

Article

Religion and Cultural Mediations: Perspectives from Contemporary Portuguese Society

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Abstract: The article reviews the concept of “cultural religion”, pursuing its different modulations. The limits of the idea oscillate between its interpretation as a form of obsolescence of religion in secularized societies and the possibility that it is a specific modality of religious identification. However, this theoretical construct does not sufficiently incorporate a focus on the processes of cultural transmission in complex societies. From the notion of “cultural mediation (*medium*)”, an observation framework of contemporary Portuguese society is attempted in order to identify the structuring dimensions that facilitate the mobilization of religious memory in different logics of action.

Keywords: cultural religion; cultural mediation; ecclesiosphere; detraditionalization; societal decatholicization; social memory

1. Introduction

Discussions about “cultural religion” are frequent in societies that have experienced processes of identity construction associated with religious memory. The formulation of the concept, in its different modulations, is frequently a substitute for the idea of secularization. The problem of “cultural religion” developed as part of the so-called “religious crisis” of the 1960s, with diverse but comparable scenarios in European and North Atlantic geography (McLeod 2010). Michel de Certeau was one of the first interpreters of this crisis. He described it from the point of view of the functioning of culture as a disarticulation between “saying” and “doing”. In his view, this was the core of the fragmentation of Christianity as a social body—the social disintegration of “objective Christianity. This fragmentation resulted from the end of the structural articulation between the believer’s personal experience and the community’s social experience. The fragments that constitute cultural Christianity disseminated, without the possibility of a strong anchorage, into a “body of meaning”. In his hermeneutics of culture, Michel de Certeau identified some places documenting this “folklorization of objective Christianity”. Beliefs are reshaped by promoting shifts between meanings and signifiers. Michel de Certeau notes that Christians have left institutionally ordered places in other situations (de Certeau 1974, pp. 9–13). They remain believers but become less practicing. The practices do not presuppose a stable link between objective conduct and personal convictions. Christian belief remains linked to rites, forms of belonging, family lifestyles, sexual behaviors, and political choices. Still, these links have become more ambivalent and increasingly complex, producing new scenarios within a heated debate about ethical issues on the public stage (McLeod 2010, pp. 215–39). British sociologist Grace Davie’s widely commented study of British society forged the term “common religion” to describe this situation of individuals’ autonomy from institutions and the tendency toward the spread of diffuse religiosity. Davie pointed out that “Christian nominalism” had become the most significant socio-religious phenomenon in societies marked by the long course of Christian institutions (Davie 1994, pp. 74–80). This was the context for developing the constellation of concepts that seek to interpret “cultural religion”. As will be seen, it is not a matter of assuming that there can be a religion outside



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of culture. Instead, it is a matter of formulating a concept that describes a modality in which the available symbolic stock is mobilized for identity construction but with scant relation to the lived religion. It is, however, not ignored that the idea of confessional religiosity is a model of understanding that emerged in Europe in the context of the Reformation. In this sense, it is essential to consider the possibility that “cultural religion” is an expression of the crisis of “confessional religion” (Diotallevi 2017, pp. 65–95).

In any case, the various interpretations of this problem do not pay enough attention to the possibilities of connection between this sociological approach and the anthropology of memory. What is identified as “cultural religion” is part of this vast process of cultural transmission, within which diverse actors and different types of agencies enter into the social play of anamnesis or amnesia—the tensions and transactions between remembering and forgetting (Ricoeur 2003). All societies are permanently confronted with what they should forget or safeguard. In this case, the conceptual revision offered by research found in the notion of “cultural mediation” a possibility of anthropological rooting of the inquiry about “cultural religion”. What are the *media* (in the Latin sense of “vehicle”) that allow the organization of the process of cultural transmission that enables the maintenance of that modality of religion? The recovery of Régis Debray’s “mediological” theory was a central element in guiding the research. Debray sought to find an intelligibility of his own for the processes of cultural transmission, seeking to identify the “mechanics” of transport. He described these mechanics from three dimensions (Debray 1997, pp. 15–22). (a) The material dimension: the different material resources for transporting representations and practices and the agents of this transport. (b) The diachronic dimension: if communication conquers space, transmission conquers time, inscribing society in a regime of temporality, prolonging and safeguarding are the qualities proper to transmission. (c) The political dimension: transmission requires strategic competence (making alliances, witnessing, including/excluding, hierarchizing, ordering, classifying, and archiving) for the construction of the preservation of the experience of “us”, a resource that societies constantly seek to renew.

After this conceptual revision, contemporary Portuguese society will be presented as a laboratory that allows the identification of a diversified framework of cultural mediations. These mediations organize the inscription processes of religious memory in different regions of social experience. The multiscope approach, starting from Portuguese society, allows the historiographical and ethnographical rooting of the problems that the theoretical construct of “cultural religion” (and its modulations) aims to interpret.

2. Cultural Religion: Concept Review

In semiotic terms, the distinction between religion and culture is affected by different, often irreconcilable, theoretical models (Shelton 2022). However, from the point of view of the goals of this study, the twofold characterization of culture presented by Patterson is functional. On the one hand, culture is the set of semiotic structures, cognitive schemas, and value systems that organize perceptions, justify interpretations, and frame actions. On the other hand, culture lies in its pragmatic dimensions. In this second perspective, the focus is on social practices and interactions. Thus, this focus on the “uses” of culture accounts for the logic of reproduction and the processes of constructing symbolic boundaries (Patterson 2014).

The concept of “cultural religion” has undergone several transformations in the context of studies on European and North Atlantic geography. In its various modulations, the image does not assume that a non-cultural religious phenomenon can exist (Beyers 2017). Instead, it is a theoretical construct that aims to characterize a particular modality of religion. The attribute “cultural” intends to interpret situations in which religious references concern identity construction processes without clearly incorporating the dimensions of the lived religion (Knibbe and Kupari 2020; McIntosh 2018).

2.1. *Belonging, Believing, and Practicing*

The 1990s and the 21st century's first decade witnessed a renewed interest in the category and object of "cultural religion". The concept made it possible to articulate various forms of secularity, creating a kind of intermediate zone between North American religious effervescence and French *laïcité* (Laniel 2015; 2016, pp. 373–74). In this period, the persistence of indicators of religious belonging in various national territories of the European and North Atlantic geography contrasted with the loss of influence of Churches and the erosion of more regular cultural practices. Moreover, regarding ritual practices, the behaviors are distinct if we compare practices associated with the course of life (birth, marriage, and death) with others linked to daily, lived religion (Bréchon 2002, 2004; Davie 2000, pp. 61–81). Bréchon noted that, in the data from the International Social Survey Programme, between 1981 and 1999, some indicators of religiosity—such as the "feeling of being a religious person", the "feeling that faith brings strength and comfort", or participation in religious ceremonies "at least once a year" (Bréchon 2002, p. 466)—were strengthened. However, the boundaries of the phenomenon are fluid, requiring some conceptual plasticity. We propose at this point to reread four relevant proposals for categorizing the phenomenon: "cultural religion", "fuzzy fidelity", "diffused religion", and "culturalized religion".

Demerath used the concept of "cultural religion" to classify a type of religious identification that expresses itself as a cultural attachment in a given territory or social space without incorporating any active participation (Demerath 2000). Indicators of membership, under these circumstances, are fragile. This erosion may be more evident in the realm of ritual practices than in the realm of adherence to enunciations of belief. One of the benchmark studies, comparing Northern Ireland, Poland, and Sweden, showed that religious identification based on cultural belonging, without practices of worship or the like, prevailed. This category has distinctive characteristics. In Europe, it tends to be predominantly a religious identification category. It is easily recognizable from various indicators but is not a "self-affirmed label". It is about situations in which religion is a reference for constructing identity.

Nevertheless, this construction does not include the regularity of active forms of religious life: "It is a way of being religiously connected without being religiously active" (Demerath 2000, p. 136). The stock of symbolic materials that constitutes "cultural religion" can be exploited and reactivated in different ways: in Poland, "cultural religion" is a pocket of resistance to communism; in Northern Ireland, it is a resource for differentiation between two antagonistic Christian identities; in a different way, in Sweden, "cultural religion" is mainly a form of identity inertia, without any dynamics of contrast that prompt a more muscular reactivation of religious memory (Demerath 2000, pp. 127–35). Demerath argues that "others" in the social space are influential in maintaining "cultural religion". The qualities of persistence may differ depending on the morphology of the religious tradition.

In some cases, practices are more resilient. In others, beliefs may exist beyond the dwindling of ritual practices. However, even given this diversity of landscapes, Demerath hypothesizes that this ultimate bond of memory may be the one that resists a situation of impending extreme secularization. In other words, the researcher supposes these behaviors are the harbinger of a future position of complete irrelevance of religious practices and beliefs. From this perspective, it can be said that we are dealing with entities on a path of departure. "Cultural religion" would be the last stage of a distancing route (Demerath 2000, pp. 136–37). However, it is necessary to consider that, when comparing different European societies—which have in common the fact that religiously inactive individuals are predominant—it is possible to find apparent dissimilarities. In some national contexts, adherence to Christian memory as a personal experience is valued more, while in others, Christian memory as a cultural heritage prevails (Storm et al. 2020).

The concept of "fuzzy fidelity", proposed by David Voas, has interpreted this phenomenon of stabilizing majority religious identities (Voas 2008). "Fuzzy fidelity" describes a population with religious belonging, low adherence to statements of belief, and low frequency of community activities, but a more attentive presence in culturally normative

rituals. These “fuzzy” individuals combine a specific articulation between beliefs and practices. These combinations translate into weak religious involvement. Which is not to say that they document a phenomenon of total secularization. Voas interprets these indications of a diffuse identity as more likely to correspond to more significant and complete religious disengagement. While he recognizes that this type of religious identification shows signs of persistence, he also notes a strong trend toward weakening religious affiliation. This interpretation of Voas is close to a reading that underlines the scale of the long course of secularization. In this view, culturalized religion would be a transitional stage in secularization. However, subsequent social research tends to consider that this model of cultural identity should be studied as a religious pattern with its characteristics. Its exclusive interpretation from the viewpoint of the obsolescence of religion may not allow the construction of stable frameworks of observation and comparison with other types of religiosities.

In contrast to this model, marked by the idea of obsolescence, others emphasize the “dissemination” factor. Cipriani contributed to this discussion with the concept of “diffused religion” (Cipriani 2017). The Italian sociologist sought this concept to overcome or make the boundaries between traditional religion and secular modernity more porous or between ecclesiastical religion and modern secularity. The “diffused” quality of religion is presented from a double perspective. First, religion is diffused “in”, which presupposes paying attention to the processes of spreading religion in multiple “objects”, such as prayer, rites, and beliefs across large sectors of the population. However, also religion diffused “by”: that is, through values that guide choices. Cipriani pays particular attention to the capacity of a set of received values under the influence of religious history. These values are particularly present in contexts of primary religious socialization. Diffuse religion moves and develops as an acquired and transmitted cultural heritage, even if transformed within new social life frameworks. In this century, some of the trends in memory studies have renewed interest in the study of the medium and long course of the life of cultures. The analysis of cultural phenomena translates into an added focus on their distribution in space and time (Morin 2011, p. 19). The anthropologists Fredrik Barth and Dan Sperber have become decisive figures within this trend in the cultural sciences. From Barth’s perspective, culture is distributive. Thus, it is important to know how the different cultural substrates are distributed and how they interact (Barth 1981). Sperber stresses that skepticism toward culture does not explain why certain representations are demonstrably more durable and more distributed within a social group. Even moving beyond the idea of culture as “collective consciousness”, it is still necessary to consider the phenomenon of the durability and spread of practices, values, and representations—an “épidémiologie des représentations”, according to the anthropologist’s lexicon (Sperber 1996).

Pastor and Mayrl interpret the modern boundary between the religious and the non-religious somewhat differently. They use the term “culturalized religion” to analyze phenomena situated on an ambiguous border between the religious and the non-religious. According to the authors, “culturalized religion” presents two essential characteristics: in their public aspect, these phenomena display the label “cultural”, associated with concepts such as “memories”, “heritage”, or “tradition”, and can be understood as non-religious; however, the content of this typology reveals a solid link to explicitly religious languages, practices and imaginaries. In general terms, it can be stated that “culturalized religion” is primarily understood as culture, mobilizing forms of agency peculiar to that field (Astor and Mayrl 2020, pp. 210–12). After an extensive literature review, the authors present three modalities of “culturalized religion”. (a) “Constituted culture” concerns perception schemes strongly influenced by religious structures. (b) “Pragmatic culture” includes using various elements of religion for non-religious purposes. (c) Thirdly, culture as identity integrates religion as a marker of belonging but is not articulated to forms of participation in the religious field (Astor and Mayrl 2020, pp. 213–19). This categorization is presented with the awareness that social complexity is quite fluid, escaping the rigidity of a stable classification. Therefore, this framework of distinctions should be read as a model of

analysis that allows the identification of different combinatorial logics, producing different articulations between the three modalities of “culturalized religion”.

This type of analysis has been greatly emphasized in studies of cultural practice in Europe and North America. After World War II, research developed a particular interest in the measurability of religious practice. In France, Boulart and Le Bras became interested in Catholics called “seasonal conformists” (Boulart 1954; Le Bras 1942, 1975). These Catholics were on the borderline between those who maintained some regularity in their cultural practice and those who had already moved away from any frequency of worship. This sociological research served the concerns of Catholic agents in planning a strategic reaction to de-Christianization. However, as Laniel noted, these ecclesiastical sociologists discovered in the “seasonal conformists” a favorable ground for inquiry into the links “between Catholic culture and the larger societal culture” (Laniel 2016, p. 376).

In the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century, research emphasized that “cultural religion” can be found in how respondents position themselves in sociographic surveys. In studies on practices of worship, discrepancies have been pointed out between what is ethnographically observed or ascertained through census methodologies, and the results obtained through sampling. This has been followed in several national contexts. In 1993, a team of researchers in the USA highlighted the “contradiction between poll-based reports of Church participation and denominational reality” (Hadaway et al. 1993). The detection of this issue stimulated the search for other methods of measurement. Anomalies concerning the metrics of practices of worship have also been explored in Europe (Monnot 2012; Marzano 2012, pp. 25–86). This context has led to a question: what do respondents mean when they answer, in surveys, the question about worship attendance? There is strong evidence pointing to the possibility that respondents, in their replies, say more about their sense of belonging than about their actual worship attendance (Teixeira 2013a, pp. 176–92).

Sociographic studies, with representative samples of national populations, have shown a tendency to multiply ritual practice regimes. This polyhedron of profiles intersects, at the level of beliefs, with the oscillations between autonomy and adherence (Soares and Teixeira 2022). In several European societies, marked by a culture of Roman Catholic observance, the discussion on “cultural religion” has intersected with proposals of models for the analysis of typologies of Catholic worshippers (Laniel 2016, pp. 375–78). Several typologies have been tested. Among the most recent, we should mention Bobineau’s proposal, which focused on analyzing sociability (Bobineau 2005, pp. 298–337). Moreover, Bremond d’Ars’ project is dedicated to studying the modalities of gift circulation in the Roman Catholic field, aiming to understand its institutions’ economic basis (de Bremond d’Ars 2006, pp. 150–57).

2.2. Individual, Institution and Transcendence

The debate on these changes has generally emphasized a disjunction between institutional religion and the modalities of individual recomposition of the religious/spiritual. Within his interrogations about the “secular age”, Taylor proposed a model of analysis for the tensions inhabiting the relations between religious institutions and the consciousness of individuals in advanced modernity. His model integrates four disjunctions: (a) between spiritual “seekers” and “resident” worshippers; (b) between personal responsibility and the authority of a moral code; (c) between a historicized and a naturalistic view of moral questions; and (d) between spiritual openness to various cultures and religions and the exclusivist experience of religious belonging (Taylor 2007; Taylor et al. 2012).

These disjunctions reflect a phenomenon of “dualization” of religion. Interpreting research trends at the end of the twentieth century, Jean-Paul Willaime pointed out that the dynamics of modernity had favored a dualization of the religious: on the one hand, the religious field specializes through institutional differentiation, but on the other hand, the religious spreads, as individuals are more autonomous vis-à-vis the institutions that manage the collectivity (Willaime 1996). This context favors the disarticulation (or the modulated recomposition) of the dimensions of belonging, belief, and ritual practice: indicators of religious belonging persist but with autonomy concerning individual beliefs and practices;

certain beliefs may remain without articulation with any sense of belonging; and diffuse belonging and belief can allow experimentation with other forms of transcendence. This pluriform approach to the experience of transcendence had already interested authors such as Luckmann: In his perspective, human experience is a continuous flow of “little”, “intermediate”, and “great” transcendences. However, he stresses that societies differ in the way they organize subjective experiences, including the experience of the “little” spatiotemporal transcendences of everyday life, the “intermediate” transcendences of other human beings, and the “great” transcendences of life and death (Luckmann 1979, 1990).

The interest in individual religiosity or the strategic and institutional dimensions of religion is today one of the research frontiers. Research on “everyday religion” values the religious and spiritual creativity of individuals’ everyday experiences outside institutional frameworks (Ammerman 2016). On the one hand, it is claimed that it is necessary to find models for understanding religion outside institutional frameworks, prioritizing what receives spiritual meaning in the everyday lives of individuals (McGuire 2008). On the other hand, it is argued that attention needs to be paid to the strategies of groups and institutions. Only in this way can we understand how different forms of religious agency participate in the construction of public space and are culturally transmitted (Woodhead 2011).

The questioning about the modern dualization of religion was very much in evidence in the research on religious identities in Swiss society conducted by Roland Campiche in recent decades (Campiche 1992, 2010; Campiche et al. 2004). According to his reading, it is necessary to consider the coexistence of two types of religiosity: an “institutional” religiosity, rooted in processes of social reproduction, and a “universal” religiosity, constituting the cognitive and relational structures of individuals. According to Campiche, this complexity requires the mobilization of substantialist and functionalist perspectives, including classical approaches such as that of William James. In this perspective, the universality of the transcendence experience is underlined, regardless of the forms it takes in religious traditions. James sought to show that the fulcrum of the religious phenomenon should not be sought in the social functioning of religious beliefs or in the intellectual speculations that underpin them but rather in the experience of individuals, who find answers to the enigmas of their existence in a transcendent dimension (Campiche et al. 2004, p. 274; James [1902] 2018).

In this avenue of discussion, Joas has shown that the Weberian analysis of the “religion-modernity” tensions has not given due attention to the fact that the experience of self-transcendence is constitutive of human beings (Joas 2008, 2021). In this self-transcendence, different processes of sacralization are rooted. Joas attributes much relevance to the human phenomenon of idealization. Human action, in its creativity, is mobilized by various kinds of “otherness”: ideals, tragic experiences, festive memories, or the exemplarity of certain personalities. Forming these ideals as an expression of the creativity of human action can take very diverse historical forms. The dynamism of self-transcendence, as an anthropological structure, does not develop in a linear process. In this perspective, modernity is a favorable context for the proliferation and displacement of forms of self-transcendence. Joas’s argument replaces the axiom of the universality of religion with the hypothesis of the universality of experiences of self-transcendence. From this perspective, his exploration of the historical itineraries of sacralization of the person, which give substance to a genealogy of human rights, stands out (Joas 2013).

2.3. Cultural Religion and the Crises of Pluralism

In a distinct order of discussion, studies on “cultural religion” integrate the debate on the “cultural privilege” of religion. This debate is frequent in societies that have had the historical experience of Christianity, whose structures and fragments survive in forms of secular Christianity. From this perspective, the “culturalization” of Christianity is seen as a mechanism of privilege, which reproduces a particular social hegemony. As Lauwers has shown, these forms of inequality have a diverse morphology: “spared injustices” (for example, school vacations are often related to a Christian calendar that does not benefit

children and adolescents from other religious traditions), “unjust enrichment” (many Christian references are often assumed to be secular and sometimes even seen as universal, rendering other value systems “abnormal”), and “justifiable privileges” (Christianity being a long-standing presence in Europe, it is justifiable that it is over-represented in the public sphere, with predominant architectural languages and extensive penetration in ethical vocabulary (Lauwers 2022)). The discussion may emerge in contexts of affirming religious pluralism or in environments more influenced by secularist politics. The studies within this framework tend toward normative conclusions. Lauwers’ study follows Beaman’s critical diagnosis. In his perspective, when Christianity is assumed to be a national heritage, this translates into the canonization of a vision of history hostage to a particular gaze, which excludes the possibility of other narratives. While not advocating the erasure of Christian memory in the public space, we point out the need for vigilance over the policies that reproduce a hegemony based on a logic of heritage (Beaman 2013, 2020).

Regarding the presence of religion in the sphere of public action, other authors have observed that the impossibility of making religion a normative foundation has not made impossible the public use of religion as an instrument of intervention (Lavoie 2019). The different types of religious agency must be understood in the global movement towards de-privatizing religion (Casanova 1994). The discussion developed by Casanova on “public and private religions” implies the consideration that religions may have different conditions of access to the public arena—to benefit from policies of positive discrimination, to intervene in the discussion on the consensus necessary for social life, or to participate in the policies of memory that define the identities of territories (Casanova 1992). Casanova pointed out that, in regions where there is a religious-cultural hegemony, it is possible to find a trace of this preponderance in public institutions (for example, in the courts), even when the state presents itself as “neutral” (Casanova 2002). The conceptualization of “cultural religion” has been impacted by various social dynamics and representations. Among them: the integration of religious diversity driven by migration flows; the fear of the “risks” of the influence of Muslim populations on the liberal way of life; the recourse to Jewish and Christian memory in the construction of an ideology for the European Union; and the activism of religious and secularists in the ideological debate on the presence of religion in public space. This means that the notion of “cultural religion” has undergone remodeling when faced with the vast problem of the regulation of belief in multiple modernities (Milot et al. 2010).

One essential model of “cultural religion” is “heritage religion”. The patrimonial uses of religious memory have witnessed a particular increase in the context of “crises of pluralism” (Zubrzycki 2012). This is, then, a defensive use of religion as heritage in a context of broad changes in social frameworks. This dynamic can be translated into forms of mobilization of hegemonic religious references inscribed in the course of the history of societies. Nevertheless, it can also be an opportunity to reactivate other memories that function, in that context, as counter-hegemonic.

Discussions about the presence of religious signs in the public space have also increased in this context. In the different argumentative scenarios, a distinction is once again being drawn between religion as “belief” (religiosity, lived religion) and religion as “heritage” (memory, culture). This distinction has allowed some courts to admit that a crucifix in a public-school classroom is not an instrument of Christianization but a passive symbol of identification of national culture (Črnič and Pogačnik 2019; Joppke 2013, 2018, pp. 242–44). In this situation, some argue that it is a device for cultural transmission rather than a vehicle for religious socialization. In the context of the issue of religious diversity and public space management policies, a cleavage between “old” and “new” residents is not necessarily reproduced. In the case of the new Islamic presence in Europe, studies underline that Christian-majority churches have, in some instances, been facilitators of Islam’s inscription in the public space, especially regarding access to halls of worship or welfare support (Astor et al. 2017, pp. 135–36). And one also finds situations where Muslim agents support the legitimacy of Christian signs in public space as a means to affirm the

legitimacy of the presence of other religious symbols. Sometimes, this can be configured as a religious front against the pressure of secularization dynamics. Paradoxically, sometimes it is about using cultural religion to normalize the affirmation of new identities in the social space using, to this end, liberal politics themselves.

In the European context, “cultural religion” is confronted with the emergence of a “pure religion”, devoid of ties that limit it to a cultural context. This is the thesis of Olivier Roy. “Pure religion” is internalized religion, grounded in religious imaginaries that draw a clear boundary between the community of believers and others. It is a religious self-representation that refuses places of ambiguity, that is, the intervals in which religious practices and representations run the risk of cultural contamination. It is this contamination that produces miscegenation and hybridity and fosters religious bricolage. Roy notes that revivalist religious trends tend to privilege ideas of election and individual conversion in the fight against any dynamics of acculturation. Such dynamics would not be compatible with the concept of being “born again” (Roy 2008).

Moreover, as they return to religious “origins” as a re-identification strategy, reformist movements devalue history and culture as contexts of transmission. Religious communitarianization is no longer based on territory or the patient remodeling of social structures. Instead, they favor the communitarianization of converted individuals “separated” from the surrounding culture using the idea of divine election. This tendency can be observed in diverse religious geographies, such as Pentecostal churches and Salafite Muslim groups in Europe. In the interpretation of the Islamologist Olivier Roy, the renunciation of cultural roots makes these religious movements, on a global level, portable and agile in their expansion. They are inscribed in the religious market within globalization processes. They are exportable religions. And, therefore, they need to be de-territorialized, de-ethicized, and de-culturalized (Roy 2008, pp. 178–89, 210–35). They do not need to “convert” cultures; they convert individuals. Thus, it can be stated that such a mode of religion renounces cultural mediation. In contrast to Samuel Huntington’s theses, the idea of a culture clash is weakened, since religious projects claim to assert themselves without cultural particularism (Joppke 2018, pp. 236–37).

In the context of the recomposition of “pure religion”, the role of intellectuals and artists is relativized. They tend to inhabit the terrain of ambiguity. The glossolalia of Evangelical Pentecostals and Roman Catholic Charismatics exemplifies the sublimation of one of the most determining cultural structures, namely language. No theological or linguistic knowledge is required because the message penetrates, dispensing with these mediations. Roy calls this “holy ignorance”. Generally speaking, it is a communication of the message without transmitting knowledge. This is why techniques such as ecstasy, meditation, or exorcism, which remove the body from its historical and cultural situation, are preferred. This tendency is observable in distinct religious contexts, such as Zen spirituality, Hasidic movements, or Pentecostal denominations (Roy 2008, pp. 26–27, 189–90). The myth of religion outside of culture feeds on the flows associated with globalization, within which there is no room to think about the possibility of culturalized religion, since the religion of converted individuals is the one that best adapts to market conditions. From the point of view of social theory, this is the domain where a clash between two conceptions becomes evident.

On the one hand, the sociology of religion is marked by Durkheimian posterity, in which collectivity imposes itself on the individual. Conversely, a markedly utilitarian conception views religion within the framework of rational choice that mobilizes individuals in a market situation (Mellor 2000). Paradoxically, the flows that energize the market tend to homogenize religion (Pérez-Agote 2018). Homogenization is, in this case, a correlate of de-culturalization.

3. Portuguese Society and the Roman Catholic Ecclesiosphere

The persistence of the cultural influence of the Roman Catholic Church allows it to remain one of the leading institutions providing symbolic goods (moral and religious), but

this does not necessarily reinforce the means for organizing regimes of Catholic belonging. Catholic institutions can continue to be seen as depositaries of necessary symbolic-religious capital, but not in an “exclusivist” way. That is, the survival of this substratum in contemporary Portuguese society coexists with the recognition of pluralism as fact or representation.

The “inclusivist” tendencies, comparable to what happens in other North Atlantic societies, are not drawn in the vertigo of pure indeterminism (Lefebvre and Pérez-Agote 2018; Lefebvre et al. 2015; Campiche 2010). Instead, they are concretized within the framework of an imaginary coherence that has as its residual cradle the tradition that organized the individual’s religious socialization—a kind of loyalty to the “native” religious tradition. Individuals may remain attached to the religious group in which they were socialized, regardless of the evolution of their own beliefs. Nevertheless, the reverse can also be documented: some beliefs persist, but any perception of belonging dissolves (Teixeira et al. 2019). This disarticulation was the basis of Grace Davie’s thesis about the complex relationships between believing and belonging (Davie 1994).

The process of differentiation of Portuguese Catholicism can be interpreted through the concept of ecclesiosphere. This concept was disseminated by the French historian Émile Poulat (Poulat 1986). This study intends to describe the different circles of closeness to or distance from the central core constituted by Roman Catholic institutions—between Catholicism experienced as a bond of proximity and Catholicism experienced as a diffuse reference. As will be shown, in Portuguese society, it would be excessive to speak of a process of “exculturation” of Catholicism in the sense proposed by Hervieu-Léger (Hervieu-Léger 2003, pp. 90–131). In the current circumstances, it is more effective to read this phenomenon as a continued process of societal de-catholization (Mendonça et al. 2015).

3.1. A Late Traditional Religiosity

The effects of the structures of traditional religiosity in Portuguese society have endured over time. The concept of “traditional religiosity” includes the set of practices, imaginaries, and worldviews concerning local and regional expressions of the sacred, with a particular relationship to the social structures inherited from peasant society. In this context, the images and narratives of the Christian God have acquired the plasticity of a “God of our land”.

The biography of a French anthropologist who visited Portugal in the 1970s testifies to this characteristic of Portuguese society. Pierre Sanchis was interested in studying the conflicts and transactions in the relations between popular religious festivities and Roman Catholic liturgical forms. It is essential to emphasize that, for Sanchis, the religious experience in Portuguese society could replace the “exotic other” by contrast with the societies of Central and Northern Europe (Sanchis 1997). Until the late 1980s, the tensions and negotiations between popular religiosity and ecclesiastical religion constituted a space of convergence of the leading research interests (Leal 2000). This itinerary reached a climax in the work of Moisés Espírito Santo. This social scientist was responsible for reifying the concept of “popular Portuguese religion”. In his view, peasant religion is not, strictly speaking, Christian. It is the result of cultural bricolage processes, in which several religious systems are juxtaposed according to the needs of the social group. From this perspective, it is a vernacular religiosity marked by the memory of the adaptation of social groups to the environment, in tension with the ecclesiastically mandated religion of revelation (Espírito Santo 1990).

These different religious strata crisscrossed each other in their habitat, which we may call “parish civilization”. The communal regime that lived there allowed the maintenance of the mediations that linked the living and the dead in a continuously celebrated lineage of belief, hybridizing the Roman Catholic devotional repertoire and other non-Christian substrates. In any case, it should be stressed that, in the last quarter of the 20th century, traces of a late religious traditionality were still visible, with a substantial incidence of family civilities and moralities (Iturra 2001; Lima 1994; Cabral 1989).

In Portuguese history, between the 1930s and the 1970s—the period of the construction of the *Estado Novo*—these religious substrates enabled a logic of concentric functioning on the part of political and religious institutions. The image of a peasant society was the place where many of the codes of maintenance of a lineage of belief were molded. This “Portugal-as-village” also served the interests of an ideology legitimizing authoritarian forms of social control. This symbolic correlation between the “village” and the “nation” suited the isolation promoted by Salazarism. Roman Catholic morality was opportunistically adopted, as a spiritual foundation, by Salazar’s disciplinary power, as part of the political work of “patriotization. The Salazarist discourse around the syllogism “Portuguese, therefore Catholic” was thus at the service of the political fiction of a Portuguese world (Martins 2016).

The construction of the “Fátima phenomenon”, starting in 1917, accompanied the entire trajectory of the Portuguese 20th century. The practices and ideologies associated with the so-called “apparitions of Our Lady of Fátima” (1917) played a decisive role in transforming traditional religiosities in Portugal. The practices developed at the Sanctuary of Fátima strongly connected with the imaginaries and symbolic structures of the so-called “popular religion”. But, paradoxically, Fátima became an engine of the de-traditionalization of religion in Portuguese society. The “Fátima phenomenon” is central to the transformations that have deepened the gap between traditional pilgrimage practices and the pilgrimage around ecclesiastically ordered shrines, according to a logic that increasingly went beyond the local and regional scales. The new forms of pilgrimage presented themselves as being disconnected from the social dynamics associated with the *romaria*, which were closer to the model of the total social fact (Teixeira 2018).

The hybridism that characterizes the “Fatima phenomenon”, under the authoritative mediation of the Roman Catholic institution, is a decisive factor in understanding its expansion. Fatima has become a place of observance of the productions of religious modernity. Traditional practices (previously “sedentary”, tied to local structures) find in the “Fatima phenomenon” the facilitating medium for the necessary adaptation to the various movements of the Portuguese population—whether the flow from rural to urban and peri-urban spaces or the constitution of multiple diasporas in Europe and the American continent. In the social frameworks of the peasant population, the construction of identities rested on the symbols of the local communities, particularly the patron saints. In a context of mobility and deterritorialization, the strength of these symbols shifted to others of national character, easily adaptable in diaspora contexts, responding now to the contingencies of urban and cosmopolitan ways of life. By becoming the central pole of religiosity for vast layers of the Portuguese population, Fatima participated in the construction of cultural mediations that facilitated the recomposition of Catholicism in Portuguese modernity (Von Klimo 2022; Teixeira 2020; Marques 2014; Fedele 2014).

3.2. A Revolution without Religious Disruption

The “Study on Freedom and Religion in Portugal”, promoted by the Portuguese Institute for Public Opinion and Market Studies in 1973 and coordinated by Luís de França, is one of the first sociographic surveys centered on the religious question in Portugal (França 1973). Moreover, it was carried out before the political revolution of 1974, which ended the authoritarian regime of the *Estado Novo*, making it even more unique. We should note that the study aimed to identify the trends in Portuguese society concerning the following regions of information: attitudes about religious freedom, the Concordat between the Portuguese State and the Holy See, religious teaching in schools, and also the various types of liberty claimed by different religious groups.

For the survey participants, the problem was not the existence or not of the Concordat regime. Instead, their main focus was the normative place of religion. Respondents were particularly interested in the change in marriage and divorce regime for Catholic spouses. Interest in this topic contrasts with the lack of interest in other issues, such as chaplaincies, concessions, and exemptions. Also noteworthy was the interest in a change in

the exclusivity regime enjoyed by Catholic moral and religious teaching in schools. From this study, it can be said that the “average Portuguese” rejected in the Concordat two forms of social control by the Roman Catholic Church: the ideological, materialized through religious teaching, and the moral, exercised through the norm of the indissolubility of Catholic marriage.

This study’s conclusions point to the possibility of interpreting the events that would lead to the revocation of that Concordat clause after the Revolution of 25 April 1974, as the concretization of a dynamic of affirmation of individual liberties. For the respondents, claiming the annulment of that link between the secular and religious spheres as an expression of the emancipation of individuals from the devices of social control is more important than evaluating the privileged situation of Catholic institutions.

Without the radical change in the demographic weight of Catholicism, societal de-catholicization was underway. The democratization of the political system in “post-April 25” Portugal did not bring a jolt of religious news. The core of this change concerned the protection of individual liberties. This implied a shift in the social place of Roman Catholic religious institutions. Thus, the revocation of article 24 of the Concordat, which prevented Catholics from accessing the institute of divorce, within the confluence of political forces and social movements, confirms a process of transformation of mentalities that includes a sharper appreciation of the autonomy of individuals vis-à-vis institutions and a more explicit awareness of the independence of different social spheres. In other words, on the one hand, the Roman Catholic Church was not prevented from enforcing, by its means, its doctrine on the indissolubility of marriage. However, on the other hand, citizens were granted the civil right to divorce, regardless of their religious affiliation.

Building democracy in Portugal in the 1970s was a favorable occasion for religious diversification through post-colonial flows of Hindus and Muslims (Lourenço 2020; Mapril et al. 2021). Nevertheless, the most relevant impact was in the diversification of Christian identities. For Protestant minorities, including Evangelicals, and other communities, such as Seventh Day Adventists and Jehovah’s Witnesses, freedom of expression and organization represented the possibility of increasing their ethos of organization and communication (Vilaça 2015). But it cannot be said that a religious upheaval accompanied the process of political democratization. An event capable of introducing new tensions in the Portuguese religious sphere only took place, in a clear way, in the 1980s and 1990s, with the inception of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, with a strong media presence and rapid expansion strategies. For the first time, the Portuguese population was confronted, in a more ostensive way, with the religious “other” (Ruuth and Rodrigues 1999; Mafra 2002; Minga 2022; Santos and Vilaça 2022).

This new political context required the construction of consensus about the role of the State in regulating religious freedom (Dias 2021; Moniz et al. 2020). The most basic legal instruments were the approval of the Law of Religious Freedom (2001) and the new Concordat (2004) between the Holy See and the Portuguese Republic. In addition, we should mention some innovations. For example, let us recall the creation, in the City Council of Loures of the “Office of Specific Religious and Social Affairs” (1993). We should also mention the establishment, in 2005, of Religare, “Mission Structure for Dialogue with Religions” (a state initiative attached to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers). These examples give an account of an attitude that, with fluctuations and nuances, can be described as politically active in the promotion of mediating laicity. On this ground, the persistence of cultural Catholicism in the context of political democracy challenged the State to remain active in effecting guarantees of religious freedom. State intervention does not challenge “cultural religion” but seeks to diminish the impact of its associated privileges on the political management of the public space.

3.3. Societal De-Catholicization and De-Compacting Identities

Over the last fifty years, in general terms, it can be said that the socio-religious change in Portugal results from the combination of three factors: the increase in religious and non-

religious belonging, the growth of so-called religious minorities, and the decompression of Catholicism. These changes are evident in two studies dedicated to a detailed characterization of the religion of Portuguese society at the beginning of the 21st century—“Catholicism and Culture in Contemporary Portuguese Society, 1999” (Antunes 2000) and “Religious Identities in Portugal: representations, values and practices, 2011” (Teixeira 2013b).

Between 1999 and 2011, according to these studies—with probabilistic sampling—the Catholic population decreased from 86.9% to 79.5%; those belonging to other religions increased from 2.7% to 5.7%; those without religion, from 8.2% to 14.2%. Considering the universe of believers who declare they have a religion, in the 1999 and 2011 studies, the Catholic identity describes 97% and 93.3% of the population. The Protestant universe has had the most significant increase among the other religious identities: 0.3% to 2.8%. In the universe of those who have no religion, all categories show, between 1999 and 2011, a percentage increase: indifferent, 1.7% < 3.2%; agnostic, 1.7% < 2.2%; atheist, 2.7% < 4.1%; and believer without religion, 2.1% < 4.6%. The categories “Protestants (including evangelicals)” and “believers without religion” show the highest relative growth. Overall, the relative growth of those without religion is more pronounced than in the number of those belonging to other religious denominations. This is particularly relevant in the case of the category “believers without religion” (Dix 2013; Teixeira 2013a; Vilaça 2013).

In the 2011 survey, the universe of “no religion” does not coincide with the universe of non-believers. Within the universe of those without religion, “non-believers” are 67.5%, and “believers without religion” are 32.5%. In this context, believers without religion have become a significant observation group, given the emerging social dynamics. They may present themselves as a set of religious profiles of diffuse character or as a last Catholic periphery whose bonds of belonging are already very tenuous, even if they are very close to trajectories of Catholic socialization. Note that 51.4% of “believers without religion” have baptized their children, and a significant part of this group has invested in the religious socialization of their children—in a catechetical context (37.5%) or a school context (18.9%). However, 68.4% of the “believers without religion” declare that they never or rarely participate in religious acts of worship, and 19.2% once or twice a year. The proximity to more formalized religious dynamics is associated, above all, with child and youth socialization trajectories, a fact that may be a trace of the metamorphosis of a Catholic memory poured into morality with educational purposes. The information about the subsistence, in the biography of these “people without religion”, of some decisions that brought them closer to the institutionalized religious field should take into account that 48% of the “believers without religion” declare having changed their religious position throughout their lives. In 58.5% of the cases, the trajectory of change is described by disaffiliation from any religion. That is, it is necessary to consider the hypothesis that the choices regarding the religious socialization of their children may have occurred in a previous stage of religious identification or a framework of family negotiation (Dix 2013; Teixeira 2013a).

The persistence of specific zones of intersection between the biography of many Portuguese and Roman Catholic rites is essential in describing the modality of “cultural religion” in Portuguese society. According to the study “Religious Identities in Portugal: representations, values and practices, 2011”, baptism in the Catholic Church, when we take the totality of the sample, presents itself as the most distributed practice—a privileged zone of a transaction between family and civil religiosity and the proposal of Christian integration. Attention should be paid to the fact that in 82.5% of the cases, the children were baptized as babies. It should be stressed that a significant part of those who do not belong to any religion had their children baptized when they were babies—45.6% of non-believers and 51.4% of believers with no religion. Not disregarding the possibility of changes in religious position trajectories, the numbers point to the persistence of rites in the long course of identities, especially in areas of social experience where there seems to be no functional substitute for religious action (Teixeira 2013a, pp. 142–44). Grace Davie showed that this place of persistence is revealed in Europe as one of the most notable manifestations of

“vicarious religion”, a religious modality in which some ensure the maintenance of poles of permanent religious activity, allowing others to enjoy a set of symbolic goods, experienced in a framework of broader periodicity, dependent on the course of life. In this type of religious identity, the ritual markers of life cycles are the central meeting place between individual demand and the supply of religious institutions (Davie 2000, pp. 61–81).

In the shift from regimes of “communal” sociability (solidarities of proximity) to types of “societal” sociability (functional relationships), the practical forms of articulating believing and belonging have undergone significant mutations. From the center to the peripheries of the Catholic field, from a “confessing” Catholicism to the bangs of a “cultural” Catholicism, ways of expressing belief identity have diversified, a process in which we can use the metaphor of the unpacking of identities. As pointed out elsewhere in this essay, parish practices can be seen as one of the leading laboratories of these transformations in a scenario where measuring the behavior of churchgoers is no longer sufficient for a social portrait of “Catholic practice”. In this context, it has become necessary to consider that the fabric of Catholic identification is a process of decompaction (Teixeira 2015). This metaphor aims to interpret a phenomenon that cannot be summarized in the boundary between the “outside” and the “inside”, the “core”, and the “peripheral”. The reshaping of the ways of analyzing Catholic cultural practice has made it possible to realize that irregularity has become the most important phenomenon. Arroyo Menéndez’s study considered data on practices of worship between 1989 and 2005. In the longitudinal reading of the data, it is observed that the relative weight of Catholics who never go to Mass remains stable, while those who observe regular Sunday worship have decreased steadily. However, the irregular group has progressed continuously (Arroyo Menéndez 2007).

This observation aroused interest in the study of the phenomenon of irregularity, opening the possibility of discovering that “irregularity” from the point of view of institutional norms can be a “regularity” in social terms. Thus, the “cultural religion” phenomenon in Portuguese society cannot be limited to the universe of distance. The “diffuse” and “diffused” aspects are combined, creating a series of circles of closeness or distance, depending on the perspective. In any case, it is difficult to establish a sociometric criterion to define the passage from lived religion to cultural religion. In the Roman Catholic ecclesiosphere, we find a vast set of behaviors that are presented in a hybrid form considering those two extremes of classification. The different profiles drawn in the universe of the irregulars can oscillate between the valorization of the occasional relationship with Catholicism in the form of a civic religion or the experience of a Catholic religiosity shaped according to rhythms recreated by individuals disconnected from any religious normativity.

The most recent survey, “Religious Identities in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, 2019”, confirmed something already observed in the study “Religious Identities in Portugal: representations, values and practices, 2011”. The population of “believers without religion” presents itself as one of the most important laboratories for rethinking the limits of the “cultural religion” model (Teixeira 2019; Teixeira et al. 2019). Believers without religion do not assume any religious belonging—not even in the diffuse sense of religion as national heritage. They are situated in a regime of double differentiation between Catholics and non-believers. In this context, there is a different balance when one considers practices or beliefs and attitudes. Generally speaking, believers without religion are closer to non-believers (atheists, agnostics, and the indifferent) regarding practices (prayer, worship, etc.). But when it comes to adherence to beliefs, they approach the Catholic ecclesiosphere. They thus express, in an obvious way, the disarticulation between “saying” and “doing” that Michel de Certeau identified as a characteristic of “folklorized” religion. At the same time, the results of this analysis indicate that representations of belief can be more durable than attachment to ritual practices. Representations can be self-managed “at a distance”. In this sense, this last frontier of “cultural religion” focuses on the cognitive and ideological effects of received religious memory (Toldy 2013, pp. 45–54).

The results of the last census of the Portuguese population (2021), published at the end of 2022, did not bring any new developments (INE 2022). In the last decade, the number of

Catholics decreased by 8.1% (from 88.3% in 2011 to 80.2% in 2021). On the other hand, the percentage of residents claiming to be Protestant/Evangelical experienced a 1.2% increase (from 0.9% to 2.1%). The Orthodox remained at 0.7%, while the group of people belonging to other religions increased from 2.6% to 2.9%. The data also show 6.6% more people with no religion. The figures confirm that the erosion of the Catholic majority is a trend. In comparison, other religious belongings and the relative weight of those without religion are in a reverse cycle. The number of Catholics is now close to other data already known through sample studies (Teixeira 2013b; Duque 2022).

4. Mapping the Cultural Mediations

The exploration of the notion of “cultural religion” in the scope of this study articulates a perspective that is not sufficiently incorporated in the previous views. The social frameworks that sustain the use of the category “cultural religion” and its various modulations justify the construction of research programs that adopt a different angle: the study of the usages of the various cultural mediations that support the processes of religious transmission. We propose a research model that privileges the analysis of this type of religious agency in contemporary Portuguese society. How to read the processes of “acculturation/inculturation” in the context of the growth of “pure religion” and legitimation of religious pluralism (Roy 2008, pp. 39–80)? Portuguese society is mapped here according to a typology of different strategies of “culturalization” of religion in a context of diversification of the religious field and political democratization. Each of the axes identified here can become an autonomous line of research. However, here we intend to present a global framework of observation that allows us to understand the phenomenon in a multiscopic way—as Certeau remarked, the observation of a fragment, a particular and isolated form, may allow the discovery of a global relationship (de Certeau 1980, p. 84)

This perspective also allows the development of comparative approaches between distinct religious groups and traditions or between diverse geographies. To construct this framework, we resort to the heuristic power of the anthropology of memory. In particular, the conceptuality developed by Halbwachs, Connerton, and Candau is privileged.

4.1. Long Memory

“Long memory” is the collectivity’s vision of the world. It develops from referencing a founding past (Zonabend 1980, pp. 14, 221–22). In common parlance, these representations can pass for strategies of idealizing a past or glorifying a golden age (Halbwachs 1949, p. 129; [1925] 2004, p. 107). Educational institutions, among others, are often at the service of a pedagogy of origins, constructing symbolic lineages (Hervieu-Léger 1993, p. 252). The Christian imaginary inhabits a large part of the processes of mythification of the origins of the Portuguese nation (Mattoso 1998). From its emancipatory narrative to its overseas expansion, and including representations concerning the (re)conquest of the territory, expelling the exterior “other”, the Muslim. Thus, school narratives about the nation’s identity are structurally crossed with this Christian memory. As a result, the discussions about the educational system oscillate between the criticism of the mythologization of history and the identification of problems of religious illiteracy in textbooks (Mucznik 2011).

It should be emphasized, however, that the use of an “origins” narrative may not be limited to Christian memory. This aspect is also relevant to the approach to Islamic identities in Portugal. Islamic communities also intersect with the dynamics of the heritagization of memory. For some social scientists, Muslims in today’s Iberian Peninsula introduce a new typology in the itineraries of recomposition of Muslim daily life in Europe (Martikainen et al. 2019; Vakil 2003; Tiesler 2000). In addition to circuits for economic, diplomatic, and educational reasons, in addition to a traditional presence in European regions such as the Balkans, the Iberian Peninsula accounts for an inscription that can represent itself as an “interruption”. Among some groups of Muslims in Portugal, we can find the appeal to the memory of an interrupted presence, strengthened by signs of a

cultural, material, and immaterial presence. This patrimonial set is, in fact, a capital present in different logics of local development (García-Delgado et al. 2020). The Islamic festival in the town of Mértola has become the most popularized face of this valorization of Arab and Islamic memory in the construction of the identity of the Portuguese territory.¹ The itinerant exhibition organized by the National Commission for the Commemoration of the Portuguese Discoveries, under the title “Arab-Islamic Memories in Portugal”, and the exhibition “Islamic Portugal: the last signs of the Mediterranean” (1998–1999), held at the National Museum of Archaeology, remain milestones in the itineraries of heritagization of this legacy (Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses 1997; Museu Nacional de Arqueologia 1998).

The heritagization of Arab-Islamic memory in Portugal has favored, on the one hand, attitudes of Islamophilia and, on the other hand, representations of this new Islamic presence as a “return”. For the sensibility of Muslims, it may be decisive to think that the Portuguese territory is not alien/foreign to Islamic memory—even if there is no historical and demographic relation between the new residents and this former Islamic presence. Thus, the “new Islamic presence” concept has gained symbolic connotations in the Iberian Peninsula. Furthermore, the mediation of the Arab cultural heritage has made other resources available for the social requalification of these communities.

4.2. *The Memoranda*

The memoranda (that which is worthy of being memorable) is essential for constructing identities. Marcel Detienne has stressed that the “memorable”, “far from being a recorded past or a set of archives, is a knowledge of the present” (Detienne 1992, p. 79). Reference to the memorable events of collective history is a powerful way of establishing an order in the experience of time as “narrated time” (Ricoeur 1991, p. 194). Hence, through political imposition, the amputation of identities (Candau 1998, p. 88). The reference to memorable events is decisive in constructing representations of ethnicity and nationality, allowing a “naturalization” of the community (of origin and destiny). The temporal experience of societies is mapped by events with different levels of “evocability”. One can identify a social work of mnemonic selection that makes “event proper”, specific facts, real and imaginary (Connerton 1989, pp. 6–39; Sperber 1996, p. 91; Halbwachs [1925] 2004, p. 282). In societies, this is a shared field, but not without conflict. Conflicts of memory often call for appropriate policies. The multiplication of areas of the “memorable” indicates the complexification of social space. Conflicts of memory call for specific political agencies. History, as a discipline, can be used as a resource in constructing the memorable. This explains the success of historiography and ethnography, professional or amateur, at the local or national levels, as a resource for identification (Taivalantti et al. 2022; Febvre 1995, p. 437).

The archive of the political memory of the Portuguese nation permanently intersects with different configurations of Iberian Christianity. Even when this encounter is conflictual, as in the case of the establishment of the Republic in 1910, reconciling memories is particularly relevant. In the history of Portugal, the Jews have replaced the inner “other” with object policies of exclusion and assimilation. Due to the symbolic relevance of the event, it is worth noting that the inauguration of a memorial in Largo de São Domingos, in Lisbon, evoked the massacre that victimized the city’s Jewish population in 1506 (Voss 2018). Attended by religious representatives and the municipal authority, the ceremony took place on 23 April 2008. It consisted of the inauguration of a sculptural ensemble by Graça Bachmann and Carlos Ramos integrated with a remodeling of that square under the slogan “Lisbon, city of tolerance”.²

The Lisbon Israelite Community continues to be publicly recognized as the most critical representation of Judaism in Portugal, using foreign rabbis to keep alive the synagogue practice and mobilizing itself to nurture a presence that privileges cultural mediation. An example of this is its involvement in the recent Jewish Museum project, in Alfama, in the heart of the city’s historic area, which currently hosts many immigrants. In this sense, it

is close to the strategies of European churches. As the religious group sees its capacity to stabilize and widen the field of diminishing religious experiences, it invests in forms of cultural presence that increase its visibility as a memory. In the case of European Judaism, this dynamic is fundamental, given its place in the construction of the shared memory of 20th-century Europe (van der Poel 2019).

4.3. Commemoration as the Politics of Memory

The social task of the imperative of remembrance is embodied into the politics of commemoration (Connerton 1989, pp. 41–70). Commemoration is always selective and implies a judgment about the events and personalities of the past that can underpin the identity of the political community (Malinova 2021; Hakim and Adams 2018). In this work of selection, one not infrequently finds the trace of the politics of domination (there are “forbidden” memories) and of discrimination (certain minorities or less politically represented groups) (Candau 1998, pp. 144–45). This complex combination of fictionalized, filtered, and rememorized history aims to unify the imaginaries of the commemorating group, but at the sacrifice of other memories and with the frequent need to construct counter-hegemonic memories (Krzyżanowska 2022; Hakim and Adams 2018). This kind of memorialization activity is a project of societies in their present cycle. Only this actuality explains the politics of commemoration—of what is forgotten and what is remembered.

The commemoration of the 500 years of the Reformation in 2017 can be read as a symptom of a political effort of remembrance, but with difficulties regarding the ability to weave connections with the lived memory of vast sectors of the Portuguese population. Initiatives were concentrated in academic spaces (Alberto et al. 2019) and important cultural institutions.³ The *CTT-Correios de Portugal* (Portuguese Postal Service) issued a commemorative postcard.⁴ New perspectives on Catholic-Lutheran dialogue were mobilized (Rodrigues 2016), and the event brought together Protestant and Roman Catholic leaders in ecumenical prayers.⁵ Even if the subject was addressed by “opinion makers” in mainstream media,⁶ it is not easy to find signs of this commemoration outside the domain of the elites.

4.4. The Social Organization of Time

Among the instruments that enable the scaling of time (i.e., its ordering), the calendar is the one that more obviously marks the rhythm of collective activity, inserting individual existence in a set of collective references (Candau 1998, pp. 81–82). The very act of “musealization”—in the sense that the museum is an archive of time—is mainly related to the perception of time as a collective experience (Popescu and Albă 2022). Also, “lived religion” studies have given new attention to calendars in everyday religious experiences (Ammerman 2016). In the discussion of Christian “privileges” in Europe, the problem of the impact of Christian memory on calendar organization is one of the recurring issues (Lauwers 2022). The celebration of Christian calendar festivals in school contexts reveals a tension between the logic of cultural transmission and the duty of neutrality regarding disseminating religious messages (Reimers 2020). Any reform or sanitation of a calendar can provoke significant tensions in general. Such changes may touch the core of individuals’ modes of inscription in time, that is, the hard core of representations available for their self-understanding (Popescu and Albă 2022).

The broadcasting of the Christmas message of the Cardinal-Patriarch of Lisbon on RTP, the public television network, has often been a cause for discussion. This practice, inaugurated by Cardinal Manuel Cerejeira, dates back to the period of the *Estado Novo*, but was not abolished in the political framework of establishing political democracy. However, every year the protests led by the *Associação Cívica República e Laicidade* (Civic Association Republic and Secularism—ACRL) are repeated.⁷ This organization is the interpreter of a militant understanding of secularism that stresses the strict religious neutrality of the public space. There is no sign that its positions have strong social support, but it is possible to identify its similarity with the ideas of some political protagonists of the Portuguese Left. Every year, around Christmas, we find echoes of an argument typified by a clear

boundary in the media. On one side, the defense of the public display of this message is based on the consideration that the celebration of Christmas, in the annual cycle of Latin Christian festivities, is rooted in Portuguese culture, celebrating values widely shared by the population. On the other side, the secular arguments about the religious neutrality of the State. Or, on yet another side, the defenders of “religious diversity” challenge this Christian (or Roman Catholic) privilege and point out that religions already have broadcasting time on the public television channel, managed in a shared way. At Christmas in 2022, the message had another protagonist for the first time. On the initiative of Cardinal Patriarch Manuel Clemente, his speech was replaced by a statement from the current President of the Portuguese Bishops’ Conference. Thus, the previous logic, which emphasized the public eminence of the Cardinal Patriarch of Lisbon, was replaced by a more institutional one, which gave voice to the representative elected by the Portuguese Catholic bishops.⁸

4.5. Genealogical and Family Memory

The ties between memory and identity are particularly evident in the constitution of family genealogies. A family’s shared memories are one of the most determinant supports for constructing a family identity (Halbwachs 1949, p. 50; [1925] 2004, p. 151). The media are very diverse: records, family trees, coats of arms and other emblems, narratives, memories of incidents, ways of speaking, photographs, furniture, sundry objects, and different materialities important for tangible memory in family spaces (Ratnam 2018; Shore and Kauko 2017; Davidson 2009). Democratized kinship memory, displaced from aristocratic ideals, allows modern societies, weakened in their collective memory, the miniaturized construction of an imaginary of continuity (Candau 1998, p. 136; Hervieu-Léger 1993, p. 206; Halbwachs [1925] 2004, p. 167). Religious structures marked by peasant sociabilities strongly impacted domestic iconography and furnishings in Portuguese society. The home was a place of intermediation between biographical religion and public religion (Lima 1994, pp. 23–65). However, it has become rarer, especially among the younger generations, to find a trace of this domestic culture. Perhaps the domestic space can now be the scene of a global folklorization of religious signs, positioned in the household space as inert objects without memory and scenography at the service of a culture of hyper-exposure of subjects (Fortuna 2020, pp. 151–71). In this context, it is essential to observe the domestic spaces of migrant populations. Their diaspora experience makes them more sensitive to recomposing domestic space as a territory of memory. In general terms, it is in family photographic archives that evidence of a family religious memory abounds. This may be a memory crystallized in time. However, it is a resource available for the mobilization of references for the construction of a family culture.

4.6. Generational Memory

From Candau’s perspective, generational memory is horizontal and vertical (Candau 1998, pp. 136–37). It translates into the consciousness of belonging to a generational chain and the feeling of being a continuator of those who preceded them, creating generational communities. The horizontal notion of generation establishes solidarities that go beyond kinship. However, the concept of generation is also a way of identifying a population group that shared remarkable social experiences at a given historical moment. This vertical sense of “generation” is common in political, journalistic, advertising, and artistic language. Members of a given generation mobilize to honor and prolong the memory of those historical moments they lived through (Baranova and Dontsov 2019; Wydra 2018; Schuman and Scott 1989).

Recently, the official commemorations of the 50th anniversary of the April 25th revolution mobilized the memory of a prayer vigil in a small Roman Catholic community in Lisbon.⁹ The so-called “Vigil of the Rato Chapel”, in late 1972, took place in a complex political context: the positions of Pope Paul VI on peace and self-determination of peoples, the growing opposition to the Portuguese Colonial War, and the increasing politicization of some sectors of the Roman Catholic ecclesiosphere. Paul VI established 1 January as

World Day of Peace on 8 December 1967. On the eve of 1 January 1969, a group of Catholics gathered at São Domingos Church in Lisbon to hold a prayer vigil for peace. A meeting for the reflection on the Colonial Wars was announced in the *Capela do Rato*, in the same city. The promoters announced a hunger strike until 1 January 1973, in solidarity with the victims of the Colonial War. Still, on 31 December, the regime's forces invaded the *Capela do Rato* to arrest the participants. The event had enormous political repercussions and is presented as a significant event in the trajectory that would lead to the overthrow of the authoritarian regime (Martinho 2017; Fishman 2018).

The commemoration of the event mobilized authorities, academics, journalists, and still living protagonists of the event. It is essential to underline that those events have a particular relationship with a generation living in Portugal, the reception of the Second Vatican Council. Some ended up leaving the Roman Catholic space frustrated, as is the case of the group of intellectuals remembered as “the losers of Catholicism” (a quote from a poem by Ruy Belo). Others remained closer to the Roman Catholic institutional spaces (Revez 2007). The current community of *Capela do Rato* has now very tenuous relations with that generation. However, this capital of memory was mobilized to the center of their activity during the commemoration period. The President of the Republic decorated the community, and other initiatives of remembrance constituted the vehicle for an intersection between Catholic generational memory and the public memory of the revolution that democratized the country.

4.7. Memorial Exemplarity

In this context, a particular figure admirably personifies specific memorial values. The syntagma designates this process of “emblemization” of a personality whose exemplarity is built over time. Joel Candau describes this mode of memory construction as a *biolégende post mortem* (Candau 1998, pp. 137–42). It consists of creating models, transcending the personal qualities of the deceased, and combining archetypes and stereotypes. For example, in Portuguese society, Republican “hagiography” and Roman Catholic “hagiography” may be competitors. But they use comparable resources (Porée et al. 2015).

In the 1990s, José Machado Pais' research on the beliefs surrounding the social memory of the physician Sousa Martins showed how he could construct this genre of memory in a context of significant autonomy from an ecclesiastically ordained religion (Pais 1994). The phenomenon is constituted by the pilgrimages of the “Avieiros” a fishing community from Vieira beach, in the central region of Portugal, to the mausoleum of this doctor who lived in Alhandra in the 19th century. Equally, the pilgrimage of many to his statue in Campo de Santana in Lisbon bears witness to a religiosity centered on the economy of the symbolic transaction between believers and the “saint” (cf. Pais 1994). The saint's heroism combines science (medicine) and charity, and the miracles extend to all areas of vulnerability—physical, psychic, and social—filling them with narratives of consolation and protection. It is a religiosity of the tragic, where collective history and biography weave a plot. He moved from the outskirts to the center of the Portuguese capital. Even today, his statue, in a central area of the city, is the place of construction of a memory of heroism that crosses different worlds, open to new recompositions.

4.8. The Memorable Tragic

The memory of tragedies is an essential resource in the social construction of the field of the memorable (Gray and Oliver 2004; Bergé 2010, pp. 101–11). These events place communities before their limits—particularly their inability to control the world. But also, when they have to mobilize the available solidarity capital, they contribute to their posterity (DiNitto 2021; Holmgaard 2019; Stratta et al. 2013). For the construction of collective identities, the prestigious past, the past of achievement, and victory are essential resources. But no less decisive is the role of the painful past, the memory of shared suffering. This quality of memory was central, for example, in the modern construction of Jewish identity or the building of postwar European identities in the 20th century. This painful

memory is still decisive in many identities of minority (or minoritized), migrant, and post-colonial communities. The collective experience of tragedy seems to imply a duty of memory and, therefore, a duty of transmission. This is why we often find forms of an associative organization aimed at conserving and transmitting this memory and the narratives that convey it. In Joel Candau's classification, this is a "strong memory" (Candau 1998, pp. 152–53).

Among the tragic events that remain in the memory of Portuguese society, the fall of the bridge of Entre-os-Rios, in the northern region of Portugal, is worth mentioning. On 4 March 2001, Portugal was stunned by the news of the collapse of the Hintze Ribeiro bridge, which killed 59 people. The minister in charge of public facilities resigned immediately, and in the following days, television broadcasts meticulously followed the unsuccessful recovery of the victims' bodies (Araújo 2016). The memorial built by the Association of Family Members of the Victims of the Entre-os-Rios Tragedy presents itself as a place of meditation and a meeting place for the victims' relatives, friends, and citizens who sympathize with them. Among other elements, a sculpture representing an angel stands in the center of the square. At the base of the plinth are inscribed the names of the 59 victims of the accident. The descriptive memoir reproduced on the Association's website explains: "In choosing an Angel for the sculpture, we thought that, given its theological and religious nature, it represents, in its purely spiritual essence, the intermediation between God and Man. This Angel, inspired by the Angel Custódio, named by D. Manuel I, the Angel of Portugal, is the protector and faithful guardian of all those who need or will need it".¹⁰ The narrative hybridizes Catholic imagery and the religious memory of the nation to underline the symbolic good intended to evoke protection. It is important to emphasize that the project had no ecclesiastical patronage; it was born within a logic of associative action.

4.9. Toponymic Memory

As historian Pierre Nora noted in his classic work on the *hauts-lieux* of French collective memory, the main strength of places of memory is their ability "to stop time, to block the work of forgetting" (Nora 1984, XXXV). The memoryscape can be a persistent quality of places (Phillips and Reyes 2011). Many local development policy initiatives seek to enhance this memory. The toponymic rootedness of memory feeds all the primary circuits of collective memory: familial, local, regional, national, and religious. Halbwachs observed that "the silent and immobile society" of places, the memory of the "stones of the city" as it were, conveys a feeling of order and permanence, a kind of anchor in time, and a place of shelter (Halbwachs 1949, pp. 130, 167). The sacralization of axial sites through pilgrimage routes had a dominant role in the construction of the territories in the Iberian Peninsula. In the Portuguese territory, taking into account the "long time" of nation-building, Christian references in toponymic memory are omnipresent, from the Sanctuary to the small monument on the paths evoking the "soul" of those who passed away.

This memoryscape can have a diverse relationship with the biography of individuals, between the lived and the "musealized". In this regard, it should be noted that the interest in *genius loci* is documented in several scientific projects funded by European funds (Saraiva 2021; Rosas et al. 2017). This domain has been the object of various heritage strategies of different kinds. These strategies do not exclude the possibility of an alliance with a specific religious agency. We take as an example the candidacy of the "Practices and Manifestations of the Cult of Our Lady of Nazareth" as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (UNESCO). This cult is anchored in the memory of a Sanctuary located in the town of Nazaré (internationally known for Big-Wave surfing). The cult, however, spread and persists with its ritual and festive system, the "círios". This is a religious manifestation firmly implanted in the West sub-region of the Central region of Portugal. Our Lady of Nazareth cults also have transnational alliances, considering the relevance of the Brazilian "círios" such as those of Belém, Vigia, or Soure in Pará. The first candidacy of the "Practices and Manifestations of the Cult of Our Lady of Nazareth" to the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (UNESCO), sealed on 13 March 2020, marks a new itinerary

in the social work of memory construction. The candidacy was launched by Nazaré City Hall in partnership with entities such as the Confraternity of Our Lady of Nazaré as part of regional development political objectives, according to a program developed by a consulting company. The application found further reinforcement in the fact that, in 2013, the Festas do Círio de Nazaré in Belém do Pará (Brazil) was considered an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The project is reconfiguring itself to become a transnational candidacy at this stage. This is a pertinent example in understanding how the religious memory of a sanctuary participates in the construction of the public memory of societies in its local, regional, and transnational dimensions (Penteado 2022).

5. Conclusions

The concept of “cultural religion” (summarizing other related conceptual proposals) is strongly linked to the significant trends of socio-religious analysis of late modernity. The idea is inscribed in attempts to interpret the consequences of the “religious crisis” of the 1960s, resulting from the so-called processes of individual recomposition of belief in the European and North Atlantic geography. The aim was to understand the different modes of articulation of belonging, belief, and religious practice in contexts marked either by affirming an individual emancipatory sensibility or by the cultural persistence of religious references.

Thus, the semantics of “cultural religion” combines objectives: (a) to identify fuzzy/diffused forms of religious identification in situations in which the symbolic-religious stock remains available for identity construction but with sparse relations with the lived religious; (b) to understand the debates about the relations between religion and cultural memory in contexts characterized by religious diversity. In the first domain, a hesitation remains: are the forms of “cultural religion” a symptom of the inevitable erosion of confessional religion, or do they indicate a new form of religious identification adapted to late modernity? In the second realm, the discussion oscillates between a critique of the cultural privileges of religion and an analysis of the processes of religious “de-culturalization”.

However, within this discussion of variable geometry, particular consideration was yet to be discovered for the conditions and processes that facilitate religious memory’s inscription in the various cultural transmission processes. Thus, from a distributive notion of culture—in time and space—the mediations which enable the persistence and remodeling of the forms of “culturalised” religion were identified. Contemporary Portuguese society presented itself here as a laboratory of observation, considering two factors: the subsistence of late traditional religiosity and the recomposition of the religiousphere in the framework of the country’s process of political democratization.

From confessional Catholicism to the fringes of cultural Catholicism, the ways of expressing the articulation between believing, belonging, and practicing have diversified. Individuals may remain attached to the religious matrix in which they were socialized, independently of the evolution of their positions. The weight of religion as an obligation or observance has decreased, but its place as memory may suffer various moldings.

In Portuguese society, the trajectories of change, via processes of de-conditionalization and individualization, were accelerated by the political democratization that began in 1974, the integration of post-colonial population flows and participation in the construction of the European Community. This historical itinerary has not necessarily led to an “ex-culturation” of Catholicism. Instead, one should speak of a societal “de-catholicization”. There are still signs of Catholic initiatives in socialization and contexts of greater social vulnerability. Nevertheless, this does not mean that Catholic institutions are the sacred canopy of a social structure. On the contrary, this aggregative capacity coexists with the pluralization of believing identities and positions about religion.

The process of political democratization has certainly guaranteed the possibility of affirming a new awareness of freedom in religious matters. The 2001 Law on Religious Freedom should be seen as a culminating point in the construction of this process. The religious diversification of Portuguese society was marked by the recompositions caused by different

migratory flows. Firstly, the colonial and post-colonial mobilities. Later, the various global conjunctures conditioned the migratory flows, making Portugal a receiving society.

Considering different social portraits of the Roman Catholic ecclesiosphere, the set of 80% Catholics continues to contribute substantially for the population that international studies frame as “cultural religion”. This reality can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, the movement toward erosion is undeniable in terms of the relative weight of Catholics. Nevertheless, on the other hand, one of the properties of culturalized religion, namely its resistance, is also recognizable. In the research framework we propose, this resistance is mainly related to the functioning of social memory. However, this resource is also available for other religious identities in Portuguese society. Thus, mapping the different mediations by the agency of religious processes of cultural transmission is possible.

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Notes

- ¹ The Islamic Festival of Mértola: [URL] <https://www.festivalislamicodemertola.com/>, accessed on 9 January 2023.
- ² António Marujo, “Memorial judaico e católico evoca a partir de hoje em Lisboa o massacre de judeus de 1506” [Jewish and Catholic Memorial evokes as of today in Lisbon the massacre of Jews in 1506]: [URL] <https://www.publico.pt/2008/04/22/jornal/memorial-judaico-e-catolico-evoca-a-partir-de-hoje-em-lisboa-o-massacre-de-judeus-de-1506-258070>, accessed on 9 January 2023.
- ³ [URL] <https://www.dnoticias.pt/2017/10/9/204541-500-anos-da-reforma-de-lutero-assinalados-em-lisboa-com-congresso-sobre-as-suas-teses/>, accessed on 9 January 2023.
- ⁴ [URL] <https://fpilatelia.wordpress.com/2017/11/01/500-anos-da-reforma-protestante/>, accessed on 9 January 2023.
- ⁵ [URL] <https://www.diocese-braga.pt/noticia/1/14146>, accessed on 9 January 2023.
- ⁶ Frei Bento Domingues, “Nem Lutero, nem Francisco” [Neither Luther nor Francis]: [URL] <https://www.publico.pt/2017/07/02/sociedade/opiniao/nem-lutero-nem-francisco-1777535>, accessed on 9 January 2023.
- ⁷ [URL] <https://www.laicidade.org/>, accessed on 9 January 2023.
- ⁸ Fernanda Cândia, “Acabou a mensagem de Natal televisiva do Patriarca de Lisboa” [The televised Christmas message from the Patriarch of Lisbon is over]: [URL] <https://www.dn.pt/sociedade/acabou-a-mensagem-de-natal-televisiva-do-patriarca-de-lisboa-15589526.html>, accessed on 9 January 2023.
- ⁹ [URL] <https://www.50anos25abril.pt/iniciativas/vigilia-capela-rato>, accessed on 13 January 2023.
- ¹⁰ <https://www.afvtentrios.pt/memorial/>, accessed on 13 January 2023.

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