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Sonja Gelin

*Southern Illinois University Carbondale*

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# Sonja Gelin

## Finding Refuge in Reason and Religion: Understanding Pombaline-era Architecture and Reform through 18th Century *Azulejo*

### Introduction

In 1700, Gabriel del Barco, a painter from Spain who lived and worked in Lisbon, recorded a panoramic view of his city titled *Grand Panorama of Lisbon*. For the work, del Barco fused blue pigment to opaque, tin-glazed earthenware panels that in total spanned 23 meters: the most extensive pictorial record of the capital before the disastrous Great Earthquake on All Saints Day, 1755.<sup>1</sup> Originally a fresco painter, del Barco shifted to a career as a ceramic tile painter, becoming a prominent figure during the Baroque period.<sup>2</sup> The artist's transition from plaster to tin-glaze was natural: this form of tilework, *azulejo*, was Portugal's narrative art form. When del Barco painted his panoramic view of Lisbon, the highly syncretic medium existed "as a decorative element narrating, at the same time, events of the Portuguese society and culture."<sup>3</sup>

This paper explores the connection between architecture and *azulejo* produced after the earthquake, during, and after the Pombaline era. The 1755 disaster provoked an increase in the popularity of Pombaline tile and *Registos de Santos* (devotional tile panels). These two significant *azulejo* trends functioned to record the responses of rulers and subjects to this tremendous event during the second half of the 18th century. The literature on Pombaline-era reform and reconstruction mentions a rational, or enlightened, approach to new construction modes, including adopting prefabrication and mass production methods. Most studies focus on earthquake planning or Pombaline style architecture and only briefly if at all, discuss the Pombaline tile. The thesis of this paper is that exploration of the juxtaposition of standardized,

- 1 Ana Anjos Mântua, João Pedro Monteiro, "Grande Panorama de Lisboa / Panoramic View of Lisbon" in "Discover Baroque Art", Museum With No Frontiers, 2021. [http://baroqueart.museumwnf.org/database\\_item.php?id=object;BAR;pt;Mus12;41;en](http://baroqueart.museumwnf.org/database_item.php?id=object;BAR;pt;Mus12;41;en)
- 2 José Berardo e Silva Álvaro, *800 Anos de História do Azulejo* (Lisboa: Museu BerardoEstremoz, 2020), 344.
- 3 Fernando Magalhães, "Building Bridges between Cultures: The Originalities of the Portuguese Tile," in *Proceedings of the 7th Mediterranean Interdisciplinary Forum on Social Sciences and Humanities*, Barcelona, 16-7 May, 2019.

patterned tile and figurative, neoclassical *Registos de Santos* has much to reveal about social life and religion after the earthquake.

Further research of the increase in popularity of these devotional images during the Pombaline era—particularly in cases when the plaques were installed on Pombaline facades—will be an opportunity to analyze *azulejo* in a space between the public and private sphere through the lens of material culture. This study will address the prevalence of votive scenes and the role of specific saintly pairs in response to the earthquake and the reformatory period that followed. It will argue that the spirituality and religion of the populace remained steadfast against the backdrop of Pombaline-era reconstruction and reform.

*Azulejo* offers an exemplary framework through which to explore and tell the story of how the Great Earthquake of 1755 transformed Lisbon because of the painted tile's narrative ability and the extent of the medium's transformation during the late eighteenth to the nineteenth century. European responses to the earthquake manifest in this form of material culture will introduce *azulejo* to an audience outside of art history and archaeology (and outside of Portugal) and show how it played a central role in Portuguese architecture and heritage.

### Azulejo

The word *azulejo* is significant in that although it suggests the Spanish and Portuguese word for “blue,” *azul* the word is of Arabic origin and refers to polished objects, such as stone or earthenware. The Moors first introduced *Azulejo* to the Iberian Peninsula during the 8th century, under Muslim rule. However, *azulejo* was later formally introduced to the region during the early modern period (sixteenth to the eighteenth century) Hispano-Moorish tiles were imported to Portugal from Spain and used in the royal palace, religious buildings, and homes. The tiles, which existed in a space “between decorative art and painting,” adapted and transformed according to the space they occupied, whether found on the facades of or hidden inside churches, dwellings, and hospitals as public and private works. By the eighteenth century, the Portuguese had adopted *azulejo* as a natural art form, a symbol of their cultural heritage.<sup>4</sup> Considering how people used *azulejo* to record Portuguese history and culture, the tile-ceramic medium offers an exemplary lens to comprehend Portuguese society after the Great Earthquake—a turning point in the country's history. In his panels, del Barco records Lisbon before the earthquake: a city in an ideal port location that rapidly prospered on

4 Céline Ventura Teixeira, “A Palimpsest of Ornaments: The Art of Azulejo as a Hybrid Language,” *Renaissance Studies* Vol. 34, No. 4 (2019): 593–623. <https://doi.org/10.1111/rest.12591>.

alluvial soil. However, having grown without planning, the urban topography was congested and unorganized and created hazards that exacerbated the damage caused by the earthquake, fires, and tsunami.

### A Brief History of Azulejo in Portuguese Architecture

By and large, architects limit their discussion of ceramic tile to its practical functions, such as its indoor application for cooling and sanitation or its external function as cladding.<sup>5</sup> Most of the literature on Pombaline architecture relies heavily on the writings and plans of military engineer Manuel da Maia and architects Eugenio de Santos and Carlos Mardel, whom the Marquis of Pombal, Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, oversaw.<sup>6</sup> During the reconstruction of the *baixa pombalina* (downtown Lisbon), cost-saving measures factored heavily in the design simplification of decorative tile.<sup>7</sup> After the earthquake, the Dom José and the Marquis of Pombal streamlined the construction of architectural elements, such as windows, doors, tiles, “wrought iron staircase components,” or even anti-seismic components (i.e., Pombaline cage) through mass production, simplification, and in some cases, prefabrication. Masons followed these decrees to meet safety requirements and speed up the rebuilding process.<sup>8</sup> The concept of a modern and rational rectilinear city grid, Pombaline architecture, and anti-seismic design left little room to understand tiles beyond function. In “The Pombaline Quarter of Lisbon: An Eighteenth-Century Example of Prefabrication and Dimensional Co-ordination,” Richard Penn, Stanley Wild, and Jorge Mascarenhas made an exception by briefly mentioning the Real Fábrica do Rato, a workshop that produced many of the ceramic tiles of the period.<sup>9</sup>

Other scholars, particularly in the field of art history, have explored the decorative function of *azulejo*. In “Building Bridges between Cultures: The Originalities of the Portuguese Tile” and “A Palimpsest of Ornaments: The Art of Azulejo as a Hybrid Language,” art historians Fernando Magalhães and Céline Ventura Teixeira discussed the Arabic origins of ceramic tile, its introduction to, gradual transformation, and apogee in the Iberian Peninsula

5 J. De Sousa-Leão, “Portuguese Tiles in Brazilian Architecture,” *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* Vol. 84, No. 493 (1944): 83-87. Accessed February 16, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/868752>.

6 Ana Carneiro, Ana Simoes, Maria Paula Diogo, and Teresa Salomé Mota, “Geology and Religion in Portugal,” *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* Vol. 67, No. 4 (2013): 331-54. Accessed April 20, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43287696>.

7 Berardo and Álvaro, *800 Anos*, 459-475.

8 Richard Penn, Stanley Wild, Jorge Mascarenhas, “The Pombaline Quarter of Lisbon: An Eighteenth Century Example of Prefabrication and Dimensional Co-ordination,” *Construction History* Vol. 11 (1995), 13.

9 *Ibid.*, 3-17.

as a vehicle for cultural exchange and hybridity. *Azulejo* underwent various transformations and influences through variations in colors, motifs, scenes depicted, and fabrication techniques by artists. In “*Al zulaiju*: Music in the Ceramic Tiles of São Vicente de Fora Monastery in Lisbon,” Luzia Rocha explored the role of *azulejo* in the church by analyzing the panels installed at the site and argued that the choice of allegorical and pastoral scenes reflected the training and values of individual artists. Fernando Magalhães’ brief discussion of Pombaline tile did not mention the 1755 earthquake, although he did mention the Marquis of Pombal and alluded to “changes in Portuguese society taste [sic].”<sup>10</sup>

Many art historical discussions of Pombaline tile summarily commented on devotional panels called *Registos de Santos*, popular in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Artists painted icons and allegorical scenes with cobalt blue pigment on a tin-glazed tile installed on facades. Like the Gabriel del Barco panorama, their blue-white figurative composition correlated with a color scheme of the earlier Baroque period.<sup>11</sup> In “Registo de Santos em Azulejo do Município de Lisboa: Algumas Considerações,” Fernando M. Peixoto Lopes and Margarida Almeida Bastos engaged with this topic and described the typical function of such tiles as providing protection to buildings. Lopes and Bastos also considered the different kinds of icons, imagery, motifs, style, and colors, providing information on the locations of surviving panels.<sup>12</sup>

The municipal archive of Lisbon houses many photographs of *registos* above doorways and between windows in different *freguesias* (civil parishes), including Santa Maria Maior, the location of the Baixa. Though Lopes’ and Bastos’ article included a photograph of a *registo* of St. Martial over a doorway in Lisbon, they made no mention of Pombaline tiles or architecture.<sup>13</sup> What they omitted is worthy of study: though *registos* predate Pombaline Lisbon and the earthquake, and their decoration style was not exclusive to the historic district, artists made the most of this type of devotional panel after the quake (from the mid-eighteenth to the nineteenth century). Another important and neglected subject is how many icons of St. Martial (protector against fires), St. Anthony (the patron saint of Lisbon), and St. Francis Borgia (protector against earthquakes) were made at this time and how often they were placed together on building facades. Lopes and Bastos noted that some panels appeared in places that correspond to their subject (e.g., St. Martial icon on the façade of a

10 Fernando Magalhães, “Building Bridges between Cultures”, 43.

11 Berardo and Álvaro, *800 anos*, 344-5.

12 Fernando M. Peixoto Lopes and Margarida Almeida Bastos, “Registo de Santos em Azulejo do Município de Lisboa: Algumas Considerações,” *Olisipo: Boletim do Grupo Amigos de Lisboa*, no. 20/21 (2004): 95-105.

13 *Ibid.*, 97.

Lisbon firehouse).<sup>14</sup> In addition, the juxtaposition of these devotional *registos* on a Pombaline facade with standardized, less refined, and less expensive patterned tiles raises questions about the social status and identity of the person or institution that commissioned the panels, and for what reasons.

Historians such as Timothy Walker and architects including Ricardo Daniel dos Santos Ferreira Nunes analyzed Pombaline architecture in relation to the values and philosophies of the Enlightenment. They considered the Marquis of Pombal a man of the Enlightenment and connected his prompt and rational response to the disaster to his identity as an *estrangeirado* (foreigner), which was shaped by his time abroad as a diplomat.<sup>15</sup> In "The Portuguese Precedent for Pierre Patte's Street Section," Andrew Tallon explored the connection between Pierre Patte, a French architect, and Eugénio dos Santos, a Portuguese architect and military engineer, by analyzing their mutual connection to the doctor António Ribeiro Sanches. Sanches, a Portuguese national, lived in Paris and established "an extensive network of scientists, politicians, diplomats, doctors, and philosophers...with whom he had a significant intellectual exchange."<sup>16</sup> Tallon argued that Sanches likely supplied Patte with dos Santos' plans and that his role in Pombaline reconstruction influenced Patte.<sup>17</sup> Another historian, Timothy D. Walker, similarly argued in "Enlightened Absolutism and the Lisbon Earthquake: Asserting State Dominance over Religious Sites and the Church in Eighteenth-Century Portugal" that the orderly city grid and Pombaline architecture that was imposed by a state whose leaders were influenced by the Enlightenment, were asserting civil power over religion.<sup>18</sup> In his foundational work, Walker challenged established Pombaline Lisbon historiography by addressing the grid's effect on the Catholic Church in Lisbon, arguing that it reflected a desire to "occlude" the church, physically and symbolically.<sup>19</sup> Despite their prominence in churches and public places, Walker did not consider *azulejos*, referring only vaguely to the *Grand Panorama of Lisbon* (1700) and ignoring the *Registos de Santos*, an interesting omission.

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14 Ibid., 103.

15 Timothy D. Walker, "Enlightened Absolutism and the Lisbon Earthquake: Asserting State Dominance over Religious Sites and the Church in Eighteenth-Century Portugal," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* Vol. 48, No. 3 (2015), 311.

16 Andrew J. Tallon, "The Portuguese Precedent for Pierre Patte's Street Section," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* Vol. 63, No. 3 (2004), 374.

17 Ibid., 370-77.

18 Walker, "Enlightened Absolutism", 307-28.

19 Ibid., 307.

### The Great Lisbon Earthquake: All Saints Day, 1755 and the Marquis of Pombal

The Lisbon Earthquake, which took place on November 1, 1775, All Saints Day, is viewed by many as one of the most disastrous events ever to befall Western Europe. The earthquake occurred at around 9:30 AM and consisted of “three distinct tremors” over a span of ten minutes, measuring 8.75-9 on the Richter Scale and IX-IX on the Mercalli Intensity Scale.<sup>20</sup> The structure of the city, its buildings, its location, and the very day of the earthquake all uniformly exacerbated the natural disaster effects.<sup>21</sup> The earthquake was devastating to the country of Portugal, especially the city of Lisbon and its downtown area. The district was densely settled; its tall buildings (often stacked up to five stories high) were constructed on narrow, winding streets.<sup>22</sup> Candles and small fires tumbled over during the quake and fueled the flames that besieged the downtown area. The fire spread quickly, as it was stoked by the strong winds blowing that day. Most of the convents and churches were reduced to rubble, and the Palace of the Inquisition lay in ruins.<sup>23</sup> Many of those who did survive the earthquake perished in the tsunami and fires that followed. The aftershocks, which lasted into the nights and days after, tormented the survivors. According to eyewitness accounts, shocked and traumatized survivors wandered among the dead and dying in the immediate aftermath, crying out to God for mercy. Some even trailed behind priests, who were walking around “performing the absolution en masse.”<sup>24</sup> These accounts described shocking displays of “superstition” or “religious fever” among the survivors, many of whom had been worshiping or participating in festivities earlier that day.<sup>25</sup>

After the earthquake, the Marquis of Pombal traveled to the royal palace to meet with Dom José, who escaped death by residing with his family in nearby Belém. When the King asked what the next course of action was, the Marquis replied, “Bury the dead, and feed the living.”<sup>26</sup> This reply demonstrated his control of the situation and foreshadowed his response as he rushed back to Lisbon and worked to ensure the safety of the survivors.

20 Edward Paice, *Wrath of God: the Great Lisbon Earthquake of 1755* (London: Quercus, 2008), 72.

21 Penn, Wild, and Mascarenhas, “The Pombaline Quarter of Lisbon”, 3.

22 *Ibid.*, 3-17.

23 Walker, “Enlightened Absolutism”, 311.

24 Paice, *Wrath of God*, 95.

25 *Ibid.*, 95.

26 Smith, *Memoirs of the Marquis of Pombal*, John Smith Athelstane, Conde da Carnota, 1813-1886. *Memoirs of the Marquis of Pombal: With Extracts From His Writings, And From Despatches In the State Paper Office, Never Before Published*. Vol. 1. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1843), 92.

In *Memoirs of the Marquis of Pombal: With Extracts From His Writings, And From Despatches In the State Paper Office, Never Before Published* (1843), John Smith credits the mutual respect between King Dom José (1750-77) and Marquis of Pombal, the monarch's unwavering confidence in the intellectual statesman, and a strong government for the swift rebuilding of the city and reforms ushered in after the disaster.<sup>27</sup> Not only was a modern city with innovative architecture erected on the ruins, but the resulting developments in seismology, safety measures, and civil engineering also had a significant impact on Portuguese society. The Great Earthquake of 1775 catalyzed this reformation.<sup>28</sup>

The Marquis of Pombal was born Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo on May 13, 1699 in the town of Soure. He was the son of Manoel Carvalho e Ataíde, a *fidalgo*, and Theresa de Mendonça e Melo, who was descended from a noble Portuguese family. For a time, Carvalho e Melo attended the University of Coimbra before his studies disillusioned him and instead chose to pursue politics, history, and legislation. Soon after meeting a cardinal with close connections to King João V, he was appointed to the Royal Academy of History in 1733. He took the opportunity to make a name for himself and pursue his interests while serving as an ambassador to London and Vienna. Carvalho e Melo learned from various French writers at court, and "Europeanized intellectuals" like him were critical of their native countries and eager to introduce modern ideas and new values.<sup>29</sup>

Historians and architects often hail the Marquis of Pombal's swift response to the disaster. Safety was paramount in all his efforts concerning the quake. Those who had lost their homes were placed into temporary housing in wooden huts imported from Holland. British merchants' accounts of the aftermath describe how the prefabricated components arrived by sea and could be built and dismantled quickly. The importation of the collapsible huts influenced the adoption of prefabrication and mass production for many of Pombaline architecture's structural elements.<sup>30</sup> The Marquis prohibited anyone from leaving the city without authorization to prevent looters from selling goods purloined from churches and homes or securing them elsewhere. Most of the perpetrators of these acts had escaped from the prisons and descended onto the city. The Marquis of Pombal issued a decree requiring that everyone was accounted for to combat these evils. Any "idlers" or "vagabonds" were put to work clearing debris. Despite being compensated with food and money, many of these criminals continued to rob, rape, and kill survivors.

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27 Ibid., 98.

28 Ibid., 86.

29 Paice, *Wrath of God*, 27-8.

30 Penn, Wild, and Mascarenhas, "The Pombaline Quarter of Lisbon", 3-17.



The Marquis had no choice but to enact martial law: armed guards stood by the doorways of residences while anyone caught committing a crime was executed.<sup>31</sup> The Marquis of Pombal's swift action brought a semblance of security and calm to the population that they had not felt since before the earthquake: "Like a superior being, he was present everywhere; encouraging the timid, comforting the desolate, awing the wicked, restraining the reckless, soothing the wounded, and pouring the balm of peace and consolation into the bosoms of the despairing and the afflicted."<sup>32</sup> After quelling the chaos, reconstruction was the next order of business.

The Marquis of Pombal consulted Manuel da Maia, a military engineer, to oversee the reconstruction of the city. Da Maia presented a series of plans in three stages. The initial stage presented to the Marquis on December 4, 1755, contained five different plans. The first plan involved rebuilding everything as it had been before. The second proposal would restore the buildings to their previous height while widening the roads. According to da Maia, had they followed the first plan, it would imply that "the last earthquake [was] not the sign of another," and both the first and second proposal "neglected" any anti-seismic design in favor of simple convenience.<sup>33</sup> The third and fourth proposals incorporated anti-seismic design and other safety measures: the third method would limit the building height to two stories while keeping the wider roads. The fourth proposed tearing everything down and starting anew. The building heights would still be restricted to two stories and would be prohibited from exceeding the height of the widened streets. The first, second, third, and fourth plans would utilize the debris to elevate, smoothen and level the ground, while the fifth method proposed leaving the ruins in favor of erecting a new city.<sup>34</sup> Da Maia argued that the fifth proposal was the easiest, as it was the most inexpensive method. Not only would it facilitate clearing the debris, but a new site also eliminated the need to adhere to the "restrictions of the old Lisbon" while giving property owners the freedom to rebuild as they pleased. This could also be interpreted as the military engineer wanting to avoid dealing with proprietors.

31 Smith, *Memoirs of the Marquis of Pombal*, 92-5.

32 Ibid., 96.

33 Manuel da Maia and José-Augusto França, "Manuel Da Maia – Dissertação (Dissertation) 4 December 1755 - 19 April 1756," in *Lisboa Pombalina e o Iluminismo* (Lisboa: Bertrand Editora, 1983), 1. [https://www.academia.edu/38305958/Manuel\\_da\\_Maia\\_Disserta%C3%A7%C3%A3o\\_Full\\_English\\_version\\_](https://www.academia.edu/38305958/Manuel_da_Maia_Disserta%C3%A7%C3%A3o_Full_English_version_).

34 Ibid., 3-5.

Da Maia detailed the advantages and disadvantages of each plan and stressed that certain factors had to be considered before making a decision. One such factor determined the location of the new royal palace, which once stood on the waterfront before collapsing during the earthquake. Although the time spent by the King in Belém influenced the decision to relocate the palace, fear was an equal factor in not rebuilding the *Paço da Ribera* on the waterfront.<sup>35</sup> The Lisbon Senate acted within reason and chose the fourth proposal.<sup>36</sup> This decision reflected a desire to avoid a similar disaster while continuing the commitment of the Marquis since November 1: restoring the feeling of security in the hearts and homes of the people of Lisbon. Da Maia proceeded to the second phase of planning. On February 16, 1756, he presented the second phase of the plan and outlined the issues and conditions faced in the reconstruction phase, including how proprietors would be compensated for any property loss.

A survey measuring properties in Lisbon was carried out at the time the second part was drafted. Da Maia acknowledged that a second phase of the survey that appraised the properties needed completion. The Marquis of Pombal prohibited any reconstruction until both survey phases were completed to ensure the plan was thoroughly measured. The third phase of the plan, presented on March 31, 1756, included plans created by military engineers Carlos Mardel and Eugenio dos Santos. Da Maia gave the lieutenant colonel and the captain the challenging task of drafting the plans for the new city while considering “the correspondence between the old and the modern in the situations that require a change from the old to the new.”<sup>37</sup>

The series of decrees that the Marquis imposed immediately after the quake, the chosen proposal, and resulting architecture formed a “structural code” that aimed to guarantee the safety of city dwellers<sup>38</sup>. The rectilinear city plan presented a new model of urban planning by straightening and widening the streets. The height of Pombaline buildings (already capped at three stories) could not exceed the width of the widened streets. The base structure met the anti-seismic standards by elevating and leveling the foundation with debris and stabilizing it with timber piles. Architects incorporated a timber-framed cage known as the *gaiola pombalina* into the wall’s frame to reduce the buildings’ weight and increase their flexibility.<sup>39</sup> They also designed firewalls that extended over the façade to reduce fire spread from one wall to the other.

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35 Walker, “Enlightened Absolutism”, 319.

36 Penn, Wild, and Mascarenhas, “The Pombaline Quarter of Lisbon”, 3-17.

37 Da Maia, “Dissertação”, 14.

38 Ricardo Daniel dos Santos Ferreira Nunes, “Constructive Characterization of Pombaline Buildings and Simplified Pushover Analysis of Frontal Walls” (Master’s Thesis, M.A: NOVA University Lisbon, 2017), 1-87. <http://hdl.handle.net/10362/23393>.

39 Ibid., 29-30.

A total reconstruction of the downtown district and rebuilding the more expansive city was underway. The adoption of prefabrication and mass production for some components was necessary to quickly execute the fourth plan and achieve the desired uniformity of the modular buildings. Specialized teams produced the wood, iron, and ceramic parts in workshops; then, they were assembled on site.<sup>40</sup> The Marquis of Pombal's modernization of downtown Lisbon also revealed the changing aspects of Portuguese culture and society. Before the earthquake, Dom José and the Marquis felt they had the potential to restore Portugal to its past glory; this disastrous event presented the opportunity to erect something even greater atop the ruins. The reconstruction was a manifestation of Enlightenment values: in an authoritative position, the Marquis of Pombal applied reason to enact progressive reform. According to Walker, the state asserted its power over the Catholic Church by reducing its role in society in favor of presenting an image of "secular state power or commercial enterprise" by harnessing architecture's function as a symbol of power.<sup>41</sup> The functions of *azulejo* transformed after the earthquake, just as the skyline depicted in del Barco's *Grand Panorama* had. Two late-eighteenth-century tilework trends—Pombaline tile and *Registos de Santos*—reflected new styles and existing traditions and revealed Portuguese attitudes amidst radical change.

### Azulejo Trends in the Pombaline Era

The uniformity of Pombaline architecture determined the employment of patterned tile cladding. A typical Pombaline building could not exceed four stories (permitted by the mandated incorporation of the *gaiola*). All openings on the façade (doors, French windows, and balconies) were level with each other. The ground floor, or arcade, was reserved for commercial spaces.<sup>42</sup> Pombaline tile was simply another extension of this "rational and programmatic" architecture applied to the interior walls and the exterior of Portuguese buildings as decorative cladding.<sup>43</sup> The simplistic yet dynamic style of tilework was a familiar display of *horror vacui*: its occupation of space and standardized design recalled its Arabic origins. These panels were composed of polychrome patterns that consisted of repetitive floral or geometric motifs.

The prefabrication and mass tile production in workshops like the *Réal Fábrica de Louça ao Rato* kept costs low. Founded by the Marquis of Pombal in

40 Penn, Wild, and Mascarenhas, "The Pombaline Quarter of Lisbon", 11.

41 Walker, "Enlightened Absolutism", 319.

42 Armando Maia Serôdio, *Inauguração da Exposição Comemorativa da Reconstrução de Lisboa depois do Terramoto de 1755 - Frontarias dos edifícios da Baixa*, 1955, Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa, PT/AMLSB/CMLSBAH/PCSP/004/SER/001032.

43 Berardo and Álvaro, *800 Anos*, 459.

1767 and active until 1835, this ceramic factory operated under the direction of Sebastião de Almeida and later Francisco de Paula e Oliveira and is one of the only surviving workshops from the period. This workshop, and others, also produced figurative *azulejo* panels depicting saints (*Registos de Santos*) in the latter half of the eighteenth century. The panels vary in size, shape, color (e.g., blue-and-white or polychromatic), and imagery. Despite this, certain saints and religious figures were more popular or appropriate than others.

Icons of St. Martial, protector against fires, St. Francis Borgia, protector against earthquakes, and St. Anthony, the patron saint of Lisbon, were popular. *Registos* containing this iconography predated the earthquake but rose to prominence during the late 18th century and throughout the 19th century. The popularity of votive scenes on building facades after the earthquake coincided with a shift from Rococo to Neoclassical style during the late 18th century. The Berardo Collection Museum in Lisbon houses a considerable number of these *registos*, many of which were produced during this period. Their collection is notably representative of the neoclassical art movement that had extended to *azulejo* by the 1780s. Most surviving panels, if not explicitly dated on the work by the artist, were produced approximately in the late 1700s to the early 1800s.<sup>44</sup> This collection and a series of photographs of the panels taken by Eduardo Macedo Portugal in different locations throughout the capital reveal the prevalence of pairing St. Anthony and St. Martial on late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century *registos*. For example, an 1807 panel credited to de Paula e Oliveira's workshop contains images of the Holy Family, St. Martial, and St. Anthony (Fig. One).<sup>45</sup> The eye is naturally drawn to the center roundel containing a scene of the Holy Family (The Virgin Mary, infant Jesus, and St. Joseph). In this instance, emphasis on the Marian image is achieved through a hierarchal scale; additionally, it is flanked by two smaller roundels containing the figures of St. Anthony of Padua (lower right) and St. Martial (lower left). The scene conveys purity and devotion through the rendering in cobalt blue on a white tin glaze. The three scenes are framed in a gold finial border along with plumes of palmette ornamentation, contrasting with the polychromatic background decorated with floral motifs. A similar *registro* can be found on a façade located in the Misericórdia district of Lisbon. Installed above the doorway at Travessa da Queimada 11, the building's façade is ornamented in blue, green, and yellow Pombaline tile with marble skirting, its geometrically patterned borders a stark contrast to the neoclassical scenes above the door.<sup>46</sup>

44 Ibid., 459-476.

45 Francisco de Paula e Oliveira, *Registos Sagrada Parenteral, São Marçal e Santo António*, 1807, majólica, 150 x 97.5 cm Berardo Museum.

46 Eduardo Macedo Portugal, *Registro de Santos votive à Sagrada Família, Santo António e São Marçal*, 1950. Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa. PT/AMLSB/POR/053526.



Figure 1. Photograph by Eduardo Macedo Portugal, *Registo de Santos votive à Sagrada Família, Santo António e São Marçal*, 1950. Courtesy of Câmara Municipal de Lisboa, Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa.  
PT/AMLSB/CMLSBAH/PCSP/004/EDP/000226)

Considering that many of the late 18th-century and 19th-century *registos* are compositions including St. Martial, St. Anthony, or St. Francis Borgia (often composed as saintly pairs in varied combinations) and the overall protective function of *registos*, these devotional panels functioned as cultural relics commemorating the earthquake and as spiritual safeguards for the people of Lisbon. As cultural relics, the images of St. Martial, St. Anthony, and St. Francis Borgia invoked the memory of the earthquake, tsunami, and fires that destroyed the city; the veneration of the saints recalled the very day the earthquake transpired. As spiritual safeguards, *registos* offered divine protection against natural disasters, which had been interpreted as divine punishment until that point. In *Wrath of God: The Great Lisbon Earthquake of 1755*, author Edward Paice describes the state of Roman Catholicism during the 18th century, writing:

The country was in a grip of what Portuguese Liberals of the next century would describe as an ‘almost cretinous form of Roman Catholicism.’ When the leading Methodist Reverend

George Whitefield visited Lisbon on his way to America in the spring of 1754 he was appalled by the sight of people 'beating their cheeks, and weeping heartily' at the 'Dumb Shews' during Lent; at the processions of barefoot penitents with chains fastened to their ankles carrying crosses on their backs; and at the spectacle of such ubiquitous self-flagellation...<sup>47</sup>

The *registos'* rise in popularity can be interpreted as a measure of religious congruence in the wake of natural disasters, namely the historical association of these events with God's fury. The earthquake profoundly impacted Christianity in Portugal and throughout Europe, affecting both Protestants and Catholics alike. For example, sermons delivered across England were filled with messages about the quake, imploring worshippers to see the disaster as a wake-up call to repent and turn their lives around. For these believers, God spoke through nature: the devastating earthquake was an admonishment to his children. Some Protestants believed that God had unleashed his wrath on Lisbon because it was rife with sin. Catholics in Lisbon had previously blamed groups like the New Christians for plagues and other natural disasters. In 1755, they sought to blame Protestants and other "heretics".<sup>48</sup> Believers looked to icons and allegorical depictions for religious instruction; the devotional panels functioned as hagiographies but also symbolized ideal qualities for a believer. Thus, the *registos* were a way for Lisboans to make intangible heritage—the historical characterization of natural disasters as an "Act of God" and their traditional forms of coping, healing, and learning from such events—tangible in the face of modernity.

### Conclusion

The Great Earthquake of 1755 was not Lisbon's first earthquake or natural disaster; the capital experienced a handful of damaging earthquakes and disastrous fires over the years. Had they followed the fifth plan and moved to a new location, it would have been regressive. Instead, the decision was made to erect a new city in the old location. The Marquis of Pombal's swift response ensured the safety of Lisbon's inhabitants. The city plan and anti-seismic architecture designed by his subordinates were founded in reason and science and embodied the values of the Enlightenment. However, despite these structural innovations and safeguards that were present in Pombaline architecture, the fact that many in Lisbon still found comfort in the *registos* years after the earthquake reflected the desires of a pious population who witnessed and experienced the Marquis of Pombal's sweeping reforms and

<sup>47</sup> Paice, *Wrath of God*, 23.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

sought refuge in their faith, whether independently of or supplementary to these changes. The devotional religious scenes panels brought ease to Lisbonites in familiar and traditional ways, thus dissimilar from the shelter of their new buildings. While the former refuge shielded against the acts of a vengeful God, the latter was a defense against future disasters—constructed using seismological research.

In other words, *azulejo* panels of St. Martial, St. Francis, St. Anthony, and others offered protection and reassurance that firewalls, a Pombaline cage, or a rectilinear city plan could not. Placed over the doors or in-between the windows of facades, these two-dimensional figures stood watch, just as those armed guards had in those initial days after the disaster. The continued popularity of the *Registos de Santos* throughout the 19th century was consistent with the years that followed the King's death in 1777, the beginning of the Marquis of Pombal's downfall. Soon after Queen Maria I ascended to the throne, she relieved the Marquis of his duties. Her subsequent actions included the rebuilding of many Catholic churches and the backlash to Carvalho e Melo's identity as an *estrangeirado* which dictated his controversial secular reforms, including the suppression and expulsion of the Jesuits and his overall clash with the Catholic Church.<sup>49</sup> Similar to Gabriel del Barco's 1700 panorama recorded Portuguese history and culture before the turning point that was the Great Earthquake of 1755, two significant eighteenth-century *azulejo* trends—Pombaline tile and *Registos de Santos*—recorded modern and traditional responses to natural disasters.

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49 Walker, "Enlightened Absolutism", 320-1.



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