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LUÍS SILVA

"The Spaniards' way of being is different from ours": discourses of national identification in the border of Alentejo

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"The Spaniards' way of being is different from ours": discourses of national identification in the border of Alentejo. This article tackles the discourses of national identification produced by the inhabitants of a village close to the border between Portugal and Spain on the Guadiana river, in order to shed light on the persistence of the Castilians/Spaniards as the main collective partner, the "significant other" in the construction and reproduction, through difference, of Portuguese identity. Based on ethnographic materials collected approximately in the last two decades, it shows that, in the context under study, the representation of the personality of the Portuguese people emerges out of a structure of contrasts in relation to the representation of the Spaniards' personality. Similarly, the contrast to the Castilians/Spaniards is the main leitmotif from which the Portuguese identity has been built over time.

KEYWORDS: national character; stereotypes; national identity; Iberian border.

"A maneira de ser dos espanhóis é diferente da nossa": discursos de identificação nacional na fronteira do Alentejo. Este artigo aborda os discursos de identificação nacional produzidos pelos habitantes de uma aldeia próxima da fronteira luso--espanhola no rio Guadiana, a fim de ilustrar a persistência dos castelhanos/espanhóis enquanto parceiro coletivo preferencial, o "outro significante" na construção e reprodução, pela diferença, da identidade portuguesa. Com base em materiais etnográficos recolhidos sensivelmente nas últimas duas décadas, o artigo mostra que, no contexto em estudo, a representação da personalidade dos portugueses emerge por oposição à representação da personalidade dos espanhóis. De igual modo, o contraste com os castelhanos/espanhóis é o principal *leitmotiv* a partir do qual se tem construído e reproduzido a identidade portuguesa ao longo dos tempos.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: caráter nacional; estereótipos; identidade nacional; fronteira ibérica.

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INTRODUCTION[1]

As Federico Neiburg (2002, p. 10296) mentions, the expression "national character"

> describes forms of collective self-perception, sensibility, and conduct which are shared by the individuals who inhabit a modern nation-state. It presupposes the existence of psychological and cultural homogeneity among the citizens of each country, as well as the idea that each nation can be considered a collective individual, with characteristics analogous to the empirical individuals who are its inhabitants.[2]

The subject of "national character" is a fertile ground for anthropological research and debate that gives rise to two main lines of inquiry. The first of these lines was initially developed by the Culture and Personality School, with contributions by prestigious anthropologists like Geoffrey Gorer (1942), Margaret Mead (1942), and Ruth Benedict (1989 [1946]), among others. With this school, the idea that a culture gives rise to a common personality was broadened to encompass the idea that national cultures engender national

2   On the concept of "national character", see António Fonseca (2008).

characters. The work carried out by these authors focuses on the description and psychological characterization of cultural configurations and the personality types associated with it, and on an attempt to explain the relationships between types of cultures and types of personalities through early childhood experiences (Lindesmith and Strauss, 1950, quoted by Neiburg and Goldman, 1998, p. 63). The fault with this approach derives from its generalizations and simplifications, and their related ontological essentialism (Neiburg and Goldman, 1998, pp. 68ff.).

The second approach, which is relatively more recent, is marked by the critical study of the discourse on national character, rather than by the study of the discredited "national characters" themselves. Inspired by the idea that the construction and reproduction of ethnic groups and cultural diversity derive not from "geographical and social isolation" but rather from the coming into play of processes of "exclusion and incorporation" in contexts of inter-ethnic contact (Barth, 1969, pp. 9-10), this research quits its focus on the cultural "content" of national groups and starts to deal with the processes involved in their construction and reproduction (for instance, Brubaker, 1996; Herzfeld, 1997; Llobera, 1983). From this viewpoint, "national discourse is not only an *expression* of certain national feelings, but also a mechanism that *creates* a nation as a community" (Schneider, 2004, p. 100; original emphasis). It just so happens that one of the elements that a nation must say it possesses, in order to affirm its existence and singularity, is precisely "a national character or mentality" (Löfgren, 1989, p. 9; see also Mauss, 1969 [1920], pp. 603-604). As a matter of fact, the existence of a national character, reflecting a particular personality, has been a central argument of national ideologies (Leersson, 2006).

According to Louis Dumont (1983), German national ideology, as found in the philosophers Johann Herder (1744-1803) and Johann Fichte (1762-1814), contains a strange combination of opposing tendencies. On the one hand, it is considered that the individual derives his ways of being (thoughts, feelings, actions) from the national culture in which he is embedded, an idea that reflects a holistic perspective. Simultaneously, national cultures are thought of as "collective individuals", reflecting an individualistic tendency. On the other hand, since they are defined as collective individuals, national cultures are considered to be equivalent to one another, regardless of the differences thought to exist between them, which also reflect an egalitarian tendency. But there is also a hierarchical order insofar as, for each historical period, we have a national culture that is considered representative of all mankind.

As Richard Handler (1988, p. 41) remarks, this theoretical formulation helps to understand the importance of a collective psyche in nationalist discourse.

From this point of view, national cultures are literally seen as individuals that "have a soul, a spirit and a personality" (*ibid.*, p. 41). At the same time, the personality, the soul of this collective individual, not only claims its singularity *vis-à-vis* its analogous entities, but also installs a hierarchy. This is because the nation is a product that is historically constructed through a double process of identification, one internal, highlighting the common resources of a country's citizens, the other external, underlining the features that set it apart from other nations (for instance, Löfgren, 1989; Triandafyllidou, 1998).

The specificities of a nation are usually put into discourse under the guise of stereotypes and/or what Joep Leerssen (2006, p. 17) calls "ethnotypes", stereotyped images of the temperament and specific moral features of a certain national group and the others. Despite being abusive generalizations that derive from isolated facts, national stereotypes play an important role at various levels. They not only mark the existence of nations and the differences that are supposed to exist between them (Sobral, 2012, p. 17), but they also work as behavior guidelines for interacting with the "other" (van den Berghe, 1997), when they arise and are put into action. Apparently monolithic, stereotypes are, nevertheless, flexible and dependent on the historical, social, and geopolitical context (for instance, Herzfeld, 1993; Löfgren, 1989; McDonald, 1993; Valcuende del Río, 1998).

In Portugal the theme of "national character" has been subjected to both of these approaches. The first was carried out, not just by ethnologists/anthropologists, since the last quarter of the 19th Century (for instance, Braga, 1894; Dias, 1961 [1950]; Gil, 2004; Lourenço, 1978; Pascoaes, 2007 [1915]). The second approach is much more recent and has produced a critical analysis of the discourse, the texts of these authors (Cabral, 2003; Cunha, 2006; Fonseca, 2008; Leal, 2000a, pp. 83-104; 2000b). Some contributions notwithstanding (for instance, Amante, 2007, pp. 271-287; Rovisco, 2013; Sobral, 2012, pp. 85ff.), far less attention has been given to the national identification discourse of common folk, the people that, as José Manuel Sobral (2015) shows, live and die in anonymity.

Considering the results of the *National Identity* module from the *International Social Survey Programme* 2003 as a "*folk* theory" about what it means to be Portuguese, João Leal (2010) draws a parallel between this and an erudite theory. According to the author, this folk theory is characterized by a moderate importance of nationality as a source of identification for those inquired, demanding criteria, chiefly ethno-cultural criteria, for the definition of what it means to be Portuguese, and a contradictory pride in the country, in which symbolic reasons prevail over practical reasons for national pride. In this respect, this theory brings forth some of the central topics of intellectual

production on Portuguese identity, notably that of "hyper-identity", that of "Portugal as a problem", and that of "Portugal's decadence and backwardness" (*ibid.*, pp. 77-80).

The present article points in this same direction, seeking to identify the constants of Portuguese identity's representation. The article deals with the national identification discourses produced by the residents of a village in the Alentejo, close to the Portuguese-Spanish border, with the purpose of illustrating the persistence of the Castilians/Spaniards as the preferred collective partner, the "significant other" (Triandafyllidou, 2006) in the construction and reproduction, by contrast, of Portuguese identity. The text is organized as follows. After describing the methodological aspects and the context of the study, respectively, the article examines the empirical material. In the final section, the results from the ethnographic study are confronted with the importance that the contrast under consideration has had in the constitution of Portuguese identity, diachronically.

METHODOLOGY

This article is based on ethnographic material collected in the Portuguese village of Montes Juntos at two different moments, more than a decade apart, between September of 1997 and May 1998, and May 2015. The author lived and worked in this village, mainly during the first period, except for three weeks of research in the Spanish village of Cheles, gradually expanding the network of acquaintances and respondents.

The main methods of data collection consisted of participant observation, interviews, and detailed field notes. We interacted daily, in multiple contexts, with a considerable number of residents, including during visits to Cheles, crossing the international border by foot across the Guadiana river; we participated in festivals and bullfights; we surveyed neighbors and identified permanent residents; we conducted 40 open (recorded) interviews – between 30 and 120 minutes in duration – among residents of both sexes and different age groups (either individually or in group). We tried to record, either during the interviews or during informal conversations, the subjective experience of the difference between the residents of this sector on both sides of the border, and also the comments related to the resemblances and dissimilarities that we encountered, *de facto*, in the field.

Considering the great salience of festivities and food in the residents' collective identity discourse, we have made these two topics the core subjects of the ethnographic investigation. Special attention was paid to patronal festivities – Nossa Senhora da Conceição in Montes Juntos, held in the weekend

closest to May 3rd, and Santo Cristo da Paz in Cheles, celebrated during the 13th and 14th of September – and two other celebrations – Carnival in Montes Juntos and the Holy Week in Cheles –, as well as to festive food and food served in snack-bars and restaurants. The fact that the discourses related to these two topics often refer to national stereotypes led to their inclusion in the set of themes under investigation.

CONTEXT

Montes Juntos is a village in the municipality of Alandroal, lying just five kilometers away from the Iberian border on the Guadiana River (or Alqueva's Great Lake), facing the Spanish village of Cheles (Badajoz) just seven kilometers away as the crow flies. The origins of this village, formed by the connection of formerly separate properties, remain unknown. We know, however, that the territory of the parish it belongs to, Santo António dos Capelins, was repopulated after the *Reconquista* in the 13th Century and remained part of the municipality of Terena until 1836 (*Enciclopédia Luso-Brasileira de Cultura*, 1966, p. 894), the parish itself being founded in 1853 (Costa, 1934, p. 634).

The oldest reference we find about Montes Juntos dates back to 1888, when repair work was conducted on the *Guarda Fiscal* (Customs) station (Documentação sobre prédio n.º 199, presente no Agrupamento Fiscal de Évora), shut down, like many others, by Ordinance 525/93 of May 17, 1993. The Minutes of the Capelins Parish Council, dated March 22 1921, record that the *Junta de Paróquia* was instated in 1910, and was based in the sacristy of Capelins' church until 1921, when it was set up "in a house on the location of Montes Juntos", where it remains to this day.

The village of Montes Juntos has demographic and socio-economic features that are similar to most of Portugal's border towns and villages, namely, low population density, dual ageing, and low education and training indexes (cf. Cavaco, 1995). By the end of the 1990s the village had 420 inhabitants – five of them born in Spain (three women and two men) – of which 12% were aged 16 or less and 28% were older than 65. Likewise, one third were illiterate and many survived on subsidies and pensions, while the majority of the active population worked in the primary sector. Presently, the village has just about 200 permanent residents, including two Spanish women (mother and daughter).

One of the central features of rural and coastal communities of the Iberian Peninsula and its autonomous regions is the rivalry among neighboring towns and villages (for instance, S. Cole, 1991; Leal, 1994; Riegelhaupt, 1973),

and Montes Juntos is no exception. Its residents frequently recall some of the most striking rivalries they kept with the residents of Ferreira de Capelins and Cabeça de Carneiro, including the fights between young men from these villages every time they met in balls and the danger they were in each time they courted a girl from a neighboring village. Although mitigated by the enlargement of kinship and friendship networks, this rivalry persists today, and festivities remain one of its main means of expression.[3]

This rivalry is, nevertheless, negligible when compared with the one that links Montes Juntos with the Spanish village of Cheles, similar, to an extent, to the preferential rivalries between neighboring villages observed by Julian Pitt-Rivers (1971 [1954]) in Andalusia. Indeed, to the majority of the population of Montes Juntos, Cheles is their main partner in the construction, by contrast, of a collective identity. There was an exception made in the context of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) when, according to the residents' discourse, rivalry was replaced by solidarity, as occurred in other places along the Portuguese-Spanish border (for instance, Simões, 2011). This preference is further motivated by the existence of an international border separating the two villages, a division that makes the territorial limits of the village coincide with the territorial limits of the country, turning "neighbor" into "foreigner".

The anthropological literature shows that physical and geographical referents are not crucial for the demarcation of borders between symbolically constructed groups (for instance, Appadurai, 1996; Barth, 1969; Cohen, 1985; van Gennep, 1960 [1908]). Undoubtedly, though, these referents are extremely effective expressions of identity and difference, especially when dealing with an international border, although there are exceptions (Medeiros, 2006). This is illustrated by the effect that the setting of the border in the late 13th Century had on the formation of Portuguese identity, allowing "the notions of import and export to become more present" and the association of "a certain space with the opposition between 'national' and 'foreign', which began to refer not only to people but also to things and, above all, to currency", according to the historian José Mattoso (2015 [1985], p. 782). On the other hand, it is in border areas that the dialectic between center and periphery, a factor in the creation of political borders, is more intensely felt (for instance, J. Cole and Wolf, 1974; Godinho, 2011; Sahlins, 1989; Wilson and Donnan, 1998).

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3   Concerning Cabeça de Carneiro, this rivalry is illustrated by an ottava known by most in Montes Juntos: "To Carneiro I'll go no more/ Not even if invited/ One of them had warned me/ Not to go there or burn to death/ Not to go there or burn to death/ For that is the practice/ They still keep the axe/ To be used absent the fire".

According to Peter Sahlins (1989, pp. 110-111), the main identification processes in border contexts do not reproduce the concentric circle identity model that characterizes European rural society. Instead of a hierarchical order that starts in the village, parish, municipality, region, in which attachment and affection become more and more diluted as we move away from the native land, there is a dialectic in which the relative decrease in a local sense of belonging and loyalty match an inverse increase in national loyalty and belonging. In other words, border populations are essentially committed to the (re)creation of the horizontal relationship of a country as opposed to another, of a community that occupies a given space and claims a nationality in opposition to another community in similar circumstances.

In Montes Juntos, as in some places close to the Spanish-Portuguese border (Brito, 1988, p. 339), and not in others (Amarante, 2007, p. 239; Valcuende del Rio, 1998, pp. 280-285), things happen in a similar way. As demonstrated elsewhere (Silva, 2016), in opposition to João Leal's (2010, p. 69) conclusion relative to the aforementioned analysis of the results of the *International Social Survey Programme* 2003 that, "in Portugal", one gives "moderate importance" to "nationality as a source of individual identity", in Montes Juntos, nationality is without a doubt the most important identity category.

This situation can be spotted at several levels, namely, in (i) the automatic identification of the villages of Montes Juntos and Cheles with their respective national inclusion spaces, Portugal and Spain; (ii) the shift, which tends to be systematic, of a local identity discourse toward a national identity discourse, in this case also built around a rationale of "localising national differences and nationalising local ones" (Sahlins, 1989, p. 286); and (iii) the fact that its residents interact mainly as nationals of different countries. This article focuses on the stereotypes that underlie the creation of a psychological border between the Portuguese and the Spanish in the village studied.

It is important to mention that these two villages belong to a sector of the Portuguese territory neighboring Spain whose limits are not yet diplomatically and formally established, on account of the conflict around the possession of Olivença and its surroundings. Annexed by Spain following the Treaty of Badajoz (1801), this territory is thought to rightfully belong to Portugal, as claimed by the *Grupo dos Amigos de Olivença* (Friends of Olivença Group). The fact is that Olivença had not only entered the domains of Portugal via the Treaty of Alcanises (1297), but also Spain had signed the text of the Congress of Vienna (1814-1815), in which it pledged to return the territory as quickly as possible, which never occurred. Therefore, the area of the "international high Guadiana" – a designation ascribed to the portion of the Guadiana River between the mouth of the Caia River, close to Elvas, and the mouth of the

Cuncos creek, in the vicinity of Mourão – is still waiting to be defined, or demarcated, since the river acts as a fiscal or surveillance line.[4]

The wavering/uncertainty of this sector's border line helps us to better understand the Portuguese presence in Cheles during the past five centuries. The Portuguese Independence Restoration War (1640-1668) had a direct impact in Cheles, which became depopulated just three years after the outbreak of hostilities (Torrado, 2000, p. 61). With the war's end, came a slow re-population of the area and the construction, in 1670, of a new settlement, inhabited mostly by new families, the majority of which were Portuguese (Madoz, 1847 VII, p. 313). In a document written in 1791, regarding this location, in reply to Article 3 of *Interrogatório de la Real Audiencia...* (1994, p. 303), it is mentioned that "the proclivity that mostly stands out in these dwellers is that of the wine owing to their Portuguese ancestry". In the mid-19th Century, most of the resident "families" came from Portugal, "maintaining the language" of that country (Madoz, 1847 VII, p. 313). In more recent years, by the end of the 1990s, only six of its approximately 1400 residents were Portuguese, all female, most of them now deceased. But many people admit to having Portuguese ancestors in their genealogies.

NATIONAL STEREOTYPES IN COUNTERPOINT

It is true that, as in other geographical contexts (for instance, Amante, 2007, pp. 285-287; Medeiros, 2006; Rovisco, 2013, pp. 359, 375; Uriarte, 1994, p. 173), there are people in this village who do not perceive any differences between residents from either side of the Iberian border. Nevertheless, besides objective differences, or beyond them (Silva, 2016), the majority of its residents perceive and verbalize the existence of subjective discontinuities that coincide with the border. "The Spaniards' way of being is different from ours", the Portuguese, some say. "They have a different mentality", others assert. "There is a great difference between the Portuguese and the Spanish [...], there is a great difference when it comes to mentality", said an interviewee in his sixties. "Everything is different, the way of being... everything; the Spanish are very different from the Portuguese", added another resident, in his thirties, during an informal conversation in a snack-bar when he guaranteed that concluding the study on the difference between Montes Juntos and Cheles would take the author a lot of time (*Field journal*).

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4   The remaining sectors of the land border between Portugal and Spain were defined by two border treaties, one signed in 1864 (*Tratado de Limites...*, n. d.), the other in 1926 (*Convénio de Limites...*, 1928).

Before moving forward with the analysis of the psychological differences perceived between the two "imagined communities" (Anderson, 1991 [1983]), we should mention that, as is usual with stereotyping processes (Quattrone, 1986, quoted by Billig, 1995, p. 81), the residents ascribe, in the context at hand, more features to the other, the Spaniards, than to themselves as Portuguese. One additional factor: these attributions are usually made not in absolute terms but in comparative ("more" or "less") ones, as when describing persons and groups (Tajfel, 1982-1983 [1981] I, p. 149). Furthermore, the relative and oppositional character of this identification implies its inscription in an "implicit negativity" (Boon, 1982, quoted by Cohen, 1994, p. 138), which means that while attributing features to the Spanish, those are automatically disavowed to the Portuguese and vice-versa.

Much in the same way, men are more referenced than women in the discourses under analysis. But while the features attributed to women define them and them alone, features attributed to men describe, more often and simultaneously, not only men but people in general. In general, when mentioning "the Spaniards" and/or "the Portuguese", the interviewees are talking about the complete national group and not just the male gender. When asked if what they had just stated also applied to women, sometimes they affirmed "all of them", while on other occasions they answered that "it is the same thing, the women are as different (from us) as the men".

There are, nevertheless, cases in which a clear distinction between men and women is established. In other cases, still, the referents used are strictly masculine or feminine. Regardless of some exceptions, the image one has of the men is, therefore, in line with the image one has of the nation. In a study on national stereotypes carried out in several European and non-European countries, in which the respondents were asked to describe the people, men, and women of the national group they belonged to, Alice Eagly and Mary Kite (1987, quoted by Amâncio, 1993, pp. 130-131) came to the same conclusion. It means that there is a predisposed equivalence between the notions of "man" and "individual", revealing an asymmetry in gender representation, but also a symbolic dominance of male over female (Amâncio, 1993; see also Almeida, 1995).[5]

As mentioned by Carmelo Lisón (1992, p. 149), the "other" "is an ambivalent synthetic figure that sometimes attracts and, almost always and simultaneously, repels". The image of the Spanish in Montes Juntos is an example of this situation. They possess, in this village, images that are differently valued,

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5   On the representations associated with national women, Portuguese and Spanish, see Silva (2016, pp. 134-144).

either positively or negatively. Regarding the styles of socialization, the image of the Spanish is usually positive. In fact, in Montes Juntos, similarly to what happens in other places on both sides of the Portuguese-Spanish border (for instance, Amante, 2007, p. 281; Rovisco, 2013, pp. 361-362; Valcuende del Río, 1998, p. 334), including Cheles, one considers the Spanish to be "more joyful", "fun", and "expansive" than the Portuguese, who are seen as "more reserved". Consider, for instance, the following interview fragments:

> The Spanish are more joyful, more fun-loving. They come here and they may start to sing together; it's different, that's all (F., male, age 25).

> They are more cheerful than the Portuguese. […] We are more restrained (D., female, age 46).

The image of the border communities is, in this instance, in agreement with the one outlined by intellectuals from Portugal and other nations. This is specifically the case with Jorge Dias (1961 [1950]), to whom the Portuguese do not possess "spontaneous joy" and are "less exuberant, loud and expansive" than other Mediterranean peoples, namely, the Spanish, being that "a single Spaniard, in a train car, drowns out with his voice those of all the Portuguese". On the other hand, *sadness* is one of the features of the Portuguese personality according to Teófilo Braga (1898, pp. 161-162) and Teixeira de Pascoaes (2007 [1915]), as well as the residents of Cheles and other Spanish border villages and towns (De Miguel, 2000, quoted by Amante, 2007, p. 279). The most emphatic expression of this representation, often associated with *saudade*, originates in the idea that the Portuguese have a propensity for suicide (Braga, 1898, p. 162) and/or that they are "a suicidal people" (Unamuno, 2011 [1908]).

In Montes Juntos, however, these characteristics of the Spanish are also a subject of criticism. In this sense, as in the border villages of the Beiras (Amante, 2007, p. 287; Rovisco, 2013, p. 362) and in the aforementioned text by Jorge Dias, it is said that "the Spanish are very loud". "What they are is much louder", said an interviewee in her twenties after having branded the Spanish as a more joyful and expansive people than the Portuguese. The festivals, the bullfights, and the public socialization places are the contexts most highlighted by the residents when wanting to illustrate this Spanish stereotype, of whom it is also said, like Jorge Dias (1961 [1950]), that they "speak too loud":

> They come over here to the festival and make one hell of a racket. If there's a festival and they come, we start hearing them in the distance, singing, clapping and stuff. They're a cheerful bunch, I tell you, much more than the Portuguese (M., male, age 65).

You've never been to a market fair? It's exactly the same, that rowdy crowd blabbering away, so much blabber, no one understands them. That's how the Spanish are. Five or six of them get together… when they come over here, they speak louder than the whole village. (Still nowadays?) Still nowadays?! Wait for the May festival, with the bullfight… (A., male, age 21).

Concerning the dimensions believed to be fundamental for the definition of individual character and, by extension, national character – virility, honesty, righteousness, and kindness – the image of the Spanish is, in the village in question, openly negative, even stigmatizing. The exact terms of this demonization deserve a detailed scrutiny.

One of the most verbalized stereotypes about the Spanish in the village is that they are "very fearful", especially in the context of bullfighting. This is most evident during the running of the cattle in Montes Juntos, particularly the one that takes place Sunday mornings during the festival of Nossa Senhora da Conceição, since a great number of *cheleros* come to take part in it. First of all, the presence of residents of Cheles in these events, even after the construction of the Alqueva dam that made the traditional crossing of the border (by fording) impossible[6], actualizes the stereotype that "the Spanish are very fond of bullfights".

At the same time, what is at stake here is not only the village's masculinity – as it happens in non-border contexts, for instance in Pardais (Almeida, 1995, pp. 200ff.) – but also, and most of all, the virility of the countries of origin of those involved. Since the groups that spontaneously gather to perform the *pega* (catching) of the animal are formed according to nationality, mutual accusations of lack of courage or virility are common. While the residents of Montes Juntos say that "the Spanish chicken out when it's time to grab the cow", those from Cheles state that "the Portuguese are not bullfighters, the fight in Montes Juntos is a Spanish affair".

One should note that these stereotypes appear also in the discourse about the official bullfights of the countries in question, where Portuguese bullfighting is characterized by horseback fighting and the *pegas* by groups of amateur *forcados*, and Spanish style bullfighting involves *toreros* fighting on foot, the lancing of the bull, and its death in the arena. Regarding these differences, it is said that "the Portuguese are braver than the Spaniards", because they "deal with the beast in its full strength", without lancing it, and because they "hold it" (for instance, A., male, age 73; M., male, age 78).

6   The construction on the Alqueva dam began in 1976 but was suspended between 1978 and 1995. The sluices were finally closed in 2002. Presently, the shortest road connection between the two villages is a 70 kilometers stretch.

On the other hand, the *brave* Portuguese and *fearful* Spanish stereotypes can be found in other Portuguese contexts close to the Iberian border. For example, in 1994 a 60 year old fisherman in Vila Viçosa declared, when confronted with a perceived difference in fishing habits on the Guadiana River, that "the Spanish fish by day" and "not at night", when "the catch is better", because "they are very fearful" (Silva, 2016, p. 28). Eduarda Rovisco (2013, pp. 352--354) registered similar statements around the border areas of Idanha-a-Nova municipality, but in the context of the discourse related to smuggling. Much in the same way, Fátima Amante (2007, pp. 273-274) mentions that the Portuguese are considered "braver" on both sides of the border in the municipality of Sabugal, much on account of the *capeias raianas* (a peculiar bullfighting style).

Another thing that is frequently said in detriment of the Spanish is that they are "false", especially when it comes to doing business, where it is said that "they are always thinking about swindling you, they won't trick you only if they can't", a statement that is reverberated by an interviewee in her fifties, according to whom "they are not like us: when they take a liking to something, and don't have money, they steal it". Similarly to what happens in the Beira Baixa border area (Rovisco, 2013, pp. 354-355), this stereotype about the Spanish is closely associated with interactions relative to cross-border smuggling:

> Very treacherous is what they are. (About what?) It's that they are misers… business-wise. Almost unimportant stuff, but they're treacherous. They would order a pocketknife from me, […] "let us see the knife, how much is it?"; "It costs x". They would come back and say: "Hey, it's too expensive, I don't want it" […]. Listen, once I had to keep one of those shawls to put over the shoulders, I gave it to my mother […]. They never wanted to pay for anything (J., male, age 83, *Field Journal*).

Meanwhile, in Montes Juntos, the image of the Spanish as untrustworthy, already present in Fernão Lopes' (1385-1459) opinion about the Castilians (Saraiva, 1993, quoted by Sobral, 2003, p. 1115), is usually associated with another negative representation widespread in the village: their dishonor. This is clearly expressed by an interviewee:

> The Spaniard is more disloyal than the Portuguese. The Portuguese is a more serious individual. The Portuguese keeps his word and his commitment. They… it's like I say, they're half-gypsy; they're of the gypsy kind (J., male, age 74).

Finally, there is the widely accepted opinion that "the Spanish are mean". One of the empirical referents of such classification points to the way the animals are treated in bullfights:

> (Did you ever go to the Santo Cristo da Paz festival in Cheles?) I went there several times, to the bullfight. Once, a Spaniard there severed the cow's tendons and the crowd applauded. Eh, the Spaniards are worse than the gypsies when it comes to doing evil stuff. They're not afraid of anything, they wreck everything, they're evil (F., male, age 66).

Others are a throwback to the past, especially to a time of cross-border smuggling, but also of assaults and arrests of Portuguese by *carabineros*, to the Spanish Civil War and, though implicitly, to the armed faction of the Basque nationalist movement *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna*:

> The Spanish are no good. When the lads went there… there, in a festival, the *carabineros* beat two or three Portuguese and took the pocketknives from our boys and sent them back to Portugal; they didn't want us there; they were mean, brutish (M., male, age 73, *Field Journal*).

> The Spanish… they may have good people and bad people there, but they're not like the Portuguese. They don't have our blood; Spanish blood is black and ours is white, compared to theirs. (Why do you say that?) It's just the way it is. They kill presidents, they kill everything, we don't kill anyone here. They fight wars of their own making, they're evil, they have bad blood. […] The Spaniard's blood is more… wicked. They are like a kind of gypsy, not like the Portuguese (M., female, age 59).

We should mention, by the way, that the stereotypes of Portuguese *kindness* and Spanish *evil* can be found in other border towns and villages on the Portuguese side (for instance, Rovisco, 2013, pp. 351-354), as well as in the discourse of many other Portuguese individuals, usually considered to be a "kind" people (Dias, 1961 [1950]), "mild mannered", contrasting with the greater violence of the Spanish, the Spanish Civil War being a case in point (Sobral, 2012, pp. 17, 82).

On the other hand, it is remarkable that the last statement transcribed above uses a metaphor – "Spanish blood is black and ours is white" – that seems to indicate that collective personality features are inherent, rather than acquired. Mostly because it adds a biological dimension to the psychological and cultural determinism that characterizes the aforementioned Culture and Personality School (Neiburg and Goldman, 1998), that the Jorge Dias (1961 [1950]) text we have been quoting is associated with, but also because it stresses the racial purity of the Portuguese, in contrast with the racial pollution of the Spanish.

This ideological process, that naturalizes arbitrariness and, in this case, demeans and (biologically) stigmatizes the Spanish, is also patent in another

assertion made by many of Montes Juntos' residents, according to whom "the Spaniards are a gypsy race", as some say, and "the Spaniard is a kind of gypsy", as most of them put it. A predisposition to singing and dancing while clapping hands, group camaraderie, excessive familiarity, wickedness, dishonesty, falsity, lack of concern with self reputation, as well as a state of impurity and barbarism in food habits – voiced by the widespread idea that they "eat snakes and lizards" – count among the main pivotal points of such analogy, leading to the conclusion that the "gypsies" are the reference group when defining the Spanish.

These racial representations underscore and perpetuate, not just the analogy between the Spanish and the gypsies, but also, and foremost, evoking the hierarchical principle Dumont (1983) identified with regard to German national ideology, the superiority of the Portuguese compared with both groups. This idea of racial superiority and purity is, not only deeply wrong, but also extremely dangerous, as the Holocaust has proved.

FINAL NOTES

The purpose of this article was to examine the national identification discourses produced by the residents of a border area village of the Alentejo, in order to illustrate the persistence of the Castilians/Spaniards as the main collective partner in the construction and reproduction, through contrast, of Portuguese identity.

The materials presented show strong empirical evidence that, in Montes Juntos, representations of Portuguese identity emerge amid a structure of contrasts in relation to the Spanish. In Anna Triandafyllidou's terms (2006), the Spanish, here, become the "significant other", the other that, due to his proximity, allows the construction, by contrast, of a collective identity. *Joy* and *expansiveness*, but also *cowardice*, *falsity*, *unrighteousness*, and *wickedness* count among the most salient dimensions in the image – mainly, stigmatizing – of the Spanish way of being, attributes that are considered to be absent by nature from the personality of the Portuguese, thus granting them with value and superiority. Through such attributes, one starts to construct what Valcuende del Río (1998, p. 55) would call a "mythological superportuguese" – *sad*, *reserved*, *brave*, *honest*, *honorable*, and *kind* – and his opposite, a "mythological superspanish". This is a subject that has still to be properly studied and justified, but what this research also suggests is that these national stereotypes, based on the interactions produced in the country's periphery, are not limited to the context and period under analysis and can be equally found in a great number of texts.

Meanwhile, the aspect we most wish to underscore is that the contrast with the Castilians/Spaniards is also the *leitmotiv* from which Portuguese identity has been constructed and reproduced throughout much of its History, particularly in the context of the late 14th Century wars with Castile (Mattoso, 2015 [1985]) and of the War of Restoration of Portugal's independence, that José Mattoso (1998) classifies as "national wars", but also in the correlated and age-old *Sebastianism* (Real, 2014). This situation is also reflected in the school textbooks made during the *Estado Novo* (1933-1974), in terms of the teaching of History (Torgal, 2009, pp. 288-289), and of spatial representations (Bastos, 1998).

It is unquestionable that there are historical contexts when, instead of the differences, the closeness between both peoples has been stressed, either among the border populations (we have mentioned it previously regarding the Spanish Civil War) or at the State level, the "Salazarist school" (Torgal, 2014) being an example. According to Boaventura Sousa Santos (1994), the cultural elites' discourse sustains, since the late 19th Century, from Fidelino Figueiredo and António Sardinha to Natália Correia and Eduardo Lourenço, including Jorge Dias, the idea that the Portuguese are "a different kind of Spanish". Antero de Quental (2010 [1871]), on the other hand, chooses to highlight the similarity between their destinies, the decadence of both peoples from the 16th Century on. In any case, there have been and still are "significant others" (Triandafyllidou, 2006) in the manufacture, by contrast, of Portuguese identity. But, as José Manuel Sobral (2003, p. 1116) mentions, "the Castilian/Spaniard has been, in the Portuguese case, the most relevant among several "significant others" that come into the constitution, via confrontation, of national identities".

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