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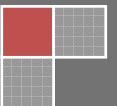
# “Anthropology and ethnography of the Portuguese-speaking empire”

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## **Anthropology and Ethnography of the Portuguese-speaking Empire**

The history of Portuguese expansion and colonialism can be roughly divided into three distinct periods, marked by the importance of different geographical setting, trade routes, and raw materials: India, Brazil, and Africa, roughly corresponding to the fifteenth and sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth, and nineteenth and twentieth centuries respectively. For the purposes of this chapter, only the latter period will be considered – that which Clarence-Smith (1985) has called the ‘Third Portuguese Empire’; it was during this period that colonialism as a modern project was implemented by the Portuguese authorities, and that anthropological knowledge and practice as such emerged.

The turn to Africa – and the start of the ‘Third Portuguese Empire’ – took place after the independence of Brazil in 1822. Portuguese expeditions in the 1840-50s tried to map the African hinterland in order to claim sovereignty over large tracts of Southern Africa between Angola on the Atlantic coast and Mozambique on the Indian Ocean coast. On the aftermath of the Berlin Conference (started in 1884) that carved out Africa for European colonialism, England issued an ultimatum to Portugal in 1890, demanding that Portuguese claims had to be based on effective occupation of the claimed territories. The last years of Monarchy in Portugal and those of the First Republic (1910-1926) were marked by the effort to obtain actual control over the claimed African possessions. These efforts had economic as well as ideological motivations, both part of Portuguese modern nation building (see Alexandre, 2000). But Portuguese colonialism in its modern sense was developed mainly by the dictatorial regime established in 1926 (and which was to

last in different shapes until 1974). In 1930, in the early stages of Salazar's regime, the Colonial Act was issued, proclaiming the need to bring indigenous peoples into western civilization and the Portuguese nation. Assimilation was proclaimed as the main objective, except for the colonies of Cape Verde (seen as an extension of Portugal), India and Macau (seen as having their own forms of 'civilization'). In the colonies of mainland Africa a distinction was made between white settlers, *assimilado*, and the indigenous, 'uncivilized' population.

Portuguese colonialism can be said to have been subaltern to other international and colonial powers; it was administered by a small semi-peripheral country, constituting a weak economic centre; it was sustained by a dictatorial political regime; and it lasted until 1975, later than other European colonialisms. Furthermore, the territories were dispersed and far apart. The weakness and underdevelopment of a colonial anthropology was certainly related to these factors and to Portugal's economic and political marginality in the international scene.

The last decades of the nineteenth century saw the emergence of anthropological practice in Portugal. In a period marked by economic crisis and the British ultimatum, the bourgeois elites openly expressed concern for what they called 'national decadence'. Literary and academic production revolved around the search for national identity, sought in popular, rural culture. Many authors concur to the notion that this focus on popular culture, the peasantry, folklore, and ideas of tradition and authenticity help explain why a colonial anthropology never developed fully. João Leal (2000), following Stocking's

(1982) typology, says that Portuguese anthropology was of the ‘nation-building’, not ‘empire-building’, sort. Other authors contest this idea, saying that mainstream history of Portuguese anthropology establishes too neat a distinction between types of anthropology, namely cultural versus physical and national versus colonial, not seeing the connections between them in the representations and practices of the time (see Roque, 2001 and also Santos, 2005). I believe that probably the construction of an Other in the colonial world was part of the process of constructing the Same in the homeland. This can be seen in the trajectory of influential anthropologists of the time, who did research on both national and colonial subjects. More important than these divides is the common weakness of anthropological production until the last quarter of the twentieth century: it was not up to date by international standards; it was not politically free; and it was ideologically permeated by the national messianic narrative of Portugal as the country of Discoveries.

Eusébio Tamagnini and Mendes Correia probably epitomize a first period, one of concern with the racial definition of the Portuguese, and opposed to miscegenation in the colonies. Tamagnini and Correia were the two main figures of the two schools of anthropology, respectively in Coimbra and Oporto. Their work – which never involved actual fieldwork – influenced a period from the late nineteenth century to the 1940s, and was mainly concerned with what today would be called ‘physical anthropology’, although the social, cultural and political concerns are quite obvious. Tamagnini’s work, published from 1916 to 1949, was influenced by Broca and Topinard: he was looking for the anthropometric statistical averages among the Portuguese, wanting these to coincide

with those of the average European. In the First National Congress of Colonial Anthropology in 1934 in Oporto (one year after the legislation of the Colonial Act), he alerted to the dangers of *mestiçagem* or miscegenation. In the Congress on the Portuguese World (held during the Portuguese World Expo that Salazar set up to promote Portuguese colonialism) he presented a study about the blood groups of the Portuguese and concluded that Portugal's population had been able to maintain 'relative ethnic purity'. In 1944 he was to acknowledge that he could not deny the existence of *mestiçagem* among a colonizing people – although that should not allow one to place the Portuguese amongst the category of Negroid *mestiços*.

In the year following the 1926 dictatorial coup, Mendes Correia had called for the segregation of relapsing criminals, for the sterilization of degenerates, and for the regulation of immigration and the banning of marriage for professional beggars. In 1932 he invited the president of the Brazilian Eugenics organization to give a conference in Oporto, during which he publicized the advantages of marriage within the same class or race and condemned *mestiçagem*. Based on a study of somatology and aptitude tests done with sixteen Cape Verdeans and six Macau *mestiços* who had come to the Colonial Expo of 1934 in Oporto, Mendes Correia concluded that miscegenation was a condemnable practice. In the plenary session Tamagnini reminded that 'the little repugnance that the Portuguese have regarding sexual approaches to elements of other ethnic origins is often presented as evidence of their higher colonizing capacity', and asserted that 'it is necessary to change radically such an attitude' (Castelo 1999:111)

Besides the legal dispositions in the *Estatuto Político, Civil e Criminal dos Indígenas* of 1929, *Código do Trabalho dos Indígenas nas Colónias Portuguesas de África* of 1928, the Constitution of 1933, the Colonial Act of 1930, and the Organic Charter of the Portuguese Colonial Empire of 1933, the regime promoted initiatives to celebrate and exhibit empire: the Colonial Anthropology Congress of 1934 during the Colonial Expo, the Colonial Congress of 1940, and the Portuguese World Expo of 1940. Salazar's regime promoted a series of legal dispositions establishing the distinction between civilized peoples and indigenous populations. Simultaneously, propaganda stressed the cultural 'nationalization' of the indigenous populations. The empire was progressively assimilated with the notion of Nation (Thomaz 2001). At the same time that the *Estatuto ... dos Indígenas* pointed to the 'respect' of native traditions, other items, whether in the Colonial Act or mostly in the *Código do Trabalho dos Indígenas das Colónias Portuguesas de África* (1929) stressed the efficient control of human resources in the colonies. Legal dispositions guaranteed, in practice, that the colonial administration and the colonists controlled the rights and labour of colonized peoples. The *Estatuto ... dos Indígenas* lasted until 1961 and distinguished citizens from indigenous, but both were 'Portuguese'. As Thomaz (2001) says, the virtual limit of the distinction was 'assimilation'.

The administration was supposed to identify the 'usages and customs' of the different ethnic groups in the empire. Colonial anthropologists did research work all over the empire, but mostly in Mozambique and Angola, for labour, economic and political reasons. A colonial knowledge was pursued by institutions such as the *Sociedade de*

*Geografia de Lisboa* (which had been founded in 1875) or the *Escola Superior Colonial*, which prepared colonial administrators and civil servants; it was promoted by the SGL in 1883 but started *de facto* in 1906. Later it was to become a university institution in 1961, the only with an anthropology course until the restoration of democracy. An autonomous research institution, *Junta de Investigações do Ultramar*, was active in promoting research in several colonial topics, including anthropology.

The 1950s mark a turning point in colonial policy and also in anthropology. In 1953, a new law renamed the Colonies as Provinces. This was the result of international pressure for decolonization in the post WWII period and of the beginning of national liberation struggle in the colonies in the early 1960s. The international scene changed after the Bandung conference of 1955. The regime was under pressure and started a campaign to legitimize Portuguese presence in Africa. In 1961, when African armed struggle for national liberation started, important legislation changes occurred: compulsory labour and the *Estatuto ... dos Indígenas* were abolished. Anthropologist Jorge Dias worked in Africa in this context. He broke away from Mendes Correia and his anthropobiology, received influence from American cultural anthropology and, after joining the above mentioned colonial school he was invited by the Ministry of the Overseas to head the *Missões de Estudo das Minorias Étnicas do Ultramar Português* (Portuguese Overseas Ethnic Minorities' Research Missions). The Missions studied the Chope of southern Mozambique, Boers and Bushmen in southern Angola and, most of all, the Maconde of Northern Mozambique, a study led by Dias. The missions had been proposed at the First Colonial Anthropology Congress in Oporto in 1934. Dias' study of

the Mozambique Maconde is a hallmark of the anthropology of the period. It followed more up-to-date methods of social anthropological research. Besides his work on the Maconde (1964–70), his secret reports from the field have been studied by Pereira (1986) and in them Dias showed to be a reformist: he was critical of the regime's colonial errors and his official intention was to 'correct' them. Jorge Dias and his team (they were to found the Museum of Ethnology according to a universalistic and not strictly colonial conceptualization) started what could be called a second, culturalist, period. Physical anthropology was no longer central. But Dias and his team did not become colonial anthropologists – they focused mainly on the ethnological tradition of studying Portuguese rural society. His public intervention did not dismiss the national narratives related to colonization. What Dias did was to modernize them following the influence of Gilberto Freyre's lusotropicalism, a culturalist interpretation of the alleged humanistic and hybridizing nature of both the colonization of Brazil and modern Portuguese colonialism.

This is where we come full circle. The 1950s and 1960s were marked by rhetoric of miscegenation and praise for the universalistic and multiracial nature of the Portuguese colonial endeavour, connecting it with the humanistic overtones of the Discoveries. This was achieved by the incorporation of lusotropicalism, a notion proposed by Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre. *Um Brasileiro em Terras Portuguesas* is a collection of Freyre's speeches proffered between 1951 and 1952 during his journeys in the Portuguese colonies, as a guest of Portugal's Minister of the Overseas. The work sums up the vision of a Portuguese way of creating a specific hybrid civilization in the tropics



through processes of miscegenation. Tamagnini's and Mendes Correias' thesis were no longer official, Freyre's was. And the production of the official brand of anthropology pointed this way.

In 1974 the Portuguese dictatorship was over and in 1975 the colonies became independent, as a result of political changes in Portugal and the liberation movements in the colonies. In the mid-eighties Portugal joined the European Union and economic development led to a large increase in immigration from the ex-colonies. The democratic nation-state did not abandon the master national narrative based on the Discoveries and refashioned it in modern terms by means of promoting special ties with the ex-colonies and creating the notion of Lusophony, largely equivalent to the better known Francophony.

Contemporary anthropology in Portugal has severed the ties with pre-1974 anthropology. Today's anthropologists were either educated abroad or educated by those who returned to Portugal from exile after 1974. For the first time in its history, Portuguese anthropology is in tune with contemporary international production. As a result, there has been a growing trend towards doing an anthropology of colonialism and empire. Many younger scholars are analysing the dispersed colonial anthropological production with critical tools. At the same time, a growing number of anthropologists are studying the post-colonial situation in the ex-colonies and the processes of immigration to Portugal. Ironically, the 'colonial terrain' is at last being discovered.

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