Silenced Narratives: a Social Museology Approach at the National Coach Museum

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Narrativas silenciadas: uma abordagem de Museologia Social no Museu Nacional dos Coches

Another Look at the Collection

The way collections in so-called normative museums are approached is at the core of current discussions. Since the Round Table of Santiago de Chile in 1972, it has been acknowledged that the museum is an instrument of transformation at the service of society and can play a crucial role in building critical awareness in the face of contemporary issues (Primo & Moutinho, 2021). These institutions, aware of their social responsibility, are expected to adopt practices committed to diversity. We recall the UNESCO *Recommendation concerning the Protection and Promotion of Museums and Collections, their Diversity and their Role in Society*, in the year we celebrate its tenth anniversary. This document, which reiterates the mission of museums to preserve, research, communicate and educate, also recognises their social dimension, encouraging member states to support the principles set out in the *Declaration of Santiago de Chile*:

> "museums are vital public spaces that should address all of society and can therefore play an important role in the development of social ties and cohesion, building citizenship, and reflecting on collective identities. Museums should be places that are open to all and committed to physical and cultural access to all, including disadvantaged groups. They can constitute spaces for reflection and debate on historical, social, cultural and scientific issues. Museums should also foster respect for human rights and gender equality" (*Recommendation concerning the Protection and Promotion of Museums and Collections, their Diversity and their Role in Society*, 2015, p.8).

It is therefore intended that museums play an active role in society, as spaces of dialogue, more inclusive and conscious, attentive to different voices in the interpretation of objects (Antas, 2022). Historical and museological research enables the development of new forms of interpreting collections, breaking away from the reproduction of the same official discourse. Paulo Freire had already encouraged the revision of knowledge, rejecting the passive repetition of information, and instead investigating and critically analysing each discovery (Freire, 1967).

In the last decades of the 20th century, Social Museology began the fight for the inclusion of the experiences of groups that had been marginalised throughout history (Soares, 2024). The issue of the decolonisation of museums has inspired much reflection and is gradually beginning to materialise in concrete practices:

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> "regarding the disputes over memories and heritages that have been made invisible versus those that are hegemonic, we can attempt to identify different fronts: 1) fights for the restitution of heritage assets, resignifying the objects plundered from colonised peoples through colonial processes and which today remain under the 'protection' of normative museums; 2) historical reparation for centuries of subalternisation and violence against those same peoples, generating the demand for affirmative policies, as well as for the rewriting of history built by coloniality; 3) recognition of the knowledge of historically subalternised peoples, and the collective fight for them to assume protagonism and produce their own narrative of history" (Primo & Moutinho, 2021, p.35).

We acknowledge the complexity behind the process of historical reparation, but we emphasise that this is not limited to a single path and can be carried out through multiple strategies. Among them, we highlight the encouragement of developing a critical perspective on the different cultural assets that make up the collection, alerting the public to aspects that tend to go unnoticed and leading them to question what lies before them. For Raul Balai, the decolonisation of museological institutions is a deeply personal process, as it requires a review of the way we see, think, and understand the world, questioning established norms and unlearning ingrained conceptions, reflecting on who is granted legitimacy to speak, which structures of thought we consider valid, and what types of objects we attribute value to (Balai, 2024).

We therefore aim to shed light on dimensions often rendered invisible or neglected in the collection of the National Coach Museum, which are fundamental in an exercise of understanding the past and reflecting on the present. As Mário Moutinho points out, “decolonial thought seeks not only to criticise coloniality, but also to provide new references, new readings which, ultimately, sustain an insurgency capable of breaking with the dominant narrative, as well as with the praxis of current forms of coloniality” (Moutinho, 2022, p.31). It is a matter of framing the collection in a more complex way and adopting practices that aim to enrich the possibilities of communicating collections (Freitas, 2019, p.66). In this way, we seek to avoid the mistake made by so many other institutions, which fail to establish explicit connections between their collections and the exploitation of resources and people, thereby omitting the foundations of the wealth of the elites represented in them (Freitas, 2019).

The collection of the National Coach Museum, which comprises means of transportation dating from the late 16th to the early 20th century, allows us to trace the technical and decorative evolution of a large and diverse number of vehicles – from coaches to automobiles. It also enables us to explore the profound political, economic, social, and cultural transformations experienced during this period. These vehicles took part in key moments of international politics, from embassies to state visits and matrimonial unions. Some bear witness to a time when power was staged through ostentation, in which the monumentality of the carriages, the richness of the textiles, and the exuberance of the decoration were carefully designed to reinforce the magnificence of a king and a kingdom; others take us back to times of greater sobriety, when the functional and pragmatic prevailed over spectacle, and displays of power adjusted to the new political and cultural reality, faced with the emergence of new values driven by liberal revolutions, the rise of the bourgeois classes, and the modernisation brought about by industrialisation. We thus propose an approach to the collection that inscribes it within contemporary discussions on colonialism.

The Golden Century

We open this reflection with the expression coined by D. António Caetano de Sousa when writing the *História Genealógica da Casa Real Portuguesa*, linking the abundance of gold to the reign of King João V. At the beginning of the 18th century, a period of prosperity unfolded, built upon trade with Brazil, from where most of the Crown’s income originated. The Brazilian economy was based on sugar, tobacco, and cotton – products whose significance must not be underestimated – but it was gold that took centre stage. The discovery of gold in what is now the region of Minas Gerais, at the end of the 17th century, triggered a gold rush, driving migratory flows and leading to an increasing demand for labour (Ramos, 2009): thousands of people were trafficked from the African continent and forced to work in agricultural and gold exploitation, facing terrible conditions and having their humanity denied.

The Crown imposed a tax on the extracted gold – the «quinto» – and, despite difficulties in supervision and collection, local resistance, and smuggling, this revenue greatly contributed to financing the projects of João V: "it was the wealth originating from Brazil that largely supported the architectural and artistic programmes and the cultural patronage of the baroque monarchy of King João V" (Costa, 2014, p.236). The maintenance of absolutism, which depended largely on the staging of power, was thus secured. The king's prestige manifested itself in imposing constructions, in the luxury surrounding diplomatic missions that reinforced the international affirmation of the kingdom, and, of course, in the very coaches that are part of the museum's collection, since the most remarkable examples – witnesses of the baroque's peak – were created during the reign of King João V[3].

Beyond aesthetic sophistication, these coaches are symbols of power and wealth sustained by the spoliation of resources and the oppression of human beings. It should also be noted that many of these vehicles played a role in moments of great importance in European politics, which had direct repercussions on the former colonial domains. This is the case of the Coach of the Crown. This vehicle, a French work, was used in 1715, when an embassy was sent to Louis XIV to celebrate the signing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Portugal and France, after the end of the War of the Spanish Succession. This conflict involved several European powers, with Portugal supporting the Grand Alliance, which defended the claims of Archduke Charles of Austria against those of Philip of Anjou, a Bourbon proclaimed Philip V of Spain. The disputes in Europe had direct repercussions across the Atlantic, and Portugal was focused on defending Brazil and its routes, which were attacked by the French (Ramos, 2009).

The conflict ended with the peace negotiations in Utrecht. Portugal had its independence and sovereignty over the South American territories between the Amazon and Oiapoque rivers internationally recognised, and the territory and colony of Sacramento was also returned to it. Nevertheless, tensions between Portugal and Spain did not cease. When the double marriage of José, Prince of Brazil, and Maria Bárbara with the children of Philip V of Spain – Ferdinand, Prince of Asturias, and Mariana Victoria – was arranged, the alliance was partly motivated by the need to pacify relations between the Iberian kingdoms, given the tensions arising from attempts to define the borders of colonial possessions in South America. The Table Coach was used in the journey made by the Portuguese royal family to the border, between Elvas and Badajoz, for the ceremony known as « the exchange of the princesses», in 1729.

The Peace of Utrecht consolidated England as the main naval and commercial power. It was granted several territories in North America by France, and Spain ceded to it, for thirty years, the monopoly of the trafficking of enslaved people in the American territories under Spanish rule. As Vèrges points out, the Utrecht negotiations demonstrate

> "a shared interest in preserving the plantation-based economy, colonization, and the exploitation of the rest of the world in order to guarantee the wealth of white Christian Europe. The treaty indeed accelerated the transatlantic slave trade. While from 1630 to 1640, 20,000 to 30,000 Africans were deported per year as slaves to the European colonies, between 1740 and 1840, the number rose from 70,000 to 90,000 a year. Over the course of the eighteenth century, Enlightenment Europe deported 60 percent of the total number of African captives" (Vèrges, 2024).

We thus see the role of coaches in decisive moments of European diplomacy, whether in missions aimed at celebrating peace or in those that formalised matrimonial alliances. Of particular note, however, is the embassy sent to Pope Clement XI: one of the most significant achievements of the reign of King João V "was the conquest of parity of treatment with the other great Catholic powers in their relations with the Holy See" (Ramos, 2009, p.346). Three coaches from the collection bear witness to the splendour of this embassy, which culminated in the elevation of the Royal Chapel to the status of Patriarchal Church, following the publication of the bull *In Supremo Apostulatus Solio*. Much has been written about this event, and therefore we will not dwell so much on the procedures and the description of the day, but rather focus on the allegorical message of the vehicles that formed part of the procession.

[3] Although not all of them were commissioned by the Portuguese Crown.

At the Feet of Lisbon

Embassies are occasions suited to the display of a king's and a kingdom's power, wealth, and influence. Rome, accustomed to pomp, valued these political spectacles. The embassy took place on 8 July 1716, a feast day celebrating Queen Saint Isabel of Portugal. People of all conditions thronged the streets and balconies to watch the procession pass by. It was in such public ceremonies that "the prevailing ways of thinking and representing the world were crystallised" (Bebiano, 1987, p.46). We are in the baroque era, considered «the art of the masses», which sought "to move spiritually and politically in accordance with the main objectives of the Church and the State" (Bebiano, 1987, p.41). Baroque appeals to the senses, captivates through the theatricality of its forms, "operates among men, leading them and keeping them integrated into the established social and political system, contributing to the self-preservation of the instituted order" (Bebiano, 1987, p.43).

We recall the three triumphal cars, open-bodied in the Roman style, that are part of the collection of the National Coach Museum. Luca Chracas, under the instruction of the ambassador, D. Rodrigo Anes de Sá Almeida e Menezes, left us a detailed and careful account of the sculptural groups and the materials that composed the coaches. Fifteen paraded in total – ten escort coaches and five thematic ones. The iconographic programme of the three vehicles preserved by the museum carries a strong ideological charge, evoking the Portuguese land and sea expeditions, exalting their boldness and their contributions to the advancement of geographical and scientific knowledge, to the dissemination of the Christian faith, and to the expansion of the kingdom's dominions (Chracas, 1996). The titles of the Portuguese monarchs, as Lords of the Conquest, Navigation, and Commerce of Ethiopia, Arabia, Persia, and India, profoundly inspired the conception of the sculptural groups. We will focus on the rear of the vehicles.

Figure 1 *Coaches of the Embassy, Ana Rita Lopes' archive, 2024.*

After the secretary's coupé and the coach that represented the king had passed, the coach carrying the ambassador followed, bearing as its theme Conquest and Navigation, represented by Bellona and Thetis respectively. Bellona, the Roman goddess of war, carries a shield. Thetis, supported by a triton, measures the terrestrial globe with a compass offered to her by a Zephyr, a wind favourable to navigation in the East. Thetis gazes at the mariner's compass extended to her by Palemon, god of harbours. At the centre of the lower plane, we recognise the head of a creature representing Adamastor, alluding to the difficulties overcome by the Portuguese when rounding the Cape of Storms, renamed the Cape of Good Hope. A lion, symbol of Portuguese Intrepidity, hurls itself upon a youth, the personification of Vice (Chracas, 1996).

We must highlight the richness of the materials used in this coach: "both in the carriage, in the body, and even in the harnesses of the horses, nothing was to be seen but pure gold" (Chracas, 1996, p.84). Chracas adds: "since this coach was a triumphal car, it was fitting that the ivory paid in tribute should contribute to the sumptuousness of the structure" (Chracas, 1996, p.95). This ivory, coming from the African coast, was used in the manufacture of luxury objects.

Following the Coach of the Ambassador came the Coach of the Coronation of Lisbon, illustrating "how the Infidelity of barbarian nations spurred the perilous Navigations and the immortal Conquests of the Portuguese Kings" (Chracas, 1996, p.98). Lisbon, capital of the Empire, occupies the centre of the composition: "grave and majestic in bearing, armed with a cuirass and holding in her right hand the royal

sceptre extended in a gesture of command, and with her left girding the royal mantle." She is crowned by Fame, to her left, holding a trumpet; and to her right stands Abundance, with a cornucopia. On a lower plane, at Lisbon's feet, "sat, humble and submissive, two half-naked and shackled slaves: on the right a Moor, and on the left a Turk" (Chracas, 1996, p.99). Between the two figures, a dragon appears, attentive to Lisbon's will, while tearing apart a lunar crescent. The iconography alludes to the victory of Christendom over the « enemies of the faith ». It also recalls the support given by King João V to Pope Clement XI in blocking the Ottoman advance in the Mediterranean, as conveyed in the royal letters delivered by the ambassador.

The Coach of the Oceans was the last of the three to parade. Two men with long hair and beards, crowned with aquatic plants and carried on dolphins, represent the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. They join hands in a gesture symbolising their intercommunicability, recalling for the spectator the episode of the rounding of the Cape of Good Hope, in 1488. It is Apollo who proclaims this feat to the world, which made it possible to reach India, opening new trade routes between Europe and the East. Trade in products such as pepper, ginger, cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, and porcelain enriched the Crown. According to Chracas, Apollo represents the rising sun and "since it is from the annual and ever-changing course of the sun that the passage of the seasons is made, and with them change the winds so necessary to navigation in different parts of the earth and to the maintenance of general commerce, on the rear of the carriage (...) Spring and Summer were represented, (...) with their specific attributes – flowers and ears of wheat" (Chracas, 1996, p.105). Autumn and Winter are depicted on the front, the first with a cornucopia filled with fruit, the second with a brazier.

These three triumphal cars thus convey the imperialist discourse in a concise and clear way. They remind the audience that Portugal had consolidated itself as a maritime power, exercising control over important trade routes, and that expansion was justified by the fight against Islam and by the indoctrination of peoples (Costa, 2014). In this way, Portugal asserted its political and economic power while promoting the idea of a Christian civilising mission over the territories it dominated.

Europe as Queen: The Allegorised Continents

A year before the embassy to the Holy See, Pope Clement XI had sent to King João V the Blessed Ribbons, on the occasion of the baptism of Prince José. This tradition was instituted in the sixteenth century "for the delight of the closest circles of the pontifical court—Austria, France, Spain and Portugal—as a christening gift to royal children, especially the first-born" (Boto, 1909, p.89). In this context, an Italian coach was also offered to the king, which we recall here to address one of the motifs that commonly adorned vehicles: the allegory of the continents[4]. The theme appears in the decorative arts as a celebration of the European powers with dominions across the world, and of the Catholic Church in reference to its universality and missionary work (Pereira, 1987).

The eighteenth century is precisely the period in which this allegory, which became popular during the Renaissance, reached its peak. It was the encounters with new peoples that promoted its development, nurturing the conception of the «self» and the «other». The contrast between Europe and the rest of the world was reinforced, seeking to highlight Europe's superiority by emphasising the cultural aspects that distinguished it. Considering that imagery is a powerful means of communication, abstract concepts were given form, facilitating their dissemination to a wider audience. The four continents take the form of female figures, distinguished from each other by the symbolic objects they hold or by their physiognomy.

On the Coach of Pope Clement XI, Europe appears crowned. In her right hand she holds a cornucopia, and in her left the papal tiara above a radiated crown, alluding both to the donor and to the recipient, respectively, but also to the Pope's heavenly power to crown the potentates of the earth, submissive to Rome (Boto, 1909). Europe has a helmet beneath her foot. Asia is likewise crowned, but with a garland of flowers and fruits. Adorned with bracelets and a pearl necklace, she displays a bouquet and a censer. These two continents decorate the rear corners of the coach body. At the front we recognise Africa, standing out from the other figures by her features (nose and lips) and curly hair, upon which she wears an elephant's head. She holds a cornucopia and the remains of what was once a palm branch. Beneath her foot lies ivory. Lastly, we must mention America who, like Africa, is bare-breasted. She wears a feathered headdress, a quiver on her back, handles a bow and, in her other hand, once held aloft an arrow. Beneath her foot lies a European head, severed at the neck.

[4] Which we can also witness in the Coach of the Patriarchs and in the Coach of Maria Ana of Austria.

Figure 2 *Allegory of the Continents, Coach of Pope Clement XI, National Coach Museum's archive, 2015.*

The way in which the continents are represented was profoundly influenced by iconographic manuals, compiled in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which served as sources for artists. Among them we highlight Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*, one of the main works responsible for codifying these personifications. In the 1603 edition, each description of the different parts of the world was accompanied by an illustration. Comparing Ripa's figures with those on the Coach of Pope Clement XI, we confirm that they share several attributes. The *Iconologia*'s Europe likewise alludes to monarchies and the Church, represented by royal insignia and a temple, her authority extending over the world. She may be accompanied by a horse, military trophies, and instruments used in the liberal arts. As for Asia, Ripa highlights the refinement of its garments and the jewels that adorn it, associating it, among animals, with the camel. The representation of spices and aromatic substances such as incense evokes the products traded with this region. Africa is likewise often depicted with ivory, for the same reason. The iconography of this continent was profoundly influenced by the coins that circulated in the Roman Empire. Ripa imagines it with a cornucopia filled with ears of wheat[5].

Since people from the ancient times were unaware of the American continent, it was the accounts of travellers, merchants, and Jesuits that inspired the construction of its image. The texts and engravings that explored contact with indigenous peoples were, however, conceived and interpreted on the basis of Western codes: nudity was seen as contrary to civilisation, and the ritual practice of cannibalism shocked Europeans, which is why it was copiously represented[6].

In art, therefore, a rigid hierarchy was established among the continents. Political, military, technological, and cultural dominance belonged to Europe, followed by Asia, and only afterwards Africa and America. Michael Wintle considers that these personifications had agency: they sought to instil the idea that Europeans were superior, defining their identity by contrast with so-called «primitive» peoples. The circulation and dissemination of these images, facilitated by the development of the press, served the interests of the Crown and the elites: they emphasised the need to civilise and evangelise peoples, legitimising imperialist claims. These allegories are not, therefore, neutral mirrors of the world, but ideological constructions and vehicles of propaganda, anticipating the racial theories of the nineteenth century in the division of humanity (Wintle, 2021).

We conclude this theme by drawing attention to the appropriation of the «other» in the decorative arts, which reduces it to ornament. The body of the Coach of King José I, for example, is covered with human heads depicted with headdresses, feathers, and stereotyped features, intended to evoke Amerindians. They serve a predominantly decorative function, reflecting the period's taste for the «exotic» and alluding to contact with the so-called «New World». They also remind us of imperial power, reinforced by the presence of an eagle on the rear of the vehicle. These representations are imaginary constructions based on a Eurocentric vision. The iconography thus contributed to the dissemination and popularisation of stereotypes that legitimised the marginalisation of non-European peoples.

[5] Because of its abundance of grain, North Africa was regarded as the breadbasket of the Roman Empire.
[6] Until the 18th century, more than 70 editions of Hans Staden's engravings were published.

The Nineteenth Century

European expansion during the early modern period was decisive in triggering the Industrial Revolution and in fostering economic development at the turn to the nineteenth century. Several authors recognise that

> "the domination of European peoples over intercontinental trades, the virtual monopoly they established through mercantile expedients or by political means—coercive and even violent—secured for them the exclusive benefits of commerce, provided them with enormous wealth accumulation, access to precious metals, tropical products, drugs, spices and raw materials, and the opening of new markets. In the long run, it created a situation favourable to specialisation in the most advantageous economic activities, in commerce and in manufacturing" (Pedreira, 1994, p.3).

The expansion of the English economy provided favourable conditions for industrialisation, whose initial sectors were textiles and metallurgy. The Industrial Revolution, the transformations at the turn of the century arising from the contestation of the ideologies of the *Ancien Régime*, and the emergence of the liberal bourgeoisie, influenced profoundly the development of horse-drawn vehicles. The simplification of the production process broadened access to these vehicles, and the models of urban carriages diversified, integrating the new rhythms and habits of the population: they were used both for everyday journeys and for more leisurely occasions, such as social visits, trips to salons, cafés, the theatre, and the opera. Carriage rides along the boulevards, moments for displaying their owners' influence, became intrinsic to bourgeois sociability.

Figure 3 *Nineteenth Century Vehicles, Ana Rita Lopes' archive, 2025.*

Specialised workshops proliferated in the major European centres. The manufacturer's name was engraved on the wheel hubs of the carriages. Given the wide variety of models in circulation at the time, it would be an exhaustive exercise to describe them individually. In the collection we find everything from promenade vehicles, for use in the city and in the countryside, which allowed the passenger himself to drive; to ceremonial carriages, of which the Crown Carriage is the prime example.

In nineteenth-century vehicles, the bodies assumed simpler contours and were painted in sober tones (mostly black backgrounds). Both closed and open models circulated, and the two options could even coexist, as in the landau, which features two folding leather hoods, thus adapting to the social context and to the weather conditions in which it was used (Pereira, 1987). Priority was given to comfort and safety. The coachman's seat tended to be level with the roof, its elevation ensuring better visibility, to which the lanterns also contributed. Some of these vehicles had pedal bells, roller blinds, folding steps, making them more functional. Different braking systems were employed, such as the disc brake or the wheel brake, as well as different types of springs (pincer and half pincer, elliptical and semi-elliptical, "C"-shaped).

The technical innovations observed in nineteenth-century vehicles were closely linked to the Industrial Revolution. Henry Bessemer developed a process for decarbonising cast iron to obtain high-quality steel at low cost. Applied, for example, to suspension springs, it made vehicles more stable. Among other

innovations, we also highlight the use of rubber to coat the wheels[7], allowing for more comfortable journeys by cushioning road impacts. Rubber is extracted from the *Hevea brasiliensis*, a tree native to the Amazon basin. With the development of the vulcanisation process by chemist Charles Goodyear, rubber became more resistant and durable, and was quickly integrated into different industries. In the early nineteenth century, Brazil was the main supplier to the European market. However, after the planting of seeds in the British colonies of Southeast Asia, Malaysia and Ceylon became the main centres of production. This is an example of how the progress reflected in vehicles and the comfort they offered was directly linked to the exploitation of colonial resources.

Carrying the Elites

In addition to the various horse-drawn vehicles, the collection of the National Coach Museum also includes a group of sedan chairs, a means of transport powered by human traction. Their history dates back to Antiquity, but they became popular again in Europe from the seventeenth century, falling into disuse in the first half of the nineteenth century. The sedan chair consists of a portable box with a single seat, and lateral metal supports for fitting removable poles. It is carried by at least two men, one at the front and the other at the back. They could use leather harnesses to help distribute the weight. In European cities, sedan chairs were carried by hired and paid porters. However, in the former colonies, this work was imposed on enslaved people.

This means of transport served aristocratic, bourgeois, and religious elites, acting as a clear indicator of status, reflected in the decoration of the panels and in the liveries of the porters. In addition to privately-owned sedan chairs, there were also those available for hire. They were used mainly in urban areas, to cover short distances, facilitating travel through narrow streets, allowing people to escape congested traffic, and protecting them from the unsanitary conditions of the city.

Among the museum's sedan chairs, we highlight a nationally manufactured piece, in Empire style, which belonged to Joaquim Pedro Quintela, 2nd Baron of Quintela and 1st Count of Farrobo. The box is covered in black leather, has three windows with curtains, and a folding roof.

Figure 4 *Sedan Chair of the Count of Farrobo, Ana Rita Lopes' archive, 2023.*

The Count of Farrobo, a shareholder and capitalist, was one of the great investors in Portuguese industrialisation. Heir to a colossal fortune, what particularly interests us here is his involvement in the tobacco monopoly, whose exclusive rights to importation, production, and commercialisation were leased by the State. This was a secure way of accumulating capital and, since the late eighteenth century, was reserved for a small number of families, among which were the Quintelas (Mónica, 1992). Support for the liberal cause during the civil war earned Joaquim Pedro Quintela the title of Count of Farrobo and the tobacco monopoly. As Maria Filomena Mónica points out, his patronage and philanthropic achievements, for which he was praised, were made possible largely thanks to these profits.

Tobacco was one of the most widely consumed colonial products in Portugal and around the world, especially after the popularisation of pipe, cigar, and cigarette smoking. The tobacco plant is native to South America and was part of the daily lives of indigenous peoples, who used it in ritual and medicinal practices. Tobacco was introduced to Europe in the sixteenth century. Until its independence, Brazil was Portugal's main

[7] As we can see in the Phaeton, the Victorias, the Calèche, and the Clarence in the collection

supplier[8], with a significant increase in production recorded in Bahia between 1785 and 1804 (Costa, 2014). Tobacco was consumed across the social spectrum and profoundly transformed social habits. An example of this is the nineteenth-century practice of retiring to smoking rooms after a meal, spaces reserved for male sociability. As Françoise Vèrges points out, the consumption of products such as tobacco, sugar, coffee, and tea transformed European societies, but their origins lay in colonial exploitation and the appropriation of local practices, integrated into global trade systems built on forced labour and slavery[9] (Vèrges, 2024).

To enjoy a private sedan chair was a privilege restricted to an elite, implying not only ownership of the object but also the means to pay for its use. The sedan chair was a clear marker of status and testified to the wealth of the Count of Farrobo—an example that may also lead us to recall other influential families of nineteenth-century Portugal who enriched themselves through colonial trade and royal monopolies.

Replicating Imperialist Visual Narratives

We have already observed different ways in which colonialism is expressed in the museum's collection. We cannot, however, conclude this reflection without recalling the creation, during the Estado Novo (an authoritarian and nationalist regime), of a replica of the Coach of the Coronation of Lisbon. The iconography was adapted to the message that, two hundred years after the embassy to Pope Clement XI, Salazar's regime sought to transmit. The replica of the vehicle does not belong to the National Coach Museum but rather to the Museum of Lisbon, and it has not been musealised, a fact we greatly regret given its ideological weight.

The sculptural groups that adorn the original Coach of the Coronation of Lisbon have already been analysed. The creation of the replica was commissioned from the Casa Olaio by the Lisbon City Council, with the purpose of parading it in the recently revived City Festivities. It would also feature, in 1940, in the historical parade of the Portuguese World Exhibition, representing the "Splendour" of the eighteenth century.

Figure 5 *Lithographic Poster of the Grand Lisbon Festivities, Litografia Nacional do Porto, 1934.*

The replica was created one year after the promulgation of the Constitution, which included the Colonial Act, in which it was declared that "it is an organic essence of the Portuguese nation to fulfil the historical function of possessing and colonising overseas territories and of civilising the indigenous populations therein" (Colonial Act, 1930). The regime insisted on the rhetoric that Western origins were superior and that the transmission of Christian civilisation formed part of Portugal's colonial mission.

We highlight three events that clarify the intention behind the choice to reproduce the Coach of the Coronation of Lisbon. The replica was created in 1934. This was the year of the First Portuguese Colonial Exhibition in Porto, where human beings relocated from territories under Portuguese rule at the time were exhibited, their daily lives staged in recreations of indigenous villages. Henrique Galvão, the technical director, admitted that the organisation's objective was to captivate the thousands of visitors attracted by the «exotic», educating them and instilling "a great sense of our greatness as an imperial people" (Galvão, 1934). Henrique Galvão was also responsible, in 1934, for the slogan "Portugal is not a small country." The phrase appeared on a poster, distributed in several languages, showing a map of the European continent overlaid with

[8] It later came to depend on the African colonies, or on imports from Cuba and the United States of America.
[9] Tobacco was, in fact, the standard commodity in the trade of enslaved people (Costa, 2014, p. 229).

Portuguese colonies to emphasise the empire's extent. Finally, in the same year, the First National Congress of Colonial Anthropology took place, discussing aspects related to the biology and ethnicity of the people relocated for the Colonial Exhibition, who were studied during their stay in Portugal.

Given this context, it is unsurprising that this was the coach chosen for reproduction, since it represents "the glorious triumph of the Portuguese over subjugated Africa and Asia" (Chracas, 1996, p.99), with the Joanine-era discourse appropriated by the Estado Novo. The iconographic programme of the Coach of the Coronation of Lisbon reflects a racial, cultural and religious hierarchy, praising Lisbon and, by extension, the Portuguese Empire and the Catholic Church.

Rediscovering the Collection

We thus present our proposal on how to approach the topic of colonialism through the collection of the National Coach Museum, hoping that the considerations outlined will foster deeper reflection and broader debate on this issue. Alongside the established narratives on the artistic and heritage value of the collection, it is essential to open up to more inclusive, conscious, and critical readings.

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