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Colonialism and History

Given the delayed end of Portuguese colonialism, the strong ideologization of the colonial issue in the face of the international community's rejection and the urgency of the Portuguese expansion and its identification as the pillar of the nation, it is possible to understand the difficulties in organising a scientific and historiographical discourse free of colonial ideology, which remained deaf to the recovery of the autonomous voice of the Other, rejecting their history or dissolving it in the history of the Portuguese discoveries and expansion. Dismantling the articulation between ideology and the scientific productions of a long colonial rule is an important step towards a renewal of knowledge regarding the colonised societies rebuilt with independence, as well as an indispensable condition to ensure a change in the writing of Portuguese history.

Colonial ideology and knowledge

Colonial ideology and domination

In the mid-twentieth century, while Europe negotiated African and Asian independences, Portugal reinforced the obstinate character of its colonialism, supported by an ideological construction that ensured national cohesion, guaranteed the colonists' tranquillity and guided the production of knowledge. While at the domestic level, political leaders resorted to the diffuse racism that characterised the relations of the Portuguese with the colonised countries, at the international level, they mobilised the 'historical rights' and singularity of their colonialism to reject the changes of history. Organised around three groups of myths which, although in tune with European colonial ideologies, presented autonomous formulations, the Portuguese colonial ideological system acquired a unique theoretical density, the strength of which can be measured by its duration and capacity to resist the disappearance of colonial domination itself. These three groups of myths, conceived in three dimensions - *anthropological* (the racial and cultural superiority of the white man and his corollary "civilising mission"), *historical* (the founding role of the Portuguese discoveries in knowledge and the secular continuity of Portugal's presence in the world) and *sociological* (Gilberto Freyre's Lusotropicalism, proving the harmonious relations always established by the Portuguese with other peoples, the virtues of "assimilation" and evidence of the absence of national racism), firmly established the scientific and historical



legitimacy of the Portuguese colonial options.

For a long century, stretching from the late 19th century to the last quarter of the 20th century, profound political changes, doctrinal and philosophical complexities, national and international conflicts, violent political, social and professional divergences of relevant national figures coexisted alongside this mythology, not diminishing but rather reinforcing the country's theoretical and ideological unity around Portuguese colonial values and plans.

Many different personalities participated in this multifaceted ideological construction. From Oliveira Martins, author of a vigorous reflection on Portuguese nation-building, a member of the Paris Institute of Anthropology and undoubtedly the most brilliant representative of Social Darwinism in Portugal, to the republicans Norton de Mattos and Ferreira Diniz, even to the workers and agents of the *Estado Novo* [New State], such as Armindo Monteiro, Salazar, Adriano Moreira and those who opposed the dictatorship such as Henrique Galvão and Cunha Leal. Many individuals contributed with their specific skills to consolidate the negativity of the colonised and the civilising force of the coloniser, proceeding to frame the production of knowledge. "The so-called "civilised natives" (...) as all the colonialist sociologists have acknowledged, are nothing more (...) than grotesque caricatures of white men."

With rare exceptions (...), the "civilised native" retains the mentality of the primitive, barely concealed by the wording, gestures and clothing, copied from the European", stated Vicente Ferreira ("Alguns aspectos da política indígena de Angola" ["Some aspects of the indigenous policy of Angola"], 1946, 220), a former governor of Angola, expressing the collective Portuguese appraisal of the Africans, which was based on the conviction of a cultural difference reinforced by a unique genetic heritage that not even the status of assimilated could change.

But in the mid-20th century and the 1960s, marked by the colonial war, the need to modernise the 'civilising effort', a formula dear to Salazar, translated into the strengthening of white colonisation and the recourse to Freyre's Lusotropicalism to justify the uniqueness of Portuguese colonialism. This situation led to the celebration of a great and united nation "from Minho to Timor", a phrase that became commonplace from 1961 onwards; while Salazar stressed that Portugal was a "nation spread across the world" (1963), without racial prejudice in its colonial and civilisational practices, Franco Nogueira, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, stated in a speech intended both for external consumption and to calm domestic tensions resulting from the colonial war and the country's economic and political situation " we, and we alone, brought to Africa the notion of human rights and racial equality before anyone else; and we, and we alone practise multiracialism, regarded by all as the most perfect and boldest expression of human fraternity and sociological progress. " (*The Third World*, 1967, 197-198).

The ideologization of knowledge

The history of the Portuguese presence overseas was constantly called upon to create a type of



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knowledge that would account for the existence of the peoples, who - in the name of colonial realism - needed to be kept under tutelage, becoming the producers of economies run by the Portuguese, 'incapable' of working in climatic conditions as particular as those of the tropics. Racism thus acquired a climatic tinge: the superiority of the white man became visible, and could even be measured, due to his physical fragility that contrasted with his intellectual vigour. Only the "savages," that is, the men characterised by a rusticity that put them on the same level as animals, could endure such relentless nature.

This discourse, reinforced by the 19th century theoretical framework of Paul Broca, entirely dominated by measurable values of the somatic structure, from the bones to the thickness of hair, found a staunch defender in Oliveira Martins: "documents abound showing us that the black man is an anthropologically inferior type, not infrequently close to the anthropoid, and hardly worthy of being called a man", and he added that "if there is no relationship between the anatomy of the skull and intellectual and moral capacity, why should the philanthropy of the black man stop? Why shouldn't the gorilla or the orangutan be taught the Bible, for although they do not speak they still have ears, and will understand almost as much as the negro the metaphysics of the incarnation of the Word and the dogma of the Trinity? (*Portugal em África* [Portugal in Africa...] [1891], 1953, 261-263).

Resorting to physical anthropology thus restricted the effective scope of the gaze cast on the Other. Reduced to the condition of a great ape, the African was expelled from human value considerations. His life was thus drained of historical marks, the "savage" of today's colonial era being the exact reproduction of the "savage" of time immemorial. How could anyone believe in the possibility of organising any scientific explanation, since the continent, which did not know writing - except on its northern shore from where the great Egypt had already been 'removed' to integrate the space of universal history - appeared to be populated by an extreme savagery that encompassed men, animals, and nature?

To accomplish the task of knowledge production, the frontier separating the "savages" from the "civilised" needed to have a scientific basis that only experts in physical anthropology could provide. Oliveira Martins' proposals became the anthropological creed of Portuguese intelligentsia, which unleashed a systematic reflection drawing attention to the urgent need to promote the study, teaching and knowledge of the colonies capable of introducing rationality into politics and safeguarding national interests in Africa, the space that gave consistency and dimension to the Portuguese empire. Against this backdrop, the *Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa* [Lisbon Geographical Society] (SGL) was founded in late 1875 to undertake this task. Jaime Batalha Reis, Andrade Corvo and Luciano Cordeiro were the core structure of the SGL, Cordeiro having proposed the establishment of the *Escola Colonial* [Colonial School] in Lisbon as it was called in 1906, aimed at training specialised senior staff to ensure a rational administration of the colonies.

Colonial higher education, based on similar projects in European colonial schools, comprehended subjects such as History of Colonisation, Colonial Geography, Medical Geography, Physical Anthropology, Ethnography, Law, Political Economy, Colonial Administration, Agricultural Chemistry, Overseas Agricultural



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and Forest Botany, as well as some languages of the overseas territories. But this project was overestimated, since it did not meet any of the needs of the national community and, even less of the colonisation agents, supported by illiterate colonists, settled in the field, entirely dependent on a provincial pragmatism, and unable to understand the emergence of a 'scientific colonialism' which, according to the words of Jaime Batalha Reis, needed to be "understood" to "be of effective use" (*Estudos Geográficos e Históricos* [Geographical and Historical Studies], 1941, 401-402).

Understanding the need to become familiar with the colonised populations in order to better dominate them, in other words, transforming anthropological knowledge into one of the central pillars of colonisation, was a task to be developed in the First Republic. In this context, in addition to important institutions, such as the *Agência Geral do Ultramar* [General Agency for Overseas Territories] (AGU), in 1924, directed in the early years by Armando Cortesão, two leading figures emerged in the attempt to shift the colonial paradigm, whether by actions, texts, or a new vision of the populations: Norton de Mattos and Ferreira Diniz. However, they were not endorsed by the scientific community and much less by the administrative leaders of the colonies, mainly concerned with the creation of conditions for the development of a white colonisation, as would be revealed by the studies presented at the *Congresso de Medicina Tropical da África Ocidental* [Congress on Tropical Medicine in West Africa], organised in 1923.

The rejection of a colonial project guided for and by knowledge was to hinder any attempt to organise a Portuguese scientific discourse, and was reinforced within the framework of the Portuguese political changes defined from 1926 onwards: scientific research, study, higher education and knowledge production related to the colonial issue fell definitively under the control of the State, as did the organisation of events of a recreational-formative nature such as Exhibitions, or of a scientific nature such as Congresses and research missions.

In 1934, both the *Exposição Colonial do Porto* [Oporto Colonial Exhibition] and the *1º Congresso Nacional de Antropologia Colonial* [1st National Colonial Anthropology Congress] were, above all, sites for the dissemination of the colonial ideology that guided the fabrication of 'scientific' knowledge, centred around enhancing the Portuguese race and civilising action, which was reinforced by research in the field of physical anthropology (Mendes Corrêa, *As Raças do Império* [The Races of the Empire], 1943).

The efficient work of the colonial ideology led to the establishment of colonial matters as 'specialties' exclusive to the men who were part of and trained by specific institutions, managed by political leaders. The *Escola Colonial*, called the *Escola Superior Colonial* [Colonial Higher School] (ESC) in 1927, transformed in 1954-55 into the *Instituto Superior de Estudos Ultramarinos* [Higher Institute of Overseas Studies], witnessed changes to its programmes according to the development of the colonial policy, which also guided the establishment of the *Junta das Missões Geográficas e das Investigações Coloniais* [Board of Geographical Missions and Colonial Research] in 1936, restructured in 1943 (and again in 1973), with the aim of giving "scientific research in the colonies (...) a new boost [contributing] to the progress of the colonisation technique



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and policy" (*Da Comissão de Cartografia* [Of the Cartography Committee]..., 1983).

The most substantial part of the studies devoted to overseas featured in publications directed by state bodies, such as the *Boletim* [Bulletin] of the AGU or the journal *Estudos Coloniais* [Colonial Studies] of the ESC, which sought to establish the relationship between scientific knowledge and colonial management. This did not prevent other (authorised) publications that performed an effective service to the colonial state. Such was the case of the work *Antropófagos* [Anthropophagi] (1947), where Henrique Galvão revealed the congenital savagery of the Africans. The idea of the "anthropophagous negro", trivialised without limits through the most varied means of dissemination of the image and writing, aimed at children, adolescents and adults, became a structural element of the Portuguese imaginary.

But the state seemed to have renounced a portion of its monopoly over colonial knowledge, authorising some degree of autonomy in 'neutral' spaces such as geography, biology, botany, zoology, in other words, in the fields of knowledge that appeared to escape the burden of ideology. This situation, coupled with the international context generated by the end of World War II (1945), the Bandung Conference (1955) and the condemnation of colonialism, fostered a reflection on the 'endemic' fragility of Portuguese scientific research, focusing on geography, in the wake of the scientific importance of Orlando Ribeiro.

Between 1950 and 1974, Portuguese studies displayed a strong dependence on the theoretical crutch of "assimilation", while never ceasing to be impregnated by the theories of Lusotropicalism, to which the state, society and intellectuals adhered almost blindly. "Several Portuguese scientists (...) have (...) been refocusing their research on different specialties around the relations of the Lusitanian people with the tropics, under the Luso-tropical criterion", claimed Gilberto Freyre in the work entitled *O Luso e o Trópico* [The Lusitanian and the Tropics] (1961, 2), published after the *Congresso Internacional de História dos Descobrimentos* [International Congress of History of the Discoveries], citing the names of Almerindo Lessa in medicine, Marcelo Caetano and Adriano Moreira in law and power management, and not forgetting two major names in Portuguese science: the geographer Orlando Ribeiro, who underlined how colonial scientific research "can and should also serve practical purposes; the better the knowledge one has of a region's Natural History, the firmer the delineation of its economic development will be" (*Problemas da Investigação Científica Colonial* [Problems of Colonial Scientific Research], 1950, 11), and the anthropologist Jorge Dias, summoned to direct the *Missão de Estudos das Minorias Étnicas do Ultramar Português* [Mission for the Studies of Ethnic Minorities of the Portuguese Overseas Territories], who stated, in 1956, that "the so-called Portuguese overseas expansion is (...) highly transcendent for the history of humanity.

Portuguese actions cannot be confused with the colonising movements of the capitalist nations, which established a type of human relation based on racial differentiation" (*Ensaios Etnológicos* [Ethnological Essays], 1961, 153). Jorge Dias came to realise not the rigour of the theory but the truths that resulted from his fieldwork, highlighting in a confidential document [1957] that "contrary to what people think, and what I also thought, negroes, today (...) fear us, many detest us, and when they compare us with other white men it is



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always in a way that is unfavourable to us", adding that the Portuguese "have got so used to considering themselves superior beings that they do not notice anything (...) nor do they show the slightest gesture of courtesy when speaking with educated or assimilated negroes (...). Thus, an unnecessary abyss (...) is being created between negroes and whites, which seems contrary to the superior directives established by those in charge" (Pereira, "Antropologia aplicada na política colonial portuguesa do Estado Novo" ["Applied anthropology in the Portuguese colonial policy of the Estado Novo"], 1986, 223-225).

While studies on the Others advanced during the final period of the dictatorship, they continued to highlight the interferences of colonialism. The African 'experts' were unable or unwilling to modify the ingrained reductive perspective, in particular of the African populations, and comfortably shared by the Portuguese settled in the colonies and by a metropolitan population nurtured by the colonial ideology, thus manifesting a solid national unity, which reduced the importance of conflicts between the 'supporters of the regime' and the 'opposition', and opened no significant gap for the scientific knowledge of the Other.

Portuguese historiography and the history of colonised peoples

Limitations of the historiography of the Portuguese discoveries and expansion

Portuguese historiography prior to 1974 was characterised by the constant refusal to consider the historical autonomy of the colonised, who remained a peripheral object of a national history tied to colonial mythology and to the praise of the mission to "civilise" the Others. Centred around the study of the discoveries and overseas expansion, most Portuguese historians, despite their apologia of the value of impartiality in the writing of history, remained tuned to the demands of political indoctrination in the 19th century and in the First Republic, reinforced by the harshness of colonialism and the censorship of the Estado Novo. The relationship between historiography and ideology at the service of the colonial project was characterised by harmony between the supporters and opponents of the regime in the task of historically and culturally devaluing the dominated peoples.

It was thus against the historiographical backdrop of the Portuguese discoveries and expansion, timidly extended to the colonial empire, censored and prohibited by the political-ideological directives, that the emergence of the Other came to be, and it is essential to underline the differentiation and hierarchisation of the Portuguese readings - in the wake of their European counterparts - between the African and the Asian, to mention only those who constituted the colonised of the Portuguese empire in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

This situation, which cannot be concealed, highlights the need to geographically and culturally autonomise studies on colonial domination to understand the structuring lines of colonialism, its forms of action and the consolidation of the theoretical and methodological hierarchies which characterised the fabrication of Portuguese overseas historiography.



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While the last decades of the 19th century were marked by innovations in the writing of the history of Portugal, mirroring the interference of the main European lines of thought in the readings of historians such as Alexandre Herculano, Teófilo Braga, and Oliveira Martins, it was in the 20th century that the historiography of the Portuguese discoveries and expansion took root, by means of research and the publication of texts aimed at glorifying the colonial project.

Jaime Cortesão, whose republican ideals would cost him his exile, dealt with the chapter on Portuguese expansion in Damião Peres' *História de Portugal* (1928-1954) [History of Portugal (1928-1954)], including the integration of mestizos in the colonial administration structures as one of the causes of the decadence of the Empire of the East. The *História da Expansão Portuguesa no Mundo* [History of Portuguese Expansion in the World] (1937), directed by António Baião, Hernâni Cidade and Manuel Múrias, was also written by Duarte Leite and Veiga Simão. It was only after the Second World War that the divisions became more pronounced, with the adherence of intellectuals and historians to an official discourse, re-elaborated within the framework of the Lusotropical theories which were beginning to arouse national political interest.

Rare historians, such as António Sérgio and Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, aspired to understanding the national and imperial past in the light of a universal and comparative history capable of questioning the rhetoric of the glorification of the conquests (Curto, "A memória dos descobrimentos, da expansão e do império colonial" ["The memory of the discoveries, expansion and colonial empire"], 2009). "For decades (...) authentic overseas history was developed mainly on the fringes of official institutions and achievements, and was even restricted by them", as "the myth of a people (...) that had never been tainted by greed and cruelty prevailed; awkward documents were kept hidden" and "the Exposição do Mundo Português [Exhibition of the Portuguese World] was organised in 1940 and the Comemorações Henriquinas [Prince Henry the Navigator Commemorations] in 1960 [that] did little to enhance the progress of historical research and the innovative visions of these processes that were so crucial to the formation of the world (...). The economic, social and cultural processes of the oceanic expansion were hidden. History as the search for truth was of no interest, it was reduced to a rhetoric of commemoration and justification of imperial 'greatness'" (Godinho, *Mito e mercadoria* [Myth and merchandise...], 1990, 13-14).

Godinho had worked since the 1940s towards the renewal of the historiography of the Portuguese expansion - through the publication of documentation, the critique of sources and a theoretical and methodological reflection conceived in the light of contemporary European historiography (Annales) -, and he gave it an international dimension marked by a comparative perspective and its constant integration into the issue of the construction of the modern world, while highlighting the political and ideological use of history at the service of the Estado Novo.

The years 1959 to 1962 marked the end of a period of great publications such as *História dos Descobrimientos* [History of the Discoveries] by Duarte Leite, *Os Descobrimientos Portugueses* [Portuguese Discoveries] by Jaime Cortesão, and also, in the field of cartography, the *Portugaliae Monumenta*



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Cartographica, which paved the way for new studies. Three less ambitious and shorter innovative works emerged, revealing new thematic and methodological perspectives: *Aspectos e Problemas da Expansão Portuguesa* [Aspects and Problems of the Portuguese Expansion], by Orlando Ribeiro, *Introdução à História dos Descobrimentos* [Introduction to the History of the Discoveries], by Luís de Albuquerque and the censored *Economia dos Descobrimentos Henriquinos* [Economy of the Discoveries under Prince Henry the Navigator], by Vitorino Magalhães Godinho.

But a key fact is particularly noteworthy: the issue of the autonomous organisation of the history of the Others has never been a real concern of Portuguese historians, even if Godinho's universalist perspective sought to pave the way for "a new way of looking at the world (...) [for the recognition of] the unity of men in the diversity of their societies and civilisations" (*Mito e mercadorias...*, 1990, 55). And as early as 1947, Godinho claimed that "European-centrism, which has dominated historical construction, must be banished so that authentic universal history is possible. The study of Morocco, the Canaries, the Sahara, Guinea, Angola, India, China, etc., is important for the knowledge of different structures to those of Europe and of equally diverse lines of transformation" (*História económica e social da expansão portuguesa* [Economic and social history of the Portuguese expansion]. 10).

However, it is worth mentioning three Portuguese intellectuals who came from different backgrounds, but whose studies gave rise to new research directions: Ilídio do Amaral and his studies that intertwined the geography and history of colonised spaces, António Carreira who worked on the much manipulated question of the slavery of Africans and Avelino Teixeira da Mota, who, to a certain extent, inaugurated a more autonomous interpretation of the history of the African peoples of Guinea, which he had visited in the 1950s, along with Raymond Mauny, the French historian who, having held a position in the colonial senior staff, went on to revise the colonial historiographical perspectives, much like other Europeans, to value oral sources, take an interest in the history of African peoples, and integrate it into French university teaching.

The end of the European colonial epic allowed for a conceptual and methodological revision, which reflected the growing intellectual awareness of the indispensability of interdisciplinary work, contributing to a 'decolonisation' of knowledge and the autonomous development of the historiographies of the former colonised peoples. Foreign historians, such as the two Englishmen Charles Boxer and David Birmingham, the American Joseph Miller, the Belgian Jan Vansina and the French René Pélissier, who worked on the historical issues of the Portuguese colonisation, met with little response in Portugal, and were censored most of the time. It is a fact that Boxer's work was initially fairly well received by the official entities of the Estado Novo (he was the British representative at the opening of the Congresso Internacional de História dos Descobrimentos in 1960, an academic at the Academia Portuguesa de História [Portuguese Academy of History], and an honorary doctorate by the Universidade de Lisboa [University of Lisbon] in 1953). But a divergence soon emerged after the publication of his book *Race Relations...* (1963).

Despite a few uncomfortable voices and rare publications denouncing the manipulation of colonial



history- such as nuances in the *Dicionário da História de Portugal* [Dictionary of the History of Portugal] directed by Joel Serrão (1963-1971) and the contributions of Portuguese intellectuals in exile such as Barradas de Carvalho, António José Saraiva, Luís de Matos and above all Alfredo Margarido - Portuguese historiography remained blind to worldwide epistemological changes.

Entangled in the web of the Estado Novo's ideological and political legitimations, the Portuguese writing of history limited itself to rejecting the exclusiveness of the religious justification for colonisation, acknowledging the importance of the economic factor in the relations between the Portuguese and Africans, but continuing to reject the ideological support of racism (Oliveira Marques, *História de Portugal* [1972], 1986, II, 532).

The history of «Portuguese Africa» or the rejection of African historical autonomy

While the international historiography of the 1960s established lines of reflection and analyses capable of rigorously defining the historical dynamics of dominated societies, Portuguese historiography translated itself into the writing and dissemination of unproblematic histories, the sole objective of which was to reassure the choices of the powers that be, rejecting uncomfortable texts, authors and facts: both Marcelo Caetano (1951) and Silva Rego (1956-1957) centred their concerns around the idea of the "continuity" of Portuguese colonisation, characterised by a "colonial vocation", which had remained unshakeable throughout five centuries of a riftless history, marked by relations with other peoples. In the twentieth century colonial framework, these were now the Africans, who guaranteed the true dimension of Portuguese imperial exceptionality, "Africa [being] the only one of the colonisable continents where Portugal as a sovereign nation [held] (...) important interests as well as (...) promises of future prosperity" (Batalha Reis, *Estudos Geográficos e Históricos* [Geographical and Historical Studies], 1941, 87).

The racial inferiority of the Africans, their quasi-animalisation, so scientifically proven by 19th century science and also by the "well-known (...) horror of the negro for work" (Silva Rego, *História da Colonização Moderna* [History of Modern Colonisation], 1956-1957, 203), allowed the history of Africa to be concealed, stripped of any form of intellectuality, as Hegel, Silva Cunha's direct or indirect master, and so many other strongmen of the Salazar regime, had already done. Historical knowledge relating to Africa thus became a segment of Portuguese history, with Africans being used only to assert the courage or intelligence of the Portuguese.

While the concept of a "Portuguese Africa" guided the organisation of national historiography, concentrating the various African realities in a single, homogenous space, centred around the Portuguese, for the sake of the colonising operability, it was often obliged to break this historical-spatial unity and to produce monographic studies.

The historical effort was not meant to serve history but to free the elements that could prove Portuguese rights concerning the domination of African territories and men. It was not a question of defining the knowledge of the past, but of giving an account of the ways of doing and speaking required for the



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implementation of the Portuguese colonial project, organising time and discourse, proposing historical periodisations, selecting events, choosing themes, considering only the most significant national or international problems of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, even though twentieth century realities were absent in the writing of the historians.

As part of the general mythical framework, four 'historical truths', which were hardly original, served "in continuity" to organise the writing of the history of "Portuguese Africa", which consigned Africans to a space of silence without history, only broken by the civilising impact of Portuguese actions (Rego, *O Ultramar Português no Século XIX* [Portuguese Overseas Territories in the 19th Century], 1969, VII-VIII).

The first 'historical truth' was naturally that of the "pioneering role" of the Portuguese in the abolition of the slave trade and slavery, leading to the end of an archaic exploitation of the wealth and the enhancement of African territories. Two lines of reasoning dominated the writing to, firstly, exonerate the Portuguese of this crime which they had not committed, as they were not the inventors of the trade in "human ebony", since this responsibility fell to the Africans themselves who supplied the "merchandise" (Cunha Leal, *O Colonialismo dos Anticolonialistas* [The Colonialism of the Anticolonialists], 1961, 65-66); secondly, to show the Portuguese position, centred around the "heroic figure" of Sá da Bandeira, in the front line of changes on a world scale (Rego, *Idem*, 62). It was no longer a question of the discoveries, but of returning to the Portuguese the pioneering role in the abolition of slavery "which we began to abolish when it was still being defended by England through the voice of its parliamentarians and statesmen" (Cordeiro, *Questões Coloniais* [Colonial Issues], 1934, 15).

The second and third 'historical truths' recovered the myth of the "multi-secular presence" in Africa, of the vested rights and non-legitimacy of the European claims over historically Portuguese territories, associated with the Portuguese "colonial vocation". Thus, the writing of colonial history focused on an African stage marked by multiple conflicts between the Portuguese and the other European powers, which after the Berlin Conference (1884-85) culminated in the English Ultimatum of 1890, an unacceptable blow to Portuguese "sovereignty". The Portuguese historiographical strategy used a panoply of historical facts to underline not only the long duration of Portuguese settlement and its consequent "historical rights", but also to introduce the Portuguese "civilising mission" and "colonial vocation".

While the voyages along the African coast and the land expeditions highlighted the scientific interests and the Portuguese priority in occupying positions to ensure control of the regions and develop a policy of influence with the African chiefs, the establishment of important white population nuclei replaced the "savages" and strengthened Portuguese sovereignty in the African territories to transform them into authentic sites of "national territory" (Rego, *Idem*, 1969, 7). The two 'historical truths' worked at a domestic level to awaken the national sentiment regarding Africa against the European usurper, while establishing the idea of Portugalisation based on a humanistic and original "colonial vocation". Time and the unique nature of the Portuguese became the pillar of the historical reason for colonial domination.



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The fourth 'historical truth' emphasised the "hegemony" of the Portuguese in their relations with Africans, the latter dispossessed of their ancestral lands, since it was the legitimate colonial state that ensured the organisation and management of space. The idea of "hegemony" functioned at two levels: on the one hand, towards the other European colonisers, to account for "total Portuguese hegemony in tropical Africa", the result of "the great Historical Mission which Portugal has to fulfill" (Norton de Mattos, *Memórias e Trabalhos da minha vida* [Memories and Works of my life], III, 1944, 364), and on the other, to underline the indisputable and indispensable Portuguese direction and control in the relations established with the Africans.

This ideological certainty characterised Portugal's political choices during the war operations which marked the late 19th century and continued into the 20th century. Presented as indispensable to the enhancement of the territories, which simultaneously fostered and justified the creation of conditions necessary for the "civilising mission", wars were the last resort of the "Portuguese [who] only waged them on the Africans when they were driven to do so by their [the Africans'] advances or when war became indispensable to extract the concessions they obstinately refused and that we absolutely lacked, such as that of transit through their domains, the exploitation of mines and others" (Botelho, *Diferenças essenciais na génese de Angola e Moçambique. ...*, [Essential differences in the genesis of Angola and Mozambique...] 1938, 9-10).

In this mythology, the colonial wars were thus the unavoidable confirmation of the savagery of the Africans, who were faced by the Portuguese heroes with "serenity, haughtiness and confidence" (Lavradio, 1936, in Alexandre, *Origens do colonialismo português...*[Origins of Portuguese colonialism...], 1979, 10) revealing "the immortal work of [Portugal's]colonising genius" (Galvão, "O passado e o presente da colónia (de Angola)" ["The past and present of the colony (of Angola)"], *Boletim Geral das Colónias* [General Bulletin of the Colonies], s.l. [no location provided], no. 126, 1935, 7).

These four 'historical truths' intervened in a constant and structuring manner in the construction of the historiographical discourse. The fourth best explained Portuguese choices, since it contained the most significant elements of the Portuguese vision and sought to apprehend the norms underlying the management of the relational fabric and to define the extent of the relations between the Portuguese and the Africans. While the theories of Lusotropicalism came to play a fundamental role in the theoretical justification of the Portuguese colonial vocation in the mid-twentieth century, the idea of historical continuity was rebuilt around the impossibility of a history with rifts, since it resulted from this vocation of the Portuguese people, in other words, from a national sentiment which escaped the domain of historical contingency (Caetano, *Tradições, Princípios e Métodos...* [Traditions, Principles and Methods...], 1951, 26; Leal, *O Colonialismo dos Anticolonialistas*, 1961, 42-43).

Falsifying history: The example of Angola

The historiography of Angola, the colony that represented the most 'Lusitanian' model of the Portuguese empire, could only follow the perspectives defined in the historiographical framework established for 'Portuguese Africa'. None of the elements of civilisational affirmation - states, socioeconomic systems,



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religious forms, borders and spatial planning, relational strategies, cultural dynamics - could be African; therefore, only the settlement of the Portuguese allowed access to history, to knowledge, to the values of civilisation, to the manifestations of progress.

The organisation of Angolan history, written almost exclusively by professional or amateur Portuguese historians, could not be separated from the ideological framework of Portuguese historiography, seeking to prove the existence of an unquestionable Portuguese hegemony, which provided the main axis of the reading of Angolan facts. This history was thus marked by the concealment of Angolans, guiding itself through an inventory of preferential themes, containing facts, regions, and populations according to the 'historical truths' that justified the 'Portugalisation' of Angola.

However, while most authors respected the socio-historical conditions of a colonial Portugal, the writing of Angolan history could not constitute a homogeneous fabric. Three types of historical writings may be identified: the first, totally Lusocentric and dependent on colonial mythology; a second type that, while respecting Lusophone values, sought to 'see' the reality, resorting to archives to organise the historical narrative; and finally, a third, very reduced type, that sought to account for an 'Africanised' Angolan history.

The first type brought together the histories of Angola at the service of Portuguese colonialism. More precisely, this reading of history had two more apparent than real tendencies: the first conceived Angolan history as a kind of limited inclusion in the histories of Portugal and Portuguese expansion, while the Angolans were absent or reduced to the role of minor or exotic appendages to Portuguese operations. The second granted an apparent autonomy to Angolan history, as long as it remained within the framework of the undisputed Portuguese hegemony.

In both António Baião and the group he engaged to undertake the *História da Expansão Portuguesa no Mundo* [History of Portuguese Expansion in the World] (1937-1940) and Father Silva Rego, who could not detach himself from his missionary vision, minimising the violence of slavery before the superior quality of redemptive baptism, the same colonial rhetoric is found, unwavering and unshaken in the face of the world changes recorded in the organisation of African history from the 1950s onwards.

In the extensive history directed by António Baião, which recorded the exaltation of the 'former' presence of the Portuguese in the Angolan region, resorting to heroes such as Paulo Dias de Novais and Salvador Correia de Sá, followed by the governors and their accomplishments, the history of 19th and early 20th century Angola, limited by censorship but also by the concept of history, did not emerge in an autonomous manner. It was, on the contrary, integrated into the thematic chapters devoted to overseas issues (abolition of the slave trade, the Berlin Conference, the European conflicts, scientific explorations, wars of conquest, confrontations with 'savage' populations, white colonisation), which summed up well the Portuguese ghosts and ideological directives.

Father Silva Rego's orientation also complied with this reading of history. The themes, problems, events and heroes were practically the same. But Rego tried to organise a theory capable of explaining both



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Portuguese sovereignty in Angola and Portuguese-African relations, classifying the Angolan system as a "Luso-African feudal regime".

In Silva Rego's view, the decisions arising from the Berlin Conference had disrupted Portuguese sovereignty, bringing negative changes to the relations maintained by this "sovereign country", thanks to the "vassalage treaties" with African chiefs. As a result, conflicts were fuelled between the "sobas [African chiefs], deeply divided among themselves as a result of tribal rivalries", turning them against the Portuguese authority, "the only cement that was slowly working on Angolan unity", establishing "order and discipline" and "civilisation and progress" in Angola (*O Ultramar.* , 1969,XX,247-250).

Ralph Delgado's *História de Angola* [History of Angola] (1948) cannot be ignored given its importance in Portuguese historiography devoted to Angola. Written in Benguela as a triumphalist monument to celebrate the values of the three-hundredth anniversary of the colony's restoration, this work focuses on Angolan defeats to Portuguese military genius. Delgado dedicates it to his father, the first administrator of Bié, whose nationalist sentiment he could only extol (1948, I, "Dedicatória" ["Dedication"]). The ideological lesson is clear: only by associating in a double movement the familiar and the [Portuguese] national - Angolan values were only a minor variable in this situation - could a past be made known to justify the future.

As expected, Ralph Delgado proposed a Lusocentric historical periodisation, beginning in 1472, with the "discovery", then developing around the slave trade, "the Luso-Flemish conquest and condominium", the economic relations with Brazil, characterised between 1836 and 1918 by the "abolition of slavery, the definitive occupation of the territory and the commencement of the exploitation of wealth sources"; the last period (open-ended) "from 1918 to ? " was concerned with the study of "economic and administrative expansion, social transformation and the path towards the creation of a large-scale Portuguese state" (p. II). The vision of the white history of a white Angola relegated the Africans to a historical non-space, confirmed by the prejudiced reading of the social, political, and religious dynamics of one of the most organised Angolan national structures before the appearance of the Portuguese: the Kongo kingdom, which he refers to as "a country of blacks without baptism, (...) with all the signs of a tribal organisation", evidencing an embedded "savagery" in the *longue durée*. On the other hand, the positive values were all embodied by the Portuguese "bearers of an urban civilisation and thrown abruptly into this primitive society [which] they wish to transform", imposing progress and civilising change (1948, II-III).

The second type of writing, which acknowledged a place for Africans in certain situations and contexts, was marked by the weight of Lusotropicalism. The Other had become indispensable for mestizaje, without which Portuguese colonial history could not have the same density. The *História de Angola* [History of Angola] (1929) by Alberto de Lemos, an official who held important posts in Luanda's administrative hierarchy and who organised the *Arquivo Histórico de Luanda* [Historical Archive of Luanda] (1937), embodied a Lusocentric vision, the Lusotropicalist version, revealing an articulation between the legitimate historical foundations of the "colonial cause which is still today its [Portugal's] main justification" and the duty to "populate and civilise its



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extremely extensive possessions, collaborating in the progress of humanity in general", whereby colonisation became "the fundamental function of our nationality" (Lemos, 1929, 61).

Organised around characteristic events of Portuguese life in Angola, and using analogy to remain completely loyal to Portuguese history (the Battle of Ambuíla is the 'Aljubarrota of Angola'), Lemos engaged *mestizaje*, a practice in his own family life, to record an indisputable historical certainty: the preponderant role of great urban mestizo families in the formation and consolidation of a Portuguese Angola (Lemos, *Nótuas Históricas* [Historical Notes], 1969, 240).

Norberto Gonzaga's *História de Angola* [History of Angola], published in 1963 to underline the decisive role assumed by Portugal in Angolan history, identified a 'pre-colonial period' prior to the arrival of the Portuguese, emphasising the existence of the Kongo kingdom and events centred around African figures such as Queen Njinga, in order to highlight the heroism of the Portuguese, promoters of progress and change (1963, 145). The denunciations of African savagery (with recourse to cannibalism) and European aggression against Portuguese rights were at the root of the author's discourse, focusing on facts and themes revealing a Lusocentric perspective already marked by the colonial war.

The third type of historical writing sought to restore Africans to their central role in Angolan history, though often slipping on the traps resulting from a deep-seated ideology in the Portuguese cultural fabric. One of the rare representatives of this type of writing was Norton de Mattos who, acknowledging the anteriority of Angolan history, underlined the absurd discomfort this historical reality caused the Portuguese powers-that-be. Creating a kind of historiographical space where both histories were intertwined, the general referred to the Portuguese history of Angola, which had begun in 1483 in a territory where "for many centuries there had already been", "people with a social organisation that had greatly surprised the discoverers and whose history (...) must be known in order to understand the unfolding of the complex events that have taken place in that region since the end of the 15th century until today" (Mattos, *Memórias e Trabalhos da minha vida*, II, 1944, 27-28).

Norton de Mattos advanced with dexterity on a historical ground, flawed by ideologies and myths, to point out that the history of Angola was in fact "constituted by an analysis of the reactions and transformations that its former indigenous inhabitants (...) had experienced in their contact with us. Finally, the history of the formation of the Portuguese Angolan territory, as it exists today, depended not only on African elements that stood in the way of Portuguese expression, which were sometimes defeated, sometimes not, but also on the European nations that prevented our [that is, the Portuguese] free expansion" (II, 27-28). Characterised by great curiosity, Norton de Mattos, the non-historian who pledged his theoretical allegiance to Proudhon, was unable to reassess the organisation of Angola without resorting to the Lusocentric perspective, to the Portuguese facts and colonial problems, to define the great axes of Angolan history (II, 28-29), but he did not eliminate the Africans from the historical organisation of their country.

Francisco Castelbranco's *História de Angola* [History of Angola], published in Luanda in 1932, proved



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to be more fluid, descriptive and 'Africanised'. This author, who belonged to Angola's mestizo petit bourgeoisie, was not a qualified historian either. Aware of the difficulties, the fragilities and the shortcomings of his work, but considering the task of providing "the means to learn about the History of Angola" (1932, Prefácio [Preface]) to be urgent, the author did not hesitate to undertake the inventory of knowledge, advancing to the organisation of an Angolan history in 22 chapters with no methodological concerns, dragging the Africans, even if by the patronising and fraternal hand of the Portuguese hero, to the front line of his written discourse. While his writing was overly descriptive and never sufficiently analytical, Francisco Castelbranco brought to light an important mass of information and highlighted the importance of Africans in the fabrication of their history, associating them with the events brought about by Portuguese interventions. Contrary to most histories of Angola, the author sought to record the major Angolan facts on a level identical to that of Portuguese and international events, while also focusing on issues deemed 'minor' by Portuguese historiography - the daily lives of the Angolans and the local situations that marked their lives such as epidemics, droughts, famines – while not leaving aside the exercise of administrative authority, the Portuguese and Angolan troops, the improvements implemented such as the construction of railways, white colonisation, the economic situation, the colony's finances, to mention only 20th-century issues (1932, 255-256).

Notwithstanding all its methodological flaws, this history of Angola has the merit of seeking to open up an autonomous space for Africans within their own history, rejecting the idea of African passivity in the historical transformation processes, which marked Portuguese historiography in relation to the Other. In the twenty-first century, Portuguese historiography, which has witnessed great advances in themes of Portuguese history that were silenced by the Estado Novo, has not yet been able to or known how to systematically 'decolonise' historical reflection on the colonial issue in its most complex dimensions, enhance the history of colonised peoples without prejudice and acknowledge the importance of these peoples for the renewal of Portuguese history.

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