



Paved Roads and Enchanted Moresses: The Perception of the Past Among the Peasant Population of the Alto Minho
Author(s): Joao de Pina-Cabral
Source: *Man*, New Series, Vol. 22, No. 4 (Dec., 1987), pp. 715-735
Published by: Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland
Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2803360>
Accessed: 10/02/2010 07:12

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=rai>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Man*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

PAVED ROADS AND ENCHANTED MOORESSES:
THE PERCEPTION OF THE PAST AMONG THE
PEASANT POPULATION OF THE ALTO MINHO

JOÃO DE PINA-CABRAL

University of Lisbon

Starting from the observation that the peasant worldview of the Alto Minho (northwestern Portugal) holds apparently inconsistent perceptions of the past we are led to emphasise the existence of a multiplicity of social times. The latter, however, is necessarily accompanied by an effort at unification which profoundly links attitudes to social time, social space and social order. The progressive erosion of rural autarky explains why the preservation of social order is no longer so dependent as before on the integration of social space and social time, previously achieved through the rituals of community. A new attitude to time is developing which is interpreted as corresponding to an opening of peasant society to history—that is, to a cosmological condition characterised by greater instability and irreversibility as well as by chronologically standardised time.

This article is an attempt to answer the question of how the past is perceived among the peasant population of the Alto Minho region of Portugal, where I have carried out fieldwork intermittently since 1978 (cf. Pina-Cabral 1986). The study of any social group's collective representations of the past cannot be separated from the study of its attitude towards time, of which it is a sub-category. Before delving into the ethnographic material I want to present, therefore, it is essential to make a few preliminary comments.

I have chosen to speak of 'perception' of the past and of time as a useful shorthand term, even though I am aware that it raises problems. As William James puts it, 'the moment we pass beyond a very few seconds our consciousness of duration ceases to be an immediate perception and becomes a construction more or less symbolic' (1910: 281). Gurvitch too queries the notion saying that 'it is not enough to speak of the perception of time, but also of its apprehension, its representation and symbolization, its conceptualization and knowledge thereof, its measure and, finally, its quantification' (1958: 3). In short, the expression is used here to refer to the more unwieldy 'prise de conscience du temps' (1958: 3), with particular reference to (a) how it is conceptualised and (b) how it is valued.

The starting point for this investigation was the discovery that the ethnographic evidence I had collected did not suggest the existence of a unified and systematic conceptualisation or valuation of the society's past. This discovery required careful pondering as it might have threatened the very notion of

worldview. I was thus led to Gurvitch's proposal that social times are multiple. As he puts it, 'social life takes place within times which are *multiple, always divergent, frequently contradictory*, and the relative unification of which, often associated to a precarious hierarchization, represents a problem to any society' (1958: 1). As my focus is on the past, I am more concerned here with multiplicity in the *perception* of time than with the actual existence of a multiplicity of real times. This article, therefore, attempts to show how the society unifies the plurality of its social times—an essential requirement for its existence as a society (Gurvitch 1958).

A further hurdle has to be faced before we can proceed. Fabian has argued that 'time, much like language or money, is a carrier of significance, a form through which we define the content of the relations between the Self and the Other' (1983: ix), and that 'the construction of anthropology's object through temporal concepts and devices is a political act' (1983: x). The problems which he raises cannot be solved simply. They are particularly disturbing where (as here) the social scientist is studying a socio-cultural sub-universe of his own linguistic, national and cultural environment. By studying Portuguese peasants as Other, am I furthering the cultural hegemony of the national, urban bourgeoisie, to which I belong? As I do not deny that there are ideological, and therefore political, implications behind all forms of knowledge my answer can only be partial.

To what extent can it still be said that, when anthropologists study a particular culture, they compare it to their own? In our daily experience of the world, an Indian anthropologist, African anthropologist, Japanese anthropologist, and myself, differ considerably—and yet our writings are mutually useful and refer to the same scientific ancestors. While carrying out actual fieldwork anthropologists are, indeed, first of all confronted with the difference between the everyday experience of their own society and that being studied. But the anthropological tradition has become so complex, that the process of 'making sense' of the material and constructing 'ethnographic data', involves constant reference to an anthropological discourse distinctly at variance with everyday experience of the world 'at home'. Any strict identification of the scientific standpoint with the 'West' (as is at the basis of Fabian's argument), can today be construed as an act of scientific expropriation with serious political implications. By approaching their object as an Other, anthropologists are not negatively and surreptitiously defining a Self, but are rather attempting an act of 'de-ethnocentrification' (Pitt-Rivers (1980: 419)) in which their own everyday experience of the world might also become Other. The intellectual benefits are cumulative. For example, the work of the Mediterraneanist anthropologists in Britain in the 1950's depended on insights derived from their Africanist supervisors. In turn, the studies carried out by Lison-Tolosana, Loizos or Cutileiro of populations much closer to them from a biographical point of view depended on the efforts of their immediate predecessors. The privileged awareness of difference which the study of the multiplicity of times permits must, therefore, be seen as a positive feature and not only as an ideological trap.

It is, nevertheless, worth noting that a comparative approach is implicit in everything written about time and the past. Three levels of comparison seem

particularly relevant for this article: (a) the lineal, chronologically synchronised time of social scientific and historical thought;¹ (b) the everyday perception of time among the nationally hegemonic, urban bourgeoisie in Portugal; (c) the perception of time of peasant society 'as it was'. I am attempting to study the peasant worldview as it changes, and thus, as a heuristic device, I need to postulate (even if only tenuously) a difference between what is and what was, particularly as this is a central concern for the people themselves.

The notion of peasant worldview too needs to be further qualified. The multiplicity of social time is such that, within the same society, different cognitive contexts lead to divergent perceptions of time. Schutz's notion of 'finite provinces of meaning' (1970) will clarify what I mean. When an inhabitant of one of the parishes I studied goes to school and takes his examinations, or when he has literate ambitions and writes small pieces for the town's newspaper, he is entering into 'provinces of meaning' which are not those of his daily experience of labour on the farm. When an older woman chooses to specialise in magical knowledge, perhaps with the hope of making some extra earnings, she enters a 'province of meaning' which is open to all but which few choose to explore in depth.

When I speak of peasant worldview, therefore, I am referring to the 'province of meaning' of the everyday experience of agricultural labour in these two parishes. This is a worldview which functions on the presumption of (a) relative illiteracy, (b) self-employment on a farm that secures a good part of the family's food requirements, and (c) a close relation to a specific experience of community.

This leads us to the main explanatory hypothesis of this article, namely that attitudes towards time and towards the past of one's own society are profoundly related to attitudes towards social space and social order. As Evans-Pritchard put it, 'in a sense all time is structural since it is a conceptualization of collateral, coordinated, or cooperative activities: the movements of a group' (1940: 103). Thus, at the level of collective representations through social action, social time and social space are both the creatures and creators of social order.

Time and the building of paved roads

The two parishes where I carried out fieldwork—Paço and Couto²—face the River Lima on its south bank and have thus been open to river and road traffic ever since the Roman armies arrived in 137 B.C. The river and the riverside road—whether or not the latter was kept in good condition—have always been important thoroughfares. The progressive transformation of roads such as this into more comfortable thoroughfares in the nineteenth century was consistently opposed by the rural population. In 1846, during the Maria da Fonte uprising to which I will refer later, the guerrilla leader Father Casimiro José Vieira, in a letter to the Queen, states the people's point of view:

The people of Minho and Trás-os-Montes also cannot cope with the road taxes: and thus say that the old roads, repaired annually, are perfectly satisfactory.³ It is right that a landowner should buy the utensils he needs, but in such a way that he should not need to mortgage his own farm, eventually losing it *just because of a luxury* (Pinto 1979: 126, my emphasis).

In the twentieth century, the building of modern paved roads was also vigorously opposed by the parishioners. In the 1940's, the wealthier members of the Parish Council of Paço had to battle against the concerted opposition of the residents of the uphill hamlets in order to open a small paved road to their front doors, a third of the way up the hillside. Only in the 1970's were most hamlets of Paço and Couto finally provided with paved roads for motorised traffic. Roads are still being built and although present-day villagers, many of whom own cars, are eager to have comfortable means of reaching their homes, suspicion is still rife and road building at best a tricky business.

All this does not mean that these villagers remained for centuries untouched by external influence. In the riverside area where Paço and Couto lie, the continuing impression of autarky and social independence today does not imply any lack of contact with the outside world. Some aspects of local society, which are indeed very old, lead one sometimes to feel closer links to the past than in urban areas. Continuity, however, is perfectly compatible with change. What both the casual observer and the local inhabitant seldom know is that profound changes have characterised rural life at all stages of its history.

Isolation from urban centres and from foreign contact is not a characteristic feature of this society—quite the contrary. The Portuguese Discoveries of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were mostly staffed by *minhotos*; Brazil owes much of its population to local men who, in the eighteenth century, emigrated in such large numbers that complaints were made that only the old men and women were left behind; in the nineteenth century again, emigration to Brazil and America was rife. When, in the 1960's, rural areas were nearly emptied by the run for well-paid industrial jobs in France, Germany, the United States, Canada and South Africa, this was by no means an unprecedented way of reacting to rural poverty. Finally, men's migration to Spain (and, in other areas of Minho, to the south of Portugal), and women's to the towns and cities, has always been common for those who could find no local means of earning a living. Many remained in the places to which they had escaped, but the desire to return was strong in most and a good number of emigrants have always succeeded in reestablishing themselves in their parishes of origin. The houses and churches they built, repaired and furnished are visible everywhere in Minho.

Why then did the *minhotos*—such an itinerant people—oppose the construction of roads on their doorstep? There is no single answer. One important point is that, in a region where land is so subdivided and every little piece so intensely cultivated, the building of roads is detrimental to many inhabitants who may lose an entire field underneath a road. However, having heard accounts of the disputes over road building in the 1950's and 1970's, and followed the later disputes in the 1980's, I feel that this traditional explanation is not sufficient. Road building is looked on with suspicion even by those whose fields are not at risk. A fuller explanation has to be searched for in the local population's attempt to protect community autarky—a cherished tradition of local independence and interdependence.

Minho has always been criss-crossed by *caminhos*, perilous paths about which travellers constantly complained. They were often left to deteriorate and,

depending on local interest, might even be closed. Although they were in theory open to all travellers, *caminhos* were closely watched by the local community, who had complete control over the circulation of goods and people within its territory. Anyone who has attempted to move away from the roads and roam the countryside where only the old paths are still in existence knows this can only be done with the explicit permission and under the observation of the local community. There are eyes observing the unsuspecting stranger in the most apparently deserted places.

In rural Minho, the experience of community is deeply associated with an identification with specific stretches of land. Thus, boroughs, parishes, hamlets and households are socio-geographic units in the sense that the group's identity is inseparable from a particular piece of land (Pina-Cabral 1986: 3-4). The building of paved roads affects this association. It makes the countryside uniform and, by opening the doors of local society, reduces the social significance of the socio-geographic units which are at the basis of local community. Unlike the *caminhos*, main thoroughfares and modern paved roads are open, public and national spaces where everyone is entitled to move unobserved and unchecked. The effective control of movement in 'their' land is now shifted to a higher level which does not correspond to a lived experience of community, namely the state.

Modern paved roads, therefore, come to represent the breakdown in community relations. The motorised transport utilising them escapes community control due to its speed and privacy. This newly-found privacy provided by the private automobile and taxi is certainly welcomed by individuals in their competitive struggles with each other. But the privacy welcomed by the individual is also seen as an open attack on the community. Nowadays, when a neighbour wants to consult a white witch, go to a doctor, or make some secret purchase or visit, he can do so in full secrecy, thus avoiding community control.⁴

Paved roads also bring 'progress', 'modern ideas', and modern facilities. Spatial isolation is translated into and associated with, a time factor. Peasant life is identified as a form of 'pastness'.⁵ Rural dwellers are seen as backward (*atrasados*, literally retarded) and more basic or primitive (cf. a similar set of associations among Panamanian *campesinos* (Gudeman 1976: 64-5)). They are thought to be closer to Nature and further away from the seats of civilisation, the towns. I have discussed this set of ideas elsewhere (1986: 100-4) and will therefore merely point out that this interpretation of the differences between bourgeoisie and peasantry in terms of a linear evolution from backwardness towards greater civilisation is shared by both peasant and urban elites alike. It may even be said that peasant society exists in a 'time retarded in relation to itself' (Gurvitch 1958: 20). Today, local society, and particularly peasant agriculture, depend for their survival on regular injections of capital produced elsewhere through emigration. Much like an ancient Oxbridge college, whose survival depends on its very image as representative, upholder, conservator and reproducer of a cherished past, peasant society is thought worth investing in (by the purchase of land and the building of houses) even by persons whose real prospects of ever returning permanently from emigration are slim.

Its 'pastness' makes it an ideal source of identity not only for the ex-peasant and semi-proletarian but also for the urban elites who look to rural society as a source of national and often family identity. Until very recently, most Portuguese ethnologists saw it as one of their central tasks to search in 'popular traditions' for that which 'gives its personality and its cohesion to a nation, that which distinguishes it from another' (Leite de Vasconcelos 1933: 2). The association of peasant life with 'pastness' can be quite explicit:

We may still see standing next to a palace a hovel of loose stones, surely much like the ones that Palaeolithic man would have built; and, whilst in the temple the Christian priest intones hymns to Jesus, the poor village girls consult the cuckoo to know how many years they will remain single. In the palace we have progress, in the hovel automatic reproduction of the past; in the hymns religion, in the cuckoo abuse, which similarly reaches to the past, but directly (Leite de Vasconcelas 1933: 2).

The penetration of national (urban controlled) society into rural areas facilitated by paved roads is thus interpreted by all involved in temporal terms. It is also symbolised by the adoption or refusal of national time. Typically, the existence of different standards becomes explicit annually on the occasions of the time change—Portugal follows the practice of daylight-saving time (cf. Movahedi 1985). In October 1979, for example, there was a great argument in Paço. In some uphill hamlets of this parish, the chimes of the church clock are not distinctly heard. These also happen to be the more 'traditional' hamlets. The morning Mass on Sundays which used to take place at 6.00 a.m. was now an hour earlier so that when the inhabitants of these hamlets arrived, the Mass had already finished. They insisted on having the Mass at the 'usual hour'. The priest, however, would not consider this since the 'hour' had changed. After much discussion, it was decided the Mass would be said at 6.30 a.m.!—a compromise implying the existence of two contradictory standards.

Like the conflicts surrounding road building and cemetery building (cf. Pina-Cabral & Feijó 1983), the opposition to national time has a long but mostly silent history. One of the 'innovations' of which priests are particularly proud is having connected the clock in their church towers to a loudspeaker. This is to 'educate' their 'backward' parishioners, to encourage them to 'give greater attention to time'.

This struggle is not unrelated to those concerning road and cemetery building. The parish of Bico, in the nearby borough of Paredes de Coura, for example, proudly preserves a tradition of independence symbolised by using solar time to determine the times of Mass and other communal activities. According to some, this conscious refusal to abide by national time originated in what is locally known as the 'War of Bico' in the second half of the nineteenth century. The town's garrison and the people of this parish nearly came to blows about the burial of a corpse which, having taken place by order of the borough administrator in the churchyard, was unearthed and reburied by the parishioners inside the church (Alves da Cunha 1909: 383–5).

'Progress' is entering a society which perceived itself as unchanging, as closed to the Future. The peasant past is seen as one of uniform isolation both by the town dwellers, who accuse peasant lifestyles of being 'anachronistic', 'archaic',

'backward', and 'medieval'; and by the peasants, who see their life as more traditional and only recently diverging from age-old custom. In actual historical terms, of course, both are wrong. In symbolic terms, however, this merging of the spatial and temporal dimensions explains why road building and other forms of penetration of the state into local society are perceived at first as sources of danger by peasant communities. The linchpin which permits this merging is the feeling of community itself. On the one hand, community is essentially defined spatially, in socio-geographic terms; on the other hand, it depends for its reproduction on the preservation of social order. This, in turn, is achieved by manipulating temporality through a set of rituals which rely on repetitive time (see below). Thus, the destruction of community autarky is interpreted in terms of irreversible (linear) time, whilst its maintenance is dependent upon repetitive (cyclical) time.

As Gurvitch has argued, 'social times are so complex in their characteristics, their variations, and their interpenetrations, that we cannot describe them nor study them without recourse to conceptualised operational frameworks' (1958: 18). His complex framework, however, did not seem to me as useful for making sense of the material I collected as Leach's tripartite categorisation between repetitive time, irreversible time and alternational time (1961). I must stress, however, that I am adopting this framework purely as a heuristic device, not because of any belief that social time is necessarily tripartite.

To presume that bourgeois day-to-day life in Portuguese cities takes place within a temporal context characterised exclusively by the scientific view of time (as irreversible and chronologically synchronised) would, in my view, be mistaken. Similarly, it would be incorrect to claim that there is no peasant awareness of the irreversibility of time. In all societies time is a complex phenomenon. What we can attempt to compare is the specific form in which each particular society integrates its differentiated aspects.

The peasant perception of time can be distinguished from the bourgeois worldview by both its conceptualisation and its valuation of time. Time was measured backwards from the present and was not presumed to have an independent existence (it was not naturalised); time was, as Zonabend puts it, 'diversified, broken into discontinuous series' (1980: 9). A greater value was placed on the redeeming potential of the repetitiveness of time, instituted by a series of rituals of community. In other words, peasant society did not construct an image of history⁶—neither of a synchronised, sequential, historical past nor of an unpredictable, open-ended future.

Some implications of this have been explored by Weber. He claimed that, in urban, industrial society, 'we' do not necessarily 'have a greater knowledge of the conditions of life under which we exist than has an American Indian or a Hottentot' (1948: 139), the difference lies in 'the knowledge or belief that if one wished one *could* learn it at any time' (1948: 139). Paraphrasing Tolstoy, Weber says that 'civilised man'

catches only the most minute part of what the life of the spirit brings forth ever anew, and what he seizes is always something provisional and not definite, and therefore death for him is a meaningless occurrence. And because death is meaningless, civilized life as such is meaningless; by its very 'progressiveness' it gives death the imprint of meaninglessness. (1948: 140)

It is this meaninglessness, this lack of redemption, that peasant society has rejected for so long, which explains its appeal.

The conceptualisation of irreversible time

In talking to local residents about their society, one soon encounters and learns to operate with the loose classification of their past into *agora* (literally now, the time present), *antes* (literally before, the time past), and *antigamente* (in the old days). This is accompanied by a classification of people into *a gente* (literally the people), *os velhos* (literally the old ones), and *os antigos* (literally the ancient ones).

Similar classifications have become a commonplace of European ethnography (e.g., Zonabend 1980, *autrefois* and *aujourd'hui*, and Bestard 1985, *antes* and *ahora*). To the ethnographer who attempts to date these loose classifications of the recent past, it becomes apparent that there is a distinct measure of local agreement concerning their chronological placing. Zonabend, who worked in northeastern France, also refers to a similar consensus. She stresses that the break between the *aujourd'hui* and the *autrefois* took place in the decade that followed the second world war (1980: 13, 145). Similarly, in the Alto Minho there cannot be any doubt about the timing of the break: it occurred in the wake of the surge in emigration of the 1960's. Bestard's comment that the break between the 'now' (time present) and the 'before' (time past) is related to genealogical time (1985: 6) partly explains this difference between our dates, as Zonabend's fieldwork antedated mine by approximately ten years. Time past would then be the time of the *velhos* (the old ones): the time when the parents of the present householders and the grandparents of the presently marriageable set were in charge. This period is well remembered but is already imbued with tradition, with custom, and with righteous timelessness by its association with the prestige of the retired parents and grandparents—who are also godparents of many of the members of the younger generation. This authority is no longer present and therefore no longer oppressive or visibly misused, but it is still sufficiently remembered for it to be imbued with prestige. Genealogical time and domestic time are, in this sense, intimately associated.

This explanation, however, is not sufficient. Just as the 1950's was a period of radical socio-cultural alteration in northeastern France—the period of 'une sorte d'éclatement de la communauté' (Zonabend 1980: 145)—so, in northwestern Portugal, the 1960's was a period when community life suffered a radical change. To give just one example, a wealthy farmer who from 1958 to 1964 used an annual average of 372 days extra-household labour, used only 105 days of extra-household labour on the same farm and with a significantly similar household labour force between 1971 and 1974 (Pina-Cabral in press). His dependence on the co-operation and support of his neighbours, and their dependence on him for wages and mutual help was drastically reduced. Similar indices of change can be detected when we look at change in family patterns (e.g. in the average age of marriage, Pina-Cabral 1986: 70, or the rate of illegitimate births 1986: 55–9). These changes are closely interconnected. It was also apparently during the 1960's that unmarried children started denying their

parents complete control over their extra-household earnings. The study of the carefully kept records of the wealthy farmer mentioned above also shows an increase in the percentage of labourers paid with cash instead of the more informal system of reciprocal prestations (returned labour, the loan of tools, the gift of edible goods, etc.).

We may conclude, therefore, that, in their everyday classification of social time, local inhabitants are merging genealogical and household considerations with those relating to changes in socioeconomic conditions. The result is a more synthetic form of classifying time which has a fuller existential and practical significance but which relies for its effectiveness on its chronological imprecision.

My observations in the Alto Minho differ from those of Zonabend and Bestard only in that, in Paço and Couto, 'time past' is not perceived as uniform. *Antes* (before) is an intermediary stage between *agora* (now) and *antigamente* (in the old days). This distinction too has a strong genealogical component: *antigamente* is roughly the period of the headship of the last ancestors whose memory is still alive. The extent of memory varied, but at most these were the great-grandparents of present householders. *Antigamente* is a legendary period when peasant society was at its most typical or traditional—a period which stretches back beyond living memory to the society's origins in undivided continuity.

Although it is not possible to explore this in any depth here, some comment must be made on the relation between the *minhoto* peasant worldview and literacy. Goody argued that, 'in the strictest sense, history begins with writing' (1968: 39); and the question of how far the peasant worldview is marked by literacy is doubtless central in trying to assess its perception of the past.

Peasant society lives on the margins of literacy: it relies on literacy, but does not have access to it. Unlike the bourgeois urban dweller who does not necessarily know all there is to know but believes that he could know it if he wished to, the peasant knows that others have access to information from which he remains excluded. Thus, the knowledge acquired through literacy becomes esoteric and can be used for purposes which are specific to peasant society and have little to do with its actual content. The sacramental power of priests, for example is validated by reference to their control of literacy and learning (cf. Pina-Cabral 1986: 206–7). In the case of the cosmological integration of the seasons, weather and other recurring phenomena, recourse is had to almanacks whose claims to 'scientific precision' and the capacity to predict events are their main form of legitimation. Literacy is manipulated by peasant society but not controlled.

Similarly historical information which is gleaned from literate sources (and therefore presumes an irreversibility of time) is used a-historically to construct a repetitive symbolical universe. Here the manipulation of provinces of meaning is at times almost explicit. When a literate farmer tells me that present day tenants are 'buying back' the land from the landlords like the first Portuguese king when he 'recovered' it for Christianity from the Moors, he is validating a moral claim specific to the peasant worldview, with knowledge he acquired in a different context of knowledge.⁷

Peasant society today does not possess the forms by which past events are preserved in societies where knowledge is orally transmitted, such as epic poetry, formal genealogies, or formulaic expressions. Events of some symbolical relevance, however, seem to be recollected more easily than others, but their sequential order, their dates or the precise length of time they took to unravel are seldom remembered even when they occurred in the lifetime of people who are still alive. Thus, the Republican Revolution was remembered because, and to the extent that, the priest had had to hide in the mountains on the run from the Republicans. The second world war was remembered as a time of rationing when the parishes were scoured by troops in search of confiscated cereals. Part of this amnesia of relatively recent political events can be explained by the political demobilisation of the peasantry during the Salazarist regime (1928–1974). Their powerlessness and political irrelevance is largely responsible for their lack of interest.

All these events, however, took place in the *antes* not the *antigamente*. In my experience, no actual events were remembered which antedated the informants' great grandparents. This became evident when I attempted to collect information from local inhabitants about events which occurred in the mid-nineteenth century.

For instance, I became interested in the 1846 Maria da Fonte uprising as a result of my study of burial practices in the region (Pina-Cabral & Feijó 1983). The movement was started in the Alto Minho by a peasant mob composed mostly of women, when Government attempted to enforce a set of laws designed to open rural areas to capitalist development. These concerned bureaucratic reorganisation, road building, new fiscal policies, and public health reforms. What ultimately motivated the people to revolt was the imposition of a tax on burials, the forbidding of burials inside churches and in churchyards, and the attempt to enforce the construction of cemeteries well away from the churches. Paço and Couto were within the area where the uprising had been at its fiercest. Its effects are still felt today for, as far as burials were concerned, the peasants did win the day. It was well into the twentieth century that rural cemeteries were built in the region and the tax on burials was never collected. Only since the 1970's has Couto had a cemetery away from the churchyard.

I was therefore surprised to discover that no positive information survived about a movement of such great local import which had occurred well within the lives of the great-grandmothers of the older informants with whom I worked. The only thing remembered was the name of Maria da Fonte, the legendary female peasant leader. I was told by a man from Paço that she had fought the 'Spaniards'. No memory survived of the causes of the uprising or the events to which it led.

This kind of amnesia is not uniform; things are forgotten differentially—there is a certain order in the way the past is transformed or remembered. Poor people who had inherited little or no land or buildings, were very vague about the history of those of their ancestors whom they had not known personally. Contrariwise, people who belonged to wealthy households had a much deeper genealogical knowledge. For instance, the first member of the Gomes family in Paço (cf. Pina-Cabral 1986: 75–6) was reported to have come from Amarante as

a *feitor* (foreman) of an absentee landlord whose lands he eventually bought. His wife came from Couto where some of the lands she brought with her are still in the ownership of their descendants. As this man was a great-grandfather of people now in their 60's, his arrival at the parish is likely to have occurred only ten to twenty years at most after the Maria da Fonte uprising. Yet his presence is well remembered because of the land he left. This land functions as a reminder of the relation between the four wealthy households in the parish who own land which belonged to him.⁸

The relationship between the remembered past and social identity is complex and takes place at various levels. In the re-interpretation of the Maria da Fonte uprising, a civil war becomes a war against a foreign nation, thus making more structural sense. The complexity of this relationship is similarly evinced by community naming practices. Not only are these manipulated depending on the history of the kin group they describe (cf. Pina-Cabral 1986: 133) but the fact that the same person may be known by different names reflects the history of the relationship between the namer and the named.

The valuation of irreversible time

One interesting feature of the difference between 'time present' (*agora*) and 'time past' (both *antes* and *antigamente*) in the everyday discourse of Paço and Couto is that the valuation of this essentially linear and irreversible change is not uniform. During my fieldwork, I found two distinct sets of valuations.

On the one hand, I was told that *antes* milk was healthier because it was creamier; wine was stronger because it had more body; people had not been weakened and polluted by fertilisers and insecticides; they were tougher and less prone to illness; doctors were less needed and the natural remedies they used were less prone to cause other diseases; life was far more joyous; people were more fertile; households far more tightly knit; relatives more co-operative; priests more religious and knowledgeable; the 'rich' were more respected; parish festivals livelier; local festivities much more impressive.

On the other hand, *antes* was also a time of hunger; beggars and vagabonds abounded; no one could spare a crust for a starving man; people slaved in the fields till they were numb with pain; less fuss was made of children, who were born and died in greater numbers; it was a time of illegitimacy and sexual abuse of poor women; a time of greater brutality when fights often led to deaths; the 'rich' were despotic and callous; there were fights between hamlets and parishes; and travelling was hazardous.

This ambiguous valuation is fully consistent with peasant attitudes towards Nature and towards themselves. If, on the one hand, the peasant was more fertile and imbued with bodily vigour when, in the 'time past', he lived closer to Nature, on the other hand, his life was also more chaotic, more hazardous, and less imbued with knowledge and civilisation.

This assessment of the relation between 'time past' and 'time present' is reflected in the notions which *minhoto* society has of its origins. Above all else, *minhotos* are Christians. Christianity is for them the bedrock of human society as

they know it. The break between disordered, dangerous space and ordered, social space is marked by means of crosses and other Christian symbols. These protect the Christian against the anti-social forces of disorder (see Pina-Cabral 1986: 184–6).

In local lore, the advent of Christianity is accompanied by the struggle against the autochthonous population: the Moors. This is portrayed repeatedly in the popular plays (the *autos*, e.g. Guerra 1980; Guerreiro 1972) which are so old and so enduring a feature of popular life throughout the Iberian Peninsula. In Minho these plays are staged once a year in specific parishes (where they become important symbols of parish community). They usually portray a battle between the Christians and the Moors leading to the routing of the Moors and the capturing of a Moorish maiden who is to be married to a Christian prince. This is not the place for a detailed study (particularly as Paço and Couto do not have such a tradition). Rather, it is the figure of the Moors which interests us because of what it tells us about this society's view of its relationship with the earth.

Moors are believed to be autochthonous, literally to have sprung out of the earth. In a hillside forest, near a parish boundary of Paço, there is a natural granite formation—a small and unimpressive rock with some spherical indentations which look somewhat like broken eggshells. It is here that the *Mãe-Moura* (Moor Mother) is said to have emerged, engendering the Moors who lived in the region before the Christians. There are at least four other large rock formations in these two parishes where enchanted mooresses are supposed to be hidden, together with immeasurable treasure. Stories are reported of a man who, just as he managed to prise the rock open with the aid of magic spells written in the Book of St Cyprian (Anonymous 1976), was attacked by gigantic reptiles and hideous monsters. Had he been courageous, they might not have harmed him. But he ran for his life and the treasure was lost. In other reports, plague is said to be hidden with the treasure and if the wrong chest was opened, a large epidemic would ensue.

Legends such as these are legion in Portugal. In their fascination with Moors, the people of Paço and Couto are no exception. In Minho, however, this fascination is all the more interesting since we know that Moors played practically no historical role, having failed fully to occupy the land north of the River Douro.

Moors are also at times confused with Romans. No specific historical coherence, however, is to be expected in these statements. They are primarily statements of symbolic association. Many Romanesque churches (made of large and solid blocks of granite) are reported to have been built by Moors overnight. The small and beautiful Romanesque church of Couto displays above its southern door a Paschal Lamb with a flag. Parishioners say this is the little donkey with which the Moors miraculously collected the enormous blocks which went into making the church. The donkey is thought to have been enchanted and turned to stone.

I did not succeed in eliciting from my informants a consistent account of what Moorish society was like. Common reference to Moors, however, attributes to them the following characteristics: they were exceptionally hardworking; had great physical strength; had many children; their women were very beautiful;

they were extremely rich; they had incredible magic powers of a dangerous sort; they had a superb knowledge of Nature, drugs and poisons. Unbaptised children are said to be Moors—alternatively, they are said to be 'like animals'.

All these associations have a long history in this region. Yet attitudes towards the Moors have changed since the time when they were a real enemy in the Peninsula. One fascinating example is the history of the tale of Flores and Brancaflor. This tale, which is better known in a French manuscript version probably composed at the end of the twelfth century (Pelan 1937), spread rapidly throughout Europe. Its geographical origin is to this day unknown, but by the end of the thirteenth century, references to it were found from Norway to Italy, and from Germany to Portugal (cf. Reinhold 1906; Bonilla 1916: viii–x). Essentially, it is the story of a Moorish prince and a Christian slave, conceived and born on the same day (Easter), who are passionately in love with each other from the tenderest age. In an attempt to separate them, the prince's parents sell the slave to a merchant who, in turn, sells her to the emir of Babylon. The latter keeps his harem in a closely guarded tower. But the prince manages to enter the tower and hide in Brancaflor's room. The couple is soon discovered and the emir wants to kill them. Finally he takes pity on them and relents. Back in their homeland, 'they were husband and wife, and succeeded to the throne of Spain, and converted the whole of Spain to the faith of Our Lord Jesus Christ' (sixteenth century Castillian version—Bonilla 1916: 3). The twelfth-century French version is even more specific, telling us that it took a week to baptise the whole kingdom and that 'Qui Bauptizier ne se voloit, / Ne en Dieu Croire ne voloit, / Floires le feisoit detrenchier, / Ardoir en feu ou escorchier' (Pelan 1937: 127).

When folklorists started collecting popular versions of this tale in the nineteenth century, an interesting change had taken place. Flores the Moor had become 'el conde Flores', a Christian knight (Bonilla 1916: liv). In a northern Portuguese version published by Leite de Vasconcelos, the emir of Babylon has become the Devil and Brancaflor his goddaughter, whom he keeps safely locked away in Hell. The prince takes her from Hell where he had been sent for gambling (cf. Pina-Cabral 1977). This transformation reflects both the erudite nature of the earlier versions—historically more consistent in their attitudes towards Moors—and the change that had in the meantime occurred in the role of the Moors. After the fifteenth century they were no longer a real enemy and could thus assume the role they play today—symbols of man's pre-social nature, associated with the powers of the earth.

There are many similarities between the role played by the Moors in Portugal and that played by the Vazimbas as described by Bloch for the Merina of Madagascar. Like the Vazimba, the world of the Moors 'presents a problem. It is the ultimate source of vitality and therefore necessary for the living, but it is uncontrolled and therefore anarchic and dangerous' (1986: 95). In the same way as the Vazimba are violently conquered and the mother of the first Merina king was a Vazimba lady, so Moors are conquered yearly in the *autos* (popular plays) and their princess married to the heir to the Christian throne. Like the Vazimba, Moors left no descendants in the male line. Theirs is a matrilinear, natural fertility, as opposed to the bilateral fertility of Christian society. The practice of

referring to bastards as *filhos naturais* (natural children) receives here added significance.

Indeed, in popular lore, Moors are usually female. In the *autos*, we find both men and women, but the gender allocation of the lovers is always the same: the Christian is a male and the Moor a female. But in the stories of Enchanted Mooresses which are associated with large rocks, rivers, or specifically bounteous fountains, it is always a beautiful, singing, gentle, and loving Mooress who is reported to have been fleetingly heard or seen. Most often these tales show that it is impossible to reach the Mooress and capture her treasure. Usually, all the male protagonist succeeds in doing is prolonging the Mooress's enchantment.

Although the Mooresses are not necessarily identified with the Devil, there is a definite continuity between these stories and those of devilish apparitions, demonstrated, for example, by the beautiful reconstruction of mediaeval tales undertaken by Alexandre Herculano in *A Dama Pé-de-Cabra* (1858). Here, the lady has goat's hooves and the Devil is assisted by a wild donkey. It is interesting that a large rock in Paço which is supposed to have a Mooress inside—the Peneda do Castelo—has an indentation said to mark the presence of the Mooress. The locals claim that it is the imprint of a little donkey's hoof.

Those who attempt to rescue the Mooress and to capture her treasure cannot possibly succeed. The Mooress is enchanted because she is too beautiful, too rich, too fertile. When the land was conquered by the Christians, natural fertility had to be dominated and contained and now it has to remain so. The enchantment of the Mooress symbolises the trapping of natural fertility, the violent control over man's animal nature which is the price paid by humans for social order.

Thus, it may be concluded that, although they are kept as separate entities with distinct symbolic roles, there does seem to be an overlap in the characteristics which are attributed to the following four states: peasants (as opposed to urban dwellers); women (as opposed to men); peasant society in 'time past' (as opposed to 'time present'); and the Moors (as opposed to Christians). They all participate in a greater proximity to the earth and its values, to the animal side of human nature, and to the power of magic as opposed to reason. They are all imbued with 'pastness'. Furthermore, the passage between time past and time present is always ambivalent and incomplete—things are either seen to be passing from bad to good or from good to bad. Thus, even though no image of History (of linear, chronologically synchronised, naturalised time) is constructed, there is a symbolic consistency in the way in which the *minhotos* approach phenomena related to irreversible time. It is in this kind of time that the conflicting embrace between social fertility and natural fertility is seen to take place. It is in irreversible time that the contradiction between the values of spiritual life and death and physical life and death is manifest.

In the Alto Minho as everywhere else, as Leach has pointed out, 'this irreversibility of time is psychologically very unpleasant' (1961: 125). In order to control it, to counter its potential destructiveness, to enforce a strong adherence to community, peasant society has recourse to a set of rituals which are based on a different view of time—a repetitive time where the past and the present are constantly renewed with each other. I am not saying that these rituals of

community attempt to deny time, or to create timelessness;⁹ rather, as Gurvitch puts it, 'the effort to control their time, which is inherent to communities, is characterized by a mildly conservative tendency: they do not pretend to stop time, but to extract from it any unpredictability making it as continuous as possible, so that duration may prevail over succession' (1958: 44).

The redeeming value of repetitive time

Rural life in the Alto Minho is characterised by a series of rituals of community all of which unfold within repetitive time and utilise symbols of circularity, the right hand, straightness, correct motion, equality, reciprocity and order. Bread-making, processions (especially at Easter), the Mass, yearly festivities (e.g., St John's Eve, Christmas, Easter), funeral practices, and self-help systems, to name but a few practices, all share these features. I have undertaken a detailed study of a number of these elsewhere so will limit myself here to observing how they affect peasant perceptions of time (Pina-Cabral 1986: 134–50).

What makes these rituals, rituals of community is the way in which they are all closely associated with socio-geographic units: the household, the hamlet, the parish and the borough. They all play a central role in helping to reproduce the feelings of identity which bind these units. Furthermore, symbolically, they perform the function of counteracting the evil and chaos which besiege human society: pain, toil, envy, inequality, sex and the Devil. The plays dealing with the Christian victory over the Moors (the *autos*), which are highly ritualised events usually taking place on the local saint's day, are also rituals of community and as such play a completely distinct role from the stories about enchanted Moresses. The latter show how natural fertility has been trapped by the advent of Christian society. To liberate it would place social order at risk, which explains why those who attempt it are met with insurmountable opposition (giants, monsters, snakes, thunderstorms). Contrariwise, the plays show how social fertility was instituted by capturing natural fertility through violence.

In this way, the *autos* as well as other ritual practices such as breadmaking, the Mass, or the Easter feast, celebrate an Eternal Return. At each re-celebration, they counter linear time and deny the need for change. It is in this sense that we may follow Zonabend when she claims that community time is a 'temps circulaire, marqué par le perpétuel recommencement, par l'éternel retour vers le "même", donc vers un temps statique, sans fin, sans heurt' (1980: 222).

This view of time as static duration, a social condition fully controlled by a repeated return to the origins of social order, is best applied to the *minhotos'* assessment of 'time past' (*antes*) and especially of *antigamente*. 'Time present' is too visibly marked by failure to comply with the rule of community. People's involvement in their present and its struggles weakens the power of mediation of these rituals of community—that is, their power to counteract people's unavoidable perception of present life as one of strife and error. I am by no means claiming that the rituals of community completely fail to impose a cyclical rhythm and cosmological stability on everyday life. Anyone who observes the joy and genuine friendliness of neighbours towards each other at

Easter time, their sympathy and co-operation at times of bereavement, or their profound belief in the redeeming powers of the Mass, cannot doubt that these rituals do have a positive effect. Rather, I maintain that the distinction between 'time present' and 'time past' functions precisely as a validation of this effectiveness—'time past' is idealised as a condition in which the community¹⁰ succeeded more fully in capturing and keeping under control the conflict-laden effects of irreversible time.

The ambiguous valuation of the irreversibility of time is, in itself, not a distinct feature of peasant society. Both the myth of the Golden Age—when people were closer to Nature and thus were healthier, happier and stronger—and the myth of Progress—claiming that human society is being purified by the civilising virtue of human perfectionist efforts—have been part of European civilisation for a very long time. What has distinguished peasant from urban societies in the recent past has been, firstly, as I have shown, its failure to construct a unified and synchronised view of History,¹¹ largely due to lack of literacy; and, secondly, its stronger reliance on rituals of community which function as means of imposing cosmological *and* social order on everyday life. Peasant time is more human as it relies more strongly both on the substance of actual social relations and on the actual remembered experience of the participants—in other words, the 'disenchantment' to which Weber refers and which accompanies the realisation of the open-endedness of knowledge has not yet occurred. In it 'continuity and discontinuity, the past, the present, and the future tend to enter in equivalence and in equilibrium' (1958: 43), as Gurvitch pointed out about what he calls 'the time of communities'.

Since the 1960's in northwestern Portugal, however (and judging from what Zonabend says, since the 1950's in northeastern France), these conditions have begun to disappear—literacy is slowly becoming commonplace, and autarky is starting to fade and with it the rituals of community upon which it relied for survival. Therefore, even though the polarisation between 'time present' and 'time past' is an age-old feature of peasant life, it has now come to assume a new significance.

This brings us back to the paved roads. Until these were built, a distinction was maintained between *caminhos* (paths, old roads) and *carreiros* (tracks). Movement along the former was seen as being *a direito* (straight) while along the latter, movement was roundabout and random (cf. Pina-Cabral 1986: 146–9). *Caminhos* were privileged by being prescribed as the only correct paths for all ritual occasions—both (a) life-cycle and household rituals (baptismal, wedding and funeral processions) and (b) those of parish and hamlet unity (church processions, pilgrimages to chapels, the path of the Cross at Easter from household to household, etc.). Supernatural sanctions were imposed on those who attempted to shorten the way or to vary it by using *carreiros* (tracks) on these occasions. Even the 'procession of the dead'—that ghostly cortège which only some had the power to see, when the recently dead left the parish cemetery to summon the souls of their new companions—even it followed the *caminhos*.

In Paço and Couto, when paved roads were built, they tended to keep to the general outlines of the *caminhos*, but only rarely was strict superimposition feasible. The result was that the latter—being so much more impractical for

everyday use than paved roads—came into disuse. Some attempts were made to go on using the old paths for ceremonial purposes, I was told, but laziness and the prestige value of including automobiles in life cycle ceremonies soon won the day for the paved roads. The *caminhos* were abandoned, and with them the previously close interrelation between community, repetitive time, and spatial movement within the parish.

The significance of the *caminhos* lay in the way they linked the rituals of community with an ordering of physical space. They were community engraved onto the land. The building of paved roads, in itself, would not have seriously hindered this relation. It was, however, accompanied by a reduction in the significance of community relations and in the exclusiveness of the reliance of neighbours on local social relations. Community feelings as such are not disappearing in the rural parishes of the Alto Minho. Rather, their cosmological and social significance is being altered. The erosion of autarky has accompanied the development of an increased dependence on state structures. The preservation of social order is no longer solely dependent on community feelings, as it was in the times of autarky. The reinforcement of community through rituals of cosmogony and cyclical return, therefore, loses its urgency. Finally, this new attitude is interpreted locally in terms of the old opposition between 'time present' and 'time past'. Paved roads become symbols of the opening of peasant society to the Future (to History)—that is, to a cosmological condition characterised by permanent instability, irreversibility, and movement.

Time as alternation

In his famous essay on 'Cronus and Chronos', Leach suggests that time can also be experienced as a 'repetition of repeated reversals' (1961: 126). One of the characteristics of this experience of time is that 'the past has no "depth" to it, all past is equally past; it is simply the opposite of now' (1961: 126). I believe that it is worth casting a brief glance here at this type of perception of time, as attitudes to the present and the future cannot be dissociated from attitudes to the past. Irreversible time stresses the dynamic relation between past and future, in a sense destroying the present. In turn, repetitive time places the emphasis on the past and its constant revisitation in the present. Alternational time is a time of the present which tends to produce a mute past and an irrelevant future. This is the time of the relation between the seasons, between the genders, between day and night, the sun and the moon, life and death.

It primarily manifests itself in the cosmological dualism which is deeply engrained in peasant society and repeatedly brings it into conflict with Church doctrine. This dualism has profound temporal implications. Social and natural reproduction—i.e. fertility—are conceived in terms of alternation. Symbolic associations are established between the seasons and the fertility of women (Pina-Cabral 1986: 99), and between the genders and the sun and the moon (1986: 119–123). A young woman once told me that 'the first fruit from a tree cannot be eaten by women, otherwise it will only give fruit once every two years [*ano sim, ano não*]'. The following statement, recounted by Leite de

Vasconcelos, also exemplifies this: 'The Sun is the brother of the Moon and wishes the world to last for ever; the Moon does not, because it is constantly being cut into pieces (the phases of the moon)' (1986: 40). Thus, at a higher level of association, alternation itself comes to be opposed to stability, continuity, and social order, that is, to the forces whose enforcement depends on repetitive time. While repetitive time is an exclusively human prerogative, in alternational time humans exist in Nature. So it is also unlike irreversible time, as it is neither open-ended nor does it give rise to a past.

Alternational time is marked by a multiplicity of rhythms: of youth and of old age, of day and of night, of life and of death. Its most visible manifestation is the yearly cycle. Peasant life in Minho is essentially broken up into two long and clearly distinguished periods and two short periods of passage. *Winter*, extending from All Saints Day (1st November) to Carnival, is a period of long nights spent mostly sleeping in bed or waiting round the fireplace, short days of difficult but brief work, little social activity: time has a very slow rhythm. *Summer* extends from May to harvest time (known as 'St Michael's') and is a period of short nights, little sleep, intense farming activity, intense festive activity: time has a fast rhythm. These are separated by the *harvest period* (from St Michael's to All Saints)—a last spurt of frenetic activity, when practically no one sleeps and which is terminated by celebrations of death (All Saints and pig killing); and *Easter*—a period of joy and awakening when the long sleep of winter starts to give way to a more intensive routine epitomised by a celebration of the victory of life over death.

This multiplicity of rhythms is a function of the task-orientation resulting from the conditions of production on a peasant farm. As Thompson put it, 'the work pattern was one of alternate bouts of intense labour and of idleness, wherever men were in control of their own working lives' (1967: 73).¹² Part of the continued appeal of rural life for those who have left it in order to find better paid work, is precisely this task-orientation and the alternational time that it implies. Urban, industrial life completely rejects the multiplicity of rhythms. For the bourgeois worldview, the absolute equalisation of all time approximates a dogma (cf. Gurvitch 1958: 78). The typical observation that 'time is money' cannot be taken to mean that, under favourable conditions, benefit can be derived from a more intensive use of time, for all men in all places have known this. What it means is that all time is equally valuable and thus quantifiable, like money. There are symbolic implications in the way in which urban, industrial society has recourse to its highly sophisticated technical means in order to equalise all time. The standardisation of time's rhythm functions as a source of predictability and cosmological control. Electric lights, daylight-saving time, the chronological standardisation of the working day, the constant use of watches, diaries, timetables and calendars—all these are means to abolish the diversity of time.

In spite of the ever increasing use of electricity and, through increased literacy, of watches, diaries and timetables, the multiplicity of temporal rhythms is not decreasing in Paço and Couto. This is one sphere where it can be shown that, influenced as it may be by the bourgeois worldview, peasant society is not losing its cultural distinctiveness. In fact, if anything, the polarisation of rhythms

throughout the year is increasing. Summer is not only the time of more intensive agricultural work, it is also the time when urban migrants, emigrants and workers in the capitalist sector take their holidays. In summer, the number of rural inhabitants increases drastically and socialising is extremely intense. Throughout the whole of northern Portugal there has been a tendency since the mid-seventies to transfer parish festivities (previously distributed through the year) to the summer so that the migrants (who are still seen as members of the community) may attend them. In the area of Paço and Couto, during the month of August there are at least one or two daily festivities to choose from in the neighbouring parishes.

The importance of alternational time for the peasant worldview must be taken into account when we attempt to understand its effort to achieve a unification of the multiplicity of times. It is particularly relevant for our argument for two reasons: (a) it is one of the main means of reproducing symbolically the 'pastness' of rural life, its proximity to Nature—alternational time prevents the complete 'naturalisation' of real times for which the bourgeois worldview strives; (b) it is one of the characteristics of the time of the peasant worldview which is not undergoing radical alteration due to the impact of urban influence. This suggests that the hypothesis of a cultural urbanisation of the countryside is not applicable in northwestern Portugal. It is too early, however, to assess the consequences of the thorough reformulation of urban-rural relations which is currently underway.

Confronting the future

To round off this study, I should like to refer to a comment which was made to me and which I believe to be filled with the awareness of the processes of change I have been discussing. I was told recently by two old women in Paço that they had heard that 'the *mar coalhado* (literally curdled sea) no longer exists. It has been blessed by the Pope'.

This is not the place to launch into the study this notion well deserves. Essentially, for local inhabitants, the 'curdled sea' was where one sent the *almas penadas* (souls in pain, ghosts) who were too bothersome and whose demands one could not meet. Souls in pain are those whose link with the living has not been properly severed because, at death, they left unresolved debts and sinful attachments to this world. They haunt the living in a state of despair, begging them to perform the acts of redress which would free them to go their way. They are less dangerous than frightening and bothersome. Some of the claims they make can be rather annoying to the living—for instance, if my father left behind an undisclosed debt, I may not really be willing to redeem it when he comes to haunt me or some other member of my household. When these souls became bothersome, they were sent to the 'curdled sea' by means of a formula, usually through the services of a white witch. This act, however, was undertaken only as a last resort because it was thought to be extremely cruel—it prevented the soul from following its normal course, leaving it in a state of permanent impotence and pain. Similarly, a curse or an act of sorcery which was 'sent' there could not be recovered and countered.

To these women, by blessing the curdled sea the Pope both liberated all those

souls who were sacrificed for the sake of order, and abolished all the old, unredeemable curses and sacrifices. The ending of the curdled sea is therefore a destruction of those spiritual prisons which had had to be erected for the sake of upholding and reinforcing the repetitiveness of time. It is the positive side of the opening of peasant society to the Future—a kind of storming of the Bastille.

NOTES

This article was written while I was Calouste Gulbenkian Research Fellow in Portuguese Studies at the University of Southampton. I wish to thank both the Gulbenkian Foundation and the Advanced Studies Committee of this University. I am also indebted to Ruth Finnegan, Jorge Fragoso and Irene Rodrigues for their help in the preparation of the final version of the text. All translations into English from books cited in French or Portuguese are by the author.

¹ Cf. Hermínio Martins: 'general history can be seen not merely as an empirically persistent pursuit but as rationally warranted, as a regulative ideal in the Kantian sense: the idea of "one historical world" is something to which the historian must be committed in his search for the interconnections, the interrelatedness of events, conjunctures and structures, an idea often embodied in the image of linear chronological time' (1974: 269).

² The parish names are pseudonyms, as are the family names mentioned below. Both parishes are in the borough of Ponte da Barca, district of Viana do Castelo.

³ But they were not keen to repair the roads either, see the complaints of the 2nd Viscount of Balsemão, Luiz de Souza Coutinho, in his 'Memória sobre o estado da agricultura da província do Minho . . .', Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa, F. Geral ms 10 750. I am grateful to Rui G. Feijó for having called my attention to this document.

⁴ This partly explains the peculiar role played by rural taxis and their drivers in the Alto Minho, particularly as middlemen for white witches, curing shrines, and other specialists.

⁵ 'Pastness as the property of an object, of an individual action, of a symbol, or of a collectivity, has not yet been accorded a place in sociological theory' Martins (1974: 260).

⁶ Cf. Fabian (1983: 3), who uses the notion of 'universal Time' in a similar sense when he says that "'universal Time" was probably established concretely and politically in the Renaissance in response to both classical philosophy and to the cognitive challenges presented by the age of discoveries opening up in the wake of the earth's circumnavigation'.

⁷ Instances of jumbling historical fact which is evidence of this manipulation of provinces of meaning with different temporal perspectives occur in the sermons of the less erudite priests. Among the writings of Father Casimiro José Vieira, the guerrilla leader of the Maria da Fonte uprising, superb examples of this style can be found, as when he explains the nefariousness of the Liberal movement by reference to the myth of the Golden Age and the stories of Moses, David, Jesus, Afonso Henriques (the first Portuguese king) and the Archangel St Michael (cf. Vieira 1883: 217 sqq.).

⁸ Cf. Evans-Pritchard (1940: 106), 'The structural system of time-reckoning is partly the selection of points of reference of significance to local groups which give these groups a common and distinctive history.'

⁹ 'The claim that a representation of stability through time is the same as a denial of time is an entirely arbitrary interpretation' (R. H. Barnes 1984: 201).

¹⁰ This generic reference to community must be understood as a means of facilitating expression. Community is a layered phenomenon: households evince it, as much as hamlets, parishes and boroughs.

¹¹ Thus holding by what Zonabend calls 'le temps éclaté, feuilleté' (1980: 9).

¹² It does not imply a lesser capacity to organise temporally complex events (Finnegan 1981).

REFERENCES

- Anonymous 1976. *O grande livro de S. Cipriano ou O Tesouro do Feiticeiro*. Porto: Lello & Irmãos.
 Alves da Cunha, P. Narciso C. 1979 (1909). *Paredes de Coura*. Camara Municipal, Paredes de Coura.
 Barnes, R. H. 1984. *Two Crows denies it: a history of controversy in Omaha sociology*. Lincoln, London: Univ. of Nebraska Press.

- Bestard Camps, Joan 1985. Que hay en un pariente? Una explicacion cultural del parentesco en Formentera. Thesis, University of Barcelona.
- Bloch, Maurice 1986. *From blessing to violence: history and ideology in the circumcision ritual of the Merina of Madagascar*. Cambridge: Univ. Press.
- Bonilla y San Martin, Adolfo 1916. *La historia de los dos enamorados Flores y Brancaflor*. Madrid: Ruiz Hermanos.
- Evans-Pritchard, E. E. 1940. *The Nuer*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Fabian, Johannes 1983. *Time and the other: how anthropology makes its object*. New York: Columbia Univ. Press.
- Finnegan, Ruth H. 1981. 'Short time to stay': comments on *Time, literature and oral performance*, 12th Annual Hans Wolff Memorial Lecture, Bloomington, Indiana University.
- Goody, Jack 1968. Time: social organization. In *The Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, vol. 16. London: Macmillan.
- Gudeman, Stephen 1976. *Relationships, residence and the individual: a rural Panamanian community*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Guerra, P. Maurício 1980. Auto de St Antonio. *Cenáculo* 72, Braga.
- Guerreiro, A. Machado 1972. Comédia dos doze pares de França. *Rev. etnogr.* 31, 137-60; 32, 357-90.
- Gurvitch, Georges 1958. *La multiplicité des temps sociaux*. Paris: Centre de Documentation Universitaire.
- Herculano, Alexandre 1858. *Lendas e narrativas*. 2 vols, Lisboa: Bertrand.
- James, William 1910. *Psychology*. London: Macmillan.
- Leach, Edmund 1961. Two essays concerning the symbolic representation of time. In *Rethinking anthropology*. London: Athlone.
- Leite de Vasconcelos, J. 1933. *Etnografia Portuguesa*, vol. I. Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional.
- 1986 (1881-2). *Tradições populares Portuguesas* (ed.) M. Viegas Guerreiro. Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda.
- Martins, Hermínio 1974. Time and theory in sociology. In *Approaches to Sociology* (ed.) John Rex. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Movahedi, Siamak 1985. Cultural preconceptions of time: can we use operational time to meddle in God's time? *Comp. Stud. Soc. Hist.* 27, 385-400.
- Pelan, Margaret (ed.) 1937. *Floire et Blanchefleur*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.
- Pina-Cabral, João de & Rui G. Feijó 1983. Conflicting attitudes to death in modern Portugal: the question of cemeteries. In *Death in Portugal: studies in Portuguese anthropology and modern history* (eds) R. G. Feijó et al. Oxford: JASO.
- Pina-Cabral, João de 1977. Brancaflor: a structuralist analysis of a Portuguese folktale. Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand.
- 1986. *Sons of Adam, daughters of Eve: the peasant worldview of the Alto Minho*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- in press. Acting out change: popular theatre within a context of altering work conditions. In *Change and continuity in twentieth century Portugal* (eds) D. Goldey & Hermínio Martins. London: Macmillan.
- Pinto, Manuel 1979. A igreja e a insurreição popular do Minho de 1846. *Estud. Contemp.* 83-153, Porto.
- Pitt-Rivers, Julian 1980. Researcher's personality. *L'Uomo* 4, 413-25.
- Reinhold, Joachim 1906. *Floire et Blanchefleur: etude de littérature comparée*. Paris: Larose Geuthier.
- Schutz, Alfred 1970. *Alfred Schutz on phenomenology and social relations* (ed.) Helmut R. Wagner. Chicago: Univ. Press.
- Thompson, E. P. 1967. Time, work-discipline and industrial capitalism. *Past and Present* 38, 56-97.
- Vieira, P. Casimiro José 1883. *Apontamentos para a história da Revolução do Minho em 1846 ou da Maria da Fonte*, Facsimile edition 1987, José Manuel Sobral (ed.). Lisboa: Edições Rolim.
- Weber, Marx 1948. *From Max Weber: essays in sociology* (eds) H. H. Gerth & C. Wright Mills. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Zonabend, Françoise 1980. *La mémoire longue: temps et histoires au village*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.