

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL  
PATRIMONY IN BRAZIL  
Recent Work in Portuguese

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**O passado no futuro da cidade: Políticas públicas e participação dos cidadãos na preservação do patrimônio cultural de Porto Alegre.** By Ana Lúcia Meira. Porto Alegre: Editora da Universidade Federal de Rio Grande do Sul, 2004. Pp. 206. R\$18.00 paper.

**Brasília: Memória, cidadania e gestão do patrimônio cultural.** By Sandra Bernardes Ribeiro. São Paulo: Annablume Editora, 2005. Pp. 205. R\$30.00 paper.

**Quem me quer, não me quer: Brasília, metropole-patrimônio.** By Marta Litwinczik Sinoti. São Paulo: Annablume Editora, 2005. Pp. 289. R\$30.00 paper.

**Antropologia dos objetos: Coleções, museus e patrimônios.** By José Reginaldo Santos Gonçalves. Rio de Janeiro: Instituto do Patrimônio e Histórico Artístico Nacional, 2007. Pp. 256. R\$40.00 paper.

**Por um inventário dos sentidos: Mário de Andrade e a concepção de patrimônio e inventário.** By Antônio Gilberto Ramos Nogueira. São Paulo: Editora Hucitec, 2005. Pp. 336. R\$40.00 paper.

Brazil has long been touted as a nation of the future. Yet a glance at the financial pages in mid-2008 would seem to indicate that, especially in macroeconomic terms, this purportedly deferred historical promise has become a concrete, if contradictory, reality. And at this historical juncture that masquerades as an end to the modernist, developmental histories evident in projects like the construction of Brasília, the preservation and marketing of cultural and historical patrimony, or what is typically referred to as *heritage* in English, has come to play a growing role in the crafting of citizens, the open exchanges emblematic of democracies, and the production of value. Such patrimony or heritage—I will use the terms interchangeably in the paragraphs that follow—is a collective good, and thus a category of public property, as well as a bundle of techniques for protecting objects configured as essential to community identity. Supervised internationally by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and

Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and celebrated by the World Bank as a means of mobilizing culture for development, patrimony relies on registry and public commemoration to transform everyday practices and material culture into possessions of the nation or, if UNESCO is involved, of humankind. At a moment when many Latin American nations are either engaged in or facing fallout from the privatization of national possessions, heritage's ubiquity and role in alienating private property and everyday life as public goods—and hence its blurring of the boundaries between property regimes—may mean that a citizenry's practices may function as resources. In such an environment, artworks as well as a people's creativity appear as sources of value rather than symbols of unity. Yet a burgeoning commodification of identities and everyday life is not the only story that can be told about Brazil's patrimony.

Brazil's cultural heritage institution, now called the Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional (IPHAN), was first established in 1937 during the *Estado Novo* and has long been a leader in worldwide heritage movements. This legacy of innovative state-led registry of national treasures, together with recent movements in capitalism that have transformed South America's industrial powerhouse into a center of cultural production, underscores the importance of understanding the roles of heritage at a moment when Brazil's federal government appears committed to reducing inequality. In *O passado no futuro da cidade* (The past in the future of the city), Ana Lúcia Goelzer Meira, an architect and IPHAN regional superintendent, focuses on citizens' participation in heritage in the progressive municipality of Porto Alegre. There municipal heritage programs drew force in the 1990s from and supported an array of participatory budgeting initiatives and popular congresses. This gave rise to what she portrays as a citizen- and heritage-based, nonelite imaginary that emphasizes previously unrecognized cultural goods. Over the past thirty years, instead of fetishizing exceptional artifacts, Porto Alegre's planners have come often to valorize relatively intangible accumulations of shared memories, feelings, and meanings. Yet the book is not a simple, celebratory account of a turn away from monuments. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu and Henri Lefebvre as well as discussions at a welter of international heritage conferences organized in Brazil throughout the 1990s, Meira emphasizes that heritage professionals, as arbiters of taste, play critical roles in structuring how a society constructs its knowledge of itself. And for this reason her study celebrates the partial usurpation of her own professional role by other, more organic, intellectuals and citizens.

Like the authors of all three books treated here that examine heritage in specific municipalities, Meira begins with an in-depth account of patrimony that extends from the French Revolution to contemporary Brazil. This allows her to assert, as is common among Brazilian heritage profes-

sionals and as Bernardes Ribeiro repeats in *Brasília: Memória, cidadania e gestão do patrimônio cultural* (Brasília: Memory, Citizenship and the Management of Cultural Patrimony), that IPHAN is indebted to an authoritarian and physical object-centered French form of cultural management. From this fairly standard narrative, which includes attention to IPHAN's post-World War II development from a long heroic phase that emphasized monuments to a more contestatory valorization of anthropological notions of culture in the 1970s and 1980s, she moves to a concern in the 1990s with landscapes, instead of individual buildings, and immaterial heritage. This immaterial heritage, which UNESCO began to recognize in the 1990s to augment its existing registries of natural and cultural heritage and that was instituted in Brazilian law in 2000, is typically understood as a category that documents, and thus theoretically protects, cultural expressions and vernacular forms of knowledge. But Porto Alegre's heritage professionals have not simply substituted new objects for the monuments once canonized as material manifestations of national pasts.

Meira details the legal initiatives, oral history projects, educational programs in working-class neighborhoods, and heritage- and memory-based workshops put together since 1989 in conjunction with Porto Alegre's participatory budgeting process. This gave rise to fifty-eight municipal landmarkings from 1979 to 1999, a period during which IPHAN inscribed in federal registers just three of the city's buildings. And in 1997 the Elétrica Record Factory became the first heritage site listed as a result of a petition by a mix of architects and the populace—in this case, musicians—rather than by the expert opinion of heritage professionals. In fact, by 1998 the municipality had begun to approve petitions drafted entirely by local residents who did not own the sites in question and who maintained no professional ties to the planning community. Thus, it appears that, in a context of increasing public participation in local governance, citizens approached heritage as a democratic right and tool to control their cityscape. Rather than an appendage to the democratic process, cultural heritage has become central to direct citizen involvement. And as Meira's interviews indicate, a number of citizens began in the late 1990s to employ landmarking to weave alternative histories of institutions and state-sanctioned monuments.

Rather than commemorate origins, heritage as employed in Porto Alegre produces alternative historical readings. When established in dialogue with popular initiatives, patrimony may thus generate an evidentiary base that permits the reconfiguration of political struggles in the present. Here it becomes a part of everyday, popular historical experience rather than simply one aspect of top-down state policies. And this malleability, or openness to competing political projects, is apparent in Maria Litwinczik Sinoti's *Quem me quer, não me quer: Brasília, metropole-patrimônio*

(Those Who Want Me, Don't Want Me: Brasília, Metropole-Patrimony)—but so too is the difficulty of separating analytically popular consciousness from state bureaucracies and heritage policies.

Sinoti is a historian associated with GT-Brasília, or the Brasília Working Group. This interdisciplinary collaboration between IPHAN and the University of Brasília begun in the 1980s—a period of redemocratization and florescence of social movements—was instrumental to the IPHAN-mediated listing of Brasília as part of UNESCO World Heritage in 1990. Sinoti is interested in a more democratic approach to preserving Brasília and believes that this requires an alliance between urban historians and city planners as well as greater attention to the ways that Brasília's residents comprehend patrimony and its political possibilities. At the center of her study of life in a "patrimonialized" space, a project influenced by the work of E. P. Thompson and Walter Benjamin, lie eleven in-depth oral histories. Sinoti mines these to capture the histories that flash up from the experience of living in a modernist city that, while still evolving, has become a preserved heritage site. The interviews, reproduced at length, indicate that residents of Brasília's central Plano Piloto region associate patrimony with the maintenance of buildings and homes rather than the preservation of vernacular culture, a perspective associated with IPHAN's postwar, French-inspired phase. Yet this indicates also that the ostensibly separate discourses of elite heritage planning and democratic everyday life are nonetheless in some sort of constant, if unspecified, communion within Brazilian political life.

This insight is important in light of Sinoti's desire, and, as discussed later in this essay, Sandra Bernardes Ribeiro's attempt in *Brasília: Memória, cidadania e gestão do patrimônio cultural* (Brasília: Memory, Citizenship and the Management of Cultural Patrimony), to make the process of patrimonialization more responsive to democratic process. It appears that citizens' attitudes toward heritage often—and here it may be significant that most of those Sinoti interviewed are middle class and content with their lifestyles—reproduce those of the state. When Sinoti asked about heritage she encountered puzzled silences. But when she parroted government-sanctioned messages, people elaborated versions of patrimony similar to those of IPHAN. Bernardes Ribeiro, whose book is discussed subsequently, addresses something similar by arguing that IPHAN's claims to technocratic stewardship of treasured objects is itself a class-based discourse predicated on markers of cultural capital. Nonetheless, Sinoti's interviews indicate a surprising array of experiences—many interviewees were born into the working class or rural petit bourgeoisie sectors but experienced social mobility in their nation's new capital. Nonetheless, the extent to which this group interprets patrimony along lines managed by IPHAN suggests that a true democratization of patrimony involves more than listening to the people. It requires, as developed in Porto Alegre in

the 1990s, a long-term dialogue among intellectuals, state bureaucrats, and citizens as well as openness to challenges to expertise.

Sinoti works to legitimate middle-class residents of central Brasília—the Plano Piloto region that Bernardes Ribeiro suggests has been overemphasized in heritage discourses that stress original, utopian plans rather than an evolving city—as historical actors whose interpretations of patrimony are worth consideration. She argues that their understandings derive mainly from experiences in other towns, which are then read back upon Brasília. Hence the historian's attempt to combine studies of memory and urbanism generates an account in which a middle-class acceptance of technocratic emphases on stones and mortar are interpreted as a form of memory particular to Brasília. Here people who have migrated from throughout Brazil to the privileged, central regions of Brazil's planned, capital city understand that they enjoy an exceptionally high standard of living. Patrimony permits a defense of this utopia from residents of Brasília's working-class satellite cities.

*Quem me quer, não me quer* thus describes one class's reproduction of practices that defends its interests. But Sinoti explains this as an attempt to reconcile the modernist city and the at-times small-town, safe, and relatively egalitarian lifestyle it makes possible. Such putative and defensive egalitarianism energizes interviewees. Yet within this view, residents of the Plano Piloto construe distinctions between behaviors in different neighborhoods as the residue of essentialized cultural traits associated with migrants from specific regions, like Brazil's traditionally stigmatized Northeast. Although Sinoti does not say so, here the objectifications of culture essential to patrimony loop back to support prejudices that support spatial segregation. In addition, the grafting of ideas about backwardness and civilization onto the state-sanctioned celebration of icons of Brazilian-ness raises questions about the role of urban reform and the reasons that heritage takes on such a central role in Brazilian democracy.

According to Teresa Caldeira and James Holston, a long-standing Brazilian engagement with space in which the sanitizing and ordering of cities permits the conquest of a savage Latin American "nature" associated with the working class has been replaced recently by a more democratic and participatory model like that which Sinoti describes for Porto Alegre.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, the works discussed here suggest a less complete break between these two approaches to the management of national development around redemptive patrimony. If in Porto Alegre working-class participation in heritage initiatives is welcomed, and in the Brasília described by

1. Teresa Caldeira and James Holston, "State and Urban Space in Brazil: From Modernist Planning to Democratic Interventions," in *Global Assemblages: Technology, Politics, and Ethics as Anthropological Problems*, ed. Aihwa Ong and Stephen Collier (Malden, MA: Blackwell), 354–372.

Sinoti patrimony serves as a barrier to the middle class's symbolic infection by residents of the periphery, the state's roles in altering such modes of national consolidation and social differentiation become clearer in Bernardes Ribeiro's account of Brasília's landmarking.

Bernardes Ribeiro's *Brasília: Memória, cidadania e gestão do patrimônio cultural* provides an inside look at struggles within Brazil's cultural heritage community during late-twentieth-century efforts to protect Brasília's landscape. Its author, as Sinoti, was associated with GT-Brasília and worked from 1985 to 2002 in IPHAN. It is thus a privileged ethnography of the state, in this case of a federal bureaucracy whose regional office and allies in local universities have come to be excluded from the management of Brasília as patrimony. Bernardes Ribeiro draws on her experience in IPHAN and extensive interviews with community leaders, architects, planners and politicians to argue that preservation has been elitist and unresponsive to residents' needs. In spite of the novelty of Brasília's landmarking, which focused on spatial scales rather than on specific buildings, the concern with preserving relations between spaces so important to a modernist city privileges a class-specific vision of Brasília. In this way, Bernardes Ribeiro's research supports, albeit critically, certain interpretations at the center of Sinoti's study.

According to Bernardes Ribeiro, Brasília's landmarking generated elisions that emanate from planners' resistance to classify as patrimony the remnants of settlements that existed prior to the city's master plan as well as neighborhoods built by workers brought to construct the modern city. In addition to elitist models of culture, these omissions reflect two basic aspects of Brasília's landmarking. First, the modernists responsible for planning Brasília were also close to critical figures in the development of the preservation movement. In this way, modernism and tradition, as explored by Nogueira and discussed herein, are bound historically in Brazil. Second, Brasília, as a planned, national ideal counterposed to barbaric nature is a city still in thrall to its powerful authors. The status of architects like Lúcio Costa, whose writings and Rio de Janeiro-based allies played a critical role in marginalizing the GT-Brasília's recommendations that the scope and techniques of the city's 1990 UNESCO inscription be widened, allow them substantial authorial latitude in defining Brasília as patrimony.

The urbanists who favored the preservation of modernist Brasília's central region also favored aesthetics, concepts of authenticity, and hence state-directed notions of exceptionality, development, and forward-facing modernity. Bernardes Ribeiro refers to this as a "discurso competente" and argues instead that Brasília would be better served by a dynamic preservation that relies not on landmarking but on ongoing legal mechanisms that would preserve the city while allowing it to develop. Landmarking for Bernardes Ribeiro, who draws on Pierre Bourdieu's meditations on



cultural capital, is an expert discourse that ignores how people use a city at the same time that it passes off class-specific concepts of authenticity and good taste as objective, technical competence. In criticizing such ostensible objectivity in light of the history of Brazil's national patrimony institution, Bernardes Ribeiro emphasizes the importance of patrimony to democratic process in a nation seemingly especially dependent on heritage for the construction of community. She ends with a plea for a cultural policy akin to the experiences in Porto Alegre that Meira documents.

Missing in all three books is attention to the interactions between bureaucrats and citizens. If Brazilians are both challenging and latching on to IPHAN and local patrimony institutions' practices and messages, how does this take place? How do new social groups adopt techniques developed in one or the other social sphere? José Antônio Gonçalves begins to raise, and respond to, such questions in his collection of essays *Antropologia dos objetos: Coleções, museus e patrimônios* (Anthropology of Objects: Collections, Museums, and Patrimonies). Gonçalves is interested in the way material things, and especially those integrated into official collections, help structure consciousness. He therefore examines the categorical differentiations that permit the separation of, for example, groups and individuals and subjects and objects. Important to this are anthropological theorizations of cultures as aggregates of traits and objects. This is fundamental to modern museums and heritage sites, which often portray a movement from distant origins to more advanced social states. Such a version of progress woven around increasingly precise and apparently more just definitions of a community's markers reappears in various guises in the studies discussed previously. Yet in his essays on aura and authenticity; on hunger, taste, and cuisine as heritage; on comparisons of Ouro Preto, Brazil, with colonial Williamsburg, Virginia; on objects that symbolize iconically and metonymically versus those that call up abstract ideas arbitrarily; and on ethnicity and culture more generally, Gonçalves questions the naturalization of the subject-centered, redemptive contemplation of a linear version of patrimony. He propels readers to think more about how modern societies wall off objects from human beings and in the process invest both things and people with distinctive and often magical powers. In doing so, he focuses ethnographically on sensory perceptions, narrative forms, and semiotic structures in ways that complicate theorizations of heritage that analysts like Sinoti and Meira present.

For many progressive professionals, the democratization of patrimony turns on opening the landmarking process to participation by previously silenced groups so as to include a broader range of objects. This, it is assumed, would then give voice to an expanded range of projects. Yet for Gonçalves, such information-based and relatively nonritualized—in the sense of rituals as embodied, pragmatic events that produce belonging rather than the transmission of specific information—initiatives threaten

to generate intensely specific, impersonal, and hence anonymous forms of patrimony that splinter a society. Nonetheless, as Bernardes Ribeiro's and Sinoti's studies of Brasília's class-specific spatial segregation indicate, state-imposed symbols may generate precisely what Gonçalves fears.

What seems most interesting about patrimonialization as a performative rather than a communicative idiom is Gonçalves's recourse to the anthropological metaphor of engineers and bricoleurs.<sup>2</sup> Engineers remake the world into tools and building blocks from which they construct edifices. Bricoleurs construct reality from found, rather than engineered, objects. These are less amenable to the transmission of information and more productive of sensuous communion with a world in which specific shapes must be taken into account in their usage. Such an engagement with objects, as opposed to their mobilization and synthesis as pieces of a puzzle, permits them to be understood as more than symbols of ideas and values. They may be transitory and compose and decompose, a materiality that modern museums and information societies typically miss. Such a focus on objects in themselves might push social scientists to do more than document the extent to which heritage can be expanded in terms of the groups that participate in it and the objects that represent those groups. One might investigate how it is that groups form, perceive, and then represent objects. What counts as an object and what does one do with it? Are there alternatives to bricolage and to engineering or to the banal suggestion that we tack between them? The answers are not theoretical but amenable to sensitive investigation of actual practices.

In addition to pushing for an expanding conception of what objects do, Gonçalves's text, published with the support of IPHAN, advocates a deeper consideration of institutional influences on the types of investigations of Brazilian heritage discussed in this essay. The three case studies were all written by people with close relationships to heritage institutions. They are thus insider testimony and might be read against the grain to see what sort of dissonances they provoke. One apparent absence involves how the described movements in heritage policy react to and provoke alterations in arenas not usually associated with patrimony. How does a concern with the origins of the nation correlate with understandings of race and the origins of that nation's populations? Why, given the effervescence of Brazilian anthropology, did high-cultural notions of artistic merit predominate in IPHAN for most of the postwar period? And how did

2. In referring to patrimony as a performative, I follow Gonçalves, as well as important currents in contemporary anthropology, so as to recognize that patrimony does not so much transmit specific content as make claims about a world in ways that alter that world. In other words, patrimony, like the phrase "I now pronounce you man and wife," makes things happen not simply because of its content, but because of the power and authority invested in it as a state-sponsored ritual act that is supposedly based on the expertise of the professionals charged with its development and supervision.



residents approach technicians during attempts to secure protection for buildings? What internal debates did this provoke? A history of how conflicts in society affect heritage policy, and vice versa, would be welcome.

Gonçalves does not offer such a history even as he provides insights into how it might be conducted. In the chapter titled “Monumentalidade e cotidiano: Os patrimônios culturais como gênero de discurso” (Monumentality and Everydayness: Cultural Patrimonies as Speech Genre), he expands on a point common in the specialized literature: institutional definitions of Brazilian patrimony have shifted mightily over time. Early on, and still under the folkloric-modernist sway of its symbolic founder, the intellectual Mário de Andrade, IPHAN (then SPHAN) espoused an ethnological, process-based concept of patrimony. After World War II this would be replaced by a focus on buildings and monuments, and especially on remnants of the Portuguese baroque style, only to be transformed during the 1980s when the new IPHAN director Aloísio Magalhães came again to valorize an anthropological version of culture akin to Andrade’s. Nonetheless, the arbitrariness, and hence the constructedness, of competing versions of what is admissible as a national symbol supports Gonçalves’s, as well as Sinoti’s and Bernardes Ribeiro’s, assertions that patrimony is not about content but about the ability to arbitrate values. Yet the impact of defining taste varies with historical context.

*Por um inventário dos sentidos: Mário de Andrade e a concepção de patrimônio e inventário* (For an Inventory of the Senses: Mário de Andrade and the Birth of Patrimony and the Inventory), explores the details and legacy of the well-known nationalist intellectual Mário de Andrade’s attempt to “catalogue all the Brazilian people’s cultural manifestations . . . [and] preserve these manifestations to guarantee the constitution of a genuinely national esthetic, and thus, a national identity” (2005, 26). Well known as a leader of the modernist movement and author of the first draft of the legislative project that generated IPHAN (then the Serviço de Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional, or SPHAN), Andrade and his ethnographic, musicological, and literary work have generated an enormous body of scholarship. Yet this close look at his influence on, and conceptions of, patrimony, published in 2005 as Brazilians searched for new, more democratic paradigms for the protection of cultural manifestations, plays a special role. Professionals seek new tools as the landmarking of monuments loses ground to immaterial heritage and cultural landscapes. One of these, introduced by planners in Salvador, Bahia, in the 1970s, is the inventory (*inventário*), or the list of cultural manifestations that documents their existence, yet does not fix them in quite the same way as landmarking (*tombamento*). Although picked up for a time by the progressive IPHAN director Aloísio Magalhães, the inventory quickly fell into disuse. Yet by the early years of the new millennium, as debates about democratizing patrimony raged, heritage professionals like the authors of the

books discussed here searched for a more elastic instrument with which to document, celebrate, and at times protect national culture. Here Mário de Andrade's thought, and aura, play an important and legitimizing role, as they did in the São Paulo of the 1920s and 1930s.

From 1935 to 1938, collaborating with the French ethnologists Dina and Claude Lévi-Strauss, Andrade ran the city of São Paulo's Department of Culture. In the previous decade Andrade had served as the so-called pope of the modernists, who attempted to demonstrate Brazil's simultaneous difference and cultural equality with Europe. Andrade thus sought to celebrate his nation's vernaculars and vitality. From 1927 to 1929, he made a number of journeys to the Northeast and the Amazon. The poetry and synesthetic metaphor in Andrade's writings from this period, together with the great emphasis placed on inventories in the Department of Culture and affiliated entities, led Nogueira to the term *inventory of the senses*. This recognizes the extent to which Andrade's proposal for SPHAN stressed the protection of national culture through registry rather than the transformations in property regimes associated with landmarking.

*Por um inventário dos sentidos* is often allegorical and frequently cites Andrade's writings at length. Nogueira complements his poetic account with more standard historical narrative intended to link Andrade's interventions into the cultural sphere to movements in Latin American politics. He thus takes up the challenge of tying cultural policy to its formative contexts even as he relies mainly on secondary sources to do so. Yet his conclusions are, for most academics working in or on Brazil, well known, with the exception of his study of the Department of Culture. He links Andrade's experiences there to his drafting of legislation for SPHAN and describes how the department created popular libraries (*bibliotecas populares*), which recall initiatives in Porto Alegre of the 1990s, and through which Andrade sought to reach out to immigrants' children. Nonetheless, care must be taken in interpreting such efforts—education was a central aspect of the authoritarian, nationalist Estado Novo—within a book written about patrimony from an early-twenty-first century moment when committed heritage professionals seek to expand on Brazil's democratic consolidations.

At times Nogueira suggests that Andrade was really "doing" immaterial heritage *avant la lettre*. There is little doubt that the folklorist shared many interests with, and probably inspired, many in IPHAN and the United Nations today. But his highly anthropological contributions in the 1920s and 1930s and the protection of immaterial heritage nearly a century later address quite different historical contexts. Today's heritage professionals must, for example, deal with Brazil's south-south relations, with the challenges presented by the rapid commercialization of heritage, and with the hangover from the Fernando Henrique Cardoso administration's near privatization of culture. Meanwhile, Andrade struggled to

conceptualize national culture on the heels of São Paulo's coffee boom and recent industrialization, and thus projected a Brazil to rival Europe and the United States in ways quite different from today. Nonetheless, Nogueira's inventory of Andrade's life and work continues his canonization as patrimony, as a figure for the nation whose ways of conceiving of public culture gave rise to a creative IPHAN that is now a player in key debates about democracy and development. In this way, the shifting consecration of Brazil's past and the complex relations between human beings and their treasured objects continue to promise a future, collective, and perhaps more just form of collective redemption.