

WHEN VISITING AND HONORING A DEAD BODY REVEALS THE ENCOUNTER BETWEEN RELIGION, CULTURE AND TOURISM: THE CASE OF SANTA MARIA ADELAIDE IN PORTUGAL

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**Incomparable Asset for Sustainable and
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THE ENCOUNTER BETWEEN RELIGION, CULTURE AND TOURISM

“Religion has always been the spiritual engine of all civilizations.” (Cunha, 2001)

“In many parts of the world, religion is a vital part of cultures dynamics, exerting a powerful control over the behavior of individuals.” (Park, 1994)

THE ENCOUNTER BETWEEN RELIGION, CULTURE AND TOURISM

“Religious rites, such as pilgrimages or votive offerings, are important features of people’s history and culture, showing an intimate relation between these and the holy.”

(Lima, 1988; David, 2001; Pinto, 2002 *cit in* Mateiro, 2010)

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“Also known is the fact that in occidental cultures, when thinking of a pilgrimage destination, one promptly imagines something built in honor of the supernatural (Santos, M. G., 2006), commonly existing a confrontation and familiarity with death.” (Oliveira, 1998)

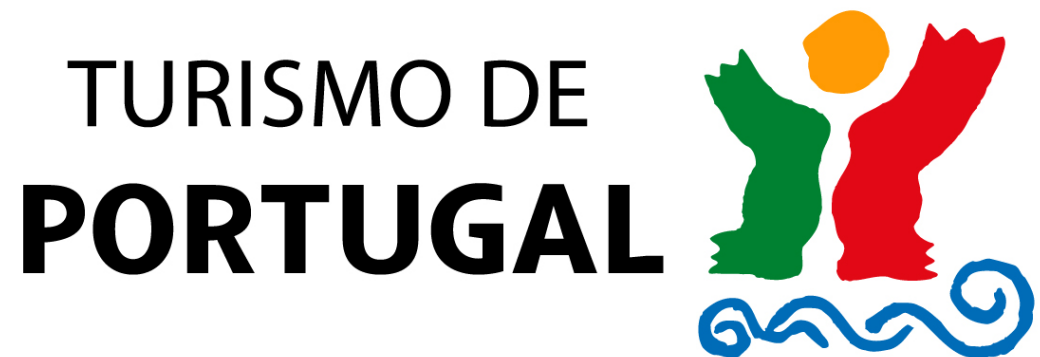
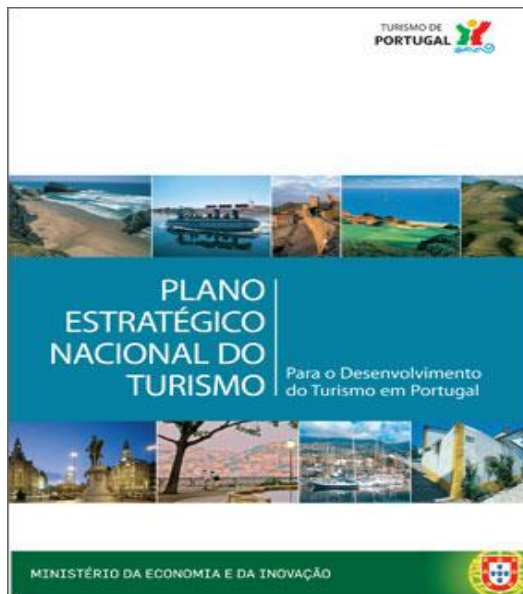
“Indeed, mankind has always been interested in understanding the end of life.” (Niemelä, 2010)

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It is in this context that, in a way, we find the origins of Religious Tourism and Dark Tourism, both covered by the tourist dynamics, although with different characteristics and dimensions, but closely related with religion, death, spirituality and cultural diversity.

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As known, Religious Tourism assumes a significant role in the universal tourism industry and in the particular case of Portugal it is considered strategic for the tourist policy, although included in the strategy defined for the product “Cultural Tourism”.



THE ENCOUNTER BETWEEN RELIGION, CULTURE AND TOURISM

“Dark tourism assumes special interest in the tourism sector, namely of niches, comprising educational, cultural and patrimonial features.”

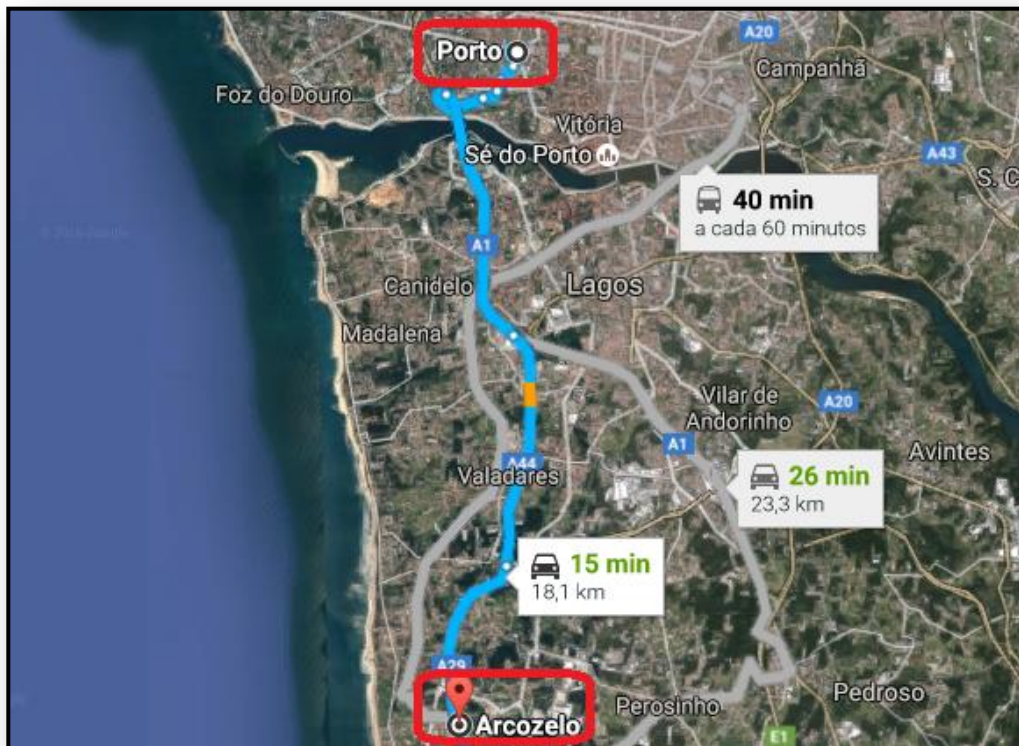
(Tarlow, 2005 *cit in* Niemelä, 2010)

“In a behaviour perspective, among activities related with this type of tourism are: travelling to places with death evidence or symbolic representation, such as museums and theme spaces; travelling to places where death is staged, such as religious festivities and social rites.”

(Seaton, 1996 *cit in* Stone & Sharpley, 2009)

THE CASE OF SANTA MARIA ADELAIDE IN PORTUGAL

It is in this theoretical framework that fits the case studied; Santa Maria Adelaide in the town of Arcozelo, Northern Portugal.



Source: Google Maps



Photo: Mateiro, 2010

THE CASE OF SANTA MARIA ADELAIDE IN PORTUGAL

“A phenomenon with particular characteristics, visited for religious, touristic and scientific motivations. With a history dating back to 1835, it is a incorrupt body, mummified, considered "saint" by the people and lying exposed in a chapel since 1924, to whom were assigned several "miracles", although not recognized by the Church.”

(Mateiro, 2010)

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Very close to the chapel of Maria Adelaide and also of religious and tourist interest, there are two churches, one of the 17th century, a leisure park and a gift shop with religious products.



Photos: Jorge Coelho, 2016



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Also a museum, with offerings to the “saint”, where...

“...one can count around six hundred baptism and wedding dresses (it is said that the complete collection goes over six thousand, though there’s no way to showcase it all), money from over twenty-five countries, jewels, candles, shirts from football players and thousands of photographs, thank-you notes and other objects.”

(Atlas Obscura, 2016)

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Photos: Jorge Coelho, 2016

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In current times, although there are no studies that have provided concrete data, it is being said that "after the Sanctuary of Fátima, Arcozelo is the most visited place for worship in the country".

(Teixeira, 2007; Coincya, 2007 *cit in* Pinto, 2011)



Photo: Jorge Coelho, 2016



Photo: Atlas Obscura, 2016

METHODOLOGY, CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

By employing a methodology where the choice for the method fell on the qualitative, directed to the social context (Denzin & Lincoln, 2006 *cit in* Simão, 2008), with the objective of knowing the tourist dynamics and potential of Santa Maria Adelaide, it was concluded that the existing heritage, both material and immaterial, is significant and it's maintenance and sustainability is being ensured.

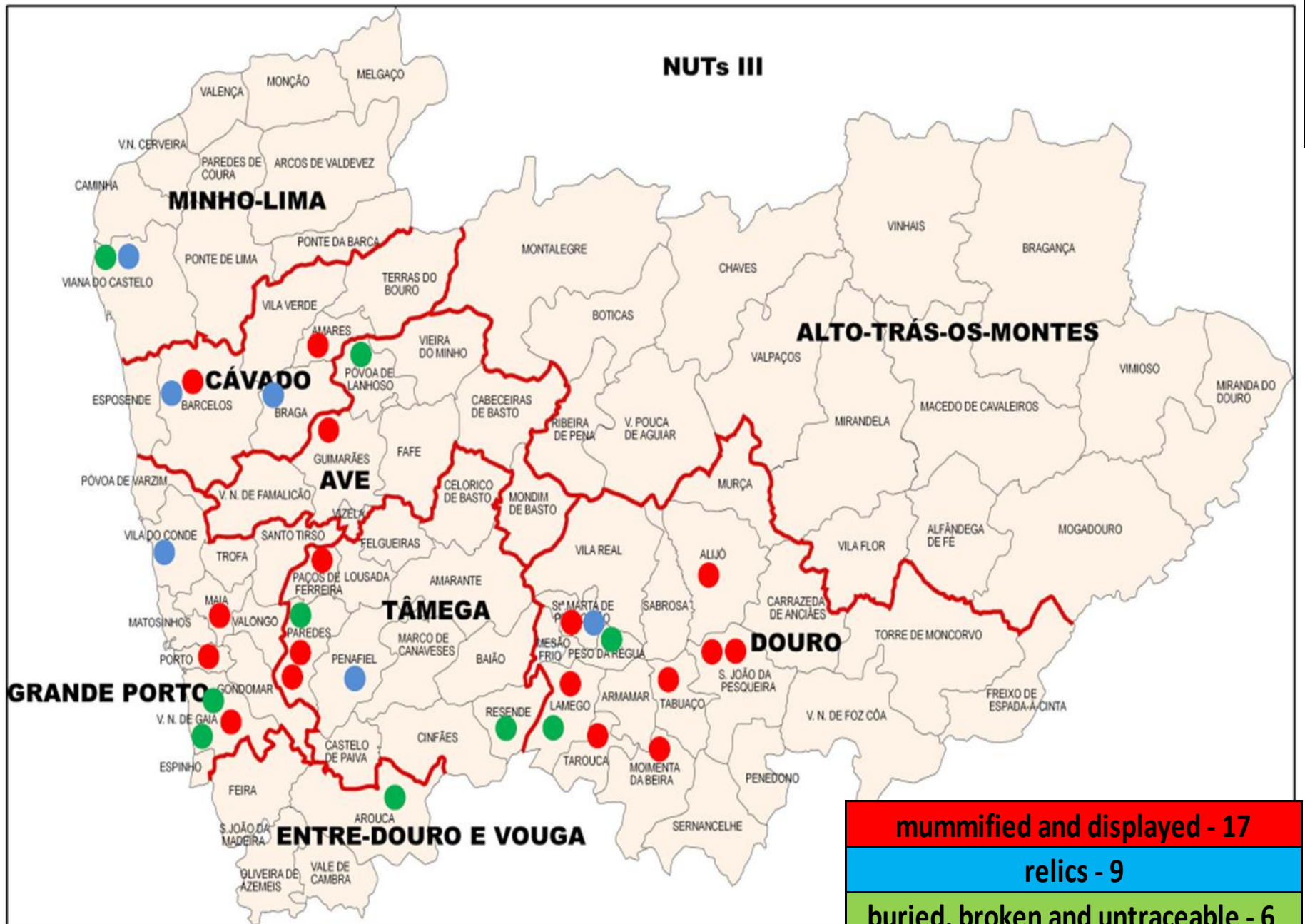
METHODOLOGY, CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Was also concluded that there is the possibility to develop a tourism product to niche markets, given the scientific and morbid interest it arouses.



This is considered significant because “there are 32 "incorrupt saints" in Northern Portugal, of which 17 are mummified and displayed and the rest are buried, broken or become relics.”

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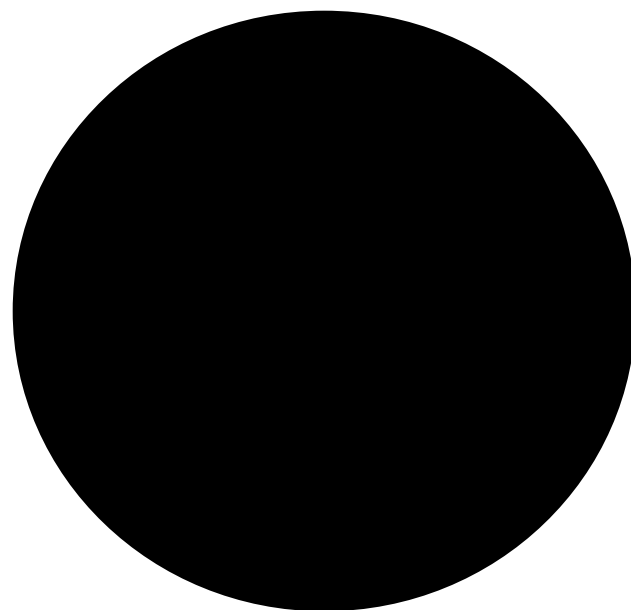
METHODOLOGY, CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

With this kind of resources, it may also be considered the construction of different tourist routes in combination with other existing heritage in Northern Portugal, including UNESCO World Heritage and the Romanesque Route.

A possible all year round product that might help to reduce seasonality, valuing the heritage, both material and immaterial.

An interesting encounter between religion, culture and tourism.

THANK YOU!



[JORGE COELHO | 2016]