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CONFLICTING ATTITUDES TO DEATH IN MODERN PORTUGAL:

THE QUESTION OF CEMETERIES

The 19th century in Portugal witnessed a succession of ideological, social, and economic transformations which, in many cases, were set in motion by a political process drawing on principles formulated earlier under the impact of the Enlightenment. The transformation of attitudes to death and burial practices is here seen in this context.

The historiography of attitudes to death and burial in Portugal has thus far received scant attention. The following comments are mainly intended as a stimulus to further research on this topic. They are an attempt to combine insights derived from anthropological research with those available from historical material. We are encouraged in this purpose by the belief that in the recent developments in the social history of death there is an evident failure to give sufficient attention to the ethnographic material already available and to the theoretical insights of social anthropology.[1]

While carrying out anthropological research in rural Minho (1978-1981), João de Pina-Cabral (one of the authors of this article) became aware of the existence of a process of change in attitudes to death and burial. There appeared to be a movement from what Ariès calls the *mort apprivoisée* (tamed death), to a type of death which corresponds more closely to his model of the

1 For a similar opinion, see Stephen Wilson, 'Death and the Social Historians: Some Recent Books in French and English', *Social History*, Vol.V (1980), p.443.

mort sauvage (wild death).[2] The particular interest of this process is that it is closely related to the use of cemeteries, about which historical information had been gathered by Rui Feijó (the other author of this article). This allowed us to create a picture of the momentum and character of the change over the last 150 years. The interest of the insights thus derived is enhanced by the fact that attitudes to death and burial are by no means an isolated cultural phenomenon; indeed their change in present-day rural areas is part of a much larger process of change from a peasant world-view into a world-view which is dominated by the values of the urban bourgeoisie.

Although in the course of this paper Portugal is sometimes referred to as a whole, we are aware that, in attitudes to death, as in most other aspects of popular culture, Portugal is a profoundly divided country. Since our material is mostly derived from the north, and particularly from Minho, and since we know of no corresponding research in the south of the country, we are at present unable to correct this focus on the north - a deficiency of which we are sorely conscious.

I

In his pioneering comparative article on the collective representations of death, R. Hertz points out that

> there is a close relationship between the representation of the body and of the soul. This mental connection is necessary, not only because collective thought is primarily concrete and incapable of conceiving a purely spiritual existence, but above all because it has a profoundly stimulating and dramatic character. [...] The material on which the collective activity will act after death, and which will be the object of the rites, is naturally the very body of the deceased.[3]

This relation between body and soul is cross-culturally widespread and it is noteworthy how it has been a constant of European attitudes to death.[4] In the 6th century A.D. it took a

2 Philippe Ariès, *L'Homme devant la mort*, Paris: Seuil 1977.

3 Robert Hertz, *Death and the Right Hand* [transl. R. and C. Needham], London: Cohen and West 1960, p.83.

4 Cf. S. Wilson, *op.cit.*, p.447, and Pierre Chaunu, *La Mort à Paris - XVI^e, XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles*, Paris: Fayard 1978.

new perspective when the Christian faithful started to manifest a desire to be buried *ad sanctos*; that is, it was believed that spiritual benefit for the soul in the afterlife was to be derived from being buried near the relics of a martyr. In time, this attitude was somewhat modified and there came to be a desire to be buried in or near the churches, *apud ecclesiam*. Paradoxically, however - considering the ubiquity of this practice in Europe - the Church has always formally prohibited burials inside church buildings. As early as 563, the council of Braga had expressly forbidden this practice and this position was formally maintained by the Church authorities until the 18th century.[5] It seems, however, as Ariès points out, that 'the only effect of the canonical ban was to submit the widespread practice of inhumation inside the churches to the payment of a fee, while, at the same time, preserving a principle.'[6] But if for the theologians there was an intrinsic difference between burial inside the churches and burial in churchyards, for the faithful this distinction did not apply. Burial in the churchyards was conceived of as a continuation of burial inside the churches. There was merely a gradation of value between being buried near the altar and being buried further and further away from it. In this sense, outside or inside the walls of the church made only a quantitative, not a qualitative difference.

In the beginning of the 19th century in Portugal, burials took place in or around the parish churches. This was the case both in the cities and in the countryside.[7] When there was no space for all within the churches, only the wealthy received the preferential treatment of lying under the church roof, the majority of parish members being buried in the churchyard, either in communal or individual graves. Although our data do not allow us to provide any quantitative estimate,[8] we are in a position to

5 Ariès, *op.cit.*, p.53.

6 *Ibid.*, p.56.

7 For a rather detailed description of burials in Portugal at the time, see A.P.D.G., *Sketches of Portuguese Life, Manners, Costume and Character,* London 1826, chapter XIII, 'Portuguese Funerals', pp. 237-249. See also Patricia Goldey, 'The Good Death: Personal Salvation and Community Identity', in this volume.

8 See, however, Geralda Maria Marques Ferreira dos Santos, *A Freguesia de S.Martinho de Arrifana de Sousa de 1700-1729,* Lisboa: Publicações do Centro de Estudos Demograficos 1981, pp.149-150; Maria Lucilia de Sousa Pinheiro Marques, *A Freguesia de S.Martinho de Arrifana de Sousa de 1730-1759,* Lisboa: Publicações do Centro de Estudos Demograficos 1974, pp.133-135; Maria Celeste dos Santos Duarte de Oliveira Duarte, *A Freguesia de S.Martinho de Arrifana de Sousa de 1760-1784,* Lisboa: Publicações do Centro de Estudos Demograficos 1974, pp.160-162.

suggest that, at least in Minho, when burials in churches were eventually banned by law, churchyards played an intermediate role between burials inside churches and burials in the cemeteries. Furthermore, and again with the exception of the wealthy and famous, there were seldom any outward markings to specify where each person had been buried, and families did not own or keep for their private use any part of the burial grounds.[9]

Throughout Europe, in the 19th century, the practice of burying people inside churches and in churchyards fell under criticism. Such criticism bears witness to the emergence of a new attitude to death, one which saw death as far more threatening. While the traditional attitude had been characterised by a familiarity with the dead - both in physical and spiritual terms - and by a stress on the public nature of death, the new attitude privatised death, attempted to limit the expression of mourning to the close family, and marginalised the role of the dead in public life. We find it useful to conceive of this change in terms of Ariès' model of the opposition between *mort apprivoisée* - the traditional type of death - and *mort sauvage*, the new attitude which was espoused by the bourgeois, liberal intelligentsia. We might be accused of simplifying Ariès' analysis of this historical process by reducing it to a simple polarity. It must be remembered, nevertheless, that, on the one hand, his analysis is mainly concerned with changes of attitudes amidst the European élites, and that, on the other hand, the model remains useful for it allows us to plot the specific attitudes to death which we encounter within a continuum between these two opposites, without necessarily reducing them to either.

9 See, however, William Kinsey *Portugal Illustrated*, London 1828, p. 190 ('The floors of the churches in Portugal are generally divided into so many oblong squares into which are fitted trap-doors of wood, which are easily raised. They overlay the ordinary places of separate interment, and are very frequently after the burial of an individual, covered with a piece of black cloth, which is rudely nailed on, as a testimony of mourning.') W.A. Douglass, in his book *Death in Murelaga* (Seattle and London: Washington University Press 1969) reports that each *household* in this Basque region owned a burial space inside the parish church. Could a similar practice have taken place in Portugal? This system would appear at first to combine both tendencies which we are here opposing. We must not, nevertheless, confuse 'household' with 'family' - for these are rather different concepts. The differences between the implications of using each of these concepts as the elementary unit of social life are rather considerable. (For a discussion of this in relation to the Alto-Minho, see João de Pina-Cabral, *A Worldview in its Context: Cultural Uniformity and Differentiation,* Oxford, D.Phil. Thesis, 1981, chapter entitled 'Household and Family'.)

II

In Portugal, the new attitude only made a real impact after the Napoleonic invasions and it came to be enshrined in law in 1835 and again in the so-called Health Laws of 1844. For the bourgeois thinkers who were behind these laws, death had become *sauvage*, for they lacked the ritual and conceptual structures to integrate death within the social realm.

In order to understand this change we have to refer to the ideological context within which it took place. The 18th century had witnessed the growing impact of the concept of 'preventive medicine' on medical thought. Good health was no longer seen as something doctors had to restore once someone had been afflicted by disease. Rather, it was felt to be necessary to preserve it. Concomitantly, disease was regarded as avoidable within certain limits, its causes no longer being credited to God's will alone.

But individual life is an eminently social phenomenon. Once it had been discovered how diseases are spread, the need to prevent them was recognised. The maintenance of public health called for the intervention of social entities capable of isolating the *foci* of disease. In a word, the development of preventive medicine goes hand in hand with an increased intervention of the 'health authorities' - that is, state institutions. Death, therefore, was closely associated with health. We shall, once again, borrow a term from Ariès who refers to this process as the 'medicalisation' of death.[10]

The idea that, once the flow of life had ceased, bodies started to decompose, liberating *miasmas*, was very popular among the authors of the late 18th and early 19th century. A *miasma* is defined in the O.E.D. as 'an infectious or noxious emanation'.[11] There is no doubt that these 'emanations' were regarded as a threat to public health, since they had the power to fill the air and gain a hold over every living creature they touched. Therefore, contact between the living and the dead was to be avoided, and dead bodies isolated and kept in places where their *miasmas* would not reach the living. This prompted regulations about the time mediating death and burial, and regarding the places of burial. In all instances, death was regarded in physiologic terms - no matter how incorrectly in today's views - and life was considered as something to be preserved. This *valuation* of life, so important to the evolution of medicine, was being associated

10 Cf. also John McManners, *Death and the Enlightenment*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1981, ch. 2 ('Defences against Death: Eighteenth-century Medicine'), pp. 24-58.

11 For a Portuguese translation, see under 'miasma' in Antonio de Morais Silva, *Grande Dicionario da Lingua Portuguesa* (10th edition), Lisboa: Confluencia 1954.

with a *devaluation* of death. The belief that 'Life and Death are the gifts of God' was replaced by an attitude which stated that 'God gave us Life for us to preserve'.

At this point, we have to insert a caveat. For, even if these views are nearer to ours than those of the popular strata of the early 19th century, they should not remain outside our critical attention. As such, their significance as a system of symbolic classification must not be overlooked.

As R. Hertz first pointed out, death corresponds in all societies to a moment of marginality or liminality, one which presents a threat to the group, as it creates a gap in the social order. As such, it is not intrinsically different from other moments in the developmental cycle of the social group, where individuals pass from one status to another such as birth, initiation, or marriage. Social groups manifest a need to conceptualise these moments of passage and to deal with them in ritual terms, these being Van Gennep's *rites de passage*. Two aspects of Van Gennep's cross-cultural analysis of funerals seem particularly relevant to our argument. First, the fact that of all rites of passage, funerals are those which most strongly stress the theme of transition (an insight derived from Hertz); secondly, that 'of all the rites of passage funerals are most strongly associated with symbols that express the core of life values sacred to the society at hand.'[12]

It is not only moments of passage in the life of individuals, however, which present such a threat to the conceptual order of the social group. This feature is shared by many other phenomena which are similarly characterised by the gap they create in the conceptual order which the society imposed on the cosmos. Mary Douglas, in her book *Purity and Danger* (Harmondsworth 1966), has demonstrated that such phenomena are commonly characterised by the social group which confronts them, as impure and dangerous. She argues that there are five basic means by which societies can cope with these, so to speak, abhorrent facts: re-definition, physical control, avoidance, imputation of danger, and finally ritual or artistic utilisation. This last category is perhaps the most interesting for, according to her, society is seen to utilise the power which such abhorrent phenomena derive from the threat which they present to the conceptual order as a means of re-enforcing that same conceptual order.

12 Richard Huntington and Peter Metcalf, *Celebrations of Death: The Anthropology of Mortuary Ritual*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1979, p. 19. In ch. 4 of this book, the authors develop considerably Van Gennep's original insight, using material from Madagascar.

Now, it was precisely this process which characterised the attitude to death of the popular strata of the early 19th century in Portugal, the attitude which the 'enlightened' liberals so profoundly questioned. In the context of the *mort apprivoisée*, death remained threatening and impure - a point that is not being denied here.[13] What allowed for the 'familiarity' with and 'public nature' of death, which distinguished the *mort apprivoisée* from the *mort sauvage* of the liberals, was, rather, the ritual utilisation which was given to it. Here, Van Gennep's insight as to the fact that in funerals society expresses and re-enforces 'the core of life values sacred to it' assumes its significance. The prime mover behind the liberals' change in attitudes is precisely the fact that this ritualisation of death had lost its sense for them. F. Steiner, talking of the Victorians, makes a point which could equally well be applied to the Portuguese liberals of the early 19th century: 'the more the links, props and joints of the socio-religious thought structure were absorbed into theories of rational ethics, the more isolated became the little islands of prescribed ceremonial behaviour.'[14]

Even if death had already been impure for those who experienced it as *apprivoisée* (witness the ban applied to close mourners which prevents them from attending church services for the week following the death), the fear of contact with the dead, however, was expressed far more strongly by those who espoused the new and urban attitude to death - the *mort sauvage*. In this context, it is worth noting that the justification given by the liberal legislators for the building of cemeteries away from churches and from inhabited zones, as well as for the raising of the high walls which, today, are characteristic of Portuguese cemeteries, was that these were unhygienic and might lead to the spreading of dreadful diseases. As Ariès comments in relation to France, it is not very clear whether churchyards were indeed a real hazard to public health, or whether the indignation expressed by the 'enlightened' men of the late 18th and early 19th centuries was not motivated by a new symbolic categorisation of death which saw it as a particularly impure and unseemly phenomenon.[15] As Mary

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13 Wilson (*op. cit.*, p. 444) criticises Ariès for presuming that this was not the case: 'it is clear that in societies of the more recent past, death was feared as much as it was accepted, and that a certain taboo did surround it...'. Nevertheless, we feel that, once this point has been made, Ariès' general idea still remains useful.

14 F. Steiner, *Taboo*, Harmondsworth: Penguin 1967, p. 51; also quoted by Huntington and Metcalf, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

15 Philippe Ariès, *Essais sur l'histoire de la mort en Occident du Moyen Age à nos jours*, Paris: Seuil 1975, p. 159.

Douglas argued in *Purity and Danger*, we have to question our own Western attitudes to hygiene which, although they are based on revolutionary discoveries in medicine, are all too often used as an ideological umbrella for the expression of the perception of a kind of impurity which is basically rooted in symbolical considerations.

If we accept this view, then, the legislative effort of the Portuguese Liberals of the first half of the 19th century and the subsequent development of new burial practices can be seen in a new light. Those who espoused the *mort apprivoisée* dealt with the threat which death presented to society by the ritualisation of death. In this way, death was appropriated by society as a means of expressing 'the core of life values sacred to it'.[16] Those who were buried inside the churches or in churchyards remained at the very centre of the social life of the community to which they had belonged. When the living gathered for prayer, the dead were beneath their feet, thereby emphasising that membership of the religious community created a unity which reached beyond the grave. To this day, in rural Minho, the comments of the *almocreve* in Júlio Dinis' 19th-century novel *A Morgadinha dos Canaviais* can still be heard: the graves do indeed look nice, like those in the cities, but the cemetery is a cold and wet place, where the dead are left alone, uncomfortable, and unprotected.

For those who started experiencing death as *sauvage*, however, the symbolism behind the traditional ritualisation of death was no longer sufficiently strong to deal with the threat which death presented to the social group. The dead, therefore, had to be physically marginalised, for their impurity was no longer controlled and co-opted by ritual means.

III

The view of the Liberals had a lasting effect in the development of attitudes to death in Portugal as a whole. Nevertheless, these views remained a feature of a specific group within the larger society. We do not pretend that these transformations broke what one might call a nationally unified pattern of belief - which has probably never existed. Precisely what prompted this study was the discovery that the attitudes towards death, dying, and the

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16 For a more extensive discussion of this process in the Alto-Minho, see João de Pina-Cabral, *op.cit.*

dead of the peasants of the Alto Minho are still today rooted in a pre-Liberal view of death. But the crucial fact is that the group who accepted the new set of ideas, no matter how systematically, happened to dispose of an extremely effective resource: political power. This was the case after the victory of the Liberals over the Absolutists in the 1830s.

The Liberals held an unqualified belief in the powers of Law as a tool for social change and for the shaping of society. This may not be an individualizing feature of Portuguese political history, but it certainly was a hallmark of Liberal political philosophy. Oliveira Martins, although very critical of the Liberals' views, wrote the best acknowledgement of this fact when he referred to the legislation of Mouzinho da Silveira in the following terms: 'The laws of the 16th of May, 30th of July, and 13th of August [1832] are our 1789.'[17]

The Liberals legitimised their policies evoking several principles, among the most important of which was the concept of the 'lights of the century'. From a political stand-point the 'lights of the century' consisted of the principles of human rights and the tripartite distinction of powers. The attempt to put these principles into practice led to a growing complexity of the state's functions. Perhaps the most commonly quoted example is that relating to literacy and the school system. But we can add the implementation of a national network of 'health administrators' suggested by the 'lights' of medical science. There, the State met death.

Pascal Hintermeyer[18] has argued that the concern of the State with death could have its own, specific rationale, the 'control of death' entailing the extension of the State's authority over the living - be they individuals or groups - and their minds. This was certainly not an expressly stated concern of the Portuguese Liberals, although it was in keeping with their attitude of ignoring diversity and imposing uniformity. This becomes evident in their attitude towards religion.

The first bill passed on the issue of death and cemeteries was dated the 21st September 1835, and it states that the traditional ways of burying the dead were 'superstitious' and 'offensive to the respect and veneration due in holy places'. Rodrigo da Fonseca Magalhães, the minister who submitted the bill, explains there that it was due to the 'ignorance of the Middle Ages' that such a 'shameful abuse' could have been transformed into a 'religious duty'. He continues

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17 J.P. Oliveira Martins, *Portugal Contemporâneo* [1882], Lisboa: Guimaraes e Cia 1976 (8th ed.), p. 352.

18 *Politiques de la Mort*, Paris: Payot 1981.

> Even in those days of obscurity and harshness of costumes the voice of the enlightened religion, free from prejudice, could be heard against such practices.

And he proceeds to quote the bans on burials inside churches made by the councils of Braga (563), Meaux (845), Tribur (895) and Reims (1117) - in this way demonstrating an uncommon theological erudition. Thus, for the Liberal legislators there was no question of attacking religion. Reason and Faith were not reputed incompatible. For the Liberals there was rather the need to clean up popular religion. This was possible in so far as they regarded the latter as basically centred on a core of sound Roman Catholicism from which some principles had been extracted and a lot of 'superstitions' added.

This view of popular religion which persists to this day[19] denies it a basic unity and identity and as such greatly misunderstands its nature. Even if, to the eyes of a literate person with a theological training, popular religion may appear to lack consistency as it fails to be structured in a strictly logical fashion, its basic unity and identity cannot be denied. To attempt to 'purify' it by subtracting all the 'superstitions' or 'pagan' elements and leaving the rest behind, is to fail to understand its unitary nature. It is precisely why such an attempt was perceived as a full-scale attack on religion, and released the fury of the people in 1846. Being convinced that 'the wise words of a handful of enlightened men are lost amidst the general blindness',[20] the Liberals took the risk of enlightening the blind by force. History did not accommodate their dreams. The data on cemeteries which we present below and the Maria da Fonte Revolution, which has been discussed elsewhere by Rui Feijó,[21] are the clearest signs of this failure.

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19 For a detailed description of this attitude as it is manifested in Minho today, see João de Pina-Cabral, 'O Paroco Rural e o Conflito entre Visões do Mundo no Minho', *Estudos Contemporaneos* [Porto], Vol. II (1981), pp. 75-110. On this issue see also Antonio Joaquim Esteves, *Religião Popular: Formas e Limites do seu Poder Constituinte*, Porto 1977.

20 Rodrigo da Fonseca Magalhaes, Law of the 21st September, 1835.

21 Rui Graça de Castro Feijó, 'Mobilização rural e urbana na Maria da Fonte', in Miriam Halpern Pereira *et al.* (eds.), *O Liberalismo na Peninsula Iberica na primeira metade de século XIX*, Lisboa: Sá da Costa 1981, ii, 183-193. See, in the same volume, Maria de Fatima Sá e Melo Ferreira, 'Formas de Mobilização popular no liberalismo - o "cisma dos monacos" e a questão dos enterros nas igrejas', pp. 161-168.

IV

It is not easy to create a detailed picture of the practices of burial in Portugal in the early 19th century since they were not specifically recorded by the participants. The accounts of attitudes to death and burial at this time given by British travellers, however, prove to be particularly interesting in relation to this issue. These were written by Protestants whose attitudes to death were already akin to the *mort sauvage* and who were deeply shocked when confronted with traditional, Catholic burial practices. We shall base ourselves in particular on the account given by A.P.D.G. in his *Sketches of Portuguese Life, Manners, Costume, and Character* (London 1826), as we feel it deserves particular attention because of the author's evident knowledge of Portuguese, his sharpness of observation, and the general wealth of information conveyed. The obvious distaste which he expresses for what he describes can be taken as an assurance of partial disinterest. He is certainly led to describe facts which, today, would shock most of us but which, for the participants, at the time, were commonplace.

Two aspects of death and burial in Portuguese towns at the time appear to have shocked him most. These are precisely those characteristics of the *mort apprivoisée* which Ariès considers to be the most central: the familiarity with death and the dead, and the public nature of the process of dying.

After having described the ceremonial preparations which were undertaken when a person was seen to be approaching death, A.P.D.G. comments:

> When the procession [with the Holy Sacraments] arrives at the sick person's door, the canopy and the lanthorns are rested against the wall, and every one goes into the room, not excepting even the rabble who, more out of curiosity than devotion, have followed the host. For such is their incontestable right: and thus are the sufferings of the dying exposed to the gaze of an uncompassionating mob.[22] It is true that the Portuguese see this in a very different point of view from that which we take, when we attach ideas of decency to dying peaceably and quietly. They deduce very advantageous consequences from a numerous collection of persons round the sick bed; as they conclude that, however scanty the prayers of each may be, every little aids; and no one is therefore excluded.[23]

[22] 'A revolting custom universally prevails here of suffering the street door to remain open on such occasions, to the intrusion of every rude and careless observer', [Anon.], *The World in Miniature: Spain and Portugal*, (Frederic Shoberl, ed.), London 1827, ii, 239.

Death was public in the sense that everyone was encouraged to participate in the process of each person's death (as it is still the case in the rural parishes of Minho), but also in the sense that the familiarity that was felt towards the bodies of the dead made it unnecessary to rid the public eye of their presence. Indeed, it made no sense for the Portuguese city-dwellers of the early 19th century to bury someone without religious ceremony. For this, however, the presence of priests was necessary and these had to be paid for. The poorest, therefore, were reduced to having to beg for alms after a death. This the English travellers found shocking. A.P.D.G. tells us: 'Many are seen laid out just in the state in which they died, with an earthen bowl upon their bodies, to receive the alms of the people who may chance to pass the way',[24] and, again, another traveller: 'it occasionally happens that a dead body is seen lying on the back in the open streets, with a little cup or pan placed upon the breast, for the reception of voluntary subscriptions to defray the expenses of burial'.[25]

Indeed, still today, the burial of anyone without religious ceremony in the eyes of the *minhoto* peasants is nothing less than absurd. It is via the ceremonial actions of the representatives of the Church that death is ritualised and is appropriated by the social group. In the deeply conservative region where João de Pina-Cabral carried out fieldwork there was an upsurge in 1976 against the local presence of members of the Portuguese Communist Party. In one town, a local man who had expressed pro-communist views was attacked by a mob and killed. It was then necessary to bury him, for which purpose the priest was of course called. Following the orders of the Archbishop, however, the priest refused to bury him if any Communist Party flags were flown at the funeral. In the middle of the funeral procession someone brought out a flag, at which point the priest went home. This caused such havoc that it was necessary to call another priest and, this time, no one dared to show a flag. The man was finally buried as a Christian, to everyone's satisfaction.

The construction and utilisation of cemeteries, something which was imposed by law when the liberal bourgeoisie came into power in the 1830s, presented a direct threat to the population. In the cities (as opposed to the rural areas), this was less true, for, by the middle of the 19th century, attitudes were already changing, and cemeteries had become necessary as a result of rapid demographic increase.

[23] A.P.D.G., *op.cit.*, p. 239.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 246.

[25] [Anon], *The World in Miniature*, ii, 242.

Two innovative aspects are noteworthy in relation to burials in cemeteries. First, cemeteries are apart from churches even though they are holy ground. This represents a change in attitudes in which the previous familiarity with the dead is transformed into a stronger need to separate the realm of the living from that of the dead. The congregation no longer prays on top of its dead. Interestingly, as the *minhoto* peasants started to adopt urban practices and build cemeteries, they found it nevertheless impossible to give up completely the previous sense of familiarity with the dead which was an expression of the strong feeling of parish community. When cemeteries were built, they were placed as near to the churches as possible, in the path which the processions follow when they go round the church and the *cruzeiro* (big stone cross) on feast days. This is, in fact, in contravention of the original Health Laws which specified that a cemetery should be on the borders of inhabited zones. In none of the cases presented in Table 3 below was the cemetery further than 100 yards from the church. Furthermore, in many parishes, neighbours always go to visit the dead after Mass on Sundays, thus re-establishing the link which the building of the cemetery had threatened to sever.

The second feature of cemeteries which represents a radical change in attitudes is the existence of separately marked graves belonging to different families. As Ariès pointed out,

> The need to reunite in perpetuity, within a separate and closed space, the dead of a family corresponds to a new feeling which eventually spread to all the social classes during the 19th century [in France]: the affection which ties the living members of a family is extended to the dead.[26]

This tendency seems to have begun in France in the 16th and 17th centuries. At that time, and particularly among Protestant families, there appeared a new tendency to stress what Natalie Davis calls 'the family arrow in time and space', by means of a concern with family history, a limitation of active kinship links, and a stronger concern with family planning. Among Catholics this tendency was checked by a strong concern with inter-familial, communal links which were expressed in 'the traditional Catholic forms [of burial which] were connected directly or symbolically with corporate institutions hardly moribund in the 16th and 17th centuries, such as village assemblies and vestries, professional groups and craft guilds, confraternities and the like'.[27]

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[26] Ariès, *Essais*, p. 153 (our translation).

[27] Natalie Zemon Davis, 'Ghosts, Kin and Progeny: Some Features of Family Life in Early Modern France', *Daedalus*, Spring 1977, pp. 87-114; at pp. 99-100.

In cemeteries, neighbours are not placed in an indistinguishable group as they had been in churches or, in some cases, in churchyards; people no longer pray for the parish dead, but for 'their own dead' (*os nossos mortos*) - the dead members of their family. The two tendencies, however, co-exist - the pull of the community and the pull of the family. This co-existence, which is not a recent phenomenon, is reflected in burial practices. The burial in separate, decorated family graves in the cemetery merely comes as an indication of the progressive weakening in rural Minho of the 'feeling of community'. Nevertheless, this tendency should not be exaggerated. Ariès reports that the practices attached to the day of All Saints changed considerably during the 19th century. Previously, the physical presence of the tomb, he argues, had not been necessary.[28] In rural Minho the practices followed these days are very similar to those in urban settings where death is more feared, but with at least this one significant difference: while in the cities people visit the graves of their family and those of their close relatives, in the rural areas the visit to the cemetery is used as a ritual of parish unity and the graves visited, apart from that of one's own family, are those of one's favoured neighbours (the 'friends'), and of neighbourly households which had a death in the course of that year.

V

At this point, we have to distinguish between the ritual utilisation of death as an expression of a 'feeling of community' attached to particular social groups - such as the parish in rural Minho - and death as an expression of a feeling of identity or equality among all men - something akin to Turner's concept of *communitas*. The expression of a kind of *communitas* at the moment of death is central to Catholic thought. Anyone who has lived in

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[28] Wilson, *op.cit.*, p. 444, argues against Ariès, saying that 'there is reason to believe...that the Day of the Dead was a traditional and not a modern festival, and that people visited and dressed graves collectively on this and other occasions, as well as leaving ritual offerings of food and drink for the dead'. For a discussion of All Souls' and All Saints' Days that relates them with the expression of *communitas* which is discussed below, see Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, Harmondsworth: Penguin 1969, p. 171.

Portugal for any length of time is familiar with the expression of this attitude in statements such as 'in death we are all equal', or 'we all land up here, poor and rich alike', etc. Another such manifestation is found in the shrines to the Souls of Purgatory which line the roads in the north of the country, where one often finds amidst the flames kings, bishops, men, women, old and new - all naked or partially so, and all similarly burning. But, while in the countryside this attitude is deeply related to the expression of the 'feeling of community' which unites all the neighbours of a parish, in the urban areas the identity among all persons is manifested independently as a value in its own right. The death of each is a *memento mori* to the others, as it reminds them of the basic identity of their fates and the vanity of their strife for difference. In a chapel in Evora where the walls are completely lined with bones, there is an inscription which is placed in such a way as to be the last thing the visitor sees before he leaves. It manifests this conception powerfully and concisely: 'The bones that here lie, for yours await.'

In the context of Portugal this separation between the expression of 'community' and of 'communitas' seems to apply to all urban groups even when they espoused the *mort apprivoisée*. This is evident from the English travellers' accounts of burial practices in early 19th-century Lisbon, cited above. In spite of the public nature of death, and in spite of the expression of a symbolism of 'communitas' in the burial practices, in the cities, death is more a manifestation of differences between men than of 'community of interests' and therefore of active cooperation. Once again we are speaking of a continuum between two poles, for even in the most isolated *minhoto* parish where the death of one neighbour involves practically all the other neighbours in manifestations of mourning, the rich receive a 'better' or 'prettier' (*mais bonito*) burial than the poor. There is, however, a resistence to the expression of this difference which is very strongly felt. A student of one of the authors, who is from Minho, said that he caused panic and anger among his rural neighbours when, on coming back from the city for his uncle's burial, he insisted on the use of a motorized hearse for which not every one could afford to pay.

But, as in all such cultural areas where ideology enters at least partially into conflict with the material state of affairs, the symbolic expression of values is here rather contorted. In Minho, one finds many manifestations of the kind of symbolic somersault which Natalie Davis encountered when she speaks of the 'ostentatious doles to the poor' which were given by the rich under the guise of a feeling of human brotherhood, but which were really manifestations of status inequality.[29] Similarly, in rural Minho, one finds the practice of calling more priests to attend the burials of the rich than those of the poor. The reason

[29] Davis, *op.cit.*, p. 94.

for this is ostensibly that the services of more priests procure a greater benefit in the afterlife. The poor neighbours, however, explain it differently, saying that the rich should have more priests, not so that they should have a spiritual advantage, but because by virtue of being rich they have more sins for which to answer. The utilisation of a greater number of confraternity flags as a mark of prestige, and the presence of a greater number of people at the burials of the rich and famous, may be interpreted in a similar light.

VI

The first law regarding burial practices (21 September 1835) specified in basic terms that:

(i) in every locality there should be established a public cemetery in a piece of ground far from dwelling areas, to be ready within four months from the publication of the law;
(ii) Each corpse was to be interred in a separate grave, although the persistence of locally traditional practices regarding funerals, interments and graves was allowed;
(iii) Any priest allowing a dead body to be buried outside the public cemetery would be deprived of his job and become unable to be appointed to any other.

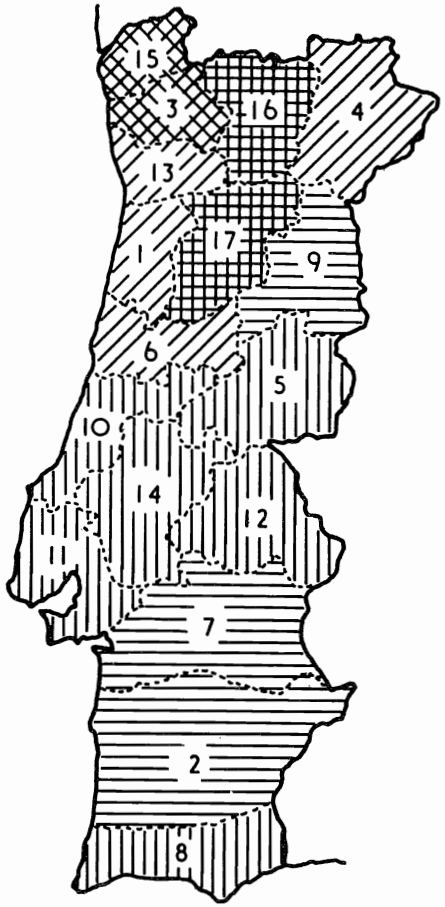
Feeling that these laws had not had the desired effect, Costa Cabral, a powerful Liberal minister, passed a new, more comprehensive and radical set of 'Health Laws' (18 September 1844). These, once again in basic terms, ordered that:

(i) A national network of 'Health authorities' be established. Amongst the duties of the new functionaries were that they should oppose burials inside churches, confer death certificates, and charge fees for each burial permission - except to the very poor;
(ii) The dispositions of the previous law regarding the construction of cemeteries be renewed and the control over burial practices tightened.

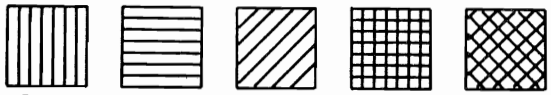
Public resistance to the enactment of these laws was very strong, particularly in the northern rural areas which were predominantly characterised by a system of independent peasant farming. On the one hand, there were popular uprisings which event-

MAP I OUTLINE MAP OF PORTUGAL, 1862

1 Aveiro
2 Beja
3 Braga
4 Braganca
5 Castelo Branco
6 Coimbra
7 Evora
8 Faro
9 Guarda
10 Leiria
11 Lisboa
12 Portalegre
13 Porto
14 Santarem
15 Viana do Castelo
16 Vila Real
17 Viseu



Numbered districts correspond to those shown in Table I



Percent of burials in Churches

Table 1: Burial Patterns in Portugal, 1862

DISTRICTS	1	2	3	4
Aveiro (1)	51.6	0.1	1.2	47.1
Beja (2)	82.2	0.1	0.1	17.6
Braga (3)	6.0	0.4	0.9	92.6
Braganca (4)	55.4	0.4	0.2	43.9
Castelo Branco (5)	99.8	0.1	0.1	0
Coimbra (6)	63.4	0.1	0.2	36.3
Evora (7)	77.5	0.2	0	22.3
Faro (8)	95.9	1.0	2.4	5.9
Guarda (9)	85.2	0.4	0	14.3
Leiria (10)	96.3	0.3	0.2	3.1
Lisboa (11)	98.0	1.2	0.1	0.8
Portalegre (12)	92.8	0	0	7.2
Porto (13)	46.7	0.6	5.1	47.6
Santarem (14)	97.3	0.3	0	2.4
Viana do Castelo (15)	17.6	0.3	0.4	81.7
Vila Real (16)	46.6	0.2	1.7	51.5
Viseu (17)	44.6	0.2	0.3	55.0
AVERAGE	67.5	0.4	0.9	31.2

Notes:

a. Column headings: 1 = Public cemetery
2 = Private vault in a public cemetery
3 = Private vault outside a public cemetery
4 = Church

b. Parenthetic numbers in this table correspond to the districts shown on Map I.

Table 2a: Burial Patterns in Porto, 1862

MUNICIPALITIES	1	2	3	4
Amarante	5.0	-	1.5	93.5
Baiao	15.8	-	0.2	84.0
Bouca	90.2	3.7	0.6	5.5
Felgueiras	0.7	0.2	-	99.1
Gondomar	90.3	1.4	-	8.3
Lousada	3.8	0.3	-	95.8
Maia	92.6	1.2	-	6.2
Marco de Canaveses	4.5	-	1.0	94.5
Pacos de Ferreira	-	-	0.7	99.3
Paredes	5.9	0.3	-	93.8
Penafiel	12.2	0.2	0.2	87.4
Porto	71.2	0.1	17.8	10.9
Povoa de Varzim	52.5	-	1.3	46.2
Santo Tirso	27.0	-	0.4	72.6
Valongo	89.0	-	-	11.0
Vila do conde	29.8	1.5	6.4	62.3
Vila Nova de Gaia	87.3	2.1	0.9	13.3
AVERAGE	46.7	0.6	5.1	47.6

Notes:

a. Column headings: 1 = Public cemetery
2 = Private vault in a public cemetery
3 = Private vault outside a public cemetery
4 = Church

ually led to the Maria da Fonte Revolution in 1846, and which were definitely connected with the attempt by the civil authorities to enforce the Health Laws (as well as other laws which were seen as being similarly repressive); on the other hand - and this is the aspect with which we are concerned here - there was passive resistance, the extent of which can be judged from the data on burials provided by the 1862 census.[30] This source, which Joel Serrão argues to be rather reliable,[31] registers all deaths occurring in that year, and presents a large amount of information about the dead person: age, sex, marital status, place of birth and death, occupation, and the place where the body was interred. The census specifies the following four places of burial:

(1) public cemetery

(2) private vault in the public cemetery

(3) private vault outside the public cemetery

(4) church

We are here concerned with the opposition to burials in public cemeteries and the building of these cemeteries. We are, therefore, mostly interested in distinguishing categories (1) and (2) from categories (3) and (4), particularly since those who accepted the new laws and bought a permanent site in a cemetery for their family's dead - category (2) - must not be merged together with those (mainly monks, nuns, and aristocrats) who were buried in private chapels or vaults inside religious buildings, category (3). The distinction between categories (1) and (2) must be seen as one of wealth and not one of belief.

Table I presents the proportion of burials taking place in each of the four categories described above for every Portuguese administrative district. Map 1 represents graphically the proportion of burials reported to have taken place inside churches. Both of these show clearly, we hope, how the practices relating to burial in the traditional way differed radically throughout the country. Some of these figures appear to be unreliable, and it is probably true that (perhaps for political reasons) the number of people buried in churches was underestimated. It seems to us improbable that no such burials had occurred in Castelo

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30 *Mappas Estatisticos dos Baptismos, Casamentos e Obitos que houve no Reino de Portugal durante o anno de 1862*, Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional 1869.

31 Joel Serrão, *Demografia Portuguesa*, Lisboa: Horizonte 1973, p. 173. In spite of the general value of the source, we feel that two or three of the figures presented must be considered with some suspicion until further research proves them to be correct.

Branco, or that the difference between Guarda and Viseu could be quite so large (14.3% as opposed to 55.0%).

It is, nevertheless, clear that a fault-line divides the country. The south is generally below 20% (except for Evora with 22.3%); while the north is above 30%, that is, above the national average of 31.2%. Furthermore, in the north, it is possible to distinguish a zone of moderate resistance to the legislation (Coimbra, Aveiro, Porto, and Bragança - all below 50%) and a hard core of resistance in Braga and Viana, where the proportion of those accorded the traditional form of burial was over 80%.

This distribution of the percentages of burials in churches suggests that the main explanation for the variation is to be found in the different cultural characteristics of each region. In a nation so often said to be not one country but several bound together this is hardly surprising; yet, it is only a partial explanation.

In order to have a better understanding of this process in Minho, we consider in more detail the districts of Porto, Braga, and Viana which compose this province, bringing the analysis to municipal level (see tables 2a, 2b and 2c; and Map II).

In the district of Porto the capital city and its surroundings had a proportion of burials in churches below 20%; the municipalities on the northern coast (Vila do Conde and Póvoa do Varzim) had intermediate positions; and the mountainous interior rejected the legislation with percentages of over 70%, reaching in some cases 99% of all burials (Felgueiras and Paços de Ferreira).

In the district of Braga - the see of an Archbishopric and a traditionalist religious centre - there was not one single municipality where less than 80% of burials were in churches. Here, the capital city, unlike the city of Porto, did not represent a focus of obedience to the law, and the distinctions among municipalities are not worth further comment.

The picture in the district of Viana is similar to that of Braga, except for two municipalities which are credited with surprisingly low proportions of burials in churches: Caminha (52.8%) and Valença (15.2%). The former case may reflect the action of a particularly dynamic or authoritarian municipal authority, but the second case appears so much in contradiction to the others that a mistake in the census cannot be ruled out.

The inter-municipality differences are here noteworthy, as in Porto. Viana, Caminha, Cerveira, Valença, that is the coast and part of the River Minho valley, the area with the best communication network and with some of the largest population centres, had their proportion at least 20% lower than the mountaineous area. This is perhaps enough to suggest that both the communication network and the process of urbanisation were in some ways associated with the spreading, if not of new ideas, at least of new practices in accordance with the law. This is a fact which may be witnessed still today since some of the most isolated parishes of the district of Viana still have no cemetery, and many of the cemeteries in this region were built only in the 1960s and the 1970s.

Table 2b: Burial Patterns in Braga, 1862 (District 3 on Map I)

MUNICIPALITIES	1	2	3	4
Amares	16.4	0.5	1.6	81.5
Barcelos	2.4	-	0.1	97.5
Braga	3.5	0.7	1.2	94.6
Cabeceiras	19.0	-	-	81.0
Celorico	0.2	-	0.2	99.6
Esposende	12.3	-	-	87.7
Fafe	11.5	0.2	-	88.3
Guimaraes	8.0	-	3.7	88.3
Povoa de Lanhoso	2.6	4.6	0.8	92.0
Terras de Bouro	4.1	-	-	95.9
Vieira do Minho	0.4	-	-	99.6
V.N.Famalicao	6.7	0.2	0.9	92.2
Vila Verde	1.5	-	-	98.5
AVERAGE	6.0	0.4	0.9	92.6

Note:

Column headings: 1 = Public cemetery
2 = Private vault in a public cemetery
3 = Private vault outside a public cemetery
4 = Church

Table 2c: Burial Patterns in Viana do Castelo, 1862 (District 15 on Map I)

MUNICIPALITIES	1	2	3	4
Arcos de Valdevez	8.2	-	-	91.8
Caminha	47.2	-	-	52.8
Coura	1.5	-	1.0	97.5
Melgaco	6.8	-	-	93.2
Moncao	7.9	-	0.2	91.9
Ponte da Barca	-	-	0.5	99.5
Ponte de Lima	1.1	-	0.1	98.8
Valenca	80.6	2.3	1.9	15.2
Viana do Castelo	21.8	0.3	0.7	77.2
Vila N.de Cerveira	22.3	0.6	-	77.1
AVERAGE	17.6	0.3	0.4	81.7

Note:

Column headings: 1 = Public cemetery
2 = Private vault in a public cemetery
3 = Private vault outside a public cemetery
4 = Church

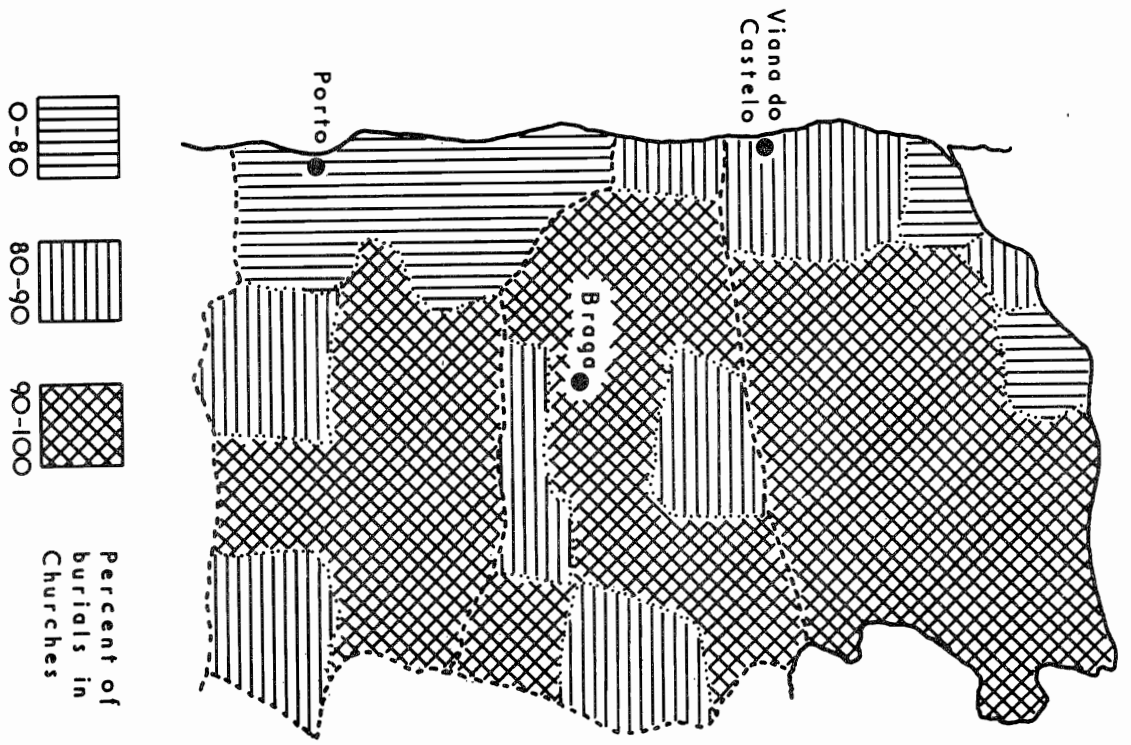
Table 3: Data on Cemeteries in Viana

Date of inauguration of some cemeteries in rural parishes of the district of Viana and the distance between them and the parish church.

Santa Leocadia de Geraz de Lima	1885	15 metres
Castelo do Neiva	1888	3 metres
Lanheses	1888	80 metres
Cabacos	1890(approx.)	
Vitorino dos Piaes	1900(approx.)	
S.Joao da Ribeira	1911	
Subportela	1912	100 metres
Facha	1914	
Correlha	1916	
Santa Maria de Geraz de Lima	1917	90 metres
Amonde	1919	100 metres
Meixedo	1928	30 metres
Crasto	1943	
S.Juliao do Freixo	1947(approx.)	
Santa Marta	?	"just outside"

Sources:

The source of the data in Tables 1 through 2c is *Mappas Estatisticos dos Baptismos, Casamentos e Obitos que houve no Reino de Portugal durante o anno de 1862*, Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional 1869. The data in Table 3 was provided by the parish priests.



MAP II MINHO, 1862

VII

The opposition to the Health Laws was, therefore, stronger in Minho than elsewhere in the country. One of its most important manifestations was a declared resistance on the part of the population to the actual building of cemeteries under the conditions specified by the law. The story of the cemetery of the capital city of the district of Viana, extracted from the records of the municipality, exemplifies this point clearly.

In 1838, the General Administrator (a non-elected representative of the Government at the municipal level) ordered the municipality to fulfil its duties regarding the construction of cemeteries, and to demarcate and enclose land for this purpose in all parishes *within thirty days*.

In 1839, the municipality again ordered all parishes to choose the location of their cemetery. Later in the year, in response to the General Administrator, the municipality admitted that not a single cemetery was reported to have been constructed, the presumed reason being a 'lack of financial means'. Four years after the enactment of the law, no practical result had yet been achieved.

In December 1840, the cemetery of Viana, the first in the district, was inaugurated. The minutes of the municipality, dated the 30th of December, read:

> Yesterday at noon, in the woods of the extinct monastery of St. Antony's, the public cemetery was blessed in all solemnity by His Reverence the Archdeacon of the *Julgado*, who had earlier on left the parish church incorporated into a procession in which His Excellence the General Administrator of the District, many clergymen, the municipal authorities, and armoured troops also took part.

In August 1841, the records of the municipality refer twice to the cemetery, first deploring the careless manner in which it was kept, and then suggesting it should be transfered to another place, a transference which was 'much desired by all the inhabitants of this city'. In July 1842 they state that 'it is evident that the present location of the cemetery does not please the inhabitants of Viana'. By then, the cemetery had already been closed on the orders of the Civil Governor. The opposition to the cemetery must have been very strong, and the municipality was faced with the fact that it had been unable to implement the national legislation.

At this point the story takes a new, unsuspected turn - the municipality decides to call for an examination of the cemetery's soil. 'The burial ground', the report of the experts reads, 'is absolutely inappropriate for its purpose, not only because of its argillaceous soil, but also for the reduced space for the graves it provides, and *for being too close to the city*' (our emphasis).

This was as 'scientific' and 'rational' a conclusion as the local intelligentsia was able to formulate. It saved the face of the municipality, but it did not reflect the real causes of popular protest. It also opened a door to the municipality, to find another place for the cemetery.

The new cemetery was inaugurated in 1855, and this time there is no mention of any ceremonies celebrating the event, and we presume there were none. In fact, the inauguration was the result of strong pressure exerted on the municipality by the Civil Governor of the District at a time when *cholera morbus* was threatening the city. Nevertheless, the municipality,still 'unwilling to go against the popular feeling so clearly manifested', exempted itself from the responsibility, claiming that the district authorities had abused their power. This time, however, twenty years after the first bill, the cemetery of Viana, a city of over 8,000 people, was open for good.

The opposition to the construction of cemeteries has continued right until our own days. In two separate questionnaires addressed to parish priests of the district of Viana we asked for details regarding their parishes' cemeteries. In some cases, the priests based their answers on parish registers; in others, on the date that is to be found in the gates of most cemeteries; finally, in some, on their own personal experience as builders of cemeteries. Their answers have been summarised in Table 3.

This is a random sample, made possible by the kind co-operation we received. No definite conclusion can be derived from it as regards the patterns involved in the timing of the cemeteries' construction, but it is certainly a good enough sample to show the failure of a law which was passed in 1835 making it compulsory for every parish to build a cemetery before the end of the year. In some cases, fifty years were necessary; in many, more than one century elapsed before the population accepted the idea of being buried in a cemetery away from the church.

VIII

Various explanations have been given for this popular resistance to cemeteries. Most of these must be discarded, being based on the values of the bourgeois élite which formulated them, rather than on those of the popular strata of the population. One of these is that burial outside churches is similar to that given to animals. Another is the fear that, by lack of adequate protection of burial grounds, animals might unearth corpses. The 1835 bill expressed these feelings in the following way:

> One of the reasons offered to justify the refusal to bury the dead outside churches in the past is a

plausible one. The authorities charged with preventing burials in churches did not act as diligently to build cemeteries, sometimes limiting themselves to the choice of a piece of land, not enclosed and open to all sorts of animals, which provoked a scandal among people who could not accept so irreverent a treatment of their dead.

But, if burials in churchyards were indeed practised widely, and were even offered as an alternative to burials inside churches, it becomes difficult to see such an argument as at all valid. No ground could be less protected than that of the churchyard, if the activities of stray animals were really a concern. We feel that the best answer to this argument has been given by Camilo Castelo Branco, the famous 19th-century novelist:

> In March that year [1846] the Septembrists of Braga incited the popular riots in the borough of Lanhoso. In England, in the House of Commons, Lord Bentinck explained, with tragic pomposity, the origin of the revolt, which with disdain he called 'a rebellion of the rabble'. He said that the Cabrals had ordered the construction of cemeteries, but had had no walls built round them, so that dogs, cats and wild boars got in in such numbers that they dug up the corpses. Nations and naturalists alike must have had a rather inflated idea of the size of the Portuguese cats which dug up corpses, and of the good relations between our dogs and the said cats in the task of exhuming them. They would have been no less surprised by the familiar behaviour of the boars who came from Gerês to collaborate with the dogs and cats in extracting rotten flesh from the soil of Lanhoso. And so the origin of the national insurrection of 1846 is defined in the annals of revolutionary Europe. It was a reaction, a battle fought by society against the swarms of dogs and cats and their allies, the profaning muzzles of the wild boars. And so it was that the journalists of Germany (a serious nation) wrote that the revolution in Minho was 'the model of legality'. The corpses served at the illegal night-time banquets of the boars and their friends, the big cats, growling with their hair on end, and the bloody-muzzled hounds - this was a case which greatly impressed the Teutons, because it was an act forbidden by the Constitutional Charter. Whether it was the Septembrists of Braga, or the united confederation of wild beasts, the fact is that the insurrection in the Alto Minho laid waste that province and Trás-os-Montes, the destruction embracing printed notices and the wines in the upland taverns. The war started by the cats and their accomplices cost the country a capital loss of 77.5 million *cruzados*.[32]

In fact, the fear of contagion through the indirect contact with dead bodies is a typically bourgeois phenomenon, and not a popular one. The Liberals were not only concerned with the actions of stray dogs and cats, they were also perturbed by indirect contact via the vegetable species that grow on the decaying bodies underneath the soil. The 'Rules to be Obeyed'[33] of the cemetery of Viana, laid down at the time of its construction, read

> It is absolutely forbidden to grow any fruit tree, vegetables, or other kinds of food, or to keep poultry or other animals within the cemetery.

Eça de Queiroz, another famous 19th-century novelist, alights on the same issue: indirect contact with the dead presents no problems for those who experience death as *apprivoisée*. In his novel *A Capital*, a central character, Artur, visits his aunt's grave in the cemetery of Oliveira de Azemeis. There, he meets the cemetery keeper who is cutting grass. Artur ponders on how the grass which is growing on the grave, contains 'something' of his aunt, and enquires why it is being cut. 'This grass?', the cemetery keeper answers. 'This grass is very good. I cut it for my rabbits'.

To the 'enlightened', modern bourgeoisie, the dead were considered rotten substance, capable of transmitting disease, and were entities outside the community of the living. For the popular culture, they remained full members of a larger community, devoid of any negative stigma.

IX

In this paper we have attempted to plot out and understand a conflict between two views of the world which, in spite of their differences, must still be understood to belong to the same wide cultural tradition. In many senses, the conflict we described is best seen as the striving of one complex and internally diversified social group to cope with the constant becoming of its own perception of the world. This becomes clear when we, so to speak,

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[32] *A Brazileira de Prazins* [1882], Porto: Lello 1974, pp. 187-8. We would like to thank T. Earle for his help with the translation.

[33] M.S., *Livro das Sessões da Camara Municipal de Viana do Castelo (16.9.1855-19.12.1857)*, Municipal Archive of Viana do Castelo.

look at the state of play. Even if everyone now accepts contentedly the fate of being buried in a cemetery, how can the Liberals' ideas be said to have won? The change took over a century to be effected, the cemeteries were not built where the law specified they should, and, when they were built, it was as much due to demographic reasons as to the acceptance by the popular culture of Minho of the 'lights of a century' that have long since passed, and whose 'lights' are no longer those of the 20th century.

We would like to end on a note struck long ago by Van Gennep when he argued that funerals are the primary occasion for the manifestation of the 'core of life values sacred' to a social group. This seems clear in relation to those who 'medicalised' death. By marginalising it, they were symbolically manifesting their desire for life. But the same applies to their opponents who, contrary to them, were willing to share their daily life with the dead and to look frontally at death. They only did so because death was co-opted and became the moment *par excellence* of the ritual manifestation of those values which they saw as the driving force of their social life.

BRIAN JUAN O'NEILL

DYING AND INHERITING IN RURAL TRÁS-OS-MONTES

I. *Introduction*

This paper deals with the two closely linked processes of dying and inheriting in a small rural hamlet in North-east Portugal. I place major stress upon the element of *time* involved in the transmission of property over the generations. Hence, I am not concerned here primarily with the strictly ritual aspects of death as a rite of passage in the traditional anthropological sense, nor with purely descriptive elements of the discrete events of 'death' and 'inheritance'. Rather, I will look at a specific form of property transfer (*post-mortem* partition) and its long-term effects on the entire social structure over time. Following Jack Goody,[1] we might expect that the precise timing of this property transfer has repercussions throughout the society. This is indeed the case. Fontelas is a most peculiar place, especially if viewed through the eyes of 'Mediterranean' anthropological theory. I propose that this peculiarity itself is a function of a particularly rigid form of delayed inheritance at death.

This paper follows a simple sequence. After a brief introduction which situates the hamlet under study, Section II deals with the process of 'dying' in two respects. I look first at the

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[1] Jack Goody, with Joan Thirsk and E.P. Thompson (eds.), *Family and Inheritance: Rural Society in Western Europe 1200-1800*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1976; see 'Introduction' and 'Inheritance, Property and Women: Some Comparative Considerations', pp.1-36.