

Parliament: setting and iconography

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The new system of political representation required a worthy setting for its leading players, both those elected by popular vote and those appointed by the crown. And, as the scenario intrinsically associated with the seat of national sovereignty since the Liberal Revolution produced its first constitution (1821-1822), the home of the legislature also provided the stage on which constitutional monarchs submitted to the rituals of acclamation (from 1834 to 1910) and where the presidents of the First Republic were elected¹ and took office (from 1911 to 1926). But the difficulty of finding a ready-made home suitable for consecration to the new civic ideals mirrored the troubled gestation and evolution of the Portuguese liberal regime itself.

The improvised Parliament

The inaugural session of the Extraordinary and Constituent *Cortes* was held on 24 January 1821. Parliament opened without the presence of the king, as Dom João VI was absent in Brazil, and without a home of its own. The Library of the *Convento das Necessidades*, in Lisbon, located on the building's *piano nobile*, was the setting chosen to receive the deputies elected in December 1820. The archives housed in the library had to be transferred to classrooms in the same building. The rectangular hall was then adapted to its new function, using architectural plans drawn up by Joaquim Martins, and with the decoration entrusted to the celebrated painter, Domingos António de Sequeira.

Sensitive to the acoustic and visual requirements of the chamber, Sequeira's designs provided for a layout in the manner of an amphitheatre, with four rows of benches, to accommodate the Members of Parliament, and a higher public gallery behind them, facing the Royal Throne, surmounted by a canopy. When the chamber was finally being laid out, it was found that the planned area was too small, meaning that only three rows of benches could be accommodated².

¹ The only exception was Sidónio Pais, elected by direct and universal (male) suffrage in 1918.

² In accordance with the 1820 draft for the *Rule of Procedure of the Chamber of Deputies*, Members of Parliament were to be seated in alphabetical order of their "baptismal names". However, the 1821 *Rules*

The wall faced by the deputies, behind the royal throne, was to be adorned by a full-length portrait of the king, Dom João VI. In keeping with the spirit of the times, Domingos Sequeira chose to portray the king pointing to a book on whose spine symbolically figure the word “Cortes”, thereby fixing the official image of the constitutional monarch. To complement this expression of the political ideals of the period, the artist started a series of sketches of a number of contemporary parliamentarians, which were to be hung on the other walls of the chamber, but this project was never concluded.

The first liberal experiment was to be aborted by the *Vilfrancada* coup d'état, and Parliament was closed in June 1823. The *Cortes* only gathered again in 1826, after the death of the monarch and the ascent to the throne of Dom Pedro IV. The Constitutional Charter granted from Rio de Janeiro, reinstating the liberal regime, provided for a two chamber system in which legislative powers were shared between an elected Chamber of Deputies and a Chamber of Peers, whose members were appointed for life by the king. These peerages were hereditary, with no fixed number. The creation of the Chamber of Peers increased the size of parliament, exacerbating the problem of a home for the *Parliament*, as a new building had to be found which could offer two chambers of sufficient size and splendour to accommodate the members of parliament. Until 1828, the Chamber of Deputies met at the *Casa da Suplicação*, on the Praça do Comércio in the heart of Lisbon, whilst the peers met at the *Palácio da Regência*, on the Rossio, in the building formerly housing the Inquisition, and which also served at the time as the seat of the Regency.³ The furniture used in the two chambers, of which a number of pieces still survive⁴, was supplied in 1826 by the Public Works Office.

Parliament in São Bento

of Procedure, which were to take effect during the Constituent *Cortes*, stipulated that the members would occupy a seat in the chamber “without any distinction or preference”. This rule was to be kept unchanged in subsequent rules of procedures for both legislative chambers until 1926, even when parliamentary representatives started to be organized into political parties.

³ The first parliamentary session in accordance with the bicameral model took place on 31 October 1826 (AFONSO; MOURÃO 2003 : 23-30; TÁVORA; LARA; SILVA 2009 : 59).

⁴ Notably the chair for the President of the Chamber of Peers, which can be observed in the ceremonial portrait in oil on canvas of the Duke of Palmela, wearing the ermine robes of a Peer of the Realm and displaying the insignia of his capacity as president of the chamber (1834-1850), painted by the English artist, John Simpson. Two of these chairs survive, and were transferred in 1834 to the new *Palácio das Cortes*. Both were to be used by the presidents of the Chamber of Deputies and of the Senate (SILVA 2009 : 10-11).

Political developments in the country held the workings of the parliamentary system in check. The acclamation of Dom Miguel as absolute monarch, in 1828, and the outbreak of the Civil War forced the early dissolution of the *Parliament* for a second time. Only when Dom Pedro's supporters regained the upper hand in 1834 with the reinstatement of the 1826 Constitutional Charter as the Fundamental Law of the country was it possible to rehabilitate the liberal regime and restore to parliament its function as the nation's representative body.

The first premises designated as home to the legislature were the Monastery of São Vicente de Fora, but it was quickly found that the building was unable to accommodate two legislative chambers, as the monastery contained only one room large enough for parliamentary sessions. The amount of work which would be needed and the expense involved compelled the Public Works Office to find an alternative venue where the *Parliament* could be definitively installed. In addition, as the Court at that time was installed at the *Palácio das Necessidades*, the king and queen were eager to find a location which would minimize their distance from the legislature. It was mere chance that led to the choice of the recently dissolved Monastery of São Bento da Saúde, although the building's characteristics made it suited to its new function, and the move marked the end of the itinerant period in the history of the parliamentary assembly, dating from its inception in 1821⁵. The search for a definitive home for the country's Parliament therefore continued throughout the entire troubled period during which Portuguese liberalism was first established (SILVA, R. H. 2003 : 75).

The installation of both legislative chambers in the Monastery of São Bento da Saúde was determined by *portaria* of the Ministry of the Realm of 4 September 1833, before the end of the Civil War⁶. The solution was proposed by João Pimentel Maldonado, archivist to the *Parliament*, in conjunction with the technical staff at the Public Works Office. Designed by Baltazar Álvares, one of first Portuguese exponents of the classical style, the building, on which construction had started in 1615 and which was still home to a number of monks, was sufficiently large and otherwise suited to its new role, although it was immediately understood that changes would have to be made to adapt what was a religious building to its new secular functions. The "anti-monastic" sentiment of the period, which was to culminate in the Decree of Dissolution of the

⁵ For the most detailed account of the building's history, cf. José-Augusto França (FRANÇA 1999).

⁶ The community of monks living in São Bento was expelled by Decree of 9 August 1833 of the Commission for the General Ecclesiastical Reform, prior to the Decree of Abolition of the Male Religious Orders.

Male Religious Orders and the nationalization of their assets promulgated by the minister Joaquim António de Aguiar on 30 May 1834, and the fact that the monasteries were the only urban buildings with the architectural characteristics able to accommodate two chambers for the meetings of the deputies and the peers of the Realm, both contributed to the choice made by Dom Pedro. This solution also fitted in with another tendency observable at the time. After the earthquake in Lisbon in 1755, the main centres of power gravitated to the western side of the city, around the royal palaces, although with the arrival of the liberal epoch, a number of ministries were installed in the Terreiro do Paço.

The lack of funds experienced by a country newly emerging from civil strife and the urgency of completing the preparations for accommodating the representatives of the Nation meant that the works had to be concluded quickly and at no great expense, although a number of initial delays occurred which may have compromised the plans of those in charge. In practical terms, the plans were drawn up by João Maria Feijó, architect in the Public Works Office, making use of the former Library and Chapter House, with a narrow rectangular layout, on the ground floor of the left wing of the monastery, to house the Chamber of Peers, whilst a part of the cloister was to be adapted to accommodate the Chamber of Deputies (SILVA, T. P. 2009a : 9-15). The dormitories of the building's former occupants, located on the first floor, were to house the offices serving the two chambers, whilst the third floor was to be readied to receive parliamentary committees and the offices of the various ministries and the respective secretarial services. In practice, the right wing of the building was to be occupied by the deputies, the left by the peers. The exception was the south-west wing, which since 1755 had housed the *Torre de Tombo*, or royal archives.

Despite the pressure created by the situation, as it was a political priority to provide a meeting place for the parliamentary chambers, the work on converting the former Benedictine monastery was subject to a number of delays, attracting criticism from certain political quarters. In late June 1834, Dom Pedro would appear to have visited the site in person and, displeased with the course of events, decided to dismiss the directors of the Public Works Office, which had taken over the work of the Pombaline *Casa do Risco*. The regent expressed his dissatisfaction at the sluggish progress on the repair works. The scale of the conversion project in the São Bento monastery, the lack of time and the shortage of funds for completing the project appear to have weighed in his decision. He decided instead to entrust the project to Joaquim

Possidónio da Silva, recently appointed as Architect to the Royal Household, who was then responsible for executing new plans in only 50 days, as the first parliamentary session was due to take place on 15 August. Dom Pedro's intervention turned out to be timely, and his choice of Possidónio de Silva to be justified, as Parliament opened on the planned date with a solemn session attended by the regent, whose health was already failing (AFONSO; MOURÃO 2003 : 31-38).

The project for adapting the building to its new civil function was accompanied by plans for decorating and furnishing the interior, equipping the premises with the facilities needed for the work of the parliamentary chambers and the associated administrative services. This involved re-using and redistributing articles from other monasteries which had been closed down, as well as surplus items from royal buildings. At the same time, many of the liturgical artefacts and other contents of the São Bento monastery were donated to Lisbon churches. Use was also made of some of the furniture used in the former parliamentary chambers in the period 1826-1828.

Attention was initially centred on the Chamber of Peers, providing it with suitably aristocratic trappings. In terms of the decorative language used, the new chamber was adorned with a royal portrait, oil on canvas, of the queen, Dona Maria II, painted in 1834 by John Simpson on a commission from Portuguese liberal exiles in London. This was later joined by another portrait, oil on canvas, of Dom Pedro V by Manuel Maria Bordalo Pinheiro, a functionary of the Chamber of Peers and father of the artists Columbano and Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro⁷. However, the hurry to prepare the two chambers, meaning that efforts were focussed more on the layout than on the decoration, resulted in a Chamber of Peers almost devoid of ornamentation and presenting an “almost disturbing simplicity”, which attracted criticism from various contemporary sources (MOURÃO 2009 : 17), the same being true of the Chamber of Deputies, which quickly proved to be uncomfortable and unsuited to its function.

Attention was also turned to the building's urban setting. In 1835-1836, the Minister of the Realm and civil governor of Lisbon, Joaquim Larcher, drew up plans to alter the surrounding street layout, with two new streets (the Rua das Cortes and the Rua Duque de Bragança), involving the demolition of a large number of buildings and rehabilitation of others. None of these plans went ahead, but in 1836 another alternative was proposed, which was to be implemented 60 years later. This consisted of pulling

⁷ Both portraits were transferred to the Coach Museum after the proclamation of the Republic (SILVA 2009 : 12-13).

down a section of the walls around the Convento da Esperança, which was still a functioning convent, and building a new road down to the river. Only after the demolition of the convent in 1889 was this street finally built and given the name of Avenida das Cortes (today Avenida D. Carlos I).

The first “Regeneration” of the parliamentary building

The interior of the building deteriorated over time, but no significant works were carried out until the 1850s. Maintenance work only was executed, in response to occasional emergencies and in order to assure the minimum standards needed for the work of the *Cortes*. Despite the age of the main façade of the São Bento Palace, as the building quickly became known, the idea of rebuilding it was only confirmed in May 1846, with the approval of designs drawn up by Paulo José Ferreira da Costa in 1841. But the plans for reworking the parliament building were only implemented in 1856, encompassing not only the façades but also the three interior storeys, under the direction of the French architect, Jean-François Colson, contracted by the newly created Ministry of Public Works. Nearing the end of his term of office, the minister Fontes Pereira de Melo charged the Portuguese ambassador in Paris, the Marquis of Paiva, with making the contacts necessary to contract the architect who had already worked on the redevelopment of the Louvre Museum.

The main feature of Colson’s plans was the reorganization of the interior space, with the two parliamentary chambers – Deputies and Peers – being moved up to the first storey. The ground floor was to be used for Royal Sessions, which would take place in the monastic church which still existed, divided into tribunes for deputies and peers, with the royal throne taking the place of the former high altar. Colson’s designs also involved changes to the façade and to the gardens at the rear of the building. Of this comprehensive set of plans, only the changes to the Chamber of Peers were actually implemented, resulting in the chamber as it still exists today. As the plans for the Chamber of Deputies were very similar in terms of layout and decoration, we can presume that the result would have had very similar ornamental and architectural features, establishing a symbolic equivalence between the two categories of national representatives. The design proposed for both chambers consisted of a semi-circular plan with two levels of public galleries, a solution which took its inspiration from the French parliamentary model.

In terms of the building's external setting, it was also in the later 1850's that steps were finally taken to improve the public area onto which it fronted, which was beautified by the planting of trees and construction of steps leading to the Rua do São Bento, with wrought iron railings, in an attempt to lend dignity to the entrance to the parliament building (SILVA, R. H. 2003 : 88). The redevelopment of the Largo de São Bento was complemented by the inauguration, in Maio 1878 (AFONSO; MOURÃO 2003 : 39-50), of the monument to José Estêvão Coelho de Magalhães, regarded by many as the most brilliant orator ever elected to the Portuguese parliament.

Work on rebuilding the Chamber of Peers only started in late 1861, when Jean-Francois Colson had already left the country⁸, but only in 1863 was a special commission set up to supervise the work, under the technical direction of the Marquis of Niza, assisted by the architect António Tomás de Fonseca and the engineers Jaime Larcher and Charles Pezarat. As a point of interest, the position of works inspector was assigned to the architect Joaquim Possidónio da Silva, whose experience in the building recommended him for this post.

As in 1834, after the structural problems had been resolved in the Chamber of Peers, thoughts turned to its decoration. The task was once again entrusted primarily to a foreign artist, the Frenchman Anatole Calmels, whose name was to be associated with a number of other projects in Portugal⁹. The São Bento Monastery had until this point retained an austere style of ornamentation. The new features started with busts of the Dukes of Palmela and Terceira placed by the galleries to evoke two of the regime's most illustrious founding fathers. Calmels also sculpted the panels in white Carrara marble over the doors, with busts of Dom Pedro IV and Dona Maria II. In 1866, José Rodrigues painted a portrait of Dom Luís which was to be hung behind the speaker's platform in the Chamber of Peers. The solemnity of the peers' proceedings was further highlighted by the theatrical effect of a canopy carved in cedar surmounted by a crown, an iconographic element identifying this parliamentary chamber and installed behind the platform from where the speaker would preside over the Chamber of Peers. With the arrival of the Republic, this symbolic scheme was changed, giving way to an armillary

⁸ The talented French architect was also involved in other building projects in Portugal, such as the New Customs Building in Oporto, the Observatory in Ajuda and the palatial home of a wealth businessman, José Maria Eugénio de Almeida, in São Sebastião da Pedreira in Lisbon, as well as plans for the rehabilitation and expansion of the Jerónimos Monastery, where the tower on the convent wing was to collapse in 1878. (AFONSO; MOURÃO 2003 : 86).

⁹ He was to design the Monument to Dom Pedro IV in Oporto, and to work on the arch in the Rua Augusta in Lisbon and on the pediment of the Lisbon City Council Building.

sphere bearing shields with the national coat of arms, more in tune with the iconography of the new regime.

The wooden canopy comprised two winged genii, representing Royalty and Justice, holding a sceptre and the ermine robes, symbols which were also removed after the Revolution of 1910. The furniture in the chamber was also almost all new, using walnut armchairs in the Victorian style. The new chamber was officially inaugurated in January 1867, offering conceptual and decorative unity thanks to the intervention of Anatole Calmels.

The main criticisms levelled at the time by the occupants of the chamber related to the deficient lighting, the lack of windows, the imperfect acoustics, the poor ventilation in summer and the absence of a heating system for the winter, criticisms which would equally apply to the situation in the Chamber of Deputies, where conditions deteriorated with the passage of time.

In response to some of the less than positive reactions, the original floor in the Chamber of Peers was replaced in 1868¹⁰. The most significant furniture from this period included the speaker's table and chair, together with the benches used by the peers and the seating in the galleries. The speaker's table was most likely designed by Anatole Calmels, and was executed in walnut by Leandro Braga. It consists of three sections joined together, standing on a platform with steps on each side. The front was decorated with medallions, also designed by Calmels, depicting the Duke of Palmela and Cardinal Guilherme Henriques de Carvalho, speakers of the Chamber of Peers from 1834 to 1857. A bench for the stenographers and another for members of the government were placed between the speaker's table and the peers' benches. In the twentieth century, under the *New State*, these two benches were removed and replaced by a tribune to be used by members of the Corporative Chamber addressing the house. The benches and the original chairs were restored in 1902, suffering from wear and tear. The public galleries were organized in boxes and balconies punctuated by 22 columns in polished *pedra lioz*. Busts of the Dukes of Terceira and Saldanha were placed in the chamber between 1885 and 1886, but then removed on the proclamation of the Republic. Eight busts were also placed between the columns of distinguished figures

¹⁰ The floor existing today was laid in 1938. (MOURÃO 2009 : 22).

appointed to the Chamber of Peers¹¹. The chamber also included special seating for the royal family and for the diplomatic corps. The ceiling was painted by the French artist, Pierre Bordes, who specialized in interior decoration.

Once the problem of the Upper Chamber had been resolved, attention would eventually have to be turned to the chamber occupied by the deputies, which was still the old cloister adapted by Possidónio da Silva in 1834. The state of the chamber continued to deteriorate until July 1872 when some of the beams gave way causing part of the ceiling to collapse. Despite the urgent need for building work, this was never carried out due to the financial difficulties experienced by the State from the late 1860's onwards. The chamber and its associated galleries, secretarial offices and cloisters, underwent minor provisional repairs, but all plans for redesigning the façade and the interior were indefinitely postponed. However, in the 1882, a new square Conference Room was built, leading on to the former *Passos Perdidos*, to be used by peers for meetings¹².

The political establishment was consistently more interested in the fitting out of the upper chamber. The ascent to the throne of Dom Carlos, in late 1889, was celebrated by the inauguration in 1891 of a portrait of the monarch painted by António Félix da Costa. When Dom Carlos died and the throne passed to Dom Manuel II, the portrait of the king assassinated in 1908 was replaced in 1909 by another, painted by José Nunes Ribeiro Júnior, depicting the last of Portugal's monarchs. With the change of regime, the royal portrait was deposed and its place taken by a bust of the Republic, by Tomás Costa. Under the *New State*, this was in turn ousted by an allegorical painting (oil on canvas) by Carlos Reis alluding to the Fatherland, and the portrait of Dom Luís returned to the chamber, where it hung alongside decorative elements from the Republican period (MOURÃO 2009 : 24).

The Parliament of Ventura Terra

The most dramatic episode in the history of the parliamentary seat occurred on 17 June 1895, when a fierce fire destroyed part of the building. Parliament had been closed since November of the previous year, and there were therefore no victims to mourn, but the Chamber of Deputies was completely gutted in the blaze. As a general

¹¹ The Dukes of Palmela, Terceira, Loulé, Saldanha, Ávila and Bolama, together with Cardinal Guilherme Henriques de Carvalho, the Count of Lavradio and Fontes Pereira de Melo, the joint work of Anatole Calmels himself, Alberto Nunes, Simões de Almeida (nephew) and Miguel Santos.

¹² Today called the Sala Dona Maria II. (SILVA, T.P. 2009b : 7-9).

election had been called for the following November, the Ministry of Public Works was immediately requested to provide new premises to accommodate the new members whilst the São Bento Palace was being rebuilt. Space was made available at the Royal Academy of Sciences, hastily adapted by Domingos Parente da Silva. Although the same architect presented almost immediately his own plans for the reconstruction of the Chamber of Deputies, which were approved by the Special Directorate of Public Buildings and Lighthouses, the Minister of the Realm, João Franco, invited the architect Ventura Terra to submit an alternative proposal¹³.

The proposed layout and the projected decoration – involving a pictorial composition alluding to Parliament, a portrait of the king, the coats of arms of the Portuguese metropolitan and colonial provinces, allegorical statues and busts of parliamentarians – were immediately understood to offer a much more ambitious approach, and controversy quickly broke out.

The competitive selection procedure organized by the Directorate of Public Works Services proved highly polemical. The *Grémio Artístico* protested against the possibility of foreign competitors taking part, at the same time as contesting the requirement that plans for decorating the façade should conform to the designs of Eng. António Joaquim Pereira. On the first of these issues it argued simply that the State had a duty to foster and defend the country's artistic talent, by taking a protectionist and corporative stance, and on the second that this restriction would limit the creativity of entries, which had to conform to the requirements of what they saw as an old-fashioned and mediocre design, drawn up by a bureaucrat who was not even alive to defend it.

The outcome of the competition was announced in late December 1895. As expected, Ventura Terra's design was awarded first place, followed by that submitted by Luís Caetano Pedro d'Ávila, an architect who, although well-reputed, was seen as fusty and outdated in his artistic approach. A third entry, from the architect José Emílio dos Santos e Silva, was disqualified.

The design placed second was found to be overly academic and the specific proposals for both the chamber and the façade were also not to the judge's liking. In contrast, Ventura Terra had assessed the space available and produced a design which was more harmonious as a whole.

¹³ For fuller biographical treatment of Ventura Terra and his plans for intervention in the *Palácio das Cortes* (cf. *Arquitecto Ventura Terra* 2009).

The aesthetics of Ventura Terra's design were attuned to the spirit of the building. In the interior, the winning entry took its cue from the neo-classical aesthetic of the façade and for the Chamber of Deputies was inspired by the amphitheatre at the Sorbonne. The adjoining lobby (*Sala dos Passos Perdidos*) was provided with a skylight in glass and iron, recalling the solution adopted at the Gare D'Orsay in Paris, where Ventura Terra had studied (SILVA, R. H. 2003 : 92). The Chamber of Deputies and supporting facilities were to be rebuilt from scratch. The chamber would be larger and higher than that designed by Possidónio da Silva in 1834, in order to offer better acoustics and to accommodate a larger number of deputies¹⁴. As a result of the internal construction work, the building emerged with a more serviceable layout, and the final outcome was described as “one of the great achievements of Portuguese architecture of the 1900's”, combining audacious features with functional beauty, a description which could be extended to the *Sala dos Passos Perdidos*, admired (as a sign of cosmopolitan taste) for drawing its inspiration from French models (SILVA, R. H. 2003 : 92)..

Construction work started in April 1897, once the initial controversies were out of the way¹⁵. At the same time, the Chamber of Peers, unscathed by the fire, underwent some minor alterations in order to serve both the peers and the deputies, on an alternating basis, as the accommodation provided for the lower chamber at the Academy of Sciences was strictly temporary. During the rebuilding of the old *Palácio das Cortes*, the Torre de Tombo archives were transferred from the south-east to the north-east wing, where they occupied the area which up to 1834 had served as the refectory for the Benedictine monks.

The final version of the design of what was to be the new Chamber of Deputies was submitted by Ventura Terra in 1898. The construction work dragged on until March 1901, when work then started on the interior decoration. After five years of continuous and varied work, the new chamber was finally ready on 2 January 1903, although the work was not yet completed. With seating for 150 deputies in a semi-circular layout in the style of an amphitheatre, the chamber also included seven seats for ministers, a tribune for the speaker, a bench for stenographers and a tribune for those addressing the chamber. A special gallery was reserved for the royal family, the diplomatic corps, the

¹⁴ In 1834 only 132 deputies were elected to the chamber, whilst the electoral decree of 1901 envisaged the election of 148 deputies. (ALMEIDA 1998 : 739).

¹⁵ Interestingly, another competition was held in 1896 for the rehabilitation of the Jerónimos Monastery, in which entries were only accepted from Portuguese architects, reflecting the corporate lobbying of the *Grémio Artístico*, which had failed to assure a similar rule in the competition for the reconstruction of the São Bento Palace.

families of parliamentarians and the press, as well as a public gallery with seating for five hundred.

When originally inaugurated, the furnishings in the chamber were relatively simple and incomplete, consisting only of the furniture in walnut and a full-length statue of the king, Dom Carlos, sculpted by António Teixeira Lopes, which was never in fact completed. In addition, two plaster lions and the national coats of arms were arrayed behind the speaker's table, whilst the side tribunes were surmounted by groups of female figures sculpted by the same artist. In the aftermath of the regicide, plans were suggested for replacing the statue of Dom Carlos with another of Dom Manuel II, by José Moreira Rato, but the plans were shelved after fall of the monarchy. The *Sala de Passos Perdidos* remained bare, and the plans for its decoration were only completely put into effect in 1921, when six panels were installed, still in place today, painted by Columbano Bordalo Pinheiro, depicting twenty two figures from Portuguese history associated with the fields of politics, oratory and public administration (SILVA, R. H. 2003 : 51-71). The final touches to the front of the building were concluded in the late 1930's.

A single concern was uppermost throughout all this work: to provide a dignified setting for the seat of national representation and to extend the areas open to the public. The solutions designed by Ventura Terra were implemented with the support of skilled engineers, such as Policarpo da Costa Lima, fully familiar with the technical advances of the time. Both architect and engineers benefitted from the generosity of successive governments, which had to accept a series of budget overruns. The rehabilitation of the *Palácio das Cortes* dragged on over several decades, under the direction of Adolfo Marques da Silva, Cristino da Silva (external finishing) and Porfírio Pardal Monteiro (responsible for the *Salão Nobre*), and the architectural followers of Ventura Silva, after their teacher's early demise in 1919. Since then, generations of artists have had the opportunity to work on a range of commissions which have transformed the São Bento Palace into a showcase of Portuguese history and mythology. The parliament building transformed itself into one of the most significant civil monuments in the country's heritage.

The ritualization of parliamentary representation

Despite functioning as the institutional embodiment of legislative power, with the central mission of debating and producing laws, the sessions held at São Bento conformed to calendars and protocol codified in the rules of procedure of both

parliamentary chambers. The most important rituals included the swearing in of deputies, peers and senators, in both the Monarchical and Republican periods, the king's speech, the acclamation of monarchs, and the election and swearing in of the President of the Republic.

Until 1910, legislative sessions were opened by the monarch in the joint presence of the deputies and the peers of the Realm. The ceremony generally took place on 2 January each year and included the "king's speech", a formality which was obviously abolished under the Republic. The speech was drafted by members of the government, outlining the main political developments which had occurred since the last parliamentary sitting. It also set out the most significant legislative measures which the ministers intended to submit to Parliament during the coming session. In a further ceremony the next day, the elected members of the Chamber of Deputies met to inaugurate the legislative session. In the case of a new legislature, both the deputies and the peers of the Realm had to swear an oath in accordance with the established formalities.

At solemn public events in Parliament, such as the opening sessions of the parliamentary year or the investiture of members of the Upper Chamber, the peers of the Realm wore their official uniform, consisting of a heavy blue coat with gold embroidered collar and cuffs, trousers with a gold stripe, waistcoat, bow tie and a feathered bicorn hat. On top of all this, peers of the Realm were required to wear an ermine cloak as dress uniform¹⁶. Deputies were not subject to any dress code.

Under the Constitutional Monarchy, Parliament was also the scene of the formal ceremony for acclamation of the king of Portugal¹⁷. This event followed a special official programme, planned over the preceding days or weeks. It normally took place before a joint session of all the deputies and peers of the Realm. A parliamentary deputation would welcome the monarch at the entrance to the *Cortes*, forming a procession led by the members of this deputation, followed by the sovereign and other members of the Court. The king, holding the royal sceptre, took his place on the throne. The speaker of the Chamber of Deputies then presented him with the Holy Gospels covered in a cross, on which His Majesty, kneeling, was to place his right hand and

¹⁶ A proposal was presented in July 1861 for this uniform, first designed in 1826, to be replaced by a more comfortable and less expensive form of dress, but the motion was rejected,

¹⁷ It should be noted that Portuguese monarchs had not worn the crown since 1646, when Dom João IV dedicated the kingdom to Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception of Vila Viçosa, proclaimed as Queen of Portugal.

repeat, in accordance with the promise of the earlier royal proclamation, the oath set out in Article 66 of the Constitutional Charter of 1826, affirming: “I swear to maintain the Catholic, apostolic and Roman religion, the integrity of the realm, to promote the general good of the nation as falls to my lot”. After this ceremony, the sovereign would make a short address to those present. The Chief Lieutenant of the Realm then unfurled the royal standard, and the president of the session would begin his prepared address. The name of the king was then acclaimed “loudly and three times”, by all those present. After this, the Chief Lieutenant would bow to the monarch and descend the steps of the throne with the unfurled royal standard and, accompanied by the footmen and heralds, headed to the balcony of the *Cortes* building, from where he would acclaim the king before the crowds which had gathered for the event. The Chief Lieutenant waved the standard and proclaimed: “Royal, royal, royal, for the most high and powerful lord, [name], king of Portugal”. They then returned into the chamber where they joined the procession which then headed to one of Lisbon’s churches, where the king was awaited by the Patriarch of Lisbon and his senior clergy for a mass of thanksgiving to protect and bless the new reign.

The Republic was to abolish all these ceremonies. The President was instead elected indirectly by the deputies and senators, and took office in a relatively discreet ceremony in the São Bento Palace. The minimal powers enjoyed by the president in the parliamentary system established in the 1911 Constitution meant that the protocol of his inauguration was simplified: the most important symbolic moment, after the bureaucratic formalities in the Chamber of Deputies, consisted of going out onto the balcony to salute the crowds which gathered outside. The exception was in 1918 when Sidónio Pais, elected by universal (male) suffrage, chose to be acclaimed at Lisbon’s *Paços do Concelho* (City Hall) (SERRA 2000 : 110).

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