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Rodrigo Christofolletti

# International Heritage

New Approaches, Old Concerns

 Springer

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*seagulls of Porto:  
epitome of a happy time...*

# Foreword: Towards New Chapters in International Heritage

Maria Leonor Botelho<sup>1</sup>  
CITCEM—FLUP<sup>2</sup>

Assets, actors, values, discourses and narratives are now key words in the field of Cultural Heritage, whether on a local, national or international scale. The most recent and striking events of the twenty-first century, such as health crises, climate change, natural disasters, war conflicts or tensions between states, force us to reflect on the impact and models of negotiation at international level in the field of Cultural Heritage. With UNESCO, and particularly since the 1960s, international cooperation has become more than an instrument, it has become a principle in international doctrine.

However, hegemonies, imbalances and conflicts between actors on an international scale have not ceased to emerge. It is therefore understood that the Convention for the Protection and Promotion of Cultural Expressions (UNESCO, 2005) aims to establish a new legal framework for international cooperation, reaffirming the sovereign right of states to adopt cultural policies. Nonetheless, problems that are difficult to resolve continue to be identified, such as the illicit trafficking of cultural goods, the iconoclastic destruction of sites on the World Heritage List (and, of course, others that have not achieved this recognition) or discussions about the restitution of goods, whether decolonial or even linked to the Holocaust itself.

These issues, present in the twenty-first century, raise a number of questions: how can negotiations between sovereign states be mediated while recognising their cultural diversity? Is international doctrine, conceived in a given historical context,

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capable of responding to new challenges and a reality as different as the one we live in today? Is it legitimate to assume universal principles of action in an increasingly compartmentalised world? How can the supposed universality of Cultural Heritage be negotiated with multiple experiences, particularly in “times of alluded disorder”?

Understanding Cultural Heritage in the twenty-first century implies, more than ever, negotiation, regardless of the scale of recognition of the attributes and values of safeguarded properties. Patrimonialisation is increasingly seen as a “process of social and cultural construction resulting from the production of multiple representations by different social groups and the evolution of heritage values that makes it possible to highlight the role of communities” (Botelho & Albuquerque, 2020, 8).

Initially, this process materialised at national level, in a clear affirmation of a top-down representation of what National Monuments are. On a broader scale, we are all aware of how the 1960s were a turning point, embodying what Françoise Choay (2010) defined as the “triple expansion” of heritage (geographical, typological and chronological). It cannot be said enough how the 1972 Convention is, symbolically, politically and doctrinally, the corollary of a process of broadening the scale of recognition of national to world heritage.

Another layer of heritage institutionalisation is being affirmed, now recognised on a global scale. This opens the door to a new paradigm, that of negotiating discourses, policies and even actions on an international scale. In this context, we cannot fail to mention the Burra Charter (ICOMOS, 1999), which was a milestone in the introduction of the concept of cultural significance as a central point for heritage management, adding to the principle of negotiation between institutional players, that of negotiation for heritage values on their various scales. And this is why we also invoke the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Council of Europe, 2005) because it shifts the focus, until then centred on (material or immaterial) goods, to the “people [who] identify” values in goods that are now assumed to be “resources inherited from the past” (Article 2, Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, 2005).

This is the fundamental motto of this book: the realisation that the prerogative of signalling what should be safeguarded for people has been transferred to them. It is therefore with natural satisfaction that we have to reflect on the work that is now being presented—*International Heritage: new approaches, old concerns*—which seeks to reflect on current issues (both emerging and urgent) and assert itself as a turning point in this field. Rodrigo Christofoletti sees it as both an arrival (a celebration and a reckoning, as he says) and a starting point. Focussing on the issues associated with International Heritage, it is a key work in the author’s consolidated scientific and pedagogical output which, by discussing themes that have been troubling him for several years, now presents old concerns with new perspectives, in other words, new approaches. This book was produced in the context of the post-doctoral mobility project that Rodrigo Christofoletti carried out at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Porto, hosted by the Interdisciplinary Centre “Culture, Space and Memory” (CITCEM), during the 2023/2024 academic year. I had the

privilege of supervising his mobility and the opportunity to follow the development of the discussions and reflections that are published here.

I share many of these concerns with Rodrigo Christofolletti, with whom I have worked for several years. I also believe that in this decade of the 2020s, in particular, we are living through a turning point in the field of international heritage. We are facing a unique moment that can perhaps only be compared to the landmark 1960s. It's no small wonder why the Venice Charter is still so celebrated, having just turned 60 in 2024. Aware today of the power of negotiation on the most diverse scales, and using the resources present in Cultural Diplomacy, aren't we facing the opportunity(s) to open a new chapter in the field of International Heritage by bringing new perspectives to old (but also new) concerns?

Porto, Portugal  
17 June 2024

Maria Leonor Botelho

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# Introduction: New Approaches, Old Concerns

This book is a celebration. It is also a reckoning. A celebration of two decades of work on safeguarding cultural heritage (both inside and outside academia) and for helping to shape a new field of study that is beginning to take shape (heritage in international relations). A reckoning for realising that some of the assumptions that guided the start of my career can now finally be repaired, reconfigured and reappropriated. In almost three decades of professional activity (two of them immersed in the problems of safeguarding heritage at international level), I have focussed my attention on the pedagogical purpose of making heritage a vector of my objects of study, a response to a theme that was swimming in shallow waters when I began my first strokes. I and other colleagues helped shape this new field of endeavour, and this paternity bequeathed us an unconditional responsibility.

Over the last 20 years, I've been immersed in the conflicting task of learning and applying issues that enhance the safeguarding of cultural heritage, first as a curious, enthusiastic person, and later as an educator, manager, teacher and scientific communicator. Along the way, I learnt how the multiplicity of views on safeguarding helps to demarcate new frontiers and consolidate the role of cultural heritage as a fundamental asset in maintaining people's lives. From the mid-2000s onwards, I specialised in a subject that was little studied at the time, becoming a pioneer in the area that brought heritage preservation and international relations together.

I started out timidly with sparse publications, in small national scientific dissemination meetings, localised seminars of national scope, and as the discoveries and demands grew, the scope of my work became more international, not only because the themes I studied forced me to have a more macroscopic notion of the safeguarding universe, but above all because I chose as my objects of study themes that were born internationalised; globalised, as I like to say. The challenge was often greater than my capacity for retention, appropriation or comprehension, but I always knew that this would be my field and the reason for my presence in academia. In this sense, there is a pioneering stamp worth mentioning. This is not an encumbrance, but this selection marks two decades of persistent research that has raised the connection between cultural heritage and international relations to a level of wider academic recognition.

This book marks a watershed between two stages of my academic career. All the themes (more or less incipient at first) find echoes and depth in the texts presented here. The themes that follow were amplified from my mobility experience (post-doctorate) at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Porto between 2023 and 2024, when I taught the course *International Heritage: new approaches*, which resulted in the themes dealt with in this book. As you can see: new approaches, old concerns...

Contributing to the overall scope of this work was the contact established with the Portuguese Judicial Police, Northern Directorate, dedicated to combating trafficking in cultural goods and economic and financial crime; with the Carabinieri Command for the Protection of Cultural Heritage in Rome and with technicians from Unidroit (Institut international pour l'unification du droit privé) in Paris, who specialise in stolen or illegally exported cultural objects. Meetings with experts, lawyers, public prosecutors and police officers specialising in the international trafficking of cultural goods in Portugal, Italy and France were essential for the accuracy of the terms used in this book. The same happened with the staff of the World Heritage Centre—UNESCO, who helped me to map out in detail the state of the art of the conflicting relationship between the committees and the list of world heritage sites, through the minutes of the management committees and interviews. I would like to highlight the kind collaboration of the former director general of UNESCO, Irina Bokova, who helped clarify a significant part of my doubts in some conversations in recent years.

From a conceptual point of view, this book seeks to reflect on the principles and reasons why those involved in heritage preservation find themselves lost in a kind of heritage disorder that exists today. As the Spanish historian José Castillo Ruiz warns us in a recent book on the limits of historical heritage, “heritage does not exist without action on it” (Ruiz, 2022). Beyond the confusion that surrounds the concepts of historical heritage and cultural heritage, the intersection between the two concepts is still a frontier that is being elucidated, to the extent that any heritage object or activity can become heritage. In this sense, the use of the concept of cultural heritage leads us to think of the concept as something that brings together the diversity of goods and activities that are the object of its attention, as proposed by the 2005 Faro Convention of the Council of Europe on the value of cultural heritage to society. This convention points out that heritage reflects the “flexibility and freedom with which each institution handles this concept, which allows each of them, depending on the role and prominence it plays in its field, to pronounce itself autonomously on this substantial issue” (Faro, 2005), after all, the concept of heritage is truly subjective and dynamic, it does not depend on objects or goods, but on the values that society in general attributes to them at each historical moment.

These values determine which assets are chosen to be protected and conserved for posterity. Thus, the nineteenth century’s restricted, singular, monumental view of heritage was overcome in the twentieth century by the incorporation of the concept of cultural value, and in the twenty-first century, it has been constantly strengthened. This cultural heritage constitutes a set of resources inherited from the past that people consider, regardless of who they belong to, as a reflection and expression of

their own values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions, which are in a constant process of change, “encompassing all aspects resulting from the interaction between people and places over time” (Ruiz, 2022, 22). For this reason, the framework that underpins this book is forged on the understanding of cultural heritage, because its flexibility allows it to go beyond the constraints that other adjectives sustain.

In the international sphere, heritage is also configured as a set of material and immaterial, cultural and natural goods generated indiscriminately by human beings throughout history, which acquire values and meanings relevant to people in the present, becoming goods of general interest, which require the implementation of a system of protection that guarantees the fulfilment of the fundamental right of all people to their conservation and collective enjoyment. The examples given in this book are ample proof of the multiplicity of experiences that surround the complex understanding of heritage at international level, in times of this disorder. Its simultaneously unitary, and globalising condition seeks to connect the past with the present and the fruit of this interaction manifests itself in themes that were previously little explored, but which are currently gaining prominence in the face of the immediacy of our time.

Although immaterial heritage and the dynamics of the immateriality of heritage were not covered in a specific article, it is easy to see throughout the book that immateriality has metaphorically become a thread that sews most of the texts together. Far from the *démodé* dichotomy that bifurcates and dichotomises tangible and intangible heritage (we have definitely overcome this dichotomy), my concerns about the intangibility of heritage can be found in topics such as the intangible heritage of refugees, and the penetration into hearts and minds of the documents that have shaped UNESCO’s world heritage (above all the 2003 Intangible Heritage Convention document), understood simultaneously as anti-seismic constructions and castles of cards. Finally, the reflections on the Memory of the World programme are first and foremost an ode to the potential of the immateriality of heritage, so that even though it is not dealt with specifically, the immateriality of heritage is the subject of many of the notes and discussions in this book.

The text that served as the initial project for admission to the mobility period introduces my first concerns. Chapter 1 prioritises not only the history of the use of the concept of soft power, but also delves into its nuances, presenting examples of different spaces, actors and typologies, in a scenario in which two other themes become protagonists: the international trafficking of cultural goods and criticism of the ill-fated representativeness of the lists sponsored by UNESCO (world heritage, intangible heritage of humanity and heritage in danger).

Closer international relations under multilateralism and globalisation have allowed professional diplomacy, carried out by state bodies, to broaden its scope. We are witnessing a significant change in the understanding, presence and visibility of other forms of diplomatic intervention, which in the near past were rather neglected. Cultural diplomacy is one of the stars of this paradigm shift. In Chap. 2, we try to present a few digressions on concepts that are commonly seen as synonyms, but which are different in nature. To this end, we will show how cultural

diplomacy has been reappropriated as an important tool for bringing peoples and governments closer together.

International trafficking in cultural goods is today one of the largest debt evasion complexes on the planet and attempts have been made to find common procedures to combat trafficking in works of art and cultural goods. In reality, it is difficult to pinpoint the depth of the damage caused by this type of trafficking. One of the reasons why it is difficult to quantify international trafficking is that the value of cultural goods is not the same in the country of origin and destination. Official sources say that paintings, sculptures, statues and religious objects are among the most trafficked artefacts. Against this backdrop, the text Chap. 3 seeks to establish bridges that preservation actors can cross while fulfilling one of their most virtuous commitments: to be a persistent compass acting on the side effects of globalisation.

It's not exactly news that international databases on the trafficking of cultural goods don't talk to each other as they should. What is new is the progress made over the last few years by these databases, which has meant that their joint actions have expanded and resulted in more effective actions to curb trafficking. In Chap. 4, a complex mechanism, we present a set of databases that, in our opinion, need to improve their communication flow. In line with this assertion, we will present its connection with the Internet, which has become a privileged space for the trade in cultural goods (legal and international), giving examples of how interoperability can bear promising fruit in the implementation of a defence belt against trafficked cultural heritage.

The return/refund of cultural goods has become an increasingly prominent issue for cultural diplomacy, reflecting a shift in North-South political discussions towards a renewed dialogue on culture. French President E. Macron's declaration (open to the return of African spoils) was considered historic. As a result, half a decade after the publication of the report co-written by Senegalese Felwine Sarr and Frenchwoman Bénédicte Savoy, entitled *The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage. Towards a New Relational Ethic*, the topic of the return and repatriation of art objects acquired by the great powers in times of colonisation, usually through international looting, has never been more visible. The text Chap. 5 analyses the receptions of this new relational ethic, with African and Latin American examples.

The tradition of preserving heritage dates back to ancient times when people sought to protect forests, mountains, rivers and seas that were important to a particular community. The adjectives are many and varied, but they express the same idea: the fact that there is something that transcends human cultural diversity and plurality and therefore deserves to be highlighted and safeguarded as a common legacy of humanity. It is from this understanding that the idea of world heritage of humanity is born, which over time will be bi-dimensioned as World Heritage and World Heritage of Humanity, the former focusing on the materiality of heritage and the latter linked to immateriality. Chapter 6 seeks to align these differences and prepare the ground for a more critical reading of the UNESCO legacy discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 7 dialogues with the assessments of archaeologist Lynn Meskell, a keen observer of UNESCO, who takes a critical look at the state of the art of the 50th

anniversary of the World Heritage Convention. In this chapter, I consolidate the reasons why I am looking at UNESCO with a less condescending eye. Looking at UNESCO with critical eyes even allows us to see natural heritage as one of the ways out of humanity's imminent collapse. It should be remembered that the 1972 World Cultural and Natural Heritage Convention was born in the midst of culture (as if it were dissociated from nature). It follows that a very pertinent criticism draws attention to the fact that the presence of natural heritage is always presented as an afterthought within UNESCO's cultural heritage sector; rather, it would be a subterfuge to address the imbalance of the list. Brazil has recovered its role as a relevant international player with UNESCO and research carried out in the last decade has addressed this and other topics, such as Brazil's increasingly prominent presence in UNESCO's decision-making committees (Committee on intangible heritage, preservation of heritage during a period of armed conflicts and the fight against illicit trafficking in cultural goods<sup>1</sup>, are two eloquent examples of this new position achieved by Brazil).

About to turn 80 (in 2025), UNESCO is an extraordinary laboratory for observing the extent to which power dynamics still reproduce colonial impositions, often behaving either as a legitimate preservation platform (an anti-seismic building) or as a demagogic and fragile propaganda (house of cards) sponsored by groups that regulate what should or should not be preserved. The text Chap. 8 analyses this pendulum action by UNESCO, escaping the emulation that sees this multilateral institution as a panacea.

This is an open discussion that shows which narrative on heritage we are affiliated with. It is in the wake of the debate on ways of preserving nature that the Chap. 9 presents examples of identifying, protecting and valorising natural heritage resources that help us understand the alarming situation in which part of the world's natural heritage finds itself. Also alarming is the current state of tourism in the world. The relationship between heritage and tourism has become a conflictual one like never before and the pandemic period has incubated another virus in people, in addition to the Covid-19 virus: a planetary need to travel, to tourist (to use an appropriate neologism), something that humanity had not yet experienced, has been dammed up. When a movement began to review the harmful impacts that unbridled tourism has on places, their residents and the tourists themselves, solutions to prevent this predatory tourism from becoming the norm gained prominence. In the Chap. 10, we discuss how unbridled tourism has become a public health problem, especially in the countries of the global north.

We cannot conceive of language and culture separately, since language is one of the means by which people assimilate culture, perpetuating or transforming it.

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<sup>1</sup> Brazil has participated in the sessions of the Subsidiary Committee of the 1970 Convention, relating to combating trafficking in cultural goods since 2023. In 2024, the Committee deliberated on awareness-raising strategies, the involvement of the arts and antiquities market in UNESCO actions, the vulnerability of cultural heritage in situations of conflict and natural disasters, in addition to the trafficking of cultural goods in a virtual environment and new technologies to combat the problem.

Language as a living cultural heritage identifies relevant political processes, functioning as the basis of identity relations. In Chap. 11, Lusophony is thought of as a heritage (with the Portuguese language as its centre and direction) that is the result of intersections and dialogues that oscillate between perpetuity, ephemerality and existence.

The tragic episode of the destruction of the Sarajevo library during the Bosnian war in 1992, which destroyed almost two million rare books and documents, marked a turning point in UNESCO's position on its responsibilities as the protector of archival collections around the world. The growing awareness of the risks posed to documentary heritage is a response to the realisation that most of the memory of peoples is contained in bibliographic and archival documents that are physically fragile and at constant risk from natural disasters, inadequate safekeeping, theft and war. The text Chap. 12 takes stock of some of the actions carried out by the programme and provides guidance, based on case studies, on how parts of this archival heritage have been preserved.

As the new century unfolds, the radiography of power relations reveals new actors. Cultural heritage is one of these actors emerging from multilateral debates. The refugee is another actor emerging from a humanitarian crisis that humanity has never experienced before. Although there seems to be no connection between the two, what we realise is that forced migration requires many people to take with them only their memories, languages and the intangible cultural manifestations of their people. In a situation of refuge, they don't carry their material goods, but the immaterial ones belong to them as the historical ballast of their origins. Against this backdrop, the Chap. 13 looks at the possible relationship between refugees and intangible heritage, with formal education as a means of propagation. But if, on the one hand, the post-pandemic optimism may have somewhat fooled us, on the other hand, it has raised alarm bells about issues rooted in years of stereotyped and prejudiced positions. Spurred on by the wave of vandalism and toppling of statues that has gripped the planet in recent years, the text: Chapter 14 discusses the role that decoloniality plays in everyday life, the weight of this option and how hegemonic political positions try to turn it into a passing fad. Preserving the past or subordinating it to the present? Would it be reasonable to tear down statues that we criticise today? Or, on the contrary, to what extent does maintaining these historical figures not corroborate the already denounced imposition of some groups over others? In this chapter, these and other (difficult to answer) questions will guide us, starting with the challenge of a "de-monumentalisation" of statues, places and toponyms, thus seeking a less condescending appropriation in relation to so-called unrepresented minorities.

The book concludes this set of internationalist themes with a text that discusses how Egypt has organised itself to produce an Egyptology made by native archaeologists, seeking to escape the caricature that television programmes have helped to propagate. Chapter 15 shows how, from the relocation of the giant temples from the banks of the Nile to the early 2000s, a new Egyptology carried out by Egyptian archaeologists and financed by a Ministry of Antiquities that was keen to regain command of a science that had been tutored for more than two centuries by European

academia has changed the way ancient Egypt is studied. Oscillating between great visibility and controversial polemics, the text shows the quest by Egyptian archaeologists to strengthen an indigenous archaeology, without underestimating international cooperation, seeking to overcome the reputation of being a scenographic laboratory and producer of false histories. However, an exoteric pseudo-Egyptology has acted to popularise its communication through a very controversial bias. All these chapters are just a part of the variety of themes concerning heritage at international level. A series of new themes will emerge from this set as the winds of multilateralism blow ever more strongly. In this period of activity, I have endeavoured to respond to the challenges of navigating shallow waters with the diligence of someone who learns to navigate by sailing. May new areas be explored and may the objects of international heritage continue to amaze us, not just because of their exuberance, but because of their link to the designs of an increasingly united, diverse and plural world.

Porto, June 2024.

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# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Soft Power and Heritage: New Domains in International Relations.</b> . . . . .	1
	State of the Art: Soft Power on the Frontier of International Relations . . . . .	1
	What Is Soft Power? How Have International Relations, History and Heritage Incorporated It? . . . . .	2
	Why Develop This Project in the Field of International Relations? . . . . .	5
	A Brief Comment on Power . . . . .	7
	The Difficulty of Choosing Between Such Complex Fields. . . . .	9
	Leading Domains in the Fight to Preserve Cultural Heritage: Criticising the Biased Cartography of World Heritage Sites and the Actions of International Trafficking in Cultural Goods . . . . .	11
	Examples of Soft Power in the Cartography of World Heritage. . . . .	12
	International Trafficking in Cultural Goods and Methods of Return/Repatriation. . . . .	15
	References. . . . .	18
<b>2</b>	<b>Digressions on Cultural Diplomacy.</b> . . . . .	21
	Digression 1 . . . . .	21
	Digression 2: Is It Possible to Measure the Influence of Diplomacy? . . . . .	31
	Digression 3: The Weight of Brazilian Cultural Diplomacy: How Is It Seen by Itamaraty? . . . . .	32
	Digression 4: External Cultural Relations and Cultural External Relations: A Paradox? . . . . .	33
	Digression 5: Cultural Diplomacy as a Bridge to Understanding Between Peoples. . . . .	42
	References. . . . .	43

**3 International Trafficking in Cultural Objects: The Privatisation of the Common Good** . . . . . 45

    First Notes . . . . . 45

    Brazil and the International Trade in Cultural Objects . . . . . 49

    November 14: Awareness Day on the Harm of Trafficking . . . . . 53

    A List for a Future Without Theft or a List Without a Future?. . . . . 54

    References . . . . . 57

**4 Interoperability as a Preservation Tool: Databases on International Trafficking in Cultural Goods.** . . . . . 59

    Databases That Do Not Interact as They Should . . . . . 62

    Interpol . . . . . 63

    Europol and Afripol—Growing Subsidiaries . . . . . 66

    World Customs Organisation (WCO) . . . . . 67

    Carabinieri—Protecting Cultural Heritage: An Example of an Ideal Type?. . . . . 68

    Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)—Task Force That Serves as a Compass. . . . . 69

    Brazil-European Union Dialogues on International Trafficking in Cultural Goods and Interoperability of Systems. . . . . 70

    Interaction Between Databases and the Internet: The Challenges of Mutual Assistance. . . . . 72

    Two Case Studies: How Interoperability Can Act as a Brake on Trafficking . . . . . 75

        Operation Pandora . . . . . 75

    Interpol Survey . . . . . 76

    Inflection Points . . . . . 78

    References . . . . . 79

**5 Return and Restitution of Cultural Goods: Decoloniality as Compass and Brake** . . . . . 81

    Restitution as Historical Reparation: What Goes for One Goes for All? . . . . . 84

    Case Studies as Food for Thought: Repatriation as a Pendulum Between Domestic and Foreign Policy . . . . . 87

    References . . . . . 93

**6 Heritage of Humanity, World Heritage and Common Heritage: Concepts in Perspective** . . . . . 95

    References . . . . . 102

**7 The Deep Roots of UNESCO’s Longevity: A Critical Look at the 50th Anniversary of the 1972 World Heritage Convention** . . . . . 105

    The World Heritage Committee and Fund: The Paymaster’s Box . . . . . 112

    Next 50: Safeguarding Living Heritage and Projections for the Coming Decades . . . . . 116

The Most Significant Conclusions of this Research Were . . . . .	118
References. . . . .	120
<b>8 Documents That Have Shaped UNESCO’s World Heritage:</b>	
<b>Anti-seismic Constructions or Castles of Cards?</b> . . . . .	121
A Long-Lasting and Resilient Convention: 70 Years Old, More	
Current than Ever... . . . .	124
54 Years of Struggle Against Economic and Moral Evasion . . . . .	129
52 Years of Controversial Cartography . . . . .	135
23 Years: Response to Looting and Focus on Studies. . . . .	139
In Situ . . . . .	139
21 Years... the Youngest Comes of Age. How Do Countries	
in the Global South View Intangible Heritage? Recognising	
Its Value or a Consolation Prize? . . . . .	144
19 Years of a Global Need . . . . .	147
Anti-seismic Construction or House of Cards? . . . . .	149
References. . . . .	150
<b>9 Natural Heritage: Challenges Between Biodiversity and Climate</b>	
<b>Change</b> . . . . .	153
Nature and Environmental History at the Centre of the Debate . . . . .	155
Human Nature in Times of Biodiversity and Climate Change . . . . .	165
References. . . . .	169
<b>10 Tourism Phobia: Between Predation and Sustainability.</b> . . . . .	171
Sustainable Tourism: Like Believing in Unicorns . . . . .	181
References. . . . .	189
<b>11 Lusophony as Heritage: Identity Relations and Language Use</b> . . . .	191
A Language That Was Born Atlantic . . . . .	191
Agreement at Odds? . . . . .	193
A Day to Call Your Own. . . . .	195
CPLP and PALOP—New Faces of the Portuguese Language	
in the World. . . . .	197
CPLP: My Land Is the World, My Language Is Portuguese. . . . .	198
Palop: Lusophone Co-operation from an African Perspective . . . . .	201
New Spaces for Language Growth: The Internet as a Stage for	
Dissemination . . . . .	202
Language Technology and Overcoming the Obstacles of Linguistic	
Diversity . . . . .	204
Two Cases Subsidised by Telegrams from the Brazilian Delegation	
to UNESCO . . . . .	206
The Timorese Paradox: Bilingualism and Multilingualism in East	
Timor . . . . .	206
Creole as a Threat: Coexistence or Dispute? . . . . .	208
Journey to the New Land of Old Letters. . . . .	210
References. . . . .	215

**12 UNESCO Memory of the World: Documentary Heritage Against Oblivion** . . . . . 217

Guidelines for the Memory of the World Programme: The Examples of Brazil and Portugal . . . . . 225

Forgotten in the Corner of the Bookshelf? . . . . . 230

References . . . . . 232

**13 Welcome as Soft Power: The Universe of Refugees Between Heritage, Language and Education** . . . . . 233

Welcoming Refugees as an Example of Soft Power . . . . . 243

Refuge and Soft Power . . . . . 245

References . . . . . 247

**14 Symbols, Statues and Functions of the Past: The Decolonial Vision Sustains a Place in the World** . . . . . 249

Soft Power as a Vector for Decolonisation . . . . . 255

Heritage in the Face of the Decolonial Turn: An Appeal to the Oppressed? . . . . . 257

References . . . . . 260

**15 From Aswan to Cairo: Projections of an Egyptology Downstream of Time** . . . . . 263

Relocation, Recreation or Construction of a False History? . . . . . 268

Abu Simbel . . . . . 270

Philae . . . . . 273

Hatshepsut’s Mortuary Temple: Discussions About Originality and Identity . . . . . 275

The Thriving Illicit Market in Egyptian Artefacts . . . . . 278

Egyptology in the Streaming Era—History Channel and Exoteric Sensationalism as a Dissemination Tool . . . . . 280

References . . . . . 282

**Index** . . . . . 285

# Chapter 1

## Soft Power and Heritage: New Domains in International Relations



### State of the Art: Soft Power on the Frontier of International Relations

What I call attraction can be carried out by impulse, or by other means unknown to me.

I use this word here to mean in general any force by which bodies tend to relate to each other, whatever the cause. (Isaac Newton)

Despite the broadening of discussions on cultural heritage in various areas, to the point where some analysts suggest that we are living in an “inflation of heritage”, in some academic spaces, such as history and its approximation with international relations, this discourse on the broadening of cultural heritage preservation policies, as well as soft power as a preservation mechanism, remains little rooted, which is reflected in the significant disproportionality between studies of the so-called hard power, to the detriment of themes whose approach is “soft power”. This discussion encourages a critical dialogue between interdisciplinary fields that border on heritage, with an emphasis on historiography (above all, based on the presuppositions of Cultural History and the History of the Present Time), and seeks to contribute to the interpretation of case studies (national and international) linked to the list of geopolitical concerns on the contemporary scene.

In international politics, power is considered to be both a means and an end through which a relationship of domination develops between one party and another, which guarantees one of the parties the possibility of determining the behaviour of the others in pursuit of its interests. The definition serves as a stimulus to broaden our understanding of the proposed object. By its very nature, soft power is a relative and intangible concept, inherently difficult to quantify. The relational nature of soft

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The general framework of this text has never been published and is based on the proposal for mobility (post-doctorate) carried out between 2023 and 2024, at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Porto (FLUP), together with CITCEM—Transdisciplinary Centre for Culture and Memory.

power gives rise to a substantially complex comparative plane in which transnational comparisons become complicated and difficult. What is loved in one country can be repulsed in another. Sometimes criticised by writers who see soft power only as a powerful means of maintaining the US status quo, the concept needs to be seen in its entirety and cannot be understood naively.

In confluence, firstly there is a long list of human endeavours that come to mind when one thinks of modern diplomatic concerns: the economy, military affairs, crime, health, the environment and terrorism, among others. On the other hand, the generic theme of the internationalisation of cultural heritage has hardly been seen on the list of such diplomatic concerns. The importance of its knowledge is overshadowed by other issues of greater general interest, such as contemporary humanitarian crises (forced human displacement, wars, civil wars and camp experiences), new trends in foreign policy, issues of contemporary urgency, global politics and negotiations and conflicts, among other topics considered more burning. This means that cultural heritage is still looking for a more forceful mention in the literature on diplomacy and cultural diplomacy and, by extension, international relations.

Although there is a perception that this is an abstract theme, there is, in direct proportion, a propositional agenda in the case of cultural heritage preservation, and it is in this agenda that this research is inserted. The broadening of the spectrum of issues related to the cultural universe, especially cultural heritage, has moved on to broader themes, such as the debate on the trafficking and repatriation of cultural goods; the wave of destruction of heritage sponsored by radical ethnic and religious groups around the world; the increasingly protagonist dimension of immateriality in the universe of cultural goods; the presence of other actors in the production, maintenance and management of heritage and the intensification of comparative studies between UNESCO member states and the institution's own mechanism: the fruit of recent dialogue between various areas of knowledge and the concept of soft power.

## **What Is Soft Power? How Have International Relations, History and Heritage Incorporated It?**

In the Western world, despite the expansion of discussions on cultural heritage in various areas, the practice of preservation policies and the use of cultural assets as examples of these policies remain little studied. In this scenario, the central theoretical framework of this research discusses the concept of soft power, propagated by the American theorist Joseph Nye Jr., who recovered arguments from classical realism related to the capacity for conviction, persuasion and attraction and organised them under a new theoretical framework. In the early 1990s, the term "soft power" came to be used by academics as the "ability to influence other people to do what you want by attraction rather than coercion. Coercive power would be military showmanship and economic sanctions, power classified as brute, while cultural,

ideological and political identity, derived from a kind of ‘co-operative behaviour’ would be soft power”. This premise forms an integral part of the notion of soft power.

Craig Hayden, for example, simultaneously identified the “potential of culture, political ideals and foreign policy legitimacy” as the three constituent resources of soft power (Craig, 2012, 29). Culture has often been considered one of its main pillars. At the same time, however, it has also been observed that culture does not lend itself to clear analytical determinations: questions of definition, origin, transmission, reception and long-term impact remain unclear; after all, “culture” is notoriously a difficult word to define, as it is imbued with many shades of understanding. In fact, in the human sciences, “culture” is perhaps as contested and controversial a concept as “power”; consequently, we can understand culture as “a broad concept that means many different things to different people” (Trommler, 1990, 67).

In order to understand the interface that brings cultural heritage and international relations closer together, the term “soft power” helps us scrutinise paths that have not yet been trodden. In international politics, power is considered to be both a means and an end through which a relationship of domination develops between one party and another, granting one party the power to determine the behaviour of others in pursuit of its interests (Ferguson, 2005, 18). This definition serves as a leitmotif for understanding the role of cultural heritage preservation in international relations. Hand in hand with the increase in perceived interest in the existence of soft power, the visibility of this topic in the academic world is growing as much as in the practice of the political arena. In line with these sentiments, it can be said that there is probably no broader concept among policymakers in international relations than that of soft power.

The term soft power has therefore been applied in various understandings, some of which have taken on forms that are unrecognisable in comparison to the concept. Joseph Nye himself recently admitted: “Over time, I’ve realised that concepts like soft power are like children. As an academic or public intellectual, you can love and discipline them when they’re young, but as they grow up, they drift away and look for new company, good and bad. There’s not much you can do about that” (Nye, 2016, 14). We realise that using the concept of soft power in the preservation of cultural heritage is in line with this simple observation. In this case, like a poet who finishes a poem, a composer who finishes his lyrics or a painter who finishes his work, the creation no longer belongs to the creator, as it will undergo re-appropriations in its trajectory as art. The concept of “soft power in cultural goods” is one of these possibilities for appropriation in the face of such a flexible concept. It is from this borderline point that we start to contextualise the object in question.

In his early writings on soft power, Nye argued that the “universalism of a country’s culture and its ability to establish a favourable set of rules and institutions that help govern areas of international activity are critical sources of power” (Nye, 2004a, b, c, 234). For this reason, soft power “tends to arise from resources such as cultural and ideological attraction, as well as the rules and institutions of regimes (...) it is the ability of a nation to structure a situation so that other nations develop preferences or define their interest in a way that agrees with its precepts”.

At the multilateral level, efforts to institutionalise new preservation practices have been made on a larger scale since the mid-1950s and from the 1970s onwards with greater force, emanating above all from UNESCO. Some documents have been the basis for these efforts, such as the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954), the Convention for the Prohibition of the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970), the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972), the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001), the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005). The large-scale use of these legal preservation mechanisms has led to the creation of a trend: cultural heritage as a key to new socio-historical-cultural approaches that scholars are constantly updating.

Culture, values and the formation of domestic and foreign agendas are the essential topics that drive the so-called soft power, which refers, in geopolitical terms, to the ability to get others to do what you want through attraction rather than coercion. The agenda-setting process is guided by the bureaucratic state and the structure of opportunities, with the intervention of the various actors that make up this articulated machinery, involving internal actors like political organisers and bureaucrats and external actors like the media, public opinion, interest groups and the academic field. However, soft power is not always produced by the state and is at risk of losing its effectiveness if it is controlled by the government, as in the case of non-state multinational companies such as Microsoft Corporation, Apple and Havaianas, among others.

In Nye's view (2004a, b, c), Brazil has potential soft power to be exploited through its foreign policy, given the attraction aroused by its promise for the future and magnificent culture. It is a rich, abundant, ethnically and culturally diverse country; these factors expand the opportunities for interstate dialogue. In addition, Brazil is known for its values of peace and cooperation, and unlike other nations, it maintains a tradition of peaceful coexistence with its neighbours. This potential, however, needs to be properly exploited in order to flourish.

According to Roberto Abdenur (1997), there is concrete data that must be taken into account regarding Brazil's position on the international stage. According to the author, Brazil's ability to engage in dialogue with other countries is favoured by the fact that it is located in a privileged region, far from ethno-religious conflicts, away from the most critical natural disasters and with recognition of diplomatic milestones demarcated by inclusion. Furthermore, the fact that the state exhibits patterns of both underdevelopment and first-world status favours dialogue. In view of the challenges, Abdenur (1997) suggests a firmer external approach, which could materialise through the exploitation of opportunities on the foreign policy agenda and through the transformation of topics dear to developed countries, such as terrorism, the environment, international crime and human rights. But there is another area in which the country can make a difference and impose a certain leading role, and that is in the area of culture.

Because of this “thematic novelty”, there are still few systematised studies in the field of International Relations on the connection between this area and the preservation of cultural heritage, and there is currently no general consensus on the definition of this new domain. However, what we do realise is that this new field has worked to understand a variety of themes, which act as ambassadors for new global demands. This has led to other objects of study that have not yet been incorporated into the field, such as the large-scale understanding of major sporting events, such as the World Cup, the Summer and Winter Games and the Olympics; football as a mark of an increasingly globalised soft power; the great artistic and musical festivals around the planet and those of lesser expression, given that they are regional, because they often make explicit the identity of peoples virtually unknown to the mainstream; languages and their borders; and the dynamics of hierarchising themes and criteria enshrined by UNESCO’s advisory bodies; these are themes which are fundamental but, momentarily peripheral. They serve as footprints on the road to our object.

Thus, this research faces a central task: to show that the connection between cultural heritage, international relations and soft power is relevant, and, for this reason, it seeks to document significant examples to this end, choosing Brazil as a comparative field with international examples. Given the importance built around this category of analysis, it seems appropriate to offer possibilities for research into the workings of soft power (a concept that is being questioned on the margins of IR), thus providing a conceptual basis and rigorous methodological approaches under its aegis.

## **Why Develop This Project in the Field of International Relations?**

Drawing a line capable of aggregating and summarising the position of a culture in relation to its heritage will always be an unfinished business, given that the work can contain several chronotopes. Given the basic assumption of this demand, why is the presentation of this project sustained within the framework of international relations? What epistemological guidelines underpin this investigation in these domains? One possible answer would be: it is a question of ethos. The place from which we speak. I realise that over the last two decades, all of my intellectual production has taken place at the intersection between the History of the Present Time and the human sciences in general, with a strong connection to International Relations, an area that is very experienced in offering shelter to frontier and related areas. This itinerary ended up building a natural bridge between historiographical study itself and research into areas bordering on international relations and studies into the preservation of cultural heritage at international level.

For historians linked to the culturalist current, the motto of their analysis is to study the mechanisms of production of cultural objects, a somewhat vague concept,

but one that ends up broadly defining this historiographical field, leaving its borders open, which in a dominantly specialised universe could sound like conceptual sloppiness. However, the object of study of Cultural History ends up naturally leading to its very essence, a space of perpetual transformation and constant adaptation, an inherent characteristic of culture. However, despite the fact that this approach is an interdisciplinary field, encompassing multiple dimensions, theoretically, thinking about understanding contemporary reality permeated by the cultural matrix, there is a need to pinpoint its field of study more precisely. In reality, the concept of Cultural History is extremely malleable, circumscribed to specific contexts, and it can be no different, given the fact that culture is in perpetual transformation, constantly adapting to new circumstances.

The approach of this research is based on the assumptions of historians such as Ariès (1995), Chartier (1988), Burke (2007). The same Cultural History that appeared as a militant willing to shake up the dictates hitherto imposed by the dominant historiography, trying to answer various tricky questions typical of our time, draws attention to the fact that the signs of its understanding are best noticed in the labyrinths and between the lines, rather than in the text itself. It is in the labyrinths that they are best felt and perceived, given to be. This realisation has been fundamental so that, on the one hand, we can broaden our historiographical knowledge of a field that is still under construction, and on the other, we can widen the possible frontiers in the fields of IR and related areas.

It should also be emphasised that the deepening of discussions between the past and the present and the break with the idea that the historical object was only identified with the distant past (defined as something totally dead and incapable of being reinterpreted in terms of the present) opened up new ways of understanding the present in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The expansion of debates about memory and its relationship with history as an object of research offered keys to a new intelligibility of the past. Despite this growing and permanent interest in the present and the affirmation of this new field of work, the so-called History of Present Time faces challenges in legitimising itself because it does not have a more precise definition of its object, its methodologies and the limits of its investigation (Ferreira, 2000, 85). Although to date a consensual definition has not been fully established, the name formulated by François Bédarida (1993), *histoire du temps présent*, seems to best meet the requirements. “The very notion of ‘present time’ has undergone transformations in its multiple aspects and its relations with contemporaries, testimonies, actors, social demand and other disciplines”.

From this debate, a relevant issue was the assertion that the “present time” constitutes a unique scientific field, by its very definition. The first difficulty is that the historical period in question is defined by shifting boundaries. So what chronology and what key event should be adopted as the starting point for the history of the present time? For some, it is the period that dates back to the last great rupture; for others, it is the era in which we live and have memories of, or the era whose witnesses are alive and can supervise the historian and put him in check (apud Ferreria,

2005, 86). It was from this perspective that Bédarida declared that “the history of the present time is made up of provisional dwellings”. This means that it turns over very quickly and is constantly rewritten, using the same material, through additions, revisions and corrections. Another singularity of the present time is the valorisation of the event, contingency and the acceleration of history. An in-depth dialogue with this current takes place through the texts of Ferreira (2000), Chauveau (1999), Rouso (2000). The suggested theoretical tools thus fit the purposes of this study and allied currents in understanding the dynamics of the contemporary.

In line with the assumptions of these currents, the analytical dimension that conceives of cultural heritage and soft power as living categories, in constant transformation, has enhanced the notion of heritage as an expanded synonym, making clear the theoretical-methodological affiliations that mark this work: Riegl (2006), Babelon and Chastel (1994), Jeudy (2005), Choay (2010), and Chuva (2017). In turn, contemporary scholars from various fields who have dealt with cultural heritage as a soft power have become fundamental to this research: Basu and Modest (2021), Huntington (2001), Lane (2001), Luke and Kersel (2018), Meskell (2018a, b), Macclory (2010, 2019), (Ballerini, 2017), (Ohnesorge, 2020, 2023) and above all, Nye Jr. (2004a, b, c, 2011a, b, 2016, 2020), to name but a few of the most accessed in the interface with other related themes.

## A Brief Comment on Power<sup>1</sup>

It should be emphasised that the world stage is constantly changing and soft power is one of the testimonies of these transformations insofar as it documents the change of hands of the sticks of power, which is not static but rather changes according to the situation. Bearing in mind that the object of study is one of the variations of “power”, it is worth exploring the meanings of “power” in the history of International Relations and its implications, immediately considering that its meaning varies according to the passage of time and, above all, the context. In this way, it becomes clear that in terms of nations, different countries have been able to exercise their role of hegemony according to the historical panorama of the moment. According to

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<sup>1</sup>This sub-item dialogues with Lara Elissa Andrade Cardoso’s master’s thesis entitled “As tonalidades do soft power brasileiro: entre a visibilidade e a atuação” (The shades of Brazilian soft power: between visibility and action), supervised by me and defended in the Postgraduate Programme in History at the Federal University of Juiz de Fora—UFJF, in 2023. The study investigated, based on reports and news from four representative national digital press organisations—Folha de S. Paulo, O Globo, O Estado de S. Paulo and Jornal do Brasil—how Brazilian foreign policy was reported and articulated to adopt strategies connected to the concept of soft power over the past two decades (1997–2018). In her research, Cardoso showed soft power in its categorical plurality as a political tool of persuasion, looking for references especially focused on the preservation of cultural heritage.

Gueraldi, the definition of the feasibility of exercising soft power “[...] encompasses more tangible concepts, depending on financial resources, deadlines, the potential availability of information and the state of theorising on the subject” (Gueraldi, 2006, 8). And, as a rule, it is the great powers that are responsible for dictating the guidelines of the international system, bearing in mind that these governments seek to understand and study international structures, their functioning and their triggers.

In illustrative terms, then, it can be seen that soft power, especially in its cultural sphere, operates with seductive notions of conviction and persuasion, promoting attractive results such as human rights, democracy and individual opportunities. It should therefore be emphasised straight away that soft power is far from having a pejorative, manipulative or Machiavellian meaning, as is the case in realist authors’ conception of human nature. Considerably more visible configurations of power predominate, such as economic and military power, while other invisible ones, which play the role of persuading, attracting and influencing the opinion of other people to act as you wish, are now beginning to seek their place in the history of the exercise of power.

That said, this less explicit power—soft power—is generally not in line with the thoughts of realist authors in international relations, who defined public opinion by its manipulative character of political power. In this sense, the nature of soft power is more closely aligned with Lynne Weil’s (2001) interpretation that public opinion is able to shape the international political agenda. According to Edward Carr (2001), a theorist who favours classical realism, power is distributed in at least the following categories: military, economic and power over opinion. The latter seems to present aspects of soft power, and its meaning refers to the strategic domain of persuasion. Therefore, among the two paradigms presented, this research is aligned with the classical theory of liberalism in international relations in order to establish more perceptible approximations with soft power as a variety of power.

As has been observed, the powers of the war industry and of imposition build a hegemonic tendency, to the extent that they provoke interstate competition in the midst of the struggle for their own interests. Still on the subject of hegemony, sceptics Thayer and Layne argue that “in international politics, benevolent hegemonies are like unicorns”, referring to the imaginary figures of fantastic beings that are mostly present in the universe of children and adolescents. In order to establish a correlation between state security and state power, this defensive endeavour to take advantage at any cost prevails in matters concerning international relations, more precisely in the realist tendency whose premises go hand in hand with hard power.

Ohnesorge (2020) pointed out that in the midst of an ever-greater dispersion of power among a growing flow of actors, there has been a change in the relevance of the varieties of power, and as a result of these changes (globalisation and new actors associated with the international system), the sources of power are, in general, moving away from the emphasis on military force and conquest that marked previous eras, as previously discussed. Following on from the analysis of the changes in notions of power at a global level, it is worth mentioning this speech by Benjamin R. Barber (1992), in which he contrasts culture and armaments,