

## ALFREDO DE ANDRADE'S (1838-1915) SURVEYS ON VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE ACROSS ITALY AND PORTUGAL<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

*This paper examines the surveys on vernacular architecture made by Alfredo de Andrade across his two nations, Italy and Portugal. This broader (documentary and iconographic) material relates to central issues in the late 19th-century architectural debate centred on the 'construction of the nation': the identification, study and safeguarding of buildings, which represented an emerging national identity, and which, on the other hand, could also be a source of inspiration for new architectural design. Moreover, the paper suggests the importance of this background in defining 20th-century architectural culture.*

**Keywords:** Surveys, Medieval Archaeology, Architecture, Safeguard

Although surveys on vernacular architecture enjoyed a particular significance in 20th-century architectural culture, an interesting background can nonetheless be found in the 19th century, involving such different fields as architecture, archaeology and ethnography<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Alfredo de Andrade was born in Lisbon in 1839 into a wealthy Portuguese family. He went to Italy at the age of 14 to study business and languages, but soon became deeply involved in artistic studies and never again returned to live in his native country on a definitive basis. Andrade studied at the Academy of Genoa and engaged in prolific artistic and cultural activity in Italy as a painter, teacher, archaeologist, restorer and architect, also undertaking several public duties, such as working as an Inspector of Monuments and a Commissioner for Artistic and Industrial Education. The reflections presented in this paper derive from a broader PhD research. See FERREIRA, T., *Alfredo de Andrade em Portugal (1839-1915): Cidade, Património, Arquitectura*, PhD Dissertation, Politecnico di Milano, 2009 (currently in publication).

<sup>2</sup> In the Portuguese context, see, among others, the studies of Henrique das Neves (1841-1915), Joaquim de Vanconcelos (1849-1936), Rocha Peixoto (1866-1909), João Barreira (1866-1971), Ricardo Severo (1869-1940) and Raul Lino (1879-1974). An interesting interpretation on this subject is quoted in LEAL, J., *Arquitectos, Engenheiros, Antropólogos*: Fundação Instituto Arquitecto Marques da Silva (FIMS), 2009.

Hence, in the 'century of the nations', several surveys were conducted in each country with the aim of identifying the characters of national art and architecture<sup>3</sup> (focusing on the construction of an emerging national identity), as well as of providing sources of inspiration for new architectural design.

Since the beginning of the century, the following question had been posed: "In welchem Style sollen wir bauen?" (Hübsch 1828). Thus, in each nation, architects and scholars were searching for the answer: for Viollet-le-Duc, it was to be found in medieval France (11-16th century); for Pugin and Gilbert Scott, in the English 13th century Gothic; for Goethe, in political-literary German Gothicism; for Camillo Boito, in the Romanesque style of Lombardy. Curiously, it was a Portuguese origin architect, Alfredo de Andrade, the spokesman for the ex-Savoyard kingdoms of northern Italy (Piedmont and Liguria), with its late medieval architecture: for some of his contemporaries, a language that could express the new identity of the young unified Italy.

### **1. Surveys in northern Italy: the *Borgo Medioevale***

A paradigmatic example is to be found in the surveys for the *Borgo Medioevale*<sup>4</sup> in Turin, conceived by Alfredo de Andrade to host the first Italian National Exhibition in 1884.

This was meant to be a manifesto against 'Eclecticism' – in the words of his close friend Camillo Boito (1836-1914) – and to the meaningless associative stylistic *pastiche* displayed in exhibitions and in architectural production throughout the 19th century (Boito, 1884). Instead, the *Borgo* stood for stylistic and artistic unity (major and minor arts), defending philological and archaeological surveys,

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<sup>3</sup> There was also the desire to 'make history' by filling in the gaps in the historiography, namely in regard to the medieval period. An interesting critical interpretation of this subject is also provided in ZUCCONI, G., *l'invenzione del passato: Camillo Boito e l'architettura neomedievale*, 1855 – 1890, Venezia: Marsilio, 1997.

<sup>4</sup> Concerning the *Borgo Medioevale* in Turin, see: GIACOSA, G., D'ANDRADE, A. and VAYRA, P., *Guida illustrata al Castello feudale del sec XV*, Catalogo ufficiale della Sezione di Storia dell'Arte, Esposizione Generale italiana, Ed. Vincenzo Bona, Torino, 1884 (ristampa anastatica, Torino, 1997); BARTOLOZZI, C. and DAPRÀ, C., *La Rocca e il Borgo Medioevale di Torino (1882-1884). Dibattito di idee e metodo di lavoro in Alfredo d'Andrade: Tutela e Restauro*, Catalogo della mostra Torino, M. Cerri, D. Biancolini Fea, L. Pittarello (coord.), Firenze: Vallecchi, pp. 189-214; SERRA, R. (Coord.) *Torino 1884. Perché un castello medioevale?*, Torino, Musei Civici, 1985.

recovery of artistic craftsmanship, sincerity in the use of materials and a more 'rational' architecture. Therefore, it symbolized the material realisation of a medievalist revival, which was then established as the best expression (artistic, cultural, ideological and political) for new architectural design. In addition, according to its mentors, it had a strong pedagogical mission as an open-air museum.

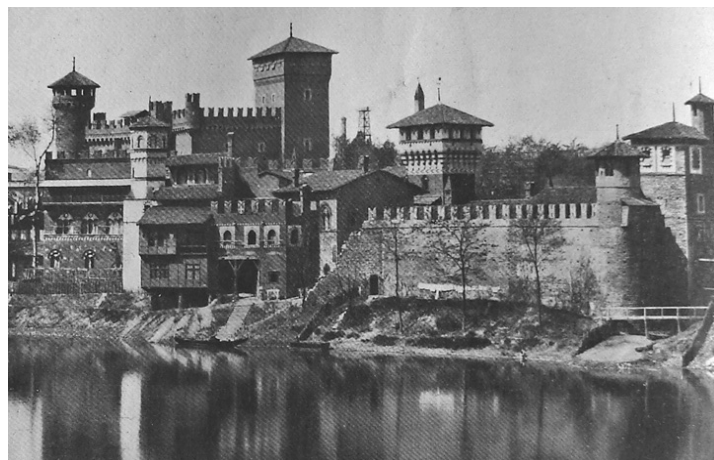
Furthermore, the medieval village in Turin was a masterpiece of synthesis of twenty years of Andrade's studies and surveys on the characters of late medieval local architecture, a *Dictionnaire Raisonné dell'Architecture Piemontese* written on fabric instead of words (Zucconi 1997, p. 204). The surveys for the *Borgo* are particularly interesting because they embrace minor architectures, such as common houses – an unusual subject in this kind of research in the period, which was generally centred on civil or religious monuments with national-political or historical relevance. Hence, Andrade was a pioneer in carrying out a systematic survey of vernacular medieval current housing and other typologies in the regions of Piedmont and Vale d'Aosta (Dondi 1981, p. 259), which has continued to represent a valuable and almost exclusive source of information on this heritage, right up to the present days (Prola & Orlandoni 1981, p. 358). These surveys consisted of collections of drawings – plans, elevations, sections, details – completed with photographs, notes in the margins and comparative analyses<sup>5</sup>.

Moreover, for the first time, the exhibition building was organized in an urban system, with a 'unity of style', including common houses, churches and a castle, aimed at recreating the historic image of a region (Serra 1981). Hence, the *Borgo Medioevale* in Turin was also a pioneering model for the presentation of a typical and unified image of one region (Gubler 1975, p. 30), which was followed by many other 'nationalist' villages spread across Europe: *Oudhollanosch Marktplaen*, *Village Suisses*, and later on, albeit in a different cultural context, *Vieux Anvers*, *Vieux Bruxelles*, *Vieux Paris*...

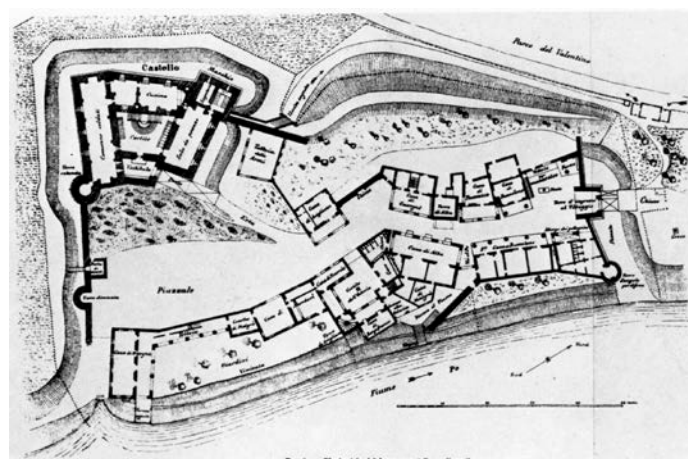
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<sup>5</sup> Most of these drawings are housed at the Galleria di Arte Moderna di Torino (GAM).

Nevertheless, the *Borgo* had a paradoxical destiny: the stance taken against eclecticism became the maximum expression of an epoch fascinated by disguises, as it was also the motor for a more superficial appropriation, namely of enriched bourgeois medieval castle-style *villini* spread across the northern Italy (Zucconi, 1997, p. 60). Furthermore, the later 'regionalist' villages in national exhibitions, ironically became a driving force for nostalgic and populist mass seduction and consumption (sometimes with political-ideological scopes), which was largely distanced from the original meaning and intention of the mentors of the *Borgo*.



**Figure 1.** *Borgo medievale* in Turin, epoch photograph (in L. Pinto, *A obra Arquitectonica de Alfredo D'Andrade*, in "Ilustração Portuguesa", 170, Lisboa: Livraria Ferreira, 1909).



**Figure 2.** *Borgo medievale* in Turin, general plan, 1884 (M. G. Cerri, D. B. Fea, L. Pittarello (coord ) *Alfredo d' Andrade: tutela e restauro*, , Firenze, Vallecchi, 1981).

The success of the *Borgo* and his previous work experience consecrated Alfredo de Andrade's reputation in Italy as an expert on heritage, as he was subsequently nominated 'Chief Inspector of Monuments' (*Direttore Regionale dell'Ufficio per la Conservazione*) in the regions of Liguria and Piedmont, becoming responsible for the supervision of hundreds of sites and the coordination of interventions. Moreover, he was appointed 'Commissioner for Artistic and Industrial Education' (*Commissario per l'insegnamento artistico e industriale*), highlighting the link between studies and surveys, artistic education, the rehabilitation of the minor arts and the safeguard practices adopted in this period. This evidences a circularity between past and present, considering that inherited art and architecture can provide a source of inspiration - scientifically backed by a rigorous archaeological surveys - for 'modern' artistic and architectural production.

## 2. 'Artistic visits' in Portugal

Curiously, a few years before his work on the *Borgo Medioevale* in Turin, Alfredo de Andrade was deeply involved in 'artistic visits' (1880-81) across his birth country (Portugal), drawing and studying buildings and objects that were to be integrated into a future National Museum. Travelling around Portugal at the request of the Lisbon Academy of Fine Arts (*Academia de Bellas Artes de Lisboa*)<sup>6</sup>, he visited numerous monuments in the regions of Coimbra, Trás-os-Montes, Minho, Alto Douro, Castanheira and the Beiras and produced several surveys (drawings, notes and reports)<sup>7</sup>.

Many of these buildings were either in ruins or threatened with decay, abandonment and vandalism, resulting from the law dictating the suppression of the religious orders and the expropriation of their property in 1834. For this reason, and also due to the political instability experienced in the first half of the 19th century, Portuguese monuments were in a state of great devastation, despite the recalls of scholars such as Alexandre Herculano (1810-1877), who

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<sup>6</sup> In the absence of any specific structures, the safeguarding of the artistic and monumental heritage was still the responsibility of the Academy of Fine Arts.

<sup>7</sup> Most of these drawings are housed at the Galleria di Arte Moderna di Torino (GAM).

defined monuments as the '*documents of the history of a nation*' (Herculano, 1840), which were generally medieval buildings.

Nevertheless, with a long background in surveys and studies, Andrade did not pay attention only to the great monuments of his birth country, but also to its artistic handicrafts, urban conglomerates, minor architecture and the vast autochthonous rural heritage, from different epochs, scattered through the national territory.

On his first journey to the region of Coimbra (February, 1880), accompanied by the journalist Rangel de Lima (1839-1909) and the photographer Carlos Relvas (1838-1894), Alfredo de Andrade visited the monasteries of Lorvão, São Marcos and Ceíça. His great knowledge and his particular working method were noticed by his partners, who addressed him as '*Master*' (Lima, 1880, s.p.), impressed by his artistic erudition, his method of drawing based on direct observation, and the capacity for identifying, evaluating and classifying the artistic and architectural heritage. His method of drawing through observation, acquired in his previous career as an outdoor landscape painter, was aided by the use of a collapsible bench and table, a white camera and several sheets of paper and drawing instruments carefully arranged in a transportable bag (*idem*, 1880, s.p.). His drawings were completed with details or schemes (plans, elevations, sections, axonometries) with metric annotations and interpretive notes. Alfredo de Andrade's background and experience are also evident in the composition of the inventories and reports, which contain detailed remarks on the studied monuments and objects: artistic, chronological, stylistic and comparative comments, as well as notes on decay and restoration.

Regarding to the selection of objects to be included in the National Museum, not only were the major arts considered, but also the '*objects of the industrial arts*' (Andrade & Lima, 1880, s.p.) - textiles, embroidery and laces, religious vestments, furniture, ceramics and glass, among others (*idem*, 1880, s.p.). In this way, a precise concept of museum was expressed, with original pieces and copies, with a didactic function, associated with the rehabilitation of minor,

ornamental and industrial arts and crafts, which are considered to be also essential for the study of an artistic period.

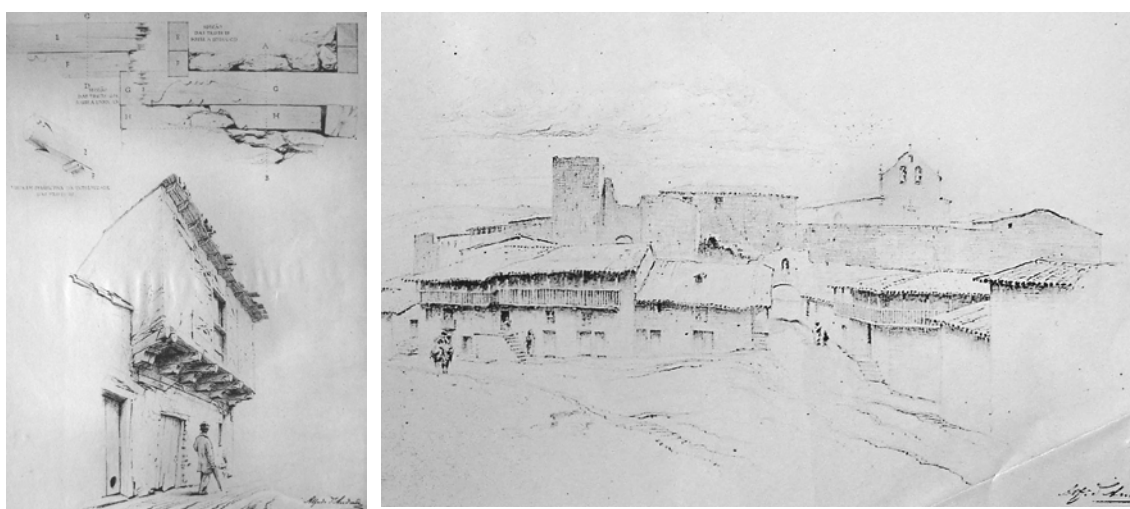
As far as the monuments are concerned, special attention was paid on this first trip to the proto-Renaissance programmes conceived in the region of Coimbra by French masters originating from Normandy and the Loire Valley, known as the '*school of the 16th-century French Renaissance*' (Andrade & Lima, 1880, s.p.). Alfredo de Andrade would later compare these studies with other carried out on another visit, in the same year, with the Director of the Academy, António Tomás da Fonseca (1823-1894), to the Convent of Santo António da Castanheira, noticing similar features in the 16th-century architectural decorations, in a state of accelerated decay (Andrade, Fonseca, Lima, 1880, s.p.). The graphic and written material produced confirms his favourite periods of study, both in Italy and in Portugal, from medieval to the first Renaissance.

On a second journey, carried out in the same year to the remote northern regions of Trás-os-Montes, Minho and Douro Litoral (therefore more challenging in the research into the 'origins' of national art), the followed itinerary included several objects that he considered relevant for a rigorous comparative study by periods. Hence, Andrade studied several monuments, such as the Monastery of Castro de Avelãs, the Castle and the *Domus Municipalis* of Bragança, the Church of São Facundo de Vinhais, the Monastery of Leça do Balio and the Church of Cedofeita in Porto.

Among the more extensive graphic and written material produced by Andrade in this journey, it is important to notice (because of the novelty of the themes) the surveys around a common house in the city of Bragança from the 13th or 14th century, namely studying its elevation and the wooden constructive details. As has already been mentioned, the attention that he paid to the minor architecture was unusual in terms of the surveys and studies made during that period – generally centred on historically emblematic civil or religious monuments – in which Andrade was a pioneer, both in Italy and Portugal. Curiously these drawings were reproduced thirty years later in a text about the evolution of the house in Portugal (Barreira, 1908, p. 164), when the debate on the 'Portuguese

house'<sup>8</sup> was gaining more expression, as a reaction to international models such as the *chalet*, the *cottage* and the *chateaux*.

Another innovative contribution of his surveys consisted in the representation of the 'old villages' (to quote Andrade's captions) of Bragança and Vinhais, considered as a whole with monumental value in itself. This idea also goes against the most common tendency in the period, which was to represent individual and highlighted monuments, without their surrounding context.



**Figure 3.** House in Bragança (in J. Barreira *A habitação em Portugal*, in *Notas sobre Portugal*, 2 vols., Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1908); **Figure 4.** Old village of Vinhais (in M. Bernardi & V. Vittorio, *Alfredo D'Andrade: la vita, l'opera e l'arte*, Torino: Società piemontese d'archeologia e di belle arti, 1957).

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<sup>8</sup> The 'Portuguese house' was part of an ideological movement that centred on the study of vernacular and native domestic architecture, as a reaction to the imported international eclectic models, such as the *chalet*, *cottage*, *villa* and *chateau*, among others. This debate started in around 1890 with an interesting contribution being made by ethnographers, engineers and architects, although in later decades it would progressively become a catalogue of stereotyped elements appropriated by the dictatorial regime. There is a vast bibliography on this subject: see, among others: LINO, R., *Casas portuguesas, alguns apontamentos sobre o arquitectura das casas simples*, Lisboa, V. de Carvalho [1933], TÁVORA, F., *O Problema da Casa Portuguesa*. Lisboa, 1947; MAIA, H., *From the Portuguese House to the Survey on Popular Architecture in Portugal: notes on the construction of Portuguese architectural identity* in *International Conference on Theoretical Currents: Architecture, Design and the Nation*, Nottingham Trent University, 2010.



Regarding Alfredo de Andrade's surveys and researches in Portugal, it is also important to mention the journey to the central inland region of the Beiras (1881) in the company of two other Portuguese archaeologists, Augusto Filipe Simões (1835-1884) and Joaquim de Vasconcelos (1849-1936). This was the first group of scholars to visit the pre-Romanesque chapel of São Pedro de Balsemão (Pessanha, 1927, p. 26), a hallmark of the period in Portugal. Other monuments included in these surveys and studies were a prehistoric monument in Peromoço, the castles of Guarda, Trancoso and Celorico, as well as the cathedrals of Guarda and Lamego and several Romanesque churches and chapels scattered throughout this region.

This unusual itinerary points to a profound study of 'medieval archaeology', as highlighted in Andrade's drawings, geared towards the complete survey, decoding, comparative analysis and classification of constructions from this period. Hence, we can observe in these studies the influence of the methods of French medieval archaeology, namely those used by A. De Caumont (1831), E. E. Viollet-le-Duc (1857-68) and F. De Dartein (1865-1882), whose books he possessed in his personal library. The analytical methodology was based on the direct observation of constructions on which he was to become an expert: systematic surveys with plans and rebated elevations, perspectives and details, including metric indication (stone stereotomy, ornamental elements, details, etc), constructive systems or signs of material culture, comparative studies with other monuments, as well as the notes in the margins relating to the author's analyses or to bibliographical sources<sup>9</sup>.

This broader graphic material is very interesting, both because it related to surveys of some monuments which had not yet been studied or drawn (therefore an important contribution to Portuguese architectural historiography) and because of the novelty in the methodology of analysis and interpretation. Moreover, it is important to notice the variety and quality of these drawings –

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<sup>9</sup> As far as Andrade's studies on Portuguese art are concerned, the most frequently quoted authors are, besides E.E. Viollet-le-Duc *Dictionnaire* (used for comparative analyses): Alexandre Herculano (*História de Portugal*, 1846-1853), Ferdinand Denis (*Portugal*, 1846), Athanasius Raczyński (*Les arts en Portugal*, 1846, *Dictionnaire Historico-Artistique du Portugal*, 1847) and Emilio Hübner (*Notícias Archeológicas de Portugal*, 1861).

from the sketch to the ink outlines or detailed representations – which were his preferential (and almost exclusive) means of representation and communication.

Hence, the 'spirit' underlying the trips around Portugal was the research into the 'origins' of national art and architecture, through a methodology based on direct contact with the artefacts, using exemplary drawing as an instrument of research and representation. These journeys are also an interesting testimony of the passion for history and archaeology that motivated the scholars of his time.

This 'spirit' may also explain the fact that, unlike other contemporary researchers, Alfredo de Andrade did not study the greater 'national monuments' (Leal, 1868). Effectively, no drawings have been found, for instance, relating to the monasteries of Jerónimos, Batalha and Alcobaça, or other monuments classified by the *Real Associação dos Architectos Civis e Archeologos Portuguezes* as first class monuments (RAACAP, 1881). Moreover, the surveyed artefacts, buildings and objects, isolated monuments and urban settlements, major and minor architectures, covered a broad chronological span and pointed to a wide concept of 'monument'.

After these journeys, Alfredo de Andrade would carry out very few surveys on Portuguese architecture, with the exception of a systematic survey of the Castle of Óbidos (1888), complementing his vast knowledge on fortified architecture. This was one of his favourite subjects, both in Portugal and Italy, where he identified a 'network of castles' in the regions of Piedmont and Vale d'Aosta, precociously understanding the value of this heritage and the importance of safeguarding it as an economic and tourist resource (Della Piana 2007, p. 367).

It is difficult to draw conclusions on the precise impact of Andrade's surveys and reports on the Portuguese architectural culture and on its safeguarding<sup>10</sup>. Nonetheless, through his journeys, surveys and reports, he actively participated in the late 19th-century process of discovering national architectural characters,

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<sup>10</sup>Andrade also made a relevant contribution to the Portuguese participation at the *Special Loan Exhibition of Spanish and Portuguese Ornamental Art* at the South Kensington Museum in 1881 and to the creation of the first National Museum in 1882. For further information about his contribution to the study and safeguarding of Portuguese art and architecture, see FERREIRA, T., *Alfredo de Andrade em Portugal (1839-1915): Cidade, Património, Arquitectura*, PhD Dissertation, Politecnico di Milano, 2009.

which was an important feature in the culture of the period, since they provided sources for new architectural production. Hence, in Andrade's surveys in Portugal, there is a predominant attention paid to the Romanesque period, which, by the end of the century, would effectively become a source of inspiration for new buildings, moving towards more rational architecture<sup>11</sup> (Tostões, 1995, p. 508).

### 3. A background for 20th Century architectural culture

Alfredo de Andrade's surveys across Italy and Portugal were part of a broader cultural project of writing illustrated 'Archaeological Memories of the Arts' (Andrade 1867). He started collecting these 'memories' around the 1860s, when, following a period of neoclassical learning, his activity reflected a profound change in its artistic orientation, being marked by the 'discovery' of neo-medieval culture. This transition was influenced by his contact with Italian *verista* painting, which gave rise to anti-academic discussions, such as the rehabilitation of the decorative arts, the defence of realism on art and the search for a 'modern' language that could express the new identity of the unified Italy.

With a strong autobiographical character, these incomplete 'memories' report more than forty years of surveys between his two nations, Italy and Portugal. They are based on the analysis and description of concrete examples, also including personal observations, bibliographical notes, comparative analyses, drawings, photographs and newspaper cuttings<sup>12</sup>.

The time span covered by Andrade's memories is a broad one: even if the medieval era is the predominant one, the 'time-nation' is expanded to other

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<sup>11</sup> Romanesque architecture was a privileged source of inspiration at the turn of the century, as it responded simultaneously to national identity (the period of the foundation of the Portuguese nation) and to more structural, formal and functional essentialism. See, for instance, the works of Marques da Silva (1869-1974) and Ventura Terra (1866-1909).

<sup>12</sup> Most of the bibliographical references can be found in his extensive private library, which stands as a testimony to the persistence of an encyclopaedic and positivist culture, with texts in different languages, such as English, French, German, Italian and Portuguese. Furthermore, it includes a vast number of subjects, such as history, customs, architecture, archaeology, politics, agriculture, music and religion, among others.

periods that were representative of artistic identity, according to each region: 'Roman antiquities' in Italy and Portugal, considered decisive for characterising the origins of places, the *manierismo* and *rinascimento* of Liguria, the Portuguese *manuelino* and the proto-Renaissance, among others.

The subjects contained in Andrade's *memories* and surveys also confirm the scope of his researches, searching for the origins and national characters of art and architecture (which could also provide for models for new architectural production): most of the entries relate to sites and constructive characters in his two nations, as well as to minor or industrial arts, materials and techniques, architectural typologies, and particularly military architecture; the typology which expressed structural sincerity and authenticity in the use of materials and more constructive and functional 'rationalism' (Bordone, 1993).

Nevertheless, we can also perceive the contradictions emerging in the attempt to conjugate regional variants with the research of one national architectural expression. According to some of his contemporaries<sup>13</sup> (Boito 1880), the key seemed to lie in the application of a 'modern style', with a 'national character', but based on 'regional traditions' (Patetta, 2000).

Therefore, in Andrade's surveys there is a strong effort in applying a rigorous and systematic methodology of surveying (in the construction of the 'nation'), which would also provide for models for 'modern' architecture in his both nations, Italy and Portugal.

The prevalence of geographical and constructive issues in Andrade's surveys and memories confirms how the search for references for 'modern' architecture was related to autochthonous vernacular characters based on logic, climate, economics and the pragmatic and intelligent craftsmen production. Hence, surveys were used as methodological 'tools' for achieving a more profound and rigorous understanding of the constructive characters of each context, as well as

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<sup>13</sup> In reference to the Italian context, it's important to notice the pioneer researches by Pietro Selvatico into medieval architecture, followed by his disciple Camillo Boito. Boito was a close friend of Andrade and a central figure in the late 19th-century cultural and artistic debate in Italy, focused on the search for a national style, as he makes clear in *Architettura del Medio Evo in Italia* (1880), with an introduction on the 'Future Style for Italian Architecture'.

a trustworthy source (not to be applied directly<sup>14</sup>) for the architecture of the present.

This is certainly an important background for the following 20th-century architectural culture: history as a methodological tool for understanding and responding to the problems of the present, the progressive construction an idea of *genius locci* (based on geographical and constructive characters), the rejection of universalist and stereotyped solutions, the definition of a systematic and operative methodology for surveys, which could inform new architectural production in continuity with tradition.

Hence, Andrade's contribution (among others), represents a necessary mediation between revivalist historicism and the new challenges of the modernism, which were being announced by the beginning of the 20th-century.

Surveys of vernacular architecture would still be a common feature in the 20th century. For instance, in the Portuguese context, the reaction against stereotyped national architecture was sustained in a survey on vernacular architecture, defending its constructive rationality, functionalism, economy, essentialism, logic and coherence (Sindicato Nacional dos Arquitectos, 1961), "born from the People and Earth with the spontaneity and the life of a flower" (Tavora, 1947). Vernacular constructions were then proposed as a source for new architectural production, which should be simultaneously 'modern' and engaged with tradition.

More recently, in a different context, broader theorisation on 'critical regionalism' (Frampton 1983; Tzonis & Levebvre 1990) has once again called for a position of 'resistance' to be adopted against the universalist homogenisation of architecture, the kaleidoscope of images from post-modern culture, and its more superficial or scenographic appropriation; instead, a regionalist approach defends the material culture of each place and its tectonic characters, providing for a more authentic, contextual and sustainable architecture.

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<sup>14</sup> The inspiration drawn from the past was not a direct one and should also consider adaptations to 'modern' living standards and requirements (comfort, technology, etc).

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