there were hardly more than three thousand participants. This reaction was common among a number of informants with the same political leanings as my friend. The nationalist left seeks to distance itself from the regional government's political use of popular tradition, but its tendency to criticize is restricted by the fact that it is dealing with symbolic resources endorsed by the Galeguist movement's long history.

Thus, in 1995, a periodical connected with the nationalist movement published an issue entitled, *In the Land of the Bagpipes*.<sup>5</sup> At that time, two mass meetings of bagpipers had been organized by the autonomous government to commemorate recent electoral victories, albeit on a more limited scale. In the introduction to *In the Land of the Bagpipes*, the publisher criticized any misappropriation of this instrument for purposes of political legitimization, although he also suggested that it was closely related to the history of *Galeguismo* and associated periods of political and cultural renaissance in Galicia with the flowering of the bagpiper's art.

In fact, in Galicia today there are tens of thousands of aspiring bagpipers, both girls and boys, in associations and schools throughout the *Comunidade*. Most of them benefit from local government funding. Even within left wing nationalist circuits there are workshops where this emblematic instrument is built and instruction is provided. If we accept the editor's of *In the Land of Bagpipes* suggestion, then we have to recognize that today Galician national culture is blooming.

In 1935, Alexander Bóveda – one of the most famous victims of the Franco revolt a year later and contemporarily the most emblematic martyr of the Galician nationalist movement – wrote an appealing “Message to the Youth,” sub-titled “We must create our National Dance.” In it he said:

Just as we already have an anthem, a flag, songs [...] we shall also soon have our national dance. Does one exist? Yes. Our *redonda*, which can be danced to a time and rhythm, with the same step, by hundreds or thousands of people... One day, for our great festival, thousands of young people from the four corners of the Galicia will flock to Compostela to acclaim our dance (*A Nosa Terra*, 396, 1935).

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<sup>5</sup> *Cadernos A Nosa Terra*, 20; a possible supplement of a historic Galician nationalist title.

Nowadays in Compostela and throughout Galicia, mass meetings of dancers performing traditional dances take place regularly, not to mention the overwhelming surge in bagpipe bands in recent years.

The similarity of concerns between the BNG picnic and the bagpipers events, examples that are out of sync with one another in terms of the ideological positions of their supporters, is quite striking. Today, an array of methods for producing and spreading a modern, nationalized mass culture – based on an objectified version of what is thought to be Galician and to belong to its people – is available for the different political sectors in Galicia. The management of this collective memory is, however, very often fiercely contested. Ethnographic images are nowadays regularly manipulated by the government of the Galician Autonomous Community, which is controlled by the People’s Party of Galicia. In fact, their creation and the initial uses of traditional culture were accepted enthusiastically by Galician nationalists at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, the Galician nationalist press in the decades before the Spanish Civil War encouraged and praised the organization of choirs, the creation of folklore groups, the staging of ethnographic shows, and other similar activities.

Today, the memory of historical Galicianism, of its pre-eminent figures and of their cultural production are highly contested resources in Galicia. In left wing nationalist circles, appropriation by the institutions of the autonomous government of these images is seen as illegitimate and shameless plundering. On the other hand, it can also be understood as a strategic and prestigious way of producing a national culture, which is one of the duties laid upon the autonomous government by the Statute of Autonomy.

## Conclusion

In 1920, Antonio Gramsci penned some fascinating considerations on the range of “Arcadian conventions” and their stylization in the creation of a national-popular culture (Gramsci 1985: 188 et seqq). Adopting his terms, we can say, for example, that there are merely “conventional” differences between the young female bagpipers or tambourine players that we meet at the picnics of the Galician nationalist far-left and those recruited by the *Xunta* in the villages of Ourense or Lugo. Today, in both cases, the common objective of their performances is to create Galician national markers.

For the urban middle-class tambourine players of the Nationalist Block, these performances may be freely interpreted and more creative, whereas village women dressed in their stereotypical traditional dress danced them in strict and orthodox fashion. But today, in both cases, they are intended to represent a national culture. The costumes and performances of the village

women – a representative of the “well-understood regionalism” sponsored under Franco – constitute, however, the *folklorismos* so distrusted by the Galician nationalist left wing.

In the *España de las Autonomías*, each of the autonomous governments has been obliged to “prove the originality of its culture.” The *Xunta de Galicia* complies with this constitutional requirement in a special way. The processes of folklorization are particularly emphatic (cf. Martí 1996, Bausinger 1990). The opposition, the left wing nationalist parties, tend to see those processes as manipulations and anachronisms to be parodied, marked by the stamp of the fascist regime with which the current president of the *Xunta* was associated.

Yet the Galician left wing nationalists also see folkloric images, more ambiguously, as the unwarranted appropriation of a heritage of reference points that they claim as their own, with origins dating back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century history of the nationalist movement. In fact, it was the work of several generations of the nationalist movement that produced the most legitimate resources available today for the teaching of Galician national culture, works that have since been appropriated by the autonomous government of Galicia. Official institutions have taken over cultural productions that were created over time, mostly under difficult conditions of repression, exile and censorship by Galicians with the most varied political opinions. This process is not over. On the contrary, it remains active and re-invents itself continually, affecting several fields, such as literature, music or ethnographic creation. We can thus see the perpetuation of a continuous objectification that serves as “proof” of Galician culture and that, with a shared reluctance, unites official institutions and the nationalist movement.

The propositions from nationalist circles seem more creative since they occupy an “anti-structural” position (Turner 1967) on the fringe of the authorities whose legitimacy as a *Galician* government they contest. They thus appear constantly involved in producing talk of liberation, and are fertile in creative proposals for an emerging “version of the world” in which Galician culture develops (Goodman 1995) – proposals whose probable destiny is institutionalization under the *autonomous government*.

Perfectly dressed in stereotypical traditional costume, and thus contrasting with the more ambiguous and cautious approach to folk culture maintained by the BNG, the “Minho peasant woman” at the picnic would reflect the “liminal” nature of the nationalists’ position in the political framework of the *Autonomous Community of Galicia*. In nations with a state – or in the cases of the Basque Country or Catalonia, where nationalist parties already hold power and conduct the process of national cultural affirmation – traditional costumes may appear as mere components of the “IKEA system” that A. M. Thiesse mentions (cf. also Brandes 1990 and Conversi 1997). They are thus open to peaceful appropriation by all sectors of society.

This has also been happening in Minho and the other Portuguese provinces for decades, without even the political revolution of 1974 bringing significant changes. In my opinion, this is happening because the legitimacy of the provincial divisions recognized by the Portuguese state has been maintained, and no significant regionalist demands have also developed. But in Galicia, as I have tried to show in this paper, the situation is quite different and folk culture remains a much more disputed arena with different political projects competing for its appropriation and interpretation.

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### VELHOS ÍCONES RURALISTAS E O SEU DESTINO NO NOROESTE DA PENÍNSULA IBÉRICA

*O artigo aborda as histórias paralelas da produção de representações icónicas das nacionalidades portuguesa e galega, pondo em evidência o modo como o processo político contemporâneo atribuiu destinos distintos ao uso dessas imagens, em resultado dos diferentes quadros políticos e administrativos institucionalizados em Espanha e Portugal.*