

EUI WORKING PAPERS

HEC No. 2006/01

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Colonialism and Imperialism: Between Ideologies
and Practices

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AND
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ISSN 1725-6720

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Printed in Italy
European University Institute
Badia Fiesolana
I – 50016 San Domenico di Fiesole (FI)
Italy

<http://www.iue.it/>
<http://cadmus.iue.it/dspace/index.jsp>

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Introduction

Genealogy of a project

If the existence of debate is a symptom of the good health of a discipline, then Colonial Studies are an extremely robust field of study. A multitude of works dealing with European colonialism are produced every year, each inspired by one of the many historical/theoretical trends ruling the land of “Colonial Studies”. However the debate between these various productions is itself distorted. The various trends at play in Colonial Studies oppose more than they complement or enrich each other; works adopting a historical, sociological, anthropological or linguistic approach to the colonial phenomenon each claim for themselves the rightfulness of their angle, discarding what is undertaken outside the scope of their own theoretical background. The problem is not only one of opposing “angles”, but in fact one of different “languages” practically unintelligible one to another. This tension, in spite of recent efforts to reconcile the postcolonial approach with the political and economic history of empires¹, is spurred by ethical stances and issues closely intertwined with the subject itself².

It is precisely this acknowledgement that induced us to challenge the widely-accepted idea according to which works on colonialism stemming from different theoretical backgrounds have no chance of relating to, let alone influencing, one another. In May 2004, a workshop was organised by Professor Diogo R. Curto (EUI) at the European University Institute within the frame of the Vasco da Gama Chair, gathering students and professors from King’s College (London), ISCTE (Lisbon), Cambridge, Brown University (Boston), the Universidade Nova (Lisbon) and the EUI (Florence). The 12 participants were invited to reflect, through their presentations or their comments, on the subject of “Colonialism and Imperialism: Between Ideologies and Practices”³. Each of the participants was invited to offer their own interpretation of this problematic based on their own specific fields of research, and the intentional width of the subject was meant to constitute an area of exchange between different, hitherto competing, approaches. If the authors were free to build their augmentations as they saw fit, the wording of the conference’s theme was an invitation for them to reflect upon certain specific paradoxes and problematics.

Imperialism and Colonialism, Ideologies and Practices: constructions around two paradoxes

The various meanings of the terms employed in the wording of the subject can be deduced by the way they have traditionally been co-articulated in historiography. While imperialism and colonialism have often been considered as interchangeable⁴, it is generally accepted, following Robinson and Gallagher’s paradigm, that colonialism is a modality of imperialism⁵. In that sense, on a conceptual level, “imperialism” designates the influence,

¹ Particularly in A. J. Stockwell and Peter Burroughs (eds): *Managing the Business of Empire: Essays in Honour of David Fieldhouse*, Frank Cass Publishers, 1998.

² The measure of importance of these ethical issues nowadays is given by the reaction of French historians against the French law of 24 February 2005 which, in its 4th article, encourages teachers and researches to stress the “positive” effects of colonialism. See the interview of Gérard Noiriel by Françoise Escarpit: “Je m’inquiète de ce virage conservateur”, *L’Humanité*, 2 April 2005, reproduced in http://www.ldh-toulon.net/article.php3?id_article=568.

³ Professor A. Costa Pinto from the Instituto de Ciências Sociais da Universidade de Lisboa and Gunvor Simonsen, PhD student, HEC Department, European University Institute have greatly contributed to the elaboration of this Working Paper through their remarks and critiques expressed during the debates in the frame of the workshop.

⁴ John A. Hobson: *Imperialism: a study*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1965 (or. ed. 1902).

⁵ V. I. Lenin: *Imperialism: the highest form of capitalism*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1917; John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson: “The Imperialism of Free Trade”, *The Economic History Review*, Second series, Vol. VI, No., 1 (1953).

power, authority or control exercised by a nation on another one, through political, economic and financial, or cultural means; “colonialism” on the other hand, implies the necessary exercise of a “formal rule”, embodied through the presence of agents and institutions – sometimes also settlers- of the dominating nation. On a time-sequential level, especially at the level of the “writing of history” or historiography, “colonialism” has therefore been seen as a possible outcome of “imperialism”. A final level of distinction that is usually drawn between the two terms is of a geographical nature: “imperial” is usually associated to the metropolis of a colonial Empire, that is to the “centre”; “colonial”, on the other hand is often linked to one, or a set of the colonies constituting the colonial Empire, that is to the “local”, or to the “peripheral”⁶.

At an intuitive level, we tend to oppose “ideology” to “practice”. “Ideology” refers to a closed and coherent set of values and beliefs, stemming –according to Karl Mannheim- from a historico-social group, expressing their life-situation⁷ and aimed at guiding their action; “practice”, on the other hand, is primarily associated to a behavioural pattern, guided by conventions or institutions. If ideology is resilient to change, “practice” –though inspired by conventions- does not preclude, as Pierre Bourdieu pointed out, innovation and strategy on behalf of the actors⁸. Comparatively, “practice” can be seen as the outcome, the accomplishment or a “figure” of an “ideology”; oppositely, a certain “practice” can institute an “ideology”, or may deprive a pre-existent ideology of its initial meaning.

Based on these assumptions, “ideology” could more naturally belong to the realm of “imperialism” while the notion of “practice” seems to be more closely linked to the concept of “colonialism”. Hence, if we wanted to summarize the basic articulations usually associated with the terms of our subject we could represent them in the following way:

Central	Imperial	Ideology
Local	Colonial	Practice

A less static perspective –and somewhat less simplistic- would be to restore the possible dynamics between these concepts instead of merely opposing them or taxonomising them. Thus, if ideology refers to a set of values and beliefs guiding or aimed at guiding actions and initiatives, then colonial practice is hardly understandable without the imperial ideology underlying it, embodied into the institutions and conventions framing it. In “The “Congo Question”: Ecclesiastical and Political Rivalries and the Internationalization of Africa Affairs (1865-1890)”, Miguel Bandeira Jeronimo analyses the confrontation of different colonial practices inspired by different imperial ideologies, the political against the ecclesiastical. Antonella Viola, in “Italian Traders in XIXth century India”, shows the obstacles created for colonial actors when faced with the absence of an imperial ideology -embodied into colonial institutions- on behalf of their motherland or rather, when faced with the colonial institutions embodying an alien –here British- imperial ideology.

In the same line of argument, if “imperial” equals “central” and “colonial” equals “local”, then “ideologies” stemming from the colonial setting can be opposed to the imperial ideology or the imperial practices. This is the subject of Fernando Pimenta’s paper, “National Identity of Angolan White Settlers” in which the author shows the formation of an ideology

⁶ Ronald Robinson, John Gallagher and Alice Denny: *Africa and the Victorians. The official mind of Imperialism*, Macmillan Press, London, 1974 (or. ed. 1961); David K. Fieldhouse: *Empire and Economics 1830-1914*, Cornell University Press, 1974.

⁷ Karl Mannheim: *Ideology and Utopia. An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1976, pp. 49-53 (or. ed. 1936). Mannheim also mentions the negative connotations, of Marxist origin, associated with the term “ideology” (p. 49).

⁸ Pierre Bourdieu: *Esquisse d’une theorie de la pratique. Trois etudes d’ethnologie kabyle*, editions du Seuil, Paris, 2000.

among the various social strata of the Angolan white settler community; this simulacrum of a “national identity”, corresponds in fact to the powerless voice of a community repressed by their mother-country –Portugal- and unable to transcend their biases against the black majority.

Pedro Monaville, in “The Untraceable Colonialist: autobiographical practices and colonial ideologies in Belgium”, reverses the perspective, showing how individuals replied to the imperial ideology of their homeland through the practice of writing their autobiographies, thus substituting a “colonial imaginaire” to an “imperial ideology”. Felipe Calvao also suggests in his paper, “Equilibrium and Conflict: Notes on the Nature of Colonialism”, that colonial practice –though here “practice” is understood in a very different way- can change the nature of an imperial ideology.

Finally, the angle chosen by the historian himself in dealing with this subject can be questioned: by focusing on the “central” or the “local”, on “imperialism” or “colonialism”, are historians deconstructing or serving an ideology through the practice of their craft? Ricardo Roque, in his paper “Human skulls and museum work: sketch of a perspective on miniature histories”, analyzes the circulation of skulls in space and time, from the time of their collection to the time of their exhibition in museums; challenging the widely-accepted notion according to which museums destroyed the historicity and colonial context of these peculiar objects of collection, the author invites us to take seriously the different layers of meaning invested in it through time, a meaning that is now ethically charged in the context of the debates on the repatriation issues. Likewise, in “Entrenching the Colonial State: some reservations on Matthew Lange’s ‘Embedding the Colonial State’”, Alexis Rappas criticises the absence of reflexivity in an article published in fall 2003 in the journal *Social Science History*. In trying to demonstrate the developmental virtues of the Colonial State in Mauritius, the author argues, Matthew Lange sacrificed the complexity of the society of the colonial setting, reducing it to the interaction between two (voluntarily) homogenised actors, the colonial state on the one hand, and the colonial “society” on the other. This ex ante establishment of a model, a reflex in the practice of sociology and political science, leads Matthew Lange to a somewhat problematic ideological rehabilitation of the colonial state. Finally, in his “Author’s response”, Matthew Lange points out that the reactions to his article are less due to the disciplinary differences between sociology and history, than to the specific standpoint of his critic, and to his own specific ideological conception of the colonial phenomenon.

Alexis Rappas and Urmila De.

Note: *The following papers are part of ongoing PhD researches. Please do not quote without the authors’ permission. A list of authors with their contact data is provided at the end of the dossier.*

PART I: IMPERIAL IDEOLOGY THROUGH COLONIAL PRACTICE

**The “Congo Question”.
Ecclesiastical and Political Rivalries and the Internationalization of African Affairs
(1865-1890)¹**

Miguel Bandeira Jeronimo

King's College

On 9th September 1865, the Propaganda Fide decided to entrust the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Congo Prefecture to the French *Congregation of the Holy Spirit*.² This decision was taken after the Capuchins Friars declined to revive the responsibility they had held since 1645, acting under the jurisdiction of the Angola and Congo Bishopric in harmony with the regulations of the Royal *Padroado*, the agreement between the Holy See and Portugal that attributed the latter the responsibility to evangelize several regions of the African continent and the privilege of ecclesiastical sovereignty over them.³ After years of unsuccessful efforts to restore the “missione di Congo” following the departure of the last Italian capuchin priest, unable to find religious orders interested or capable of providing missionaries to the region, facing the catastrophic religious situation in the Congo and the persistent inability of the Portuguese to alter it, and being confronted with the Spiritans intention to accept the challenge, the *Propaganda Fide* decided to accept the evidences and attributed the Congo Prefecture to the Spiritans, under its direct dependence.⁴

The *Propaganda Fide*' decision echoed the majority of the motives included in the proposal made by Father Schwindenhammer, the *Holy Spirit Congregation*'s Superior. The state of religious and missionary neglect that the Congo revealed helped to unanimously reach the verdict. Presenting a brief historical summary with the purpose of demonstrating the progressive decay of missionary presence in the area, the decree also mentioned the abolition of religious orders in Portugal, in 1834, as one of the causes that contributed to that decaying process, as it surely contributed to the *Propaganda Fide*'s decision.⁵ Others, obviously not

¹ This work is part of an ongoing PhD research, carried under the supervision of Professor Andrew Porter, Rhodes House Professor of Imperial History at the University of London (King's College, Department of History) and supported by the *Fundação de Ciência e Tecnologia* (Portugal). It is also a revised and shortened version of the work that was presented at the European University Institute within the frame of the workshop on “Colonialism and Imperialism: between ideologies and practices”, organized by Professor Diogo Ramada Curto on 21-22 May 2004 in Florence, Italy.

² For a general overview of the Congregation see Henry J. Koren: *The Spiritans. A History of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost*, Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, 1958; Lawrence Henderson: *The Church in Angola. A River of Many Currents*, The Pilgrim Press, Cleveland, 1992, pp. 26-28. For an overview of the work of the Spiritans in Angola and Congo see Joaquim Alves Correia: *Civilizando Angola e Congo. Os Missionários do Espírito Santo no Padroado Espiritual Português*, Tipografia Sousa Cruz, Braga, 1922.

³ This was first established in the bull *Romanus Pontifex* of the 8th January of 1455, signed by Pope Nicholas V. The Bull that created the Congo and Angola Diocese dates the 20th of May of 1596. Printed in António Brásio: *Spiritana Monumenta Histórica. Series Africana. Angola*, E. Nauwelaerts, Louvain, 5 Vols., 1966-1971, Vol. I [1966], pp. 3-8.

⁴ The decree *Saeculo XV labente* was issued on 9th September. The Prefecture of the Congo was created in 1640 and was permanent focus of ecclesiastical conflicts. For the process of restoration of the Congo Prefecture that ultimately led to its attribution to the Spiritans see M. Storme: “Engagement de la Propagande pour l'organisation territoriale des Missions au Congo”, in J. Metzler (ed.): *Sacrae Congregationis De Propaganda Fide Memoria Rerum*, Herder, Rome-Freiberg-Vienna, 1971-1976, Vol. 3/1: 1815-1972, 1975, pp. 256-260. For the King of Congo's requests see Brásio: *op. cit.*, pp. 87-88, 91-94, 97-99, 101-102, 104-105.

⁵ For the Report of Father Schwindenhammer to the Prefect-Cardinal of Propaganda Fide, dated 17th March 1865, which serves as the base of the Propaganda Fide's arguments see Brásio: *op. cit.*, pp. 157-162, 209. For the Act of the General Council of the *Propaganda Fide*, 2nd of September 1865, and the Portuguese translation of the *Saeculo XV labente*'s decree see *ibidem*, pp. 182-183, pp. 189-194; For the process of suppression of religious

mentioned in the decree, included the persistent disputes between the *Propaganda Fide* and the Portuguese authorities (both political and ecclesiastical) about the jurisdictions of the Oriental Religious Patronage, visible, for instance, in the creation of apostolic vicariates directly dependent on the *Propaganda Fide* and the withdrawal of some dioceses from Portuguese ecclesiastical jurisdictions in India. This permanent focus of disagreement unsettled the diplomatic relations between Portugal and the Holy See throughout the nineteenth century, what is verifiable in the troubled negotiations of 1857 and 1886 Concordats.⁶

On 12th September 1865, the Propaganda Fide communicated to the Bishop of Angola and Congo and the apostolic nuncio in Lisbon, Monsignor Ferrieri, the attribution of the Prefecture of the Congo to the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, but did not inform the Portuguese government.⁷ After breaching one of the agreed principles of the *Padroado*, placing the renewed Congo Prefecture under its direct authority, the Propaganda Fide doubled the infringement. The decision had not the patron consent and the latter was not even directly informed of the resolution. Despite the fact that the Angola and Congo Bishop, D. José Lino de Oliveira, was one of the recipients of the Propaganda Fide's verdict, the Portuguese government was notified by the French Legation in Lisbon, in a note dated 31st January 1866.⁸

After his own proposal in September, Father Schwindenhammer was offered the elevated post of Apostolic Prefect of the Congo Mission in November 1865. This was justified as a way to smooth future relations with the Portuguese government, "vis-à-vis who [he] couldn't easily cooperate as General Superior of the congregation". The "prejudices that are embedded in that nation vis-à-vis the religious institutes" contributed to this suggestion, promptly accepted by the *Propaganda Fide*.⁹ In the presentation letter Schwindenhammer wrote to the French Foreign Affairs minister, he asked for his intervention in the case on behalf of the Spiritans, as he did with the apostolic nuncio in Lisbon. He directly connected the suppression of religious orders with the "ruin" of the Congo mission, alongside the revolutions that occurred in Europe after the seismic effect of the French revolution. Furthermore, he explicitly emphasized the straight relation that the coming missionary endeavour could have with the French government, stressing the "advantages" that the latter could get from the missionary presence in the Congo.¹⁰ Father Schwindenhammer was officially consecrated as Prefect of the Congo in the 14th January 1866. In the same day, Father Joseph Poussot was appointed Vice-Prefect. The latter, accompanied by the Father Antoine Espitallié, went, under the utmost secrecy, to Lisbon in the same month and departed to Angola in February. The congregation received a substantial material and logistical assistance from the *Propaganda Fide* to hasten the process.¹¹

As several key players in this process predicted but undervalued, difficulties would arise from this decision. The main focus of expected resistance was identified by Father

orders in Portugal see Vítor Neto: *O Estado, a Igreja e a Sociedade em Portugal (1832-1911)*, Col. Análise Social, Imprensa Nacional Casa da Moeda, Lisboa, 1998, pp. 50-52 ff.

⁶ Withdrawal of the Dioceses of Meliapor, Cranganor, Cochim and Malaca, dictated by Pope Gregory XVI's *Multa Praeclara* of 24th April 1838. See, among others, Vítor Neto: *op. cit.*, pp. 137-164.

⁷ The acceptance of the Congo Mission by the Congregation of the Holy Spirit dates the 1st October 1865. Brasília: *op. cit.*, pp. 207-210.

⁸ For a brief biographical note see Manuel Nunes Gabriel: *D. Moisés Alves Pinho e os Bispos de Congo e Angola*, Portalegre, 1980, pp. 76-77.

⁹ Letter of Father Schwindenhammer to the Prefect-Cardinal of *Propaganda Fide*, 19th September 1865. His nomination as Prefect of the Congo Mission by the *Propaganda Fide* was accepted in a letter dated 25th November 1865. Father Schwindenhammer was officially consecrated as Prefect of the Congo in 14th January 1866. Brasília: *op. cit.*, pp. 205-206, 215.

¹⁰ Father Schwindenhammer to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, 4th November 1865; Father Schwindenhammer to the Apostolic Nuncio in Lisbon, 18th January 1866. *Ibidem*, pp. 212, 223.

¹¹ C. J. Rooney states that the missionaries were received by the Count of Castro, Portuguese Foreign Affairs Minister, what is not confirmed by other sources. 15000 francs was the amount attributed to them by the *Propaganda Fide*. C. J. Rooney: "As Missões do Congo e Angola", in *Portugal em África*, Vol. 7, 1900, p. 14.

Schwindenhammer and by the Lisbon's Nuncio, Monsignor Ferrieri. The Portuguese government would certainly raise objections to the new ecclesiastical arrangements, invoking the ecclesiastical and territorial rights stipulated in the Royal *Padroado* agreement with the Vatican. Nonetheless, both Schwindenhammer and Ferrieri, wrongly assumed that the reasons behind any Portuguese opposition would essentially derive from a narrow ecclesiastical reasoning. The exposure of the deplorable state of moral and religious abandonment of the Congo should, in their view, suffice to neutralize the anticipated Portuguese objections and, as Ferrieri remarked, the advanced and progressive ideas in Portugal should minimize the magnitude and the impact of the protest.¹² What they could not understand was, as we shall see, that for the Portuguese political authorities and elites, whether liberal or conservative, the Royal *Padroado* had extremely important political resonances and its political, that is, secular and territorial, significance was, to say the least, as momentous as the religious or "symbolic" connotation. This applied equally in the colonial context. The reactions of Portuguese secular and ecclesiastical colonial authorities also raised some preoccupations, which would prove to be justified during the Spiritans' stay in Angola and Congo territories, where they saw their evangelizing efforts persistently inhibited by Portuguese authorities, at least until the 1880's.¹³

Despite the fact that according to the Vatican's 1726 provision, missions could be attributed to a foreign religious order while being nonetheless under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Angolan prefecture, this decision aroused much resistance among Portuguese elites and produced widespread demands for urgent and vigorous action. The Apostolic Nuncio in Lisbon foresaw this when he wrote to the Prefect-Cardinal of the Propaganda Fide that some difficulties were to be expected with the Portuguese government when it was informed of the decision, especially because of the "presumed" *Padroado* rights that in Portugal were believed to be "without limits". However, public agitation should be of small importance, because of the "generalized acceptance that without the missionary, Portuguese Africa could not prosper, not only in the religious dimension, but also in the civil one".¹⁴ Again, Ferrieri did not grasp the whole picture. In both Houses of Portuguese Parliament, various protests were presented, several debates held. Portugal's political elites saw the decision as a mean to promote French expansion and influence in the area at the expense of the Portuguese "historical rights".¹⁵ Furthermore, this was seen as a serious infringement of the patronage, or *Padroado*, rights established by treaty between the Catholic Church and the Portuguese government, which conceded special rights and responsibilities to Portugal in what concerned the propagation of faith in territories under Portuguese control.

In February 1866, exactly four days after the departure of the Spiritan missionaries to Angola, the Portuguese Minister of the Foreign Affairs, Count de Castro, was confronted with an interpellation in the House of Deputies by one of the major figures of the opposition, M. Levy Maria Jordão. The subject was the voyage of the French missionaries to Portuguese colonial territories and what it represented for the dignity of the nation as a colonial power.¹⁶ Obviously capitalizing the issue for purposes of domestic politics, the motion nevertheless touched the main arguments that would be persistently mobilized by the Portuguese elites:

¹² Storme: *op. cit.*, p. 260.

¹³ In fact, this was one of the main concerns that the French missionaries, Joseph Poussot and Antoine Espitallié, discussed with Monsignor Ferrieri in Lisbon, before departing to Angola. Letter of Father Antoine Espitallié to Father Charles Duparquet, 2nd February 1866; Letter of Father Joseph Poussot to Father Schwindenhammer, 4th February 1866, both sent from Lisbon. Brasília: *op. cit.*, pp. 229-231, 233.

¹⁴ Brasília: *idem*, pp. 200-201.

¹⁵ See the *Diário da Câmara dos Deputados* [House of Deputies' Diary], sessions of 9th February, and of 14th and 16th March 1866.

¹⁶ Levy Jordão was one of the main specialists of history of Portuguese religious affairs, namely of its colonial repercussions, and wrote several books under the name of Viscount of Paiva Manso. The Holy Spirit Fathers José Maria Poussot (also Vice-Prefect of the Congo Mission's ecclesiastical jurisdiction) and António Espitallié arrived in Ambriz in the 14th March 1866.

usurpation of the rights of religious patronage sanctified by successive pontifical bulls since the 15th century and redefinition of religious circumscriptions without previous consultation of the Portuguese Crown and government, therefore illegitimately overlooking the alleged sovereignty rights, both political and religious, possessed by the Portuguese.¹⁷ Throughout the debates held in the parliament and the correspondence extensively exchanged between Ministries, between these and the colonial administration and ecclesiastical authorities, it is clear that the domestic and international political calculations generated by the Propaganda Fide's decision were far more relevant.¹⁸

Despite political loyalties, almost every contribution to the intense outcry that emerged at the time shared two perspectives. First they were all labouring in a mistaken interpretation of the Propaganda Fide's instruction. The latter was not creating a new prefecture; she was simply using a "legal" possibility, that is, the provision that allowed the attribution of the Congo Mission responsibility to a religious order, the *Congregation of the Holy Spirit*. As long as the congregation acted under the supervision and the instructions of the Diocese of Angola and Congo, no formal inconsistency could be argued against her decision. Second, what united the Portuguese in their misunderstanding of the *Propaganda Fide's* decision was what, despite party affiliations and religious preferences, united them in the appreciation of what was at stake, that is, the consequences that a renewed religious configuration could have in the international and local colonial order. The *Propaganda Fide's* resolution was an alarming sign, the French missionaries the most visible example, soon followed by other symptoms of upcoming "spoliation" of Portuguese African territories, a term abundantly used at the time. Portuguese "historical rights" were under threat. The "Oriental religious question" was now accompanied by the "African religious question". But the latter had a dimension almost absent from the former: its the political and territorial implications in a period of growing international economic, religious, scientific and political interest in the African continent.

The recognition of this aspect had several consequences in the ways in which the colonial problem and, more specifically, the missionary question were addressed in Portugal and in its colonies. Diplomatically, Portuguese efforts were mostly concentrated in the recognition of the "historical rights" to a formal sovereignty in the Congo between the 8° and the 5° 12' latitude South. The resolution of the political dimension would, in principle, automatically solve the religious disagreements, since, normally, the Vatican defined religious territorial jurisdictions in concordance with political circumscriptions. On the other hand, a formal recognition of the religious sovereignty to the Congo area by the Propaganda Fide would improve the chances of disentangling the international political disputes that made the "Congo issue" a unique resource within the diplomacy of colonialism of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The connection between the political and diplomatic strategies and the ecclesiastical and missionary tactics to assure the recognition of the Congo regions grew evermore indissoluble.

In a context of growing political, commercial, scientific and missionary competition, the Portuguese missionary question gained a renewed and crucial place within Portuguese colonialism, being introduced to the catalogue of "historical rights" proclaimed by the Portuguese elites to sustain and legitimize the recognition of their sovereignty in the Congo area. Since these rights were permanently downplayed by other European colonial powers, especially by the British¹⁹, the continuous diplomatic effort to convince them led the Portuguese authorities to see their presence in the Congo as a precious instrument for territorial

¹⁷ *Diário da Câmara dos Deputados* [House of Deputies' Diary], session of the 9th February 1866; Brásio, *op. cit.*, pp. 240-242, 278.

¹⁸ Among other sources, see Foreign Affairs Historical Archive, correspondence between the Foreign Affairs Ministry and the Navy and Overseas Ministry, several boxes, 1865-1890.

¹⁹ Roger Anstey: *Britain and the Congo in the Nineteenth Century*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1962, chapter III, pp. 37-56.

and cultural penetration and diffusion, thus augmenting the examples of influence and proto-sovereignty to be presented in bilateral and multilateral diplomatic instances. Missionary work was fundamental to the formulation of Portuguese “historical rights” in the Congo; it would also be crucial to devise colonial strategies to face the ongoing and escalating international rivalry.

The missionaries acquired a central position within Portugal’s “new African imperialism”, in a process also fuelled by the comparisons drawn with the roles played by its French and British counterparts. After years of almost complete abandonment, the Portuguese tried to revive their religious presence in the Congo area mostly as a response to the labours of foreign congregations and to the political (and “territorial”) message they supposedly carried. These were perceived as being much more than innocent organizations focused on the moral improvement of the native communities. Their “civilizing mission” was seen as hiding secular concerns and they were seen as crucial instruments of the colonial strategies of their countries. Facing the problem, the first measure taken by the Portuguese authorities rested upon the reluctant acceptance of the French missionaries establishment in Angola, although intensifying the control of their activities, reinforcing and displaying the authority of the Portuguese Diocese. In this sense, their activity as autonomous missionaries was tentatively restricted, their function as assistants of the Bishop promoted, a strategy supported by the argument that the manifest lack of religious personnel in Angola advised this solution. Simultaneously, the ecclesiastical and the political diplomacy began to take shape. In a document sent to the French diplomatic representative in Lisbon, the Portuguese Foreign Affairs’ office emphasized the four conditions under which the French missionaries would be accepted. First, their admission could only be temporary. Second, they were under the influence of the Angolan ecclesiastical authorities. Third, the latter should determine the convenience of their admission and also the number of missionaries required. Last, each missionary was obliged to dress as the Portuguese secular priests did.²⁰ At the same time, they used every reason to delay the official recognition of the formal requirements needed to develop a missionary activity in the Diocese of Angola and Congo. The delaying techniques used by the Portuguese authorities, even if they included the allocation of the Spiritans in the Luanda’s Seminary to learn Portuguese, ultimately aimed to create the conditions to find Portuguese priests to serve in the Congo area, trying to regenerate the national religious personnel’s presence in the Bishopric of Angola.²¹

Despite this apparent concession, the position of Portuguese civil and ecclesiastical authorities would remain contrary to the recognition of the renewed Prefecture of the Congo and continued to raise difficulties to the Spiritans efforts in Angola. The Spiritans knew this and strived to formulate another approach to the problem. Father Duparquet envisioned a much more grandiose project: the establishment of a mission in the interior of the Congo. This was, in a way, fuelled by the obstacles, both ecclesiastical and political, raised by the Portuguese official authorities. Despite all the obstacles raised to the West African prospects of the Congregation during the past years, Schwindenhammer selected Fathers Duparquet and Carrie, accompanied by brother Fortunato, to build a mission in Cabinda, the famous Landana Mission, in a territory that they thought to be out of the Portuguese territorial possessions. For almost three years, the Congregation’s members tried to find the most suitable place beyond the recognized frontiers of Portuguese colonies.²² After unsuccessful attempts to create and sustain missions in the south and north of Angola, it was only in 1873, with the establishment

²⁰ António Brásio: *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 254, 257.

²¹ The Bishop D. Tomás Gomes de Almeida (1871-1879) managed to reopen the Luanda Seminary and was able to get five priests from the Archdiocese of Goa in 1871. The Archdiocese of Goa was one of the most important suppliers of clergy to the Portuguese colonial missions.

²² António Brásio: *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 154-157.

of Father Duparquet's São Tiago's mission in Landana, that the Congregation's presence in the area started to solidify.²³

As stated above, to the Portuguese authorities, especially those in Angola, the activities of the French catholic missionaries implied much more than a desire to civilize and evangelize the African natives. Some years later, in a confidential letter sent to the Minister and the Secretary of State of Navy and Overseas Affairs, António E. Dantas, General-Governor of Angola, presented a brief survey of the movements of the foreign missionaries in the south of Angola, nonetheless generalizing his views to the whole Portuguese territories. The main aspect that surfaces in this document is the conviction of the dangers of accepting and authorizing the establishment and catechism of foreign missions within Portuguese territories, even "if they were Catholics and were willing to submit to the jurisdiction of Portuguese prelate". The evangelizing venture should be concentrated in Portuguese priests and missionaries. The foreign missionaries were seen as agents of their government's interests and territorial strategies.²⁴ As happened with former French missionaries from the *Congregation of the Holy Spirit*, the movements of Father Duparquet raised suspicion and received the utmost attention, despite his shared Catholicism. His several attempts to create missionary enterprises in various Angolan locations and in the Congo region were seen as an imperative motive to address the Portuguese religious implementation in these territories in a more effective and strategic manner. This "serious and important issue" should be studied, attended and solved immediately, in order to protect the "interests of Portuguese colonization". This could only be done with the promotion and widening of Portuguese missionary presence.²⁵

Deprived of financial, military and political resources to formulate more comprehensive colonial program and to react to the accumulation of evidences of variegated foreign interest in Portuguese African territories, the mobilization and purposeful promotion of missionaries was seen as a precious way to revitalize Portuguese colonial ambitions, or at least to tentatively neutralize or minimize the putative interests demonstrated by other colonial powers, especially the French and the British, in the region. The increasing number of assumed competitors for the territories under alleged Portuguese sovereignty, whether disguised as purely scientific, geographical or missionary explorations, increased the urgency of a Portuguese reaction. Events like the Brussels' Geographical Conference (1876) and the creation of the African International Association (A.I.A.) paired with the impact of the increasing explorations in African soil, supported by a variety of institutions and marked by intellectual but also commercial and political intents, ranging from state-funded to private expeditions, had an enormous influence in the historical development of colonialism in late nineteenth and early twentieth century and certainly concurred to transform the ways in which the Portuguese authorities dealt with it. And, in a sense, the Portuguese authorities recognized in the foreign missions (whether religious or not) the function and use that they tried to give to their own. Therefore, in what concerned the missionary dimension of the question, if the decrease of Portuguese missionary presence in the Portuguese colonial territories was connected with the

²³ For more information about the Landana Mission and the life and work of Father Charles Duparquet, see Gastão de Sousa Dias (ed.): *Viagens na Cimbebásia*, Museu de Angola, Luanda, 1953, pp. 45-54; António Brásio: *Spiritana Monumenta Histórica*, Vol. I, pp. 305-309; J. I. Nkulu Butombe: *La Question du Zaire et ses Repercussions sur les Juridictions Ecclesiastiques (1865-1888)*, Faculté de Theologie Catholique, Kinshasa, 1981, p. 44-45; Romain Konka: "Les Débuts de la Mission Catholique de Landana (1873-1876)", *Cahiers D'Études Africaines*, Vol. 2, 1962, pp. 362-372.

²⁴ António Eleutério Dantas was General-Governor of Angola between 1880 and 1882. Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino [Overseas Historical Archive], Angola, 1st Department, Box 1, official letter from the General-Governor of Angola to the Minister and the Secretary of State of Navy and Overseas Affairs, Luanda, 19-4-1881; printed in Mário António Fernandes de Oliveira: *Angolana (Documentação sobre Angola)*, Centro de Estudos Históricos Ultramarinos, Lisboa, Vol. 1 (1783-1883), 1968, pp. 217-223.

²⁵ Annex to the General-Governor's official letter, signed by Felisberto de Bettencourt, General-Secretary of the General Government of Angola. *Idem*, pp. 219-222.

decay of Portuguese colonial importance, their revival could, and should, be the instrument of its renaissance.

The promotion of catholic missionary activity was seen as a crucial tool to enhance Portuguese colonization and colonial rule, not only in a colonial context but also in the international arena, having a special place within the diplomatic resources mobilized by successive Portuguese governments to support their territorial claims. At a national level, it was a vital element in the definition of colonial programs by political parties and civil society institutions, namely in pressure groups like the Lisbon's Geographical Society. But it also propelled a redefinition of church and state relations, marking a decisive phase in the process of Portuguese society's secularization that began with the liberal revolution of the 1830's. The opposition to religious congregations that led to the suppression of religious orders (30th May 1834), to the nationalization of church assets, and to the increasing economic, social and political dependence on secular power that was translated to colonial contexts now had to reform its overall strategy.²⁶ In addition to domestic reasons, mainly rooted in the difficulty to establish a new constitutional order and to provide stability to the new political regime, the evolving colonial situation pressed the Portuguese liberals to moderate their posture regarding ecclesiastical authorities, not only domestically but also in the relations with the Vatican. Simultaneously, since the 1860's Portugal was marked by a progressive "politicization of the pulpit", by the emergence of a neo-Catholicism and by a gradual reintroduction of religious orders, in a process fuelled by Pope Pius IX and by the Vatican.²⁷

This made the 1870's and especially the 1880's a fertile period in considerations about church-state relations and, more specifically, about the role that missionaries should perform in Portuguese colonialism. Associated with this aspect, there emerged passionate controversies about the type of missionary that characterized and should characterize the Portuguese colonial evangelization. Domestically, several intellectuals proposed "priest-models", essentially advocating a clergy free from ultramontanism and culturally urbane and politically "modern". In what concerned the missionary question, these approaches revealed a more developed and complicated nature, as this problem was not only a part of ongoing domestic debates about the nature of the state and its relation with church, but also progressively became a decisive and unavoidable issue in what concerned colonial affairs. For the majority of Portuguese elites involved in colonial issues few doubts surfaced about the necessity of missionaries within the African expansionist purposes of the nation. Even the anticlerical personalities understood the indispensable function that could be performed by missionaries in Portuguese colonies. They rebutted the reintroduction of religious orders in Portugal itself but grew increasingly concerned to separate the "domestic" and the "colonial" sides of the problem. The traditional solution offered by the insistence on secular priests was questioned by the undeniably decadent state of colonial clergy, quantitatively and qualitatively speaking. The impact of the secularization process was exported to the colonies during the whole nineteenth-century, and the attempt to neutralize Church power was extended to the colonial arena. Léon Gambetta's well-known dictum that "anticlericalism [was] not an article of exportation"²⁸, could not be applied to the Portuguese case before the 1880's.²⁹

²⁶ Vítor Neto: "O Estado e a Igreja", in José Mattoso, (ed.): *História de Portugal*, Vol. V, Estampa, 1998, pp. 227-243; Fernando Catroga: "Cientismo, Política e Anticlericalismo", in *idem*, pp. 495-504.

²⁷ From 1833 to 1841, Portugal and the Holy See had no diplomatic relations. Vítor Neto, "O Estado e a Igreja", pp. 231-232, 237, 242; Fátima Bonifácio: *Apologia da História Política. Estudos sobre o século XIX Português*, Quetzal Editores, Lisboa, 1999, p. 271.

²⁸ Charles Ageron: "Gambetta et la reprise de l'expansion coloniale", *Revue Française d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer*, LIX, 1972, pp. 196-197.

²⁹ This is observable, for instance, in the often tense relations between the consecutive General-Governors of Angola and the "Angola and Congo" Bishops. For the role played by the French catholic missionaries in French imperialism of the third-republic see James Tudesco: *Missionaries and French Imperialism: The Role of Catholic Missionaries in French Colonial Expansion, 1880-1905*, University Microfilms International, 1980.

One striking observatory of this reformulation of colonialist thought can be found in the Lisbon's Geographical Society (L.G.S.). Founded in the 31st of December 1875, this institution proved to be a fundamental actor in the definition of Portuguese colonial programs and policies, acting as a pressure group in a national level and as a privileged interlocutor in an international and colonial one.³⁰ The connections between the declared scientific aims and the commercial, economic and political motivations that constantly surface in this institution public existence are evident. In fact, the L.G.S. had strong connections with political parties and with almost every institution or association that was involved in the colonial aspects of Portuguese society, namely the Porto and Lisbon's Houses of Commerce, the *Banco Nacional Ultramarino* (Overseas National Bank) and the *Empresa Nacional de Navegação* (National Navigation Company), but also with the main foreign institutions, whether scientific, political or missionary, interested in colonial matters.³¹ These close relations are crucial to understand Portuguese colonialism in general and the Portuguese general (political and ecclesiastical) diplomatic strategy regarding the Congo question in particular.

After assessing the outcomes of the Brussels Geographical Conference, which they saw as definitely transforming the face of the colonialism, initiating a phase of internationally pervasive colonial expansionism, the L.G.S.' members embraced the opportunity to acquire a fundamental role within the forces that aimed to revitalize the Portuguese colonial enterprise. As happened with the Portuguese religious circles with the changes in the political and ecclesiastical colonial landscapes, the L.G.S. used its scientific vocation as a justification to function as a colonial pressure group, compelling the Portuguese political authorities to join the international "geographical" movement towards Africa but also to develop a policy towards an effective colonization of Portuguese colonial possessions. It is important to stress that the conception of what was a geographical scientific endeavour was clearly introduced within a political and economic framework. The practical dimension of the geographical knowledge was emphasized, mainly for political and commercial purposes.

In 1877, in a discussion about the relevance of participating in a major congress of geographical societies from all over the world that would occur in Paris, the L.G.S. approved a motion that essentially stressed political reasons, not scientific, to justify Portuguese attendance at the meeting. Among the numerous events that marked the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1878, took place the *International Congress for the Promotion of Commercial Geography*. The Belgian delegate that presided over the meeting proposed a resolution suggesting the cooperation between governments, geographical associations and chambers of commerce with the aim of exploring the Congo basin. Although before the assembly opened the L.G.S. thought to use it to publicized the catalogue of Portuguese "historical rights", the member that attended the gathering fervently opposed the proposed discussion, threatening to leave if the motion was approved: the resolution "was of purely political character, and attacked the indisputable rights of Portugal on the Congo", including the *Padroado* rights.³²

The L.G.S. realized the need to reformulate the politics of colonial knowledge. The main aim was to established the "truth of many geographical and historical-geographical facts concerned with Portugal and forgotten or forged by the foreign science", promoting the "elaboration, collection and translating and publishing" of works that served that purpose, if possible in French and English. The ultimate goal was to produce an impressive amount of "scientific" information that could be used to sustain the Portuguese political and religious

³⁰ The society was raised by initiative of a private group of intellectuals, leaded by Luciano Cordeiro, in the last day of 1875. In the 29th of January 1876 the Civil-Governor of Lisbon approved their statuses.

³¹ See Ângela Guimarães: *Uma Corrente do Colonialismo Português. A Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa, 1875-1895*, Livros Horizonte, 1984, Lisboa,; Gervase Clarence-Smith: *O Terceiro Império Português (1825-1975)*, Teorema, Lisboa, 1985.

³² Luciano Cordeiro: *Questões Coloniais*, Imprensa da Universidade, Coimbra, 1934, p. 327.

“historical rights” to certain territories of Africa, essentially for external consumption but also fundamental in a national level. The propaganda of Portuguese colonial past and present was a fundamental device to be used in the diplomacy of colonialism, strategically intermingling scientific, economic, religious and political sources and examples. All these procedures sustained an increased widening of the colonial information order and were also vital to the promotion of specific political, scientific, economic and religious interests within the metropolitan and colonial contexts. The international competition and the threats, real and imagined, that were raised in Portuguese colonial discourses and politics provided some groups with an excellent opportunity to publicly promote their often juxtaposed but sometimes disagreeing interests and motives.

As was briefly suggested above, the realization of the Brussels’ Geographical Conference and the creation of the African International Association (A.I.A.) had a major impact in Portuguese colonial affairs. These events were seen as the confirmation of the increasing internationalization of the colonial issues and, therefore, as another source of suspicion to Portuguese elites. The fact that neither the L.G.S., neither the *Permanent Central Commission of Geography*³³, were invited to the conference augmented the concerns of Portuguese authorities. In the first meeting after the conference, the L.G.S. formulated a vehement opposition against the exclusion that had take place.³⁴ Once again, the most important point rested in the defence of an immediate and definitive rectification and recognition of the frontiers of Portuguese sovereignty in Africa, mainly in the north of Angola and in the Congo area.

These events clearly provided a golden opportunity, both in a national and international level, for some colonial sectors to enhance their colonial motivations and interests. In the realm of the L.G.S. this was a perfect moment to attain two important goals. First to affirm the international position of the L.G.S. as a crucial interlocutor in what concerned its scientific dimension but essentially as privileged and authoritative bearer of the Portuguese colonial tradition. After the apparent setback brought by her non-invitation to the conference, the L.G.S. immediately offered her collaboration and expressed her willingness to become the Portuguese representative of the African International Association, astutely reminding the latter the enduring presence of Portugal in the African continent, mainly in some areas that were covered by the association’s perceived colonial design.³⁵ This can be interpreted as a way to promote the tacit international recognition of the self-proclaimed “historical rights” in the Congo region. What is interesting is that, despite the request from the L.G.S., the Portuguese government decided not to support this decision to take part of the A.I.A. The Ministry of Navy and Overseas Affairs issued a declaration which stated that the Portuguese government did not want to “compromise the country’s responsibility in actions of strange direction”, preferring to continue, alone, the ancient tradition of sending “missions, religious, scientific and economic

³³ On 17th February 1876, the Minister of the Navy and Overseas Affairs, João Andrade Corvo, created this Commission with the purpose of collecting, organize and use all the documents about the geographical, ethnological, historical, archaeological, anthropological, as well as the natural life, characteristics of the Portuguese territories, especially in what regarded the overseas provinces, as they were then called. Their coexistence only lasted four years. In 15th of November 1880, the P.C.C.G. was included within the L.G.S. *Actas das Sessões da Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa*, 28th October 1876, pp. 11-13.

³⁴ A protest was issued to Leopold II, whose reply dates the 10th November 1876 but was only received in January 1877 by the L.G.S.

³⁵ After the non-invitation to the Brussels’ conference, the L.G.S. decided to create a commission with the sole aim to produce a volume about the ancient explorations and itineraries in African soil, translated in English, French and German in order to be profusely distributed in the scientific societies all over the world. *Idem*, 28th October 1876; For the A.I.A.’s view of the exclusion of the Portuguese from the Brussels’ Geographical Conference see P. A. Roeykens: *La Période Initiale de L’Oeuvre Africaine de Léopold II. Nouvelles Recherches et Documents Inédits (1875-1883)*, Académie Royale des Sciences Sociales, Brussels, Tome X (3), 1957, p. 21.

expeditions” to Africa.³⁶ The Portuguese government knew that the official participation in the A.I.A.’s activities could signify an explicit formal recognition of the Association and an indirect acceptance of her purposes. And this historical era required judicious decisions and cautious moves. The colonial framework was constantly changing, and the Portuguese government had to be extremely careful in his diplomatic manoeuvres, the main resource that was being used to solve the most urgent colonial problems, the ecclesiastical and political questions of the Congo and Angola.³⁷

On 27th March 1877, the L.G.S. unanimously decided to create the national committee of the A.I.A. called *Comissão Nacional Portuguesa de Exploração e Civilização da África*, normally referred to as the *Comissão Africana*.³⁸ This commission would perform a crucial work in the redefinition of the Portuguese colonialism in the next decades. As was written above, the L.G.S. tried to take advantage of the opportunities created by the Brussels’ Geographical Conference and by the emergence of Leopold II’s colonial designs and manoeuvres. But the political opportunism of the L.G.S. facing these events had a national dimension that must be underlined, as it had visible consequences in the way the religious dimension of Portuguese colonialism was addressed by Portuguese authorities. The L.G.S. clearly made the most of the widespread sense of colonial “spoliation” that came to light in the Portuguese public opinion about the international movements within and around Portuguese colonies. The urgent necessity of defining the frontiers of Portuguese territories, with special emphasis on those that were not internationally recognized as being so, was seen as a fundamental aspect. The L.G.S. immediately produced several demarches to promote her colonial program. Her proposals, widely publicized, constantly promoted in Portuguese political circles, and almost always translated, were essentially two

First, the organization of a major geographical and commercial exploration, the famous Serpa Pinto, Roberto Ivens and Brito Capelo’s voyage. The driving force of this expedition was economic as much as it was scientific. But its political significance was always emphasized. Supported by one of the most important Portuguese economic institutions, the Lisbon Commercial Association, the projected expedition aimed to impede that “a similar vigorous race, however with more means, could penetrate in Central Africa and steal the resources of the region”, ruining the Portuguese commercial interests established there. This only could be made with the precise territorial delimitation of Portuguese territories and the political and diplomatic definition of the country’s sovereignty in Africa. The reckoning of the several “geographical” expeditions that went on in Africa worsened the situation.³⁹ Second, the L.G.S. used the proposed exploration and proto-occupation strategy defined in the Brussels reunion and appropriated the idea of “civilizing stations” as their own, assuming a core position within the overall expansionist movement of the epoch. The Congo area was obviously chosen as a privileged spot for welcoming some “civilizing stations”.⁴⁰ An “African Fund” was created in 1877 and the development of this strategy of re-occupation of African soil was boosted by a subscription that was launched in July 1881, accompanied by an “appeal” to the Portuguese population, irrespective of social origins or instruction.⁴¹ This

³⁶ *Boletim da Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa*, 1st Series, 1877, p. 112.

³⁷ See F. Latour da Veiga Pinto: *op. cit.*, especially Chs. V, VI, VII, VIII, pp. 123-246; Eric Axelson: *Portugal and the Scramble for Africa (1875-1891)*, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1967, especially ch. III, pp. 38-63, and Roger Anstey: *Britain and the Congo in the Nineteenth Century*, especially chs. III and VII, pp. 37-56, 139-167.

³⁸ For the official declaration of its purposes see Luciano Cordeiro, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-49.

³⁹ *Boletim da Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa*, I Series, 1877, pp. 23-27.

⁴⁰ Even in the case of the “civilizing stations” idea, the Portuguese elites tried to affirm their precocious colonial imagination: the ancient system of prisons for the *degradados* was defined as a path-breaking example.

⁴¹ This document already contained a map with a clear reference to the “coast to coast” project (Angola to Mozambique), tinted in light red... For the conditions of the subscription, see *Ao Povo Português em Nome da*

“appeal” had a grandiose purpose and mobilized considerable means, allowing a finer understanding of what was at stake for the Portuguese authorities. To publicize the enterprise and seduce the Portuguese population, this “appeal” contained a summary of the main contemporary transformations in the colonial and international sphere, presenting information about the European movements in Africa (especially those made by the A.I.A., highlighting her own project of a coast to coast chain of civilizing stations, from Zanzibar to the limits of Angola), about the climatic conditions in the areas projected to receive the Portuguese stations, and also a remarkable description of Africa as the newest *el dorado*, trying to evoke the imagery that once belonged to Brazil. Additionally, special importance was granted to the religious situation, namely to the increasing and threatening presence of the “protestant hunters, merchants and missionaries” and the equally massive attendance of foreign catholic missionaries, that thus gained a crucial place in the overall strategy to mobilize Portuguese elites and population. The presence of missionaries was not forgotten in the explanation of what the projected “civilizing” stations should be and who would constitute them. The L.G.S. used the circumstances to affirm herself as the major source of inspiration in colonial affairs.⁴² As a consequence, in 1881, the Ministry of the Navy and Overseas Affairs, Júlio Vilhena, issued a decree that determined the main purposes of these “civilizing stations”, the “most practical and humanitarian way that experience and science suggest” to rule the “component and *adjacent* territories” of Portuguese overseas possessions. The Portuguese territorial stations aimed to civilize the native populations (“help them with the benefits of science”, propagating the Christian moral and religion, in order to “transform the barbarian behaviours”), protect the Europeans and promote commerce. Another interesting aspect is the fact that the “stations” should be used to promote the use and vulgarisation of the Portuguese language and to study “the indigenous vocabularies, their grammars, their legendry, their traditions and customs”. The stations should be centres of information gathering, and colonial vigilance.⁴³

This digression into the activities promoted by the L.G.S. reaches its ultimate rationale: in her strategy to acquire an indispensable place within the pondering and decision-making process regarding colonial Portuguese affairs, the L.G.S. addressed the religious question seriously and systematically. Since its inception, this institution dealt with this issue in several occasions, sometimes revealing the multitude of perspectives that converged in its interior. Indeed, in the “appeal” mentioned above, the allusion to the growing missionary competition within and around the Portuguese colonial territories had a particular weight. First, the reference to the catholic missions and its propagation under the Father Lavigerie’s *agenda*, one that aimed to introduce a catholic sign in the ongoing exploration of Africa.⁴⁴ Second, the indication of the increasing diffusion of British and American protestant missionary movements, “connected to commercial interests”, and its “stations”, curiously enough not mentioned as “missions”. One of the first measures to be defended by the L.G.S. was the

Honra, do Direito, do Interesse e do Futuro da Pátria a Comissão do Fundo Africano Criada pela Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa para Promover uma Subscrição Nacional Permanente Destinada ao Estabelecimento de Estações Civilizadoras nos Territórios Sujeitos e Adjacentes ao Domínio Português em África, Imprensa Nacional, Lisbon, 1881, p. 16.

⁴² *Idem*: pp. 4-5, 7, 11.

⁴³ Decree of 18th August 1881.

⁴⁴ In April of 1878, Lavigerie tried to seduce Leopold II with the purpose of bring to an end what he saw as “the wake of a ‘liberalistic’ laicism” promoted by the protestants, as Gründer judiciously states. Horst Gründer: “Christian Missionary Activities in Africa in the Age of Imperialism and the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885”, in Stig Förster, Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Ronald Robinson, (eds.): *Bismarck, Europe, and Africa. The Berlin Africa Conference 1884-1885 and the Onset of Partition*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1988, pp. 89-92; For Cardinal Lavigerie’s role in Africa see, among others, F. Renault: *Lavigerie, L’Esclavage Africain et L’Europe (1868-1892)*, Boccard, Paris, 2 Vols, 1971; For the relation between Lavigerie and Leopold II see, among others, J. Perraudin: “Le Cardinal Lavigerie et Leopold II”, *Zaire*, Vol. XI, December, 1957, pp. 901-932; *idem*: Vol. XII (1), 1958, pp. 37-64.

complete reformation of the process of clergy and missionary formation. This implied a systematic focus in the reorganization of the main centre charged for it, the Seminary of *Cernache do Bom Jardim*, near Santarém, Portugal.⁴⁵

In 1880, the Overseas Mission Commission of the Lisbon's Geographical Society, in articulation with the Navy and Overseas Ministry, produced two reports that addressed the colonial religious question.⁴⁶ Pressed by the growing missionary, scientific, commercial and political competition within and around the Portuguese colonial territories, Portuguese authorities tried to identify causes of colonial and missionary decadence and to assess formulas to foster its renaissance. The complete reformation of the process of clergy and missionary formation was one of the first measures proposed, as the first cause of colonial and missionary decay was connected with the type of missionary that had hitherto characterized the Portuguese colonial enterprise. In addition to the evident scarcity of available missionaries, the Commission stressed the missionaries' limited skills as the main cause of the debilitated state of Portuguese missionary presence in Africa.⁴⁷ As the Commission's report stated "our missionary can at his best be only a priest, but only a priest (...) he baptizes and believes to have converted". Convoking the testimony of a former Governor-General of Angola, the report proceeded to claim that what was needed was to "create a missionary, because we really don't have one". The existent missionary knew "a little bit of Latin, some theology", spoke and taught in a "dubious Portuguese", did not study hygiene, did not have a basic knowledge in natural sciences, "never handled a barometer, a compass, a rifle", and moreover, did not have a positivistic, that is, scientific, acquaintance with industry, commerce and modern civilization.⁴⁸ The question was not if Portuguese colonialism needed missionaries but what type of missionaries should be formed. The question was not whether they were regular or secular priests, but were they "modern" missionaries. That is why despite the pervasive nationalism, the possibility of accepting foreign missionaries was also considered in some circles. What was important was to promote a specific type of missionary: the geographer-missionary.⁴⁹

Ironically, the example mobilized to promote the need of geographer-missionaries was that of the French Spiritans. From 1865 to the end of the 1870's their work in Angola and the Congo was permanently obstructed. In the 1880's they have become models. One member of the L.G.S. and a Navy official, Nunes de Freitas Queriol, future Consul in Belgian Congo, wrote a report about the current state of the catholic missions in Congo and Angola. Using the information he gathered from a visit to the Spiritans' Landana mission in 1876, Queriol produced a devastating criticism of the state of religious and missionary affairs in the Portuguese territories. Accompanied by the manager of the most famous Portuguese commercial house in the area, the Castro & Leitão Company, he went to Landana to assess the procedures and results of the work of Fathers Duparquet and Carrie. The first impression he registered was the fact that both of them had highly developed cultural and scientific skills. In fact, according to Queriol, all the missionaries of the "station" were profoundly trained in the botanical, linguistic, medical and geographical subjects. The mission's infrastructures were praised and the education's curricula admired by the Portuguese visitor. Not even the fact that

⁴⁵ Former Real Colégio das Missões Ultramarinas [Royal College of Overseas Missions], founded in 1844. See Manuel Alves da Cunha: "Notas para uma cronologia eclesiástica e missionária do Congo e Angola (1491-1944)", in *Arquivos de Angola*, Luanda, 2nd series, Vol. II, 1944, p. 79.

⁴⁶ Luciano Cordeiro, "Primeiro Relatório Apresentado à Comissão de Missões do Ultramar" and "Segundo Relatório Apresentado à Comissão de Missões do Ultramar", in Luciano Cordeiro, *op. ci.*, pp. 109-134, pp. 135-159.

⁴⁷ It is important to stress that this appreciation was also extended to the qualities of the Portuguese colonial administration.

⁴⁸ *Idem*: pp. 112-113.

⁴⁹ This type of missionary should be instructed in natural sciences, medical sciences, agriculture and several others skills. It was said that they should also be taught the African languages to maximize their presence. *Actas das Sessões da Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa*, 2nd April 1880.

the French was the language used to catechize and instruct was a reason to criticize. The translation of religious texts to the vernacular language, and its use in singing, and the “agricultural education” that domesticated the “native’s innate tendency to rebel against work” highly impressed Queriol. And this was only possible with a specific type of missionary personnel. Since the religious missions were “one of the most political and economic means” that should be used to “consolidate our rule in Africa” and that this continent was being invaded by a class of missionaries that not only contributed to the propagation of faith but also to the “accumulation of scientific knowledge”, it was urgent solve the problems of the Portuguese clergy: “we are creating mercenaries, not missionaries”. Their existence was credited to the official statistical necessities, that is, the urge to counterbalance the accusations of disregarding their ecclesiastical obligations in Angola and in the Congo, of masking the near absence of ill equipped and unprepared clergymen and missionaries in these areas: “in the more strict reality all we have are contractors of religious externals”.⁵⁰

The missionary should present multiple social and professional identities and perform not only his sacred duties but also the more mundane and pragmatic necessities, those which emerged in a context of widespread international competition for native souls but also for colonial resources and knowledge. This utilitarian perspective gradually assumed certain predominance. Some well-known and influent politicians, like Barbosa du Bocage, saw the missionaries’ presence and function as including a moral and religious goal, mainly to get the native’s sympathy and admiration and, in a subsequent phase, a practical, economic objective: the respect for the rights of proprietorship and the habit of work.⁵¹ This approach was to echo in the years to come. Work will be the key to enter the “civilization guild”, a connection and an expression that was to be incessantly used by the Portuguese elites to justify their labour systems and their educational policies in the future.⁵²

But meanwhile the Portuguese metropolitan and colonial authorities still had to cope with the amazing decrease of the clergy available for metropolitan needs and an almost complete hold of the reproduction of seminarians and future missionaries.⁵³ The ecclesiastical pressure remained and the political burden grew heavy. In the period from 1865 to the early 1880’s, the territories of Congo and Angola saw the undeniable increase of missionary agencies, catholic and protestant, coming from different corners of the world, assembling and displaying different strategies and methods of activity, and competing for the souls of the natives. As Portuguese authorities knew but frequently underestimated in their approach to the whole problem, the *Padroado* imposed obligations, as well as granted rights. The construction and conservation of churches, monasteries or seminaries, the nomination and the material support of the clergy were some of the most important and, we may add, were unfulfilled by Portugal in her colonies. The efforts to establish missions under the auspices of the French Spiritans since 1865, culminating with the famous Landana Mission in 1873, and the arrival of two protestant missionaries of British origin in 1878, their visit of the King of Congo d. Pedro V and the installation, one year after, of the first Baptist Missionary Society’s mission in São

⁵⁰ Nunes de Freitas Queriol: “As Missões Católicas em África”, *Boletim da Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa*, 2nd Series, I, 1880, pp. 18-29.

⁵¹ Barbosa du Bocage was one of the leading figures of the L.G.S. and future Navy and Overseas Minister (1882, accumulating the L.G.S.’s presidency with this post) and later Foreign Affairs Minister (1883, where he was replaced by Pinheiro Chagas, also a known member of the L.G.S. in the Navy and Overseas post). *Actas das Sessões da Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa*, 24th April 1880.

⁵² See Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo: *Livros Brancos, Almas Negras. O Colonialismo Português: Programas e discursos (1880-1930)*, Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas da Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 2000 [Unpublished MA Thesis].

⁵³ Both the metropolitan (Cernache do Bom Jardim, Santarém) and the colonial seminaries (in Luanda) continued to face financial difficulties and a persistent lack of proper missionaries.

Salvador propelled the assignment of some Portuguese missionaries to the area in 1881.⁵⁴ Already in 1865, the director of the Luanda seminary, Canon António Ramos de Carvalho, was sent to São Salvador, with the clear instructions to keep an eye on the French Spiritan missionaries and to assess their movements.⁵⁵ But only in 1881, did the Portuguese managed to provide a permanent missionary residence in the Kingdom of Congo, having its capital, São Salvador, as base.

The arrival, in 1878, of two protestant missions, the Livingstone Inland Mission or Congo Inland Mission and the English Baptist Missionary Society missions, augmented the urgency to revitalize the missionary presence in the Congo territories that were claimed to be Portuguese.⁵⁶ In April of 1878, the Governor-General Caetano Albuquerque wrote to the Navy and Overseas Ministry saying that the arrival of the two missionaries was a work of the British government, guided by a calculated “diabolic plan”.⁵⁷ The Baptist Missionary Society’s mission arrived in the Congo River mouth early in 1878. Formed by two missionaries coming from the Society’s mission in Cameroon, Georges Grenfell and Thomas J. Comber, their first action was to write to the King of the Congo, expressing their wishes to establish a mission in São Salvador.⁵⁸ This contingent was to increase in the years to follow, but the mere presence of this small number of protestant missions in the territories of the Congo and Angola amplified the worries of Portuguese authorities.⁵⁹

In the light of these events it was no surprise that an ardent patriotic missionary, Father António Barroso, was appointed in 1880 to revitalize the Portuguese missionary presence in

⁵⁴ Despite some previous appointments to the area, the systematic presence of Portuguese missionaries in this region began in the 1880’s. Among others, see Hélio Esteves Felgas: *História do Congo Português*, Empresa Gráfica do Uige, Carmona, 1958, p. 127.

⁵⁵ J. I. Nkulu Butombe: *op. cit.*, p. 43; Brasília: *op. cit.*, pp. 430, 487; Manuel Nunes Gabriel: *Angola. Cinco Séculos de Cristianismo*, Literal-Sociedade Editora Lda., Queluz, 1978, p. 271.

⁵⁶ The first mission, founded by Henry Grattan Guinness, sent two missionaries, Henry Craven and Strom, to the Congo area in January of 1878. Coming from Liverpool, they arrived in Banana one month later. The Livingstone or Congo Inland Mission, name taken from the China Inland Mission, especially admired by Guinness, was established in Palabala. See E. M. Braekman: *Histoire du Protestantisme au Congo*, Editions de la Librairie des Eclaireurs Unionistes, Brussels, 1961, p. 61; H. Grattan Guinness: *The New World of Central Africa. With a History of the First Christian Mission on the Congo*, London, 1890, p. 192; For the role of this missions within the protestant evangelical revival of the nineteenth century see Andrew Porter: “Evangelical Enthusiasm, Missionary Motivation and West Africa in the Late Nineteenth Century: The Carrer of G. W. Brooke”, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Volume VI (1), October 1977, pp. 27-28.

⁵⁷ Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino [Overseas Historical Archive], Angola, 1st Department, Box 1, official letter from the General-Governor of Angola, Caetano Alexandre de Almeida e Albuquerque (General-Governor between 1876 and 1878) to the Navy and Overseas Ministry, 17-4-1878. Printed in Mário António Fernandes de Oliveira: *Angolana*, I, pp. 133-135.

⁵⁸ E. M. Braekman: *op. cit.*, pp. 67-68; Gustav Warneck: *Outline of a History of Protestant Missions from the Reformation to the Present Time. A Contribution to Modern Church History*, Oliphant Anderson & Ferrier, Edinburgh and London, 1901, pp. 201-202; John Brown Myers (ed.): *The Centenary Volume of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1792-1892*, Baptist Missionary Society, London, 1892, pp. 168-176; René Beeckmans: “Le Centenaire Protestant au Zaïre (1878-1978)”, *Zaïre-Afrique*, Nr. 130, December 1978, p. 590, 592; Lawrence Henderson: *op. cit.*, p. 37; Ruth M. Slade: *English-Speaking Missions in the Congo Independent State (1878-1908)*, Brussels, 1959, pp. 12, 33-37.

⁵⁹ In 1880, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions sent the first American missionaries to Angola, namely to Bailundo and Bié and, six years later, coordinated the arrival of missionaries from the Congregational Foreign Missionary Society of British North America. The wave of American Methodists of the Bishop William Taylor arrived in 1885. Fola Soremekun: *A History of the American Board Missions in Angola, 1880-1940*, Evanston, Illinois, 1965, Ch. II, pp. 46-95; Fola Soremekun: “Religion and Politics in Angola: The American Board Missions and the Portuguese Government, 1880-1892”, *Cahiers D’Études Africaines*, Vol. XI, nr. 43, 1971, p. 342; Lawrence Henderson: *op. cit.*, pp. 51-56. For the establishment of the Methodist mission in the north of the Cuanza, see Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino [Overseas Historical Archive], Angola, 1st Department, Box 5, official letters nr. 189, 344 and 351 from the General-Governor of Angola, 12-5-1885, 5-8-1885 and 8-8-1885; Lawrence Henderson: *op. cit.*, pp. 46-51.

the Congo.⁶⁰ As the recently nominated Bishop of Angola and Congo, D. José Sebastião Neto, wrote to the Governor-General, the urgency of sending the Portuguese missionaries to São Salvador was due to the information of the arrival of “new Protestants missionaries-explorers”, whose aims are “the protestant evangelization and something else”. To cope with this menace, the Portuguese missionaries should carry British dictionaries and, above all, gifts to the *sobas*. Without them, wrote the Bishop, the latter could impede the Portuguese arrival and dislocation from Nóqui to São Salvador.⁶¹ A piano, silver cups and tankards, kegs of rum and bottles of gin were the gifts that were presented to the King of Congo.⁶² The instructions Barroso received could not be more indicative of the purpose that governed his assignment, revealing the important extra-ecclesiastical features of missionary activities. First, he should establish good relations with D. Pedro V (King of Congo) trying to regain the influence that the Portuguese had after supporting the King in the dynastic succession conflict in the early 1860’s, assuming a diplomatic role that could not be regularly performed by the state’s officials in an unrecognized colonial possession.⁶³ This aspect was formidably important since one of the main arguments used by the Portuguese to sustain their “historical rights” was the assertion of their privileged relations with the natives, a fact that proved not only the enduring Portuguese presence in the area but also certified its civilizing virtues. This had an extreme value since the Portuguese were constantly facing accusations of exactly the opposite, as the constant barrage of accusations regarding slavery practices in Portuguese colonies demonstrated. Additionally, the Portuguese were aware of the “diplomatic” moves towards D. Pedro V made by the Protestant missionaries of the Baptist Missionary Society in the years immediately before Father Barroso’s appointment.⁶⁴ Second, Barroso should accumulate information about missionary work and propaganda (national and foreign) and about the foreign explorers and their movements (Stanley was the only one that deserved a mention, what was understandable due to the growing Portuguese suspicion of Leopold’s association manoeuvres).⁶⁵

The same instructions were given to the commander of the *Bengo*, Captain Barreto Mena, especially the instruction to identify “the studies, activities and purposes of the explorer Stanley and of the foreign missions in the Zaire and the Congo”.⁶⁶ In his report, the Captain described the state of total religious abandonment that characterized the area. As to the foreign missionaries’ presence in the area, he identified three: the French Spiritan mission in Boma, a branch of the Landana mission; the Congo Inland Mission in Palabala; and the Baptist Missionary Society mission in São Salvador. According to him, the latter was completely empty and, as far as he could find out, having D. Pedro V as his informer, this was a frequent

⁶⁰ António José de Sousa Barroso was brought up as missionary in the Cernache do Bom Jardim’s seminary and would grant an honorary position within the gallery of praised colonialists. For more information in the life and work of this missionary see António Brásio (ed.): *D. António Barroso. Missionário, Cientista, Missiólogo*, Centro de Estudos Históricos Ultramarinos, Lisboa, 1961, especially pp. XV-LIII.

⁶¹ Letter dated 11th November 1880, two months after their arrival. Printed in Brásio: *idem*, pp. 348-349.

⁶² The Portuguese missionaries were received by 250 carriers to help the mission, sent by the King D. Pedro V. Lawrence Henderson: *op. cit.*, p. 44; For a description of the ceremony in which the presents were given to the King see Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino [Overseas Historical Archive], Angola, Box 1, Captain Barreto Mena to General-Governor of Angola António E. Dantas, 11th March 1881. Partially printed in Brásio: *ibidem*, p. 366.

⁶³ See, among others, François Bontinck: “Pedro V, roi de Kongo, face au partage colonial”, *Africa. Rivista Trimestrale di Studi e Documentazione dell’Istituto Italo-Africano*, 1-2, 1982, pp. 1-52.

⁶⁴ *Idem*, pp. 24-29.

⁶⁵ Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino [Overseas Historical Archive], Angola, Box 1, General-Governor of Angola António E. Dantas to Father Barroso, Luanda, 19-1-1881, confidential instructions. Printed in Brásio: *ibidem*, pp. 352-353.

⁶⁶ Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino [Overseas Historical Archive], Angola, Box 1, General-Governor of Angola António E. Dantas to Captain Barreto Mena, Luanda, 19-1-1881, confidential instructions. Printed in Brásio: *ibidem*, pp. 354-355.

situation.⁶⁷ Stressing the cooperation between scientific, geographical expeditions and religious missions, he commented that “these two missions do everything, except their missionary obligations; they are unstoppable travellers, explorers, geographers, everything, except missionaries”.⁶⁸ The routes opened by the African International Association to enhance its territorial penetration were backed by the missionaries, who used them to try to further their own ends. The Baptist Congo Mission had its base in São Salvador, where they possessed a warehouse to keep the fabrics they used to “negotiate” with the native communities. Their influence on the natives was seen as irrelevant, but their connections with the A.I.A. were not.⁶⁹

Father Barroso’s efforts to obtain the collaboration of D. Pedro V succeeded in June 1883, although the first days of the enterprise were rather difficult as he wrote in the first report he sent the Bishop of Angola and Congo.⁷⁰ The King of Congo assumed loyalty to the Portuguese flag, instead of pledging alliance to the interests of British missionaries.⁷¹ In a report made by the General-Governor of Angola, Ferreira do Amaral, this conquest was seen as extremely important, especially because the Portuguese mission could not compete with the sumptuous offers that the British protestant missionaries gave to the *Mani Congo*, the King of Congo. Father Barroso was described by the Governor-General as the “singular salvation board” that the Portuguese had in the interior “to preserve the reach of our rule in the north coast” of Angola. With the occupation of Ambriz, Landana, the occupation of the Congo was the last element in a triangle that was vital to Portuguese interests and that took part in a scheme of pre-emptive occupation.⁷² The mission in São Salvador had a double purpose: one ecclesiastical, aimed to respond to the successive resistance from the Propaganda Fide to rectify her position regarding the evangelical jurisdictions in the Prefecture of the Congo and to react to the presence of the protestant missionaries in the area; the other, political, designed to preventatively occupy a strategic location that could serve as resource in the ongoing colonial diplomacy, both as example of Portuguese influence in the area (consubstantiating and actualizing the “historical rights” doctrine), but also as a privileged observation point, that is, a propitious spot to assess the movements of foreign forces, whether military, missionary or scientific.

In this regard, despite all the references made to the Belgian and French manoeuvres, both scientific and religious but always perceived as conveying a more significant political relevance, the main focus of concern were the British protestant missionaries’ activities. Actually, the British were seen as the major threat. It is necessary to remember that, for

⁶⁷ Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino [Overseas Historical Archive], Angola, Box 1, Captain Barreto Mena to General-Governor of Angola António E. Dantas, 11th March 1881. Partially printed in Brásio: *ibidem*, pp. 364-370.

⁶⁸ Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino [Overseas Historical Archive], Angola, Box 1, Report from the Commandant of the ship Bengo, Carlos Cândido dos Reis to the General-Governor of Angola, 2-3-1881.

⁶⁹ Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino [Overseas Historical Archive], Angola, Box 1, Report from the Commandant of the ship Bengo, Carlos Cândido dos Reis to the General-Governor of Angola, 2-3-1881. For the connections between Leopold II and the B.M.S. see, among others, Horst Gründer: “Christian Missionary Activities in Africa in the Age of Imperialism and the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885”, pp. 93-94, 97, 98; and Roger Anstey: *Britain and the Congo in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 121-123.

⁷⁰ Printed in António Brásio (ed.): *D. António Barroso. Missionário, Cientista, Missiólogo*, pp. 357-358; See also the excerpts of Father Barroso’s Diary in Sebastião de Oliveira e Brás: *Esboço Biográfico de D. António Barroso*, Porto, 1921, pp. 30-33.

⁷¹ For the relations between the São Salvador Mission and the King of Congo, see the Father Barroso’s report to the Governor-General dated 16th March 1882, printed in Mário António Fernandes de Oliveira: *Angolana*, I, pp. 523-542.

⁷² It is the General-Governor that refers to the missionary presence as an occupation, an anticipatory one. Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino [Overseas Historical Archive], 1st Department, Angola, Box 2, Report from the General-Governor of Angola Francisco Joaquim Ferreira do Amaral, 1-9-1882 to 1-9-1883. Printed in Mário António Fernandes de Oliveira: *Angolana*, I, p. 697.

Portuguese authorities, both in Lisbon and in the colonies, especially Angola, the most important political and diplomatic issue since late 1870's were the ongoing negotiations with the British (and also the French, in the 1880's) with the purpose of seeing the recognition of the territories between the 8° and the 5° 12' latitude South.⁷³ Additionally, the Portuguese elites were somewhat divided between those who defended an Anglo-Portuguese cooperation, like Andrade Corvo⁷⁴, and those who saw the collaboration with the French as more suitable to Portuguese colonial interests and projects.⁷⁵ The Governor-General actively promoted the view that the British were using their missions tactically, while waiting for the right moment to make their occupation move. Despite stating his preoccupation about the "diplomatic" moves that the protestant missionaries were making towards the native chiefs, especially the *Mani Congo*, he praised the excellent result that Father Barroso had produced in his ambassadorial visits to the King. In his own words, the "intelligent and serviceable priest" had understood "the alliance of his evangelical mission with the conveniences of his political one".⁷⁶ The reorganization of the Congo Mission in 1883, granting more material and human resources to the mission, was primarily determined by explicit political purposes.⁷⁷ The days when the Governor-General of Angola systematically denied any kind of support to the ecclesiastical requests in Angola were over.

However, this does not mean that the customary, disapproving appreciation of the ecclesiastical personnel faded. With subtle traces of anti-clericalism, the Governor-General profoundly undervalued the colonial clergymen, criticizing their lack of obedience, discipline and practical knowledge, "more strong in their theological mystical distinctions than in the practical science of leading the spirit and conscience of men". The "science of curing a wound or the knowledge to make a door or a vegetable garden have more influence in the population's liveliness than (...) the liturgical movement executed perfectly", he added. As expected, the example to follow was located in the foreign missionaries, without any distinction about their national or religious provenance. Starting with a more flexible, utilitarian view of the missionaries, a different attitude was required to face the "war to our north dominion that comes from every direction": "not only Stanley, Brazza, the British and the Dutch merchants (...) but also the cabinets of Rome".⁷⁸

For the Portuguese authorities, it was impossible to distinguish the efforts to deal with the foreign territorial manoeuvres in a political and diplomatic sphere from those required to resist what they saw as the ecclesiastical threat, coming from protestant missions but also from foreign catholic circles. In a way, these were clearly connected and inextricable. Accordingly, the continuous colonial diplomacy carried by the Portuguese constantly blurred the differences between ecclesiastical and political aspects. When in 27th September 1880, the Holy See created the Missions of Nyanza and Tanganyika in East Africa and, three days later, the

⁷³ See F. Latour da Veiga Pinto: *Le Portugal et le Congo au XIXe Siècle. Etude d'Histoire des Relations Internationales*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1972, pp. 123-148.

⁷⁴ Portuguese Foreign Minister (1871-1877 and 1878-1879) and Navy and Overseas Minister (1872-1877 and 1879), the main responsible for the devising of an Anglo-Portuguese collaboration plan, having Robert Morier as its privileged interlocutor. *Idem*, p. 127 ff.

⁷⁵ This indecision was remarkably visible within the domestic party politics and had consequences in the Portuguese diplomatic relations with both countries. For a synthesis of the general process see Roger Anstey, "Some reflections on anglo-portuguese African relations in the nineteenth-century", in *Actas do Congresso Internacional de História dos Descobrimentos*, Lisboa, Vol. VI, 1961, pp. 1-19.

⁷⁶ This information is contained in the annual report made by the General Governor. Mário António Fernandes de Oliveira: *Angolana*, I, pp. 643-756; p. 701.

⁷⁷ Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino [Overseas Historical Archive], 1st Department, Angola, Box 3, official letter nr. 42, 15th January 1883, plus four appendices. Printed in Mário António Fernandes de Oliveira: *Angolana*, I, pp. 583-592.

⁷⁸ Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino [Overseas Historical Archive], 1st Department, Angola, Box 2, Report from the General-Governor of Angola Francisco Joaquim Ferreira do Amaral, 1-9-1882 to 1-9-1883. Printed in Mário António Fernandes de Oliveira: *Angolana*, I, pp. 709-710, 755-756.

Missions of meridional and northerly High-Congo (the latter attributed to the White Fathers of Cardinal Lavigerie), the Portuguese authorities saw it as the confirmation of a growing and massive international appetite for their African possessions. And it was not merely a product of religious competition, between the hegemonic plans of Lavigerie and the Spiritans and the Combonians, or a result of a catholic effort to tackle the “protestant menace”. In the 29th January 1881, the Foreign Affairs Ministry immediately instructed the Portuguese ambassador in Rome to protest vehemently against what it saw as an ecclesiastical restriction of Portuguese jurisdiction in the area of the Congo that had unquestionable political motivations and consequences. As the Marquis of Tomar, the Portuguese ambassador in the Holy See, affirmed, the Portuguese African colonial territories were facing a total invasion of foreign missions, Catholics and Protestants, and it was urgent to control this flow by whatever means at their disposal. On 10th May of the same year, he presented a protest note to the Holy See, opposing the creation of the Congo Missions and of the Prefecture of Cimbebásia and stating that the Holy See should immediately solve these ecclesiastical disputes that had only one effect: the propagation of Protestant missions in the areas covered by the Propaganda Fide’s decision.⁷⁹

Since the political consequences of these ecclesiastical decisions, starting with renewal of Congo prefecture of 1865 and ending with the new territorial ecclesiastical arrangements of the 1880’s, were perceived as more relevant than their immediate religious effects, the Portuguese authorities decided to expand their reaction to the recent Propaganda Fide’s resolution. The protection of the *Padroado*’s rights was essentially a resistance to the multiple violations of Portuguese “historical rights” to the sovereignty of the Congo zone. For that reason the Portuguese protests should not restrict themselves to the secrecy of diplomatic schemes. The L.G.S. was given the duty by the Portuguese government to produce a document to refute, on several levels, the assumptions manifested in the referred decision. The already mentioned Commission for Overseas Missions took the job. The result was an erudite and scholarly memorandum, translated into French and entitled *Droits de Patronage du Portugal en Afrique*, dated 11th April 1881. Its aim was not only to demonstrate the illegitimacy that characterized the Propaganda Fide’s recent disposition regarding the ecclesiastical delimitations of the Congo area, since it overlooked ancient agreements between the Portuguese state and the Holy See, but also to show how it was contrary to the more secular, political and administrative dimensions of the problem, that is, the Portuguese sovereignty and colonial rule in Africa. It was not only the spiritual jurisdictions that were disregarded. To recognize and accept the decision was to diminish the Portuguese religious and ecclesiastical authority and simultaneously, although clearly more crucial, to devalue the Portuguese proclaimed political authority over those territories, thus opening a dangerous precedent and disrupting the overall diplomatic strategy that was being presented in the international arena, both in bilateral negotiations (with the French and, essentially, with the British) and, in a near future, in multilateral conferences, such as the Berlin West African Conference.⁸⁰

The reply produced by the Holy See to the first Portuguese memorandum did not acknowledge the fact that, as happened during all the period after 1865, the doctrine of “historical rights” merged political and religious evidences and motives and could not, for strategic reasons, separate them. The fact that the Holy See asked Cardinal Lavigerie, seen by the Portuguese as a representative of French’s colonial purposes, and Frédéric Levavasseur, Superior of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, to produce a counter-document to respond to the Portuguese memorandum of 11th April 1881 clearly proved the case.⁸¹ The reply, sent to the

⁷⁹ Brásio: *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 547-549, 614-616; J. I. Nkulu Butombe: *op. cit.*, pp. 51-52.

⁸⁰ *Droits de Patronage du Portugal en Afrique, sur la responsabilité du Ministère de la Marine et des Colonies*, Lisbon, 1881, pp. 3-18; Brásio: *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 583-604; Luciano Cordeiro: *op. cit.*, pp. 204-221.

⁸¹ For an overall analysis of these aspects see P. A. Roeykens: *La Politique Religieuse de L’Etat Indépendant du Congo. Documents. Léopold II, le Saint-Siege et les Missions Catholiques dans L’Afrique Equatoriale (1876-1885)*, A.R.S.O.M., Brussels, 1965; J. I. Nkulu Butombe: *op. cit.*, pp.55-56.

Marquis de Tomar in the 26th January 1882, was based almost entirely in the report made by Father Levavasseur and essentially tried to argue for cooperation between catholic missions, in order to cope with the wide spreading Protestantism in those areas. This was a reply that dealt exclusively with ecclesiastical issues, overlooking the fact that for the Portuguese the political, administrative and territorial questions were far more important.⁸² The Commission for Overseas Missions produced another memorandum, dated 1st March 1883, contesting the Holy See's reply and reasserting the Portuguese historical rights to the *Padroado* and Portuguese sovereignty rights to the territories in which the Propaganda Fide redefined ecclesiastical jurisdictions in the Congo.⁸³ The Holy See never answered. The fact that the "Congo question" was transformed into an international diplomatic problem, which ultimately led to the 1884's Anglo-Portuguese Treaty and to the Berlin West African Conference (1884-1885), recommended a careful posture by the Holy See, which managed to understand that her "purely" ecclesiastical reasoning easily conflicted not only with the purposes of internal organizations but also with the "reason" of states: The Portuguese defending their ancient rights, the French protecting their Spiritans and Leopold supporting the B.M.S and planning the emergence of the Belgian Scheut missionaries.⁸⁴

Despite the fact that the outcome of the Berlin West Africa Conference, namely the international agreement upon the "religious freedom" consecrated in the 6th Article of the General Act, apparently solved numerous contending claims, Portuguese elites persisted to assert ecclesiastical jurisdiction outside Portugal's internationally recognized territories, producing one last memorandum in 28th January 1887. One problem endured: how to match the principle of religious freedom with the submission of catholic missions to an ecclesiastical authority controlled by a state, that is, Portugal?⁸⁵ The Portuguese desperately wanted to preserve that ecclesiastical authority, which included territories of the French Congo and of the recently formed Congo International State. After years insisting in the association between politics and religion, Portugal unsuccessfully tried to dissociate the Berlin Conference's political and religious consequences and the *Padroado* rights. The bond between ecclesiastical and political claims had been broken. It was only in 1893 that these pretensions were abandoned, at least in what related to the extension of the *Padroado* outside Portuguese sovereign territories. The political and territorial limits of Portuguese West Africa were finally defined. The *Padroado* rights were only subjected to precise delimitation in the Missionary Agreement of 1940.

⁸² In fact, the Holy See's reply was the Italian translation of Levavasseur's report. Brásio: *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 665-678; Luciano Cordeiro: *op. cit.*, pp. 178-185.

⁸³ The second memorandum also tried to dispute, point by point, the ecclesiastical arguments presented by the Holy See's reply. Additionally, it was stated that Portugal was in perfect conditions to fulfil the spiritual necessities of her overseas territories, being able to mobilize the material and personnel's resources to cope with them. *Droits de Patronage du Portugal en Afrique*, Lisbon, 1883, pp. 19-54; Luciano Cordeiro: *op. cit.*, pp. 221-262; Brásio: *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 141-197.

⁸⁴ Storme: *op. cit.*, p. 272, 276-277.

⁸⁵ Butombe: *op. cit.*, p. 73.

Italian traders in 19th century South Asia

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The presence of Italian commercial operators in the 19th century India experienced two different phases. The first one, roughly from the 1840s to the late 1870s, witnessed the establishment of the first Italian enterprises on the Indian subcontinent, which sought the support of their respective home-authorities first and of the Italian Government after 1861. The second phase, from the late 1880s to the World War First, was characterised by an increasing interest towards Asia, namely India, China and Japan, as well as by several initiatives undertaken by entrepreneurs and industrialists to enhance trading relations with Asia. Between the two phases, as an essential turning point, the 1880s represented an important period of transition during which large part of the industrial and commercial elite as well as some enlightened members of the ruling class of the recently unified Italian Kingdom began to turn their attention to Asia, as a source of supply for raw materials as well as a new potential market for the output of the growing domestic industry. Further encouraged by a favourable international conjuncture which followed the world prices fall of the previous decade, Italian businessmen tried to widen their commercial horizons exploring new markets. South Asian seemed to offer manifold chances and, as repeatedly claimed by the bourgeoisie of some port cities, notably Genoa and Venice, Italy could not miss such chances. The idea that it would have been extremely worthy to improve trading relations with that part of the world, found a concrete underpinning in the growth of the trade exchanges between Italy and India during the last decades of the 19th century. Italian imports from South Asia grew fast from the 1885 onwards, and the necessity of balancing importations and exportations –the latter did not match imports- acted as an additional stimulus which motivated Italian traders to undertake concrete initiatives. The awareness that the opportunities offered by India could be seized only through the introduction of some specific measures, -such as for instance the implementation of the Italian mercantile marine, the grant of special facilities for those who engaged in import-export from and to South Asia, the consociation among entrepreneurs and industrialists interested in operating in the Indian Ocean, and in Asia overall, etc....-, slowly came out and led to several remarkable initiatives undertaken jointly by entrepreneurs, industrialists and commercial operators, with the help in most cases of the local Chambers of Commerce. In the first decades of the 20th century even the Government got involved in several initiatives to improve Italian commercial expansion in South Asia.

This paper focuses mainly on the first phase of the Italian commercial presence in South Asia. Italian commercial presence in the 19th century India was dependent upon at least five factors, whose interplay determined more or less favourable conditions for the Italian traders, and affected their behaviour, their activities and their way of approaching the market. The factors are as follows:

- 1- The internal conditions of the Italian peninsula in the 19th century.
- 2- The attitude of the Italian government towards trade and Italian trade policy.
- 3- The progressive economic growth and the fast industrial development of the last decades of the 19th century which generated the will to explore new markets.

4- Political and economic changes occurred in South Asia during the 19th century. The gradual dismantlement of the East India Company, the power-switch from the company to the British direct rule, and the structural transformations of the Indian economy, influenced Italian commercial presence.

5- The specific condition of the Italian traders which found themselves in the space of intersection between colonizers and colonized.

The spread of Italian traders in South Asia was thus determined by a combination of several political and economic factors. Such factors can be ranked in two groups; the first group comprises those factors which originating from the particular situation of the Italian peninsula before and after the unification, are strictly related to the Italian economic and political development during the 19th century. The second group includes those factors which can be ascribed to the economic and political changes occurred in South Asia and to the deep modifications which took place in the Indian economic life, especially from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. These structural modifications turned India from a net exporter, with a massive balance of trade surplus, mainly based on its well-developed low-cost cotton textile production, into a net importer¹. Such far-reaching transformations interplaying with the new forces unleashed by the progressive dismantlement of the East India Company and its economic and political powers², sharply redesigned Indian economy. In the early 1840s the first signs of a crucial modification were already visible in the nature of the exports: the world-wide appreciated finished Indian textiles were gradually replaced by the raw cotton being exported to Britain and Europe to be manufactured by the new steam-driven machinery. Additionally Indian foreign trade was strongly shaken by some crucial changes which modified substantially long-distance trade during the 19th century, with the major occurrence by the 1850s. The first deep change occurred in transports, where some pivotal improvements helped reduce prices and broaden markets. From the 1830s, due to the introduction of steam power, transports and especially maritime connections started improving outstandingly. Steamships, which left at scheduled intervals and which followed regular routes, were introduced, making the connections between India and Europe faster and predictable. In the 1869, which can be considered somehow the turning point of Indian Ocean shipping, the Suez Canal was opened. Its opening shortened the distance and made safer the route to the Indian Ocean. The most visible upshot of the interplay of all these factors was probably the rise of European private trading companies, which gradually had began to set foot on the Indian subcontinent from the first decades of the 19th century, taking advantage from the expiration of the EIC's royal charter and the official end of its commercial monopoly over India. The liberalisation of the Indian market and the power-switch from the Company to the direct rule of the British Government³, further prompted European companies to establish themselves in India. The presence of European trading companies arose significantly in the second half of the 19th century, being the new face of the international trade on the subcontinent. Moreover the liberalization of the Indian market during the so-called 'free trade era', represented an additional factor which stimulated European traders to move to India. In 1837, on April 12th, the Governor of India promulgated the *Foreign Trade Act*, and almost ten years later, in 1848, the tariff for the territories under the rule of the EIC was radically modified, and Indian ports

¹ Mitchell, B. R., *International historical statistics: Africa, Asia & Oceania, 1750-2000*, New York, 2003.

² In 1813 the royal charter of the English East India Company expired and the Charter Act passed by the British Parliament abolished officially the commercial monopoly of the company, except the exclusive right of trading with the dominions of Chinese Empire and trading in tea. However, due to several technical reasons mostly related to some problems in the balance of payments, the EIC kept trading in the Indian territories under semi-monopoly conditions until 1833.

³ With the promulgation of the *Government of India Act*, the British government officially abolished the English East India Company and took over all its administrative and political powers.

were open to foreign ships which could enjoy the same conditions of the British mercantile marine. Often defined as a system of prompting and supporting imports of British products through both formal and informal measures, the free trade era opened up great and unexpected opportunities to those who wanted to launch new business ventures in South Asia. Forbidden to all EIC's competitors for nearly one century, India now immediately appeared as a new, appealing '*world of opportunities*'⁴. And the immediate effect of the opening of trade was naturally the increase of imports and exports as well as the spectacular widespread diffusion of commercial activities, resulting in the fast-growing presence of European agency houses, especially during the last four decades of the 19th century.

In the wake of other European firms, also Italians started turning their attention to India, which was perceived with other Asian regions, namely China and Japan, as the new frontier for international business, and, by the mid-nineteenth century, they began to establish themselves there. Obviously, the presence of Italian traders was not a new phenomenon of the 19th century; in fact Italian merchants had been always present along the maritime trading routes which linked Europe with South Asia. Italian merchants had begun to travel and trade extensively in the India Ocean following the Portuguese commercial expansion in the 15th century. Portuguese ships departing towards East had often on board a handful of Italian merchants, usually from Venice or Genoa, whose powerful merchant communities were strongly present in Lisbon. However, in the 19th century the Italian commercial presence in India became somewhat different, the difference lying in the subject of the commercial enterprise as well as in the organizational structure and in the purpose of the enterprise itself. If high profits were the mere goal of all commercial enterprises and the main reason why Italians moved to South Asia, from the last two decades of the 19th century onwards Italian commercial operators aimed not only at pursuing their own private aims, but also at enhancing the trading relations between their homeland and India.

Before the unification under the Piedmontese rule, the presence of Italian trading companies in South Asia was rather limited, the reason lying on the one hand, in the internal turmoil which characterised Italian political life in a time when the peninsula was difficultly finding its way to the unification; and on the other, in the presence of EIC, which was still in charge for the administration of the Indian territories, though deprived of its commercial monopoly. The presence of the EIC left little room to traders not formally linked to the company, and this represented a concrete difficulty for those who wanted to operate in the Indian territories before the 1858. Italian traders were even more affected by such difficulty. Deprived in the beginning of any kind of institutional support, and not adequately backed by a national authority, they had to operate within the marginal space the company left to external traders. The absence of any form of national support along with the specific condition in which Italian traders found themselves, forced them to find alternative channels to access the Indian Ocean trading circuits. Moreover their specific condition – being neither colonizers nor colonized- prompted Italian traders to develop *ad hoc* entrepreneurial strategies in order to place themselves as successful as possible in the Indian economic environment.

Which kind of strategies did Italian traders develop?

Being external traders not linked to an official colonial power which could support them, the Italians had to pull themselves by their own bootstraps, relying extensively upon their own resources. They elaborated commercial strategies mainly based on three interconnected elements: family ties, personal relationships, and cooperation with local economic elite. Family and personal relationships played a key-role in the making of the Italian overseas commercial activities, and were effective tools to overcome the difficulties related to their condition of 'outsiders'. Italian entrepreneurial culture is deeply rooted in family, and

⁴ Jones, G., *Merchant to Multinationals, British trading companies in the 19th and 20th centuries*, Oxford, 2000.

family ties have been extremely important in the making of the Italian modern business enterprises. Not surprisingly, Italian companies in South Asia tended to associate members of the family with the allocation of resources, power and responsibility. An organizational structure based on family ties is to be seen as an effective solution to face the high transaction and agency costs that operating in the Indian market involved. Furthermore the coincidence between the family and the firm offered the chance to gain some practical advantages: first of all the reduction of internal transaction and agency costs, and secondly it gave them the necessary flexibility to operate in a new economic environment. The familial structure of most Italian firms was in this perspective fundamental in providing a rapid response to market changes on the basis of its information and trust and hence low transaction costs. Large number of the Italian firms active in South Asia were founded and run by a dominant family: the firm was first of all a 'family business'. In most cases the office located in Italy fulfilled the role of Mother Company while the office in India acted as a branch. Overseas branches were entrusted to male relatives, who settled in India in the period during which they were managing the branch. Economic literature too often has not acknowledged the role of family-run business in the modern economic growth. It has been given for granted that the evolution of business organization proceeds from less complex to more sophisticated, and thus effective organizational structures. Less complex models, such as family firms, have been considered less evolved forms of business organization and therefore less successful. Recent research however, has put forward the idea that this kind of pyramidal evolutionary model should be re-thought under the light of the spread and surviving of family businesses even in present days. Italian economic growth in particular, owes much to family business, which played a great role in shaping and orienting Italian industrial and commercial development in the 19th and 20th centuries.

For traders working in a colonial setting, without benefiting from the legal and economic facilities of the colonizers or enjoying the countless practical advantages of the native mercantile communities, a model of commercial organization based on family ties and kinship, presented the indubitable advantage to be more flexible and adaptable. And flexibility and adaptability were important requisites in order to successfully operate in the rapidly changing Indian market.

A family-based business organization was usually combined with another essential element: a broad network of personal relationships. Likewise family ties, personal relationships represented another important component in the making of the Italian commercial activities. In a time when business was still mostly dependent upon personal reputation, kinship and private networks, an extensive net of personal relationships was an extraordinarily effective device, which allowed Italian traders to get easier access to information and thereby to gain competitive advantages. In their networks Italian traders encompassed either the commercial elite of their place of origin or the local elite, both European and natives. The links with local commercial elite were particularly important, because connections with native merchants and entrepreneurs offered the chance to get a more direct access to the market bypassing British dominance. Historical evidence and recent research on trade Diasporas have shown that when formal channels to enter the market are closed or difficultly accessible, external traders had to find alternative, usually informal channels to operate in the market. In the Indian economic environment informal channels were dominated by local people -the native mercantile communities- which also played the vital and essential role of intermediaries. In the Indian market commercial intermediation was fundamental. Good commercial intermediaries could mark the difference between a successful or unsuccessful business. Italian companies developed tight links with local commercial and entrepreneurial elite. Connections with their local counterpart were essential to access both supply and distribution channels. Interestingly the Italian traders tended to be linked to native entrepreneurship or to search for local financial backing in those regions where the colonial power was less invasive and left enough room for

native entrepreneurs to emerge. Also other European traders could be part of the personal networks built up by the Italians. In fact when Italian traders found it strategically convenient they did not hesitate to open the doors of their companies to British or other Europeans. Close relationships with local commercial elite or specific trading castes were therefore a strategically relevant entrepreneurial tool to gain easier access to local markets, and to production and distribution channels. Sometimes the links with native mercantile communities went beyond the mere business collaboration, and resulted in a more intimate relationship, as occurred when Italians married Indian women⁵. From this perspective, close relationships with local economic elite appear as one of the most important devices which gave them the opportunity to gain relevant competitive advantages. Commercial strategies based on the combination of the above-mentioned elements also compensated Italian traders for the absence of a national support, which was considered by them extremely detrimental to their commercial activities in the Indian Ocean.

The case of the first Italian company which set foot in South Asia is paradigmatic in that sense, and it epitomizes somehow the way Italian traders operated in India until the late 1880s. The *Oliva & Casella* firm, belonging to *Giuseppe Casella* and *Bartolomeo Oliva*, was established in Calcutta in 1840 at a time when Italy was still divided into many independent principalities, and had no colonial ambitions. Calcutta was not a casual choice, of course. There is little doubt that in the period under review Bengal was the core area of British economic interests, and Calcutta, as the main urban centre of the region was for logistic reasons a particularly suitable place to launch a new business. Throughout the 19th century Bengal registered the highest concentration of Italian firms. The tendency shown by the Italians to concentrate their activities in Calcutta and in its surrounding areas was also determined by the facilities and the good infrastructures which that area could offer, and which were difficult to find elsewhere. During the two last decades of the century, however, Italian traders switched their attention to Bombay, which became in the 1890s the most important Asian market for Italy. Statistical data confirmed that the trading exchanges between Italy and the Bombay Presidency increased steadily from the 1880s onwards⁶. But when *Oliva & Casella* opened their office in Calcutta, the city was still the centre of the Italian interests. Formally citizens of the Kingdom of Sardinia, to which Genoa was annexed in the 1815 after the Congress of Vienna, the two partners acquired an enviable position in the business environment of Calcutta. Respected and well-known, they were able to thrive successfully their commercial activities, even in a marketplace marked by a high level of competitiveness as the Indian one was. The personal networks they built up both in Calcutta⁷ and in their place of origin, Genoa, were an additional effective tool which enabled them to further develop their business. In a time when personal relations and reputation were still crucial factors in business, the company extensively exploited informal channels in order to gain competitive advantages. The appointment of G. Casella as consul for the Kingdom of Sardinia, gave to the company a further chance to widen its commercial activities. However, the special position in which the company found itself due to Casella's new role as the Italian diplomatic delegate, did not lead to the institutional support the two partners would have expected. Casella's official role was undoubtedly an additional positive element, but it did not grant them the commercial and economic facilities they constantly asked for. In his letters and in his recurrent reports to the Sardinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Casella often pointed out that it would have been advisable and very helpful to improve, by whatever means the Sardinian Government

⁵ The cases of Italians who married Indian women, even if exceptions are to be seen in this perspective.

⁶ Palomba G., *L'Italia commerciale all'estero*, Cagliari, 1889.

⁷ Giuseppe Casella had married the daughter of a Calcutta businessman who owned a foundry. His family ties allowed him to get easier access to the Calcutta's commercial environment and gain a good reputation among British businessmen as well as colonial administrators.

considered appropriate, the trading relations with India⁸. In a memorandum⁹ sent to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in 1846, *Casella & Oliva* openly asked for support, proposing to create a Genoa-based shipping company to trade with India and Asia. The underlying idea was that the new company would have linked Genoa, by far the most important seaport in Italy at that time, with the Indian Ocean main seaports, and by doing so it would have strengthened the commercial relations between Italy and South Asia. Casella assured the Piedmontese Government that the benefits derived from the opening of the new trading route, would have been so high as to compensate the huge expenditures that the enterprise required. In the same letter the company also asked for some financial facilities to store Asian goods coming from the Indian Ocean in the Genoese docks as well as the exemption from storage charges for at least one year. The proposal was examined and finally rejected by the Sardinian Government, which did not consider the creation of an Italian shipping company as useful as the company claimed. Unfortunately the initiative of *Oliva & Casella* was seen to a certain extent as an attempt to secure private businesses through the official support of the state. Being essentially a continental country with a trade policy shaped by continental interests, the Kingdom of Sardinia did not understand correctly the importance of that proposal, which reflected not only the ambitions of the Italian traders already active in India, but rather the aspirations of a wider category: the Genoese mercantile community. The Genoese bourgeoisie, which had deep interests in maritime trade, fully supported the initiative of the two entrepreneurs¹⁰, and saw the eventual positive effects that it could have on the entire Genoese economy so deeply dependent upon maritime trade. Therefore to improve trading relations with South Asia, with or without the Piedmontese's official support, became a key-issue for the Genoese mercantile community. The following lines from an article published by a Genoese magazine, the *Corriere mercantile*, gave voice to the expectations of the entrepreneurial and commercial elite: << parecchi de' nostri negozianti illuminati ed avveduti nei primi saggi di spedizione di essi or praticate nei mari delle Indie ritraggono lucrosi benefici onde animati a maggiori e continuate intraprese possono approvvigionare il nostro paese direttamente di produzioni di cui siano tributari alle nazioni intermediarie¹¹>>. As the most important Italian seaport with a massive trade volume, and with a strong commercial tradition which dated back to Middle Age, Genoa was particularly sensitive to all the issues regarding trade, and especially international maritime trade¹². Moreover the successful commercial enterprises of those who had already established stable trading networks with the South Asian seaports, acted as an additional stimulus in generating the awareness that something had to be done to enhance Italian presence in the Indian Ocean. The support given to *Oliva & Casella* reveals that Genoese commercial elite was deeply aware of the possibilities that trading with South Asia could offer; but they also knew that the only way to take full advantage of such possibilities was first, the reorganization of the Genoese mercantile marine to meet the requirements of the new patterns of development in long- distance trade; secondly the introduction of preferential tariffs to adequately back those who engaged in international trade with the Indian Ocean; last the negotiation and implementation of trade agreements with other countries, and particularly with Great Britain and its overseas possessions. Some of the above-mentioned aims could be pursued jointly by commercial operators and entrepreneurs without the Government's support, but the others needed the intervention of the State. The Kingdom of Sardinia was continuously asked to

⁸ Diplomatic correspondence between Casella and the Sardinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, MAE, ASD, Moscati VI, *Consolato di Calcutta*.

⁹ MAE, ASD, Moscati VI, *Consolato Italiano a Calcutta*.

¹⁰ Genoese commercial elite was always very active in supporting their fellow citizens who had engaged in trading with Asia.

¹¹ <<Most of our enlightened and shrewd merchants have gained lucrative profits by their commercial traffics with the Indian Ocean, and if they were properly supported in their enterprises they could supply directly our country with all those products we now have to purchase from intermediaries>>. *Corriere Mercantile di Genova*, no. 200, 21st September 1846.

¹² Not surprisingly many Italian companies active in South Asia came from Genoa.

support through the adoption of specific measures, the activities of the Italian traders, and particularly the Genoese traders in South Asia, but it did very little to satisfy the requests of the Genoese entrepreneurial community. The only initiatives undertaken by the Sardinian Government were the revision of the trade agreement with Great Britain and the improvement of the consular network in Asia. In 1851, on February 27th, the Treaty of Trade and Navigation with Great Britain was signed, and it granted equal treatment to both British and Sardinian mercantile fleets in all the territories under the jurisdiction of the Kingdom of Sardinia and in all territories of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland as well as in its overseas possessions¹³. The clause regarding the British overseas possession was extremely important, because it was somehow the result of pressure exerted by the Genoese entrepreneurial and commercial elite on the Sardinian authorities. Although the new treaty represented a step forward, it was not enough for Genoa, which had far greater ambitions. In the same year Genoese shipbuilders and entrepreneurs established, as documented by a letter to the diplomatic delegation of the Kingdom of Sardinia in London, two private companies in order to trade exclusively with the Indies¹⁴. Such initiative confirms how willing and resourceful the Genoese was commercial elite in their purpose of seizing the opportunities that Indian Ocean trade offered.

In spite of the absence of any national support, Italian traders however were able to carry out their commercial activities satisfactorily. *Ad hoc* commercial strategies, personal networks, family ties, connections with the native economic elite and a farsighted capability of accessing the market through informal channels, represented a concrete alternative which compensated Italian traders for the lack of a national support. If such alternative strategies perfectly counterbalanced the lack of national support, it is difficult to say. What it seems clear is that the denial of any official support influenced negatively Italian traders. The Kingdom of Sardinia first, and the unified Italian Kingdom later, which inherited from its predecessor the trade policy, were deaf to the requests of the Italian traders as well as of the commercial elite of those cities which saw in the improvement of the trading relations with South Asia a great chance that Italy could not miss. The enhancement of the consular network and the negotiation of a new treaty with Great Britain, even though important, had no remarkable consequences on the activities of the Italian traders in the subcontinent. Although perfectly integrated in the business environment of Calcutta, the Italian trading houses were aware that the lack of a strong national support was detrimental to their commercial enterprises. In fact, it was evident that those traders which were openly supported by their respective national authorities, had better chances in the difficult and highly competitive market as the Indian one was. In spite of the free trade policy followed by the mother-country, Indian marketplace was still closed and hard to access, especially for external traders, which had to cope with the political supremacy of the British colonizers and the economic power of native merchants. *Casella & Oliva* operated for more than thirty years in Calcutta, thriving profitably their business and becoming, one of the few foreign companies, member of the Chamber of Commerce of Calcutta. In the 1860s the company was taken over by Giuseppe Casella's son, Francesco, who kept managing the firm until the end of the 1870s. The company was involved in a wide range of activities, which spanned from coral and marble importations to textile exportations and to opium trade¹⁵. The fine Italian marble from the Apuane Alps marble-quarries, and the Mediterranean coral (*corallium rubrum*) were in great demand in India. Trading in such products, especially coral, was a very lucrative activity which offered

¹³ Glazier I.A., Bandiera V.N., Berner R.B., *Terms of Trade between Italy and the United Kingdom 1815-1913*, in "The Journal of European Economic History", IV, N.1, 1975.

¹⁴ This specific topic needs to be further researched.

¹⁵ Given the extreme profitability of opium trade, many trading companies found it particularly convenient to enter such trade and to ship opium from Bengal to China seaports. *Oliva & Casella* following the trend, took part in opium trade as collateral activity which allowed them to gain high profits.

high profits, as demonstrated by the increase in coral price during the mid-nineteenth century. The Italian trading house used to chart Italian ships, prevalently Sardinian, to carry goods from India to China and vice versa, and sometimes also to ship merchandise to Australia. However, also non-Italian ships were used. For instance the *Annette*, flying Danish flag, was chartered to carry merchandise to Genoa and from there to the rest of Italy. When the volume of trade increased the company purchased a British ship to carry Asian goods to Europe.¹⁶ *Oliva & Casella* trading house also acted, by virtue of Giuseppe Casella's official role, as commercial intermediary for those who went to eastern India in order to supply silk-worms for the Italian sericulture, dramatically affected by the *pebrine* which was devastating Italian silk-worm breedings in the 1850s¹⁷.

After 1861, as a result of the combination of several internal factors, such as the political unification and its consequences; the introduction all over the country of common norms regulating commercial transactions; and the industrial development of last decades of the 19th century, the presence of Italian traders in South Asia became more intense. Calcutta remained the place with the highest concentration of Italian companies and entrepreneurs, from the 1861 to the turn of the century almost nineteen Italian firms were active there¹⁸. The number includes not only trading companies, but also firms and entrepreneurs involved in other activities, such as confectionery, hotel trade, etc. From the 1870s the presence of Italian traders in India grew even faster, and such growth has to be ascribed to the transformations which were occurring in Italy and especially in the Italian economic life. After two decades of free trade, in the late 1870s Italy switched to protection, raising tariff walls to secure a number of industrial and agricultural products. The first tariff, following the *inchiesta industriale*¹⁹ was introduced in 1878 and it aimed at protecting mainly textiles; the second tariff went into effect in 1887 and it protected especially metallurgical goods and wheat. The shift in economic policy impacted on the Italian economic life in many ways. With a domestic market partially secured by tariffs²⁰, Italian entrepreneurs started looking at new markets far away from those countries which had been since then Italian traditional commercial partners. Eastern Europe, America, Middle and Far East came to the fore as regions where to launch new business ventures. The growth of the Italian domestic industry further prompted Italian entrepreneurs to look beyond the narrow European borders, in search of new opportunities. Asia seemed then to offer plenty of opportunities, and China, India and Japan became the main attraction for most Italian entrepreneurs. The increase of the trade exchanges with Asia, from where a wide range of raw materials were supplied, represented an additional stimulus which prompted large part of Italian entrepreneurial elite to turn their attention to Asia. But there was also another important component in the growing interest towards Asia, an hidden element which contributed to transform such interest in concrete initiatives: the memories of a great past of commercial relations between Italy and the Orient. The conviction that Italy had to go back to its ancient commercial splendour combined with the expansionistic feelings of the rising imperialism of the end of the 19th century further nourished the idea of the Italian commercial expansion towards East. Contemporary press gave voice to such feelings, putting forward the idea that Italian economic elite had to make a jointed effort to improve trade relations with Asia.

The combination of all these elements resulted in a wide range of initiatives, undertaken by entrepreneurs, local and regional institutions and in the end also by the state. The most

¹⁶ The *Rhone*, a 500 tons ship, was purchased from an Englishman. British law forbade to all foreigners to own ships flying British flag in the Indian Ocean, and for that reason the ship was registered to a British citizen who acted as a man of straw for the company.

¹⁷ Zanier, C., *Alla ricerca del seme perduto: sulla via della seta tra scienza e speculazione, 1858-1862*, Milan, 1993.

¹⁸ The number is approximate, and includes only the firms officially recorded in the *Indian Commercial Directories*.

¹⁹ In 1870 the Government commissioned an investigation of manufacturing in Italy. This survey led to the adoption of the 1878 tariff, which marked officially the end of the free trade period.

²⁰ Many industrialists complained that the abolition of the forced currency in 1882 cut their protection 10% approximately.

important of all these initiatives, was the creation of the *Consorzio per il Commercio coll'Estremo Oriente*. Promoted by Manfredo Camperio the Consortium was established in Milan in the 1890s, and it gathered most of the leading Italian industries²¹. The main purpose of that institution was initially to favour the exportations of some specific products, such as wines, cotton textile and chemicals, through the opening of Italian commercial agencies in those which were considered key-marketplaces in Asia. Agencies were opened in Alexandria of Egypt, Tunis, Bombay, Hong Kong, Yokohama, Bangkok, Johannesburg, Massaua and Sydney. The *Italian Commercial Agency* (ICA) was opened in Bombay in 1894, and it was managed by *Claudio Boggiano*. The opening of the ICA represented an important step towards the improvement of trading relations with South Asia. The creation of the Consortium and the opening of the ICA inaugurated a new phase for the Italian commercial presence in South Asia. The intensification of the trade exchanges between the two countries, the concrete support given to those who wanted to operate in that part of the world along with a new awareness of the importance of South Asia on the international scenario, opened up new perspectives which favoured a more intense Italian commercial expansion.

²¹ In 1897 the industries which had joined the Consortium were 122; among them there was the *Pirelli*, the *Bastogi*, the *Carpenè e Malvolti*.

PART II: COLONIAL IDEOLOGY VS. IMPERIAL PRACTICE, OR THE OTHER WAY
AROUND?

The National Identity of Angolan White Settlers

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Can we understand European colonization merely in terms of the economic exploitation of Africa's resources and peoples? Relatedly, and of even greater significance for this paper, can we reduce the place of European settlers in Africa only to the role of visible agents of colonialism? Or, on the contrary, were white settlers able to transcend the limits of colonialism and, in so doing, to create (for themselves) a certain kind of local identity, as white settlers had done previously in the Americas? Finally, can we speak properly of an African white settler nationalism, as we currently speak of American nationalism? To answer these questions we will take in consideration the case of Angola. In this paper, we will try to provide a discussion of what we have called the "national identity of Angolan white settlers". This requires that we focus our attention on the periphery, as opposed to the centre or, in other words, the paper will address in the Angolan colonial situation¹, rather than analysing in detail the colonial policy of the Portuguese government. We will proceed by describing the European demographic colonization in Africa, the conditions from which there emerged a kind of Angolan white settler nationalism, its features, evolution and failure to achieve the control of the colonial state, in the context of white settler societies.

As D. K. Fieldhouse has pointed out, settler expansion is "as old as European overseas colonization. Any group of emigrants who established an initial settlement on the tidewater of America, South Africa or Australia regarded the hinterland as a providential endowment for its future existence and growth"². Fieldhouse's comments describe a process in which European whites would settle permanently in a place, establish a new home or even a new country, as was the case with the Greeks on the Mediterranean coast, in the Ancient times. European settler expansion or demographic colonization can be defined by chronology and by its (numeric) dimension. Chronologically, there were three large waves of European settler expansion in the last five hundred years: the first took place in the Spanish, Portuguese and British colonies of the New World. It gave birth to almost all the modern American countries (except the Caribbean and Canada), where white-settlers achieved independence from their Motherlands between the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century. A second wave of settler expansion involved the temperate zones of the British Empire during the nineteenth century. It gave origin to the old British dominions, specifically Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa³, in which self-government was achieved under white settler rule between the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. In the twentieth century, a third wave of settler expansion occurred in some parts of North Africa (Algeria), Southern and Central Africa (Angola, Kenya, Mozambique, Zambia or Northern Rhodesia and Zimbabwe or Southern Rhodesia), the South Pacific (Hawaii

¹ See George Balandier – "The colonial situation: a theoretical approach", in *Africa: Social Problems of Change and Conflict* (Ed. by Pierre L. van den Berghe), pp. 34-61. San Francisco: Chandler, 1965.

² D.K. Fieldhouse – *Economics and Empire, 1830-1914*. London: Cornell Press, 1973, *apud* Harrison M. Wright – *The "New Imperialism". Analysis of Late-nineteenth Century Expansion*. Lexington: D. C. Heath and Company, 1976, p. 186.

³ In Canada and South Africa there were already some small but important non British settler communities, such as the French of Québec (Canada) and the Boers of South Africa.

Islands) and Southern Siberia (Eastern Russia)⁴. It was much weaker than the former two and white settlers were never able to achieve independence under their own rule⁵.

European settler expansion differed also by its (numeric) dimension, in other words, by the demographic quantitative which was involved. We can distinguish three kinds of demographic colonization: limited settlement, as in the early Iberian pre-capitalist colonization of Central and South Americas and as in some twentieth century colonies of Central and Southern Africa (Angola, Kenya, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe); substantial settlement, as in Algeria and South Africa; massive settlement, engulfing the indigenous peoples, as was the case with Indians in the United States and Canada, the Maori in New Zealand and Aborigines in Australia⁶. Massive settler colonies such as Australia, Brazil, Canada or the USA evolved as political and (at least nominally) economically independent countries, creating new nations and especially creating a “New Europe”⁷. Instead, African (substantial or limited) settler colonies such as Algeria, Angola or Southern Rhodesia were never able to evolve as (internationally recognized) independent states and they were even less successful in creating new nations. South Africa was a temporary exception: its independence in 1910 should be considered in the historical context of the first decade of the twentieth century, especially in the context of the difficulties experienced by British rule after the Boer war. Nevertheless, even in South Africa white settler rule was put to an end in 1994.

Tables I and II provide some demographic data regarding the evolution of white settlement in a number of African countries between 1920 and 1970.

⁴ D.K. Fieldhouse – *Ob. Cit.*, 1973, p. 186: “ In the still colonial world [twentieth century] the most probable regions for future settler expansion were Australia, Southern and Central Africa, the South Pacific, Southern Siberia and North Africa”. In Algeria, Angola and Mozambique there were already some small but ancient settler communities.

⁵ Southern Rhodesia’s (Zimbabwe) Unilateral Declaration of Independence declared under white settler rule in 1965 wasn’t recognized by the international community. In 1980 the country achieved independence under black majority rule.

⁶ Leo Kuper – “The theory of the plural society, race and conquest”, in *Sociological Theories: Race and Colonialism* (Dir. UNESCO). Poole: UNESCO, 1980, p. 253.

⁷ About the idea of “New Europe” see: Alfred W. Crosby – *Ecological Imperialism: the Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

TABLE I

Country	1920 – Population ⁸		1940 – Population ⁹		
	White Settlers	Total Population	White Settlers	Total Population	
South Africa	1.521.000	21,9	2.732.000	23,2	11.775.000
Algeria	791.370	13,8	946.013	13,2	7.147.457
Zimbabwe	33.620	3,8	68.954	4,7	1.467.106
Angola	20.700	0,6	44.083	1,2	3.737.947
Mozambique	11.000	0,4	27.438	0,5	5.086.000
Kenya	9.700	0,2	22.800	0,5	4.884.000
Zambia	8.765	0,5	13.000	0,6	2.099.000

TABLE II

Country	1960 - Population ¹⁰		1970 – Population ¹¹		
	White Settlers	Total Population	White Settlers	Total Population	
South Africa	3.008.000	18,8	3.773.000	17,3	21.794.000
Algeria	1.050.000	9,7	-	-	-
Zimbabwe	221.500	5,8	271.000	4,5	5.971.000
Angola	172.529	3,6	290.000	5,1	5.673.046
Mozambique	97.245	1,5	200.000	2,4	8.234.000
Kenya	53.000	0,6	-	-	-
Zambia	75.000	3,3	-	-	-

Despite the different dimensions of the settler communities, during the twentieth century South Africa, Algeria, Zimbabwe (Southern Rhodesia), Angola, Mozambique, Kenya and Zambia (Northern Rhodesia) were all settler societies. At this point, we might clarify the definition of this term. As Paul Mosley has noted, a settler society is “a country partly settled by European landowner-producers, who have a share in government, but who nonetheless

⁸ South Africa (data of 1921): Christopher Saunders *et alia*s – *Historical Dictionary of South Africa*. London: The Scarecrow Press, 2000, p. XXXV. Angola: Walter Marques – *Problemas do desenvolvimento económico de Angola*. Luanda: Junta de Desenvolvimento Industrial, 1962, pp. 40-42. Algeria (data of 1921): Brune Étienne – *Les européens d’Algérie et l’indépendance algérienne*. Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1968, p. 18. Mozambique: (data of 1918) Gervase Clarence-Smith – *The Third Portuguese Empire, 1825-1975. A Study in Economic Imperialism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985, p. 134. Kenya (data of 1921) Alison Smith – “The immigrant communities (1): the Europeans”, in *History of East Africa* (Dir. D. A. Low; Alison Smith – Vol. III). Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976, p. 576. Zambia: Donald George Morrison *et alia*s. – *Black Africa: a Comparative Handbook*. New York: The Free Press, 1972, pp. 14 e 483. Zimbabwe (data of 1921): Rita Cruise O’Brien – “White society in Africa”, *Tarikh*, vol. 6, n.º 2. Lagos: University of Lagos, 1977, p. 20. The black population of Zambia and Zimbabwe were consistently under-evaluated until independence was achieved.

⁹ South Africa (data of 1946): Christopher Saunders *et alia*s – *Ob. Cit.*, 2000, p. XXXV. Angola: *1.º Recenseamento da População de Angola*, 1940. Algeria (data of 1936): Denise Bouche – *Histoire de la colonisation française. Flux et reflux (1815-1962)* (Tome 2). [Sl.]: Fayard, 1991, p. 337. Moçambique: *1.º Recenseamento da População de Moçambique*, 1940. Kenya (data of 1941): Alison Smith – *Ob. Cit.*, 1976, p. 576. Zambia (data of 1939): Shula Marks – “Southern Africa”, *The Oxford History of the British Empire. The Twentieth Century* (Dir. Judith M. Brown; WM. Roger Louis). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 553. Zimbabwe (data of 1941): Rita Cruise O’Brien – *Ob. Cit.*, 1977, p. 20.

¹⁰ South Africa: Christopher Saunders *et alia*s – *Ob. Cit.*, 2000, p. XXXV. Angola: *3.º Recenseamento da População de Angola*, 1960. Algeria: Bruno Étienne – *Ob. Cit.*, 1964, p. 18. Mozambique: *3.º Recenseamento da População de Moçambique*, 1960. Kenya (data of 1961): Alison Smith – *Ob. Cit.*, 1976, pp. 576-577. Zambia: D. Abshire; M. Samuels - *Portuguese Africa: a Handbook*. New York: Praeger, 1969, pp. 205-206. Zimbabwe (data of 1961): Larry Bowman – *Politics in Rhodesia: white power in an African state*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1973, p. 13.

¹¹ In 1962 Algeria achieved independence under non-European majority rule. The majority of settlers left the country before or soon after independence. In 1964 Kenya and Zambia achieved independence under non-European majority rule and many settlers also gradually left the countries. South Africa: Christopher Saunders *et alia*s – *Ob. Cit.*, 2000, p. XXXV; Zimbabwe (data of 1973): Patrick O’Meara – *Rhodesia. Racial Conflict or Coexistence?*. London: Cornell University Press [s.d.], p. 1; Angola: Gerald Bender and P. Santey Yoder – “Whites in Angola on the eve of independence: the politics of numbers”, *Africa Today*, 21 (Fall 1974), p. 126; Mozambique (data of 1974 for the white population): Malyn Newitt – *A History of Mozambique*. London: C. Hurst, 1995, p. 476.

remain a minority of the population and who in particular remain dependent at least for labour, on the indigenous population”¹². This definition “distinguishes settler colonies from peasant export colonies where the white immigrant population was purely administrative (e.g. Uganda, Gold Coast, Nigeria) and from colonies such as Australia and Canada where the indigenous population was too sparse to be significant either as a market or as a factor of production in the colonial economy”¹³. In settler societies we can find an interesting form of colonialism, known as settler colonialism or settler sub-imperialism¹⁴. Settler colonialism, as practised in the twentieth century in these African countries, is a rather odd phenomenon: it presents a challenge to the underdevelopment theorist, since it “must face the fact that settler economies quickly develop an economic nationalism of their own and to that extent fail to fit the classical-imperialist model of underdeveloped countries whose economic policy and development are dictated by the needs of the European metropolis”¹⁵. White settler economic nationalism was a phenomenon common to almost all African settler colonies - Southern Rhodesia’s *Unilateral Declaration of Independence* was only its most well known expression. By white settler economic nationalism we understand “the settler’s perspicacious conscience of when their interests coincided or not with those of the Motherland”¹⁶. The fact was that the economic policy dictated by the Motherland government was frequently an expression of the needs of the metropolitan bourgeoisie or even of the interests of foreign capital. However, the needs of the metropolitan bourgeoisie or the interests of foreign capital often clashed with the economic interests of settlers. Settler economic nationalism was also the consequence of economic competition between colonial white and non-white elites (not only black African, but also mulatto and African Indian, such as in the case of Kenya). Finally it was the product of settlers need to control African labour. In practise, white settlers needed to control the political colonial apparatus in order to protect their economic interests from both adverse foreign economic interests (of the Motherland bourgeoisie or others) and from competition from non-white producers and traders. It was also important in order to assure the preservation of their reserves of African cheap labour. Therefore, white settlers often demanded administrative, economic and political autonomy or even internal self-government, which assured their control over the colony’s economic policy. It is important to note, however, that settler economic nationalistic demands weren’t ideological and that white settlers often identified themselves as British, French or Portuguese patriots.

The political evolution of African settlers colonies differed a great deal, according to the colonial policy dictated by the Motherland and local conditions. For instance, by the beginning of the twentieth century, British government was willing to grant self government to Southern African white settlers, probably because of the disastrous consequences of the Boer war. At least until the second World War, British authorities saw South Africa and Southern Rhodesia as “white man countries”, places where Europeans settlers would construct new nations, as British settlers had done previously in North America and Australia. As George Bennett pointed out: “The territories of British settlement in tropical Africa were true colonies in every sense of the word. As population-projections of the mother country, they were but the last in a long line that descends from the American colonies through the later settlements that grew during the nineteenth century to become self-governing dominions under the British

¹² We have taken the definition of Paul Mosley as our working definition of a settler society. Paul Mosley – *The Settler Economies. Studies in the Economic History of Kenya and Southern Rhodesia 1900-1963*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 5.

¹³ Paul Mosley – *Ob. Cit.*, 1983, p. 5.

¹⁴ D.K. Fieldhouse – *Ob. Cit.*, 1973, p. 186.

¹⁵ Paul Mosley – *Ob. Cit.*, 1983, p. 1.

¹⁶ Franz-Wilhelm Heimer – *O processo de descolonização em Angola, 1974-1976*. Lisboa: Regra do Jogo, 1980, p. 27: “Os colonos angolanos tinham uma longa tradição de nacionalismo económico, isto é, uma consciência muito aguda de quando os seus interesses coincidiam com os da metrópole, e quando não coincidiam”.

crown. The twentieth-century colonists in tropical Africa expected to attain in their new lands the same status”¹⁷. Indeed Shula Marks remarked that, by the first decade of the twentieth century, “it was widely accepted in British ruling circles that the Zambezi River was to be the frontier between the settler south and the tropical dependencies of eastern and central Africa. As Milner, who was British High Commissioner for Southern Africa, 1895-1905, and who, more than any other single individual, shaped its early-twentieth-century destiny, remarked in 1899: ‘One thing is quite evident. The *ultimate* end is a self-governing white Community, supported by *well-treated* and *justly governed* black labour from Cape Town to Zambezi”¹⁸. In 1910 South Africa achieved self government (with the concession of the dominion status) and in 1923 Southern Rhodesia gained responsible government, an imperfect form of self government¹⁹. Therefore, South African and Southern Rhodesian white settlers achieved the control of the colonial state apparatus with British blessing.

In Kenya, British colonial policy evolved differently. Kenyan settlers also aspired to self government: “In the 1920s Kenyan politics represented a struggle for political power between the two main immigrants races. The Europeans, mainly farmers and their allies, stood arrayed against the Indians, most of them small traders and artisans, led by a handful of wealthier merchants and professional men (...). Even a militant advocate of African rights and of Indirect Rule like Lord Lugard believed that Kenya’s problem consisted in: ‘defining the area to be appropriated to British settlement, and granting to the settlers within that area representative government leading up eventually to that complete self government which a virile and progressive British colony may rightly claim”²⁰. However, in 1920 there were only 9.700 white settlers, 25.300 Indian immigrants and more than 3.800.000 blacks in Kenya. So, “in 1923 Britain declared Kenya a primarily African territory, too, where native interests were paramount (...). Settlers felt betrayed, although the declaration protected them against Indian competition”²¹. Britain also denied self government to Northern Rhodesian settlers; similarly France controlled Algeria through her Home Affairs Ministry²², in spite of the autonomist demands of the *pieds noirs* (French, Spaniards, Italians and Maltese settlers and their descendents)²³.

How then, might we situate the case of Angola against the more general picture of white settler nationalism? Angola had a long tradition of economic nationalism which dated from the nineteenth century. Even as early as 1822/1823 there had been a revolt – the so called Brazilian Conference - against Portuguese rule in the Angolan city of Benguela. Benguela’s commercial elite (at the time formed both by whites and non-whites) wanted to break away from Portugal and unite with Brazil, which had declared its independence from Portugal in 1822. The main economic interests of Benguela’s commercial elite, and especially the transatlantic slave trade, linked them with Brazil, rather than with Portugal. Nevertheless, Portugal was able to crush the revolt, since the rebels were few and without military resources.

¹⁷ George Bennett – “British settlers north of the Zambezi, 1920 to 1960”, in *Colonialism in Africa 1870-1960. The History and Politics of Colonialism 1914-19* (Vol. 2, Edited by L. H. Gann and Peter Duignan). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970, p. 58.

¹⁸ “Milner’s notion of a self-governing white community extending to the Zambezi was shared also in South Africa, most notably by General J. C. Smuts, former Afrikaner general turned Imperial statesman, joint-architect of Union, and its Prime Minister in the years 1919-1924 and 1939-48, who long dreamt of a Greater South Africa”. Shula Marks – *Ob. Cit.*, 1999, p. 548.

¹⁹ Larry Bowman – *Ob. Cit.*, 1973.

²⁰ L. H. Gann; Peter Duignan – “Changing patterns of a white elite: Rhodesians and others settlers”, in *Colonialism in Africa 1870-1960* (Vol. 2). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970, p. 126.

²¹ John Lonsdale – “East Africa”, in *The Oxford History of the British Empire. The Twentieth Century* (Dir. Judith M. Brown; WM. Roger Louis). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 535.

²² This differed from the other French colonies which were administered through the French Colonial Ministry.

²³ About the *pieds noirs* autonomist feelings see: Brune Étienne – *Les européens d’Algérie et l’indépendance algérienne*. Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1968.

However, the tensions between Angolan settlers and the government in Lisbon continued throughout the entire colonial period, since Portugal (regardless of the variety of political regimes who held power in Lisbon) was always against the concession of self government to Angola, even under white settler minority rule. As a consequence of Portuguese centralist and even authoritarian colonial policy, Angolan economic nationalism developed a more political or ideological character, especially after 1945, and, of even greater significance, Angolan white settlers started to construct a kind of local nationalist identity opposed to Portuguese colonialism²⁴.

Portuguese settlers were permanently established in Angola since the sixteenth century, when they founded the city of Luanda (the capital of the country). However, until the beginning of the twentieth century, Portugal controlled only some parts of the coast (including the city-ports of Luanda, Benguela and Moçâmedes) and little of the high plateau. Only in the 1920s was Portugal able to extend its rule to the whole colony. After the Brazilian independence in 1822, Portugal attempted to construct something like a “new Brazil” in Southern Africa, especially in Angola. This meant two things: a) the transformation of Angola in a rich colony, capable of satisfying the economic needs of the Motherland, as Brazil had done during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; b) massive colonization by Portuguese white settlers, achieved by the diversion of the traditional Portuguese migratory current from Brazil to Africa. This project was defended in the 1830s, by the Portuguese Ministry Marquis of Sá da Bandeira, and continued to be proposed by many of the Portuguese political rulers until 1974 (its supporters included Marcelo Caetano, last President of the Council of Ministries of the New State dictatorship). The Portuguese politicians more enthusiastic of this idea, such as Vicente Ferreira, Angola’s High Commissioner (1926-1928), defended the creation of a New Lusitania in the Central Angola high plateau. Further, Vicente Ferreira actually renamed the city of Huambo with the symbolic name of New Lisbon. But none of this Portuguese politicians openly defended the concession of self government to Angola’s settlers. The ideal was that Angola should become a new Brazil, with the condition that its political dependence from Portugal be preserved²⁵.

However, Portuguese demographic colonization of Angola was both slow and difficult. Almost all white settlements established in internal Angola until 1849 failed, but during the second half of the nineteenth century the situation started to change. Whites settlers began to settle down in the main cities on the coast – Luanda, Benguela, Lobito, Moçâmedes – and in some new towns of the high plateau – Malange, Huambo (Nova Lisboa)²⁶, Bié (Silva Porto) and Lubango (Sá da Bandeira, in the Huila highlands). Apart from Luanda and Malange, almost all the other white settler urban and rural centres were in Central and Southern Angola – South of the Cuanza river - , where the “climate favoured European colonization”. In Luanda and Benguela it existed already a small mulatto population (product of the biological cross of white men and black women, between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries) and an Europeanised black minority. The upper echelon of mulatto and Europeanised black communities formed a local elite, which was engaged in the slave trade and in other

²⁴ White settler economic nationalism was also very strong in Mozambique, perhaps more strong there than in Angola. However, apart from a very small group of white democrats, this economic nationalism didn’t evolved to a more political or ideological form of nationalism. We are grateful to Malangatana Valente and Anna Maria Gentili for their information about Mozambican white democrats.

²⁵ Nominally some republican democrats, such as Brito Camacho, Mozambique’s High Commissioner, recognized the right of colonies to achieve independence, but they spoke in a speculative way, presenting self rule as a possibility, as some thing which could happen in a very distant future. See: Brito Camacho – *Política colonial*. Lisboa: Editorial Cosmos, 1936.

²⁶ The city of Huambo (or Nova Lisboa) was founded in 1912, by the famous Angola’s General Governor, Norton de Matos.

commercial activities at least until the nineteenth century²⁷. The end of the slave trade and the arrival of white settlers displaced this non-white elite from its previous position of economic, social and political privilege in modern Angolan society. This created a powerful source of tension in the colonial situation, especially in Luanda. In the white towns of the high plateau – especially Lubango and Huambo – the settlers came from poor white families from Northeast Portugal and Madera island. The mulattoes were always few yet if they were legally recognized by their white fathers they were socially considered as whites²⁸. The majority of black people continued to live far away from the towns, in villages in the *mato* (“bush”). Many had almost no contact with modern society and in 1971, according to an enquiry in the rural areas of Angola, approximately 90% of Angolan rural blacks didn’t know the meaning of the word “Angola”²⁹.

The Angolan colonial situation was permeated by heavy racial tensions, particularly from the end of the nineteenth century onwards. Contrary to official Lusotropicalist assumptions³⁰, racism was the basis of Portuguese colonialism in Angola. Racial discrimination legitimised the official demographic segmentation of Angolan population in whites, mulattoes and blacks, the later officially divided in “civilized” and “uncivilized” or, by other words, *assimilados* and *indígenas*. Until the abolition of the indigenous status or *Estatuto do Indigenato* in 1961, only “civilized” black or *assimilados* (never more than 1% of the entire black Angolan population) had the right to claim full Portuguese citizenship. “Uncivilized” blacks or *indígenas* were considered merely as colonial subjects and they could be recruited by the colonial authorities as forced labour. This was not the only form of discrimination in the Angolan colonial situation based on “race assumptions”, since the Portuguese authorities believed that the “place of birth could determine the race of a person”. In reality, apart from a small community of Boers which had lived in the Huíla highlands between 1882 and 1928, Angolan white settlers were almost all of Portuguese stock³¹. Nevertheless, there was a sharp division between, on the one hand, an older settler generation and Angolan born whites and, on the other hand, a new generation of Portuguese settlers which established itself in the colony after 1945. Indeed, the Portuguese New State dictatorship promoted racial prejudice against Angola born whites, who were officially classified as a distinct racial group named *euro-africanos* (“Euro-Africans”)³². Angolan born whites were considered second class Portuguese citizens, such as the mulattoes. Thomas Okuma, an American missionary in Angola during the 1950s, pointed out that: “Discrimination by the Portuguese against Angolan Europeans over a period of many years has made the ties to the mother country weaker for the Angolan Europeans than for the new *colonos* or settlers from Portugal. Angolan Europeans resent the fact that metropolitans consider them second-class Portuguese. Prior to 1950 the *bilhete de*

²⁷ More than land, slaves were the source of capital and economic power of this mulatto and Europeanised black elite.

²⁸ In the white towns of the high plateau Europeanised blacks were even fewer than mulattoes, since the majority of the Angolan indigenous population was legally segregated until 1961, by the infamous *Estatuto do Indigenato* (“Indigenous status”). Angolan indigenous were considered Portuguese nationals, but not Portuguese citizens. To become citizens they were obliged to prove their adoption of European civilization. If they were able to do so, they were declared legally *civilizado* (“civilized”) or *assimilado*. See: Adriano Moreira – “As elites das províncias portuguesas de indigenato: Guiné, Angola e Moçambique”, Sep. da revista *Garcia da Orta*, vol. 4, n.º 2 (Lisboa, JIU), 1956.

²⁹ The conclusions of this enquiry were published in: Franz-Wilhelm Heimer – *Educação e sociedade nas áreas rurais de Angola. Resultados de um inquérito* (Volume I). Luanda: 1972.

³⁰ About the Lusotropicalist assumptions of the Portuguese colonial policy see: Cláudia Castelo – *O modo português de estar no mundo. O Luso-tropicalismo e a ideologia colonial portuguesa (1933-1961)*. Porto: Afrontamento, 1998.

³¹ This was not the same in Mozambique, where there was a very important British presence.

³² Interview to Adolfo Maria, Angolan born white nationalist, member of MLNA-PCA, FUA and MPLA (Lisbon, January 2004).

identidade of Angolan Portuguese was not valid in the homeland. Restrictions on travel to Portugal applied to them as it did to non-Portuguese residents in Angola”³³.

In 1961, the United Nations Sub-committee on the situation in Angola pointed out that: “It was stated that though the major line of distinction in social practices has been between the *não-indígenas* and the *indígenas* and in spite of the objectives of Government policy regarding a multi-racial society, in Angola race and place of birth had come to determine, in practice, many rights and privileges. It was said that in Angola there were in practice five categories of inhabitants. First the Portugal-born Portuguese; second, the Portuguese actually born in Angola; third in line was the *mestiço* (mulatto); next was the African *assimilado*; and finally, the great majority of the Africans”³⁴. The understanding of this division was the base of the sociological analysis of Angola’s white population of *Frente de Unidade Angolana* (Angolan United Front), a white nationalist movement, in 1963: “Nowadays, Angola’s white population is divided in two different and even antagonist groups, which are: 1) The Africanised whites, formed by settlers and their descendants, whose economic interests and national feelings are entirely in Angola; 2) European whites, formed by those emigrants who came to Angola only in search of self-enrichment - once they fulfilled this aim they go back to their Homeland; and by civil servants and clerks of big international companies, whose presence in the country is only temporary. The motive of their antagonism is quite clear since their interests are divergent. The Africanised white farmer, industrial or trader feel that its interests are damaged by the interests of foreign economic forces; the Angolan born white worker, civil servant or intellectual feel that they are put apart by the Portuguese government, who chose only Portuguese born whites to directive positions in colonial administration, in spite of the professional merits of each one. The first group is nationalist by its attachment to the country; the latter is colonialist, since it represents and defends colonial interests”³⁵.

These tensions were aggravated by a sociological or psycho-sociological phenomenon: the settler’s rejection of the Motherland, as a response to the previous exclusion by the Portuguese society, since a substantial part of the Angolan elites (comprising Portuguese political and criminal deportees – *degradados* - , upwardly mobile settlers from previously poor families, second class Portuguese Euro-Africans and mulattoes) had been victim of a process of social exclusion by the Motherland’s society and government. The settler’s identification with Angola and their rejection of Portugal contributed powerfully to the development of an Angolan white nationalism that was significantly ideological in character³⁶.

Geographical dispersion was other important factor of differentiation and even division among white settlers. Angola is an enormous country, crossed by great rivers (especially the

³³ Thomas Okuma – *Angola in Ferment: the Background and Prospects of Angolan Nationalism*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1962, p. 59.

³⁴ United Nations General Assembly, 16th Session, Agenda Item 27 – *Report of the Sub-committee on the Situation in Angola* (22/11/1961).

³⁵ Frente de Unidade Angolana – “A população branca no contexto nacional”, *Kovaso. Órgão da FUA*, Fevereiro de 1963, p. 2: “Presentemente, a população branca de Angola, divide-se em dois agrupamentos, bastante distintos e digladiando-se mesmo. Estes dois agrupamentos são: 1 – *População branca africanizada* – Constituída por colonos e seus descendentes, cujos interesses económicos e sentimentos de nacionalidade se situam completamente em Angola; 2 – *População branca europeia* – Constituída por aqueles que se deslocam a Angola com o único intuito de amealharem o seu pé de meia e regressar; pelos funcionários públicos nomeados e enviados pelo Governo Português; e ainda pelos funcionários superiores das empresas cujos accionistas vivem fora de Angola./ A razão do antagonismo entre estes dois agrupamentos da população branca é bem compreensível na medida em que os interesses se opõem. O comerciante, o agricultor ou o industrial fixado sente o desfavor em que é colocado perante as forças económicas estrangeiras, quer de Portugal quer de outro país qualquer; o funcionário, o intelectual, o trabalhador, naturais de Angola, sentem o quanto são preteridos em favor dos enviados pelo Governo Português, mesmo a despeito do seu valor pessoal ser superior, principalmente no respeitante a cargos de direcção./ O primeiro agrupamento é nacionalista pela sua profunda ligação ao país. O segundo é colonialista porque representa e defende os interesses colonialistas”.

³⁶ Adelino Torres – *O Império Português entre o real e o imaginário*. Lisboa: Escher, 1991, p. 61.

Cuanza which divides the North from the Centre), with mountains of over 2000 metres (e.g. Serra da Chela) and large plateaus (namely, the Central Plateau and the Huila highlands). Eastern Angola was almost uninhabited by whites. Communications between the capital (Luanda) and the rest of the country and, especially, between the Northern part and the Central and Southern regions were always very difficult: there were no railways colligating the North to the South and roads were almost all untransitable during the rainy season. Frequently, the small settler communities of the internal territories were so far away from one another that they were completely isolated during several months because of adverse weather conditions and communications difficulties. Therefore, white settlers developed a strong feeling of localism, especially in the Central and Southern regions, where they disliked Luanda centralism almost as much they hated Lisbon's authoritarian rule. Indeed, Benguela's settlers were long accustomed to a certain degree of autonomous administration and they disapproved of Luanda's hegemony within the colony. Their interests were very different from those of Luanda's whites: the former depended on internal trade, cattle, corn, fish, fruit, sisal and sugar revenues and not so much in import-export trade, construction activities or coffee exportations as did the later. Benguela's settlers also depended less on cheap contract and/or forced (black) labour than the Northern white coffee producers. In the Southern regions, demographic colonization dated back further than in the North: by the end of the colonial period, there were many Angolan born whites of 3rd and 4th generation in the South (especially in Moçâmedes and the Huíla highlands), but not in the North, including Luanda. Lubango and Moçâmedes were also the only Angolan towns where whites were greater in number than blacks. White settlers were also more rooted to the land in the towns and villages of Central and Southern Angola. Many had undergone a process of gradual Africanisation – referred as *cafrealização* by colonial authorities – , as for example, the descendants of Maderan settlers who inhabited the Huila Highlands since 1880s, whom the Portuguese official authorities referred as “Huila's white tribe”³⁷. Indigenous black population and more recent white settlers referred to the descendants of Maderan settlers as *chicoronho*. White *chicoronho* had lost almost all connection with the Motherland and they were totally integrated in the African physical environment, but they maintained their whiteness, such as the majority of the Boers had done in South Africa³⁸.

Class was also an important factor of differentiation among whites, since the social hierarchy of Angolan white settlers was very rigid. In the 1950s, Luanda's import-export elite, the big commercial and industrial businessmen – the *patrões* (“bosses”) – and the upper echelon of colonial administration formed the top of the Angolan social structure. They shared their social prestige – but not their economic power – with physicians, lawyers, high school professors, other professionals and almost all who possessed an university diploma and by consequence was called *senhor doutor* (“sir doctor”). Their hegemony was contested by the new wealthy “coffee barons” of the North-west, and by some very rich merchants, farmers and cattle owners of the Centre and South. However, the latter never succeeded in imposing their leadership. The middle class was formed by civil servants of minor (but important) functions, clerks, small city traders, the majority of farmers and the upper echelon of the working class, particularly some skilled railway and port workers. Normally, this middle class tended to integrate with the descendents of the once powerful nineteenth century mulatto and Europeanised black elite (now reduced to a civil servant and clerk middle class) or with the upper echelons of the group of new urban Europeanised black Angolans, known as *assimilados*. In the rural areas, especially in the high plateau, there was also a very large group

³⁷ Henrique Galvão – *História do nosso tempo. João de Almeida (sua obra e acção)*. Lisboa: AGC, 1931, p. 353.

³⁸ Carlos Alberto Medeiros – *A colonização das Terras Altas da Huíla (Angola). Estudo de Geografia Humana*. Lisboa: 1976, p. 31. In the local language “chicoronho” means “the settlers” (“os colonos”), but it was used both by blacks and whites to nominate the descendants of Maderan settlers.

of (poor) bush traders – the *comerciantes do mato* -, which formed a sort of rural middle class, even if in practise they were no more than *petits blancs*. At the bottom of the white social hierarchy was the large group of poor settlers: unskilled workers (such as domestic and commercial servants), proletarian craftsman (such as shoemakers), taxi drivers, ruined farmers, unemployed settlers and even beggars. The majority of this predominantly urban proletariat lived on the “best slums” of Luanda, Lobito and other urban centres, side by side with their black and mulatto neighbours (including *assimilados*). In addition to this, many of the ruined farmers and other rural poor settlers lived in the government sponsored settlements of the high plateau (as for example Cela, in the Kwanza Sul district, not far from Huambo).

Angolan white settler position in the colony’s economy changed over time. White settlers never had the total control over the colonial economy. From the sixteenth century until the middle of the nineteenth century, the few white settlers had to compete with local mulattoes and Europeanised blacks in the slave trade. Their commercial activities depended on Brazilian credit and/or Brazilian commercial houses. Brazil was also the main source of alcohol - *cachaça* - and textiles which were used as currency in trade with indigenous chiefs, in exchange for slaves and ivory. After Brazilian independence, and especially after the end of the transatlantic slave trade, Angolan traders started to produce their own *cachaça* (alcoholic drink) from bamboo sugar. Angolan white traders sell their own alcohol production (and imported cheap European textiles) to indigenous blacks chiefs in exchange for rubber, ivory, coffee and cheap black labour. As a consequence, a very powerful white commercial elite flourished in Luanda, Benguela and Moçâmedes. Instead, in the high plateau, some settlers engaged in farming, especially coffee and sugar. As discussed early, white settlers were also able to displace mulattoes and Europeanised blacks from their previous important economic, social and political position in the colony. Indeed, settlers used colonial administration to compromise non-white interests and racial ideas of white superiority legitimised the settler power³⁹. This situation gave rise to a very important non-white modern journalistic and political protest against Portuguese colonial rule – known as *nativismo* -, which became apparently the first expression of a national feeling among non-white Angolan, from the end of the nineteenth century until the 1930⁴⁰.

However, by the end of the nineteenth century, Angolan settlers had to face a bigger and stronger enemy: the Portuguese metropolitan bourgeoisie. After 1890, the Portuguese metropolitan bourgeoisie tried to convert Angola into a protected market for their products, especially wine and textiles. So, it used the apparatus of Portuguese State to implement two measures: a) to forbid Angolan alcohol (*cachaça*) production; b) to oblige Angolan white settlers to buy only wine and textiles produced in Portugal, even if foreign products were cheaper. The application of these measures would have destroyed the basis of settlers wealth and power and it would certainly have subordinated the interests of Angolan settler elite to those of Portuguese metropolitan bourgeoisie. Settlers didn’t accepted this situation and they were actually able to resist the application of this legislation at least until 1930. As a matter of fact, Portuguese administration in Angola was still too weak to enforce the execution of legislation which would compromise the direct interests of wealthy white settlers. Portuguese administration was also corrupt and we might speculate that it was aware of the significance of settler’s support. For example, in 1906 Portugal ruled only one tenth of the entire colony’s territory⁴¹. In Southern Angola, Portuguese administration relied largely on the military

³⁹ This period was excellently summarised by Douglas Wheeler. See: Douglas Wheeler; René Pélissier - *Angola*. London: Pall Mall Press, 1971.

⁴⁰ Jill R. Dias – “Uma questão de identidade: respostas intelectuais às transformações económicas no seio da elite crioula da Angola portuguesa entre 1870 e 1930”. *Revista Internacional de Estudos Africanos*, n.º 1, pp. 61-94. Lisboa: 1984. An example of this protest was the publication of: AA.VV – *Voz d’Angola clamando no deserto: oferecida aos amigos da verdade pelos natúraes*. Lisboa: 1901.

⁴¹ See Henrique Galvão – *Ob. Cit.*, 1931.

strength of white settlers (Boers and Madera's settlers) of the Huila highlands. Nevertheless, settler resistance to the execution of that legislation signalled the beginning of a more structured Angolan white economic nationalism.

Throughout this period (1900-1930) Angolan white settler politics evolved along two different lines: a) a conservative economic nationalist protest which advocated Angola's economical autonomy or, in other words, the non interference of the Motherland in the economic issues of the colony; b) a more liberal line – which called itself *autonomista* (“autonomist”) – which saw economic and political autonomy as the first step for the achievement of self government⁴². The former depended on the continuation of an archaic economic system, based on the exploitation of semi-slave black labour. It criticized heavily all attempts of modernization the Angolan economy through its own Economic Associations and also through a number of publications⁴³. Economic nationalists reacted violently against all attempts to end black forced labour, and was especially critical of those of Angola's High Commissioner, General Norton de Matos (1921-1924)⁴⁴. Conversely, liberal autonomists supported General Norton de Matos “Angola development plan” which aimed to construct a modern capitalist economy in Angola, based on free white and non-white labour. Autonomists also expressed their feelings through the Angolan Economic Associations, mainly the Benguela Commercial Association, and additionally through the republican press, such as the newspaper *Defeza de Angola*. Their strongholds were the freemason civic associations, such as the *Gremio Lusitano* in Luanda or the *Grémio Pátria Nova* in Bié. Angola's freemasonry was particular active and strong in this period, especially in Benguela. It was locally known by the African name of *Kuribeka*, which served to distinguished it from Portuguese freemasonry, and it has also been suggested that it had strong traditional ties with Brazilian freemasonry. Interestingly, the political State model of liberal autonomist settlers was provided by Brazil, in the sense autonomists supported the future transformation of Angola into an independent Republic, under white rule but with the (at least nominal) political participation of mulatto and Europeanised black elites. But autonomist position was that Angola wasn't yet prepared to achieve independence and, for the time being, autonomists accepted as necessary Portugal's temporary colonial rule. At the same time, autonomists believed that the Portuguese Democratic Republic (1910-1926) could bring social progress and economic development to Angola as well as political decentralization and even autonomy for the settlers (and “civilized non-whites”).

However by 1924, with the failure of the modernization plan of General Norton de Matos, liberal autonomist white settlers felt disappointed and betrayed by Lisbon's republican government. The colony was in deep financial crisis, aggravated by the international crisis of the 1920s. Small parties were formed in Luanda (*Partido Pró-Angola*, “Pro Angola Party”) and Benguela (*União dos Defensores de Angola*, “Angola Defenders Union”) by the more radical liberal autonomist settlers which demanded financial help from the Motherland and immediate political autonomy for the colony. In Angola there were strikes, demonstrations and other protests in major towns; the Angolan commercial houses closed their doors during a certain period and there was some speculation in the press about Angola's eventual secession⁴⁵. Nevertheless, the aspirations of Angolan white settlers remained unsatisfied. In the Motherland the conservative forces – including the Portuguese bourgeoisie with economic interests in Angola⁴⁶ – were able to establish a military dictatorship (1926-1933) which put an end to the

⁴² José de Macedo – *Autonomia de Angola. Estudo de administração colonial*. Lisboa: Edição do Autor, 1910, pp. 83, 209-215.

⁴³ See, for example, Júlio Ferreira Pinto - *Angola. Notas e comentários de um colono*. Lisboa: 1926.

⁴⁴ See, for example, Venâncio Guimarães – *A situação de Angola. Para a história do reinado de Norton, factos e depoimentos*. Lisboa: 1923.

⁴⁵ PRO – FO 371/15030, (Consul-General Smallbones to Mr. A. Henderson 10/05/1930).

⁴⁶ Especially the *Banco Nacional Ultramarino* (“National Overseas Bank”). See Adelino Torres – *Ob. Cit.*, 1991.

more liberal regime of the 1st Portuguese Republic. Military dictatorship evolved into the civil dictatorship of António de Oliveira Salazar, known as *Estado Novo* (“New State”, 1933-1974). The dictatorship reinforced the Motherland’s control over the colony in a moment of particular economic fragility amongst Angolan settlers. The pro-fascist Commander Filomeno da Câmara was nominated High Commissioner of Angola in 1929. On 29th November 1929, two branches of the freemasons in Luanda – the *Grémio Pátria Integral* and the *Grémio Portugêses* – were invaded by police under the orders of the colonial government which had started to repress the activities both of Angolan autonomists and the Portuguese political deportees living in Angola⁴⁷. Settler response came out on 20th March 1930, when Luanda’s military garrison, Portuguese political deportees living in Angola and Angolan autonomists participated in a revolt against the Portuguese colonial government. Further, “a number of influential persons at Benguela seriously proposed that Angola should declare itself an independent republic, following the example of Brazil”⁴⁸. But the revolutionaries didn’t have the strength to impose that solution. Consequently, they were obliged to negotiate with the Lisbon’s government, through local Catholic Church mediation. Lisbon dismissed the High Commissioner and the situation was stabilized. A few months later, the Portuguese colonial authorities initiated severely repressive measures against autonomist settlers which provoked several acts of violence throughout the years of 1930 and 1931. White liberal autonomists were arrested or exiled; freemasonry was prohibited and almost all political and civic freedoms were suppressed. Settlers were in no position to resist the strong government of Salazar. In this way, Angolan white settler liberal autonomist protest was crushed.

During the 1930s, the Motherland government took advantage of the weak position of Angolan settlers to enforce the execution of its economic legislation favouring metropolitan interests as opposed to settlers interests. The economic legislation of Salazar (and his Colonial Affairs Minister, Armindo Monteiro) reduced Angola to less than a peasant export colony, despite its settler colony structures. In so doing, the Motherland government expressed its opposition to the formation of an independent economic basis in Angola or, in other words, the constitution of a strong Angolan settler bourgeoisie capable of leading the country to independence, as in Brazil. As Christine Messiant has pointed out: “With Salazar the Portuguese State had the opportunity to create the mechanisms which would assure its control over the settlers and avoid the repetition of what had previously happened in the former colony of Brazil, the formation of a bourgeoisie strong enough to become autonomous”⁴⁹. Indeed, “with the dictatorship the Portuguese bourgeoisie was finally capable of monopolizing the State apparatus to neutralize the Angolan bourgeoisie”⁵⁰. Its aim was “developing the Motherland *import-export* commercial sector, capable of becoming the basis of a Portuguese industrial nucleus which would enforce the settlers to buy their products at high costs”⁵¹. The consequences of this strategy were very negative to Angola’s economy and population, both white and non white. The settler population dropped. In the high plateau many white farmers

⁴⁷ PRO – FO 371/15030, (Consul-General Smallbones to Mr. A. Henderson, 29/07/1930).

⁴⁸ PRO – FO 371/15030, (Consul-General Smallbones to Mr. A. Henderson, 10/05/1930).

⁴⁹ Christine Messiant – *L’Angola colonial, histoire et société. Les prémisses du mouvement nationaliste*. Paris: École de Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1983, p. 164: “Avec Salazar en effet, l’Etat portugais a enfin les moins libres pour mettre en place l’ensemble des moyens qui doivent assurer la souveraineté sur le colonat et empêcher que ne se renouvelle en Angola ce qui s’est passé au Brésil, la formation d’une bourgeoisie assez forte pour s’autonomiser”.

⁵⁰ Alfredo Margarido – “Prefácio” in Adelino Torres – *Ob. Cit.*, 1991, p. 14: “a burguesia portuguesa consegue racionalizar o aparelho de Estado por meio da ditadura, pondo-o ao serviço de uma política destinada a domesticar as diferentes burguesias coloniais e mais particularmente a angolana”.

⁵¹ Alfredo Margarido – “Prefácio” in Adelino Torres – *Ob. Cit.*, 1991, p. 13: “Tratava-se, então de agir no campo estrito do comércio de importação-exportação, que permitia criar em Portugal um núcleo industrial associado aos comerciantes que podia impor as mercadorias preferenciais aos colonos. As burguesias coloniais procuraram, em vão, defender os seus interesses”.

were starving and many other had to leave the colony, as the Angolan Boers had already done in 1928⁵². Those who stayed developed a strong attachment to the land, which was transmitted to the new generations of Angolan born whites. In 1943, a British member of the Anglo-Portuguese Club of Luanda described the economic and social situation of the colony: “The majority of people one talks to are completely fed-up with the system, especially the people of this Colony. Angola is simply used as a milch-cow by the Metropolitan Government which refuses permission to the Colony to start any industries which might compete with the Homeland (...)./ The economic system is quite Heath Robinson. Raw material is exported to Portugal and has to pay duty to leave the country. It as also to pay duty twice more before it lands in Angola again. 50% of all the customs duty collected in Angola goes back to Portugal. The consequences is that the cost of living here is terrific. The only things which are cheap are those which are produced in the country itself by semi-slave labour”⁵³. So, between 1930 and 1945, Angola experienced a period of forced economic stagnation and even regression.

By the end of Second World War, some changes were made in Portuguese colonial policy. A small part of Portuguese metropolitan bourgeoisie was, for the first time, interested in investing in the colonies. So, Salazar authorized the installation of some industries in Angola and Mozambique. At the same time, the colonial products – especially coffee - registered a boom of prices, and thousands of new settlers arrived to Angola searching for a piece of land upon which to grow coffee. A part of the Angolan white elite had also survived the economic stagnation of the 1930s and had began to increase in size and wealth during the 1940s and 1950s. One of the most important activities among Angolan whites was internal trade with the black population. In the high plateau, in the Benguela, Bié and Huambo districts, areas crossed by the Benguela railway, and in the area surrounding Lubango (the Huíla highland, also known as the Angola’s “white highlands”) settlers were also involved in farming, especially corn, sisal, fruit and sugar. Farming was also very important in North-western Angola, where some wealthy settlers, the “coffee barons”, developed a coffee plantation economy based on the exploitation of cheap black labour⁵⁴. Cattle farming was very important in the South, near Lubango. The fishing industry was important in Benguela, Lobito and Moçâmedes, but it also depended heavily on cheap black labour (especially in Moçâmedes). Small textile, alimentary and construction industries were established in Luanda and Lobito, which were the main ports of the country. As previously discussed, there was a very important import-export commercial class in Luanda, but its profits were conditioned by Portuguese restrictive economic legislation. Angolan settlers were still obliged to buy almost all the things they needed only from Portugal and, at the same time, they were obliged to sell their products to Portugal at low prices. This situation was a source of latent tension between Lisbon and the Angolan settlers, who continued to express their protest through Economic Associations, the most important of which were the Industrial Association of Angola (*Associação Industrial de Angola, AIA*), the Commercial Association of Luanda (*Associação Comercial de Luanda, ACL*) and the Commercial Association of Benguela (*Associação Comercial de Benguela, ACB*).

After the beginning of Angolan liberation war in 1961, Salazar opened the colonial market for new foreign capital. A substantial part of the coffee production, the entire cotton production and the mining industry - diamonds, iron and oil – were already controlled by foreign capital (American, Belgian, British, French and South African), sometimes with the participation of Portuguese capital. Foreign capital also controlled transport and communications, especially the navigation companies and the Benguela railway, which

⁵² In 1928 Angolan Boers went to South West Africa (Namibia), where they established permanently.

⁵³ PRO – FO: 371/39583 – *Angola reports on political and economic conditions*, 1944 (From “Donald – Anglo-Portuguese Club Luanda, to the Rev. B. F. Chambers, 11, Vicarage Gate, Kensington, London, 28/10/1943).

⁵⁴ Note: The majority of black population practised a survival economy, but it contributed for a very important part of agricultural production, namely corn and coffee. See: Franz-Wilhelm Heimer – *Social Change in Angola*. Munchen: 1973.

colligated the Katanga Coperbelt (in the former Belgian Congo) to the international Atlantic port of Lobito. As a consequence, Angola's economy started to grow faster, but the main profits did not remain in Angola – they went directly to the pockets of the big Portuguese, American, European and South African capitalists. In this context, the Angolan whites – like the black and mulatto population – saw the external control of Angola's main economic resources by foreigners as an exploitation of their wealth and they blamed the Portuguese government for its co-operation.

The economic grievances against Portugal contributed to the diffusion of nationalist feelings among Angolans. It is always difficult to define nationalism in Africa's political context, especially in the Angolan case. Douglas Wheeler provided the best definition which we know of: "In the context of local conditions in Angola, nationalism can be defined as a modern expression (using European techniques) of a collective grievance against foreigners (...). In Angola, therefore, nationalism begins to develop when Angolans express their protests and resistance by using European techniques and by believing that *Angolans* or *Sons of the country* have collective problems, grievances, and a *nationality* which transcend local identities (...). A study of Angolan history suggests that so far there have been three major phases of Angolan nationalism: stirrings, 1860-1930; struggle in Angola, 1930-1961; struggle from exile and insurgency, 1961 to the present"⁵⁵. Among the non white population, nationalist feelings were expressed by three different groups: the old mulatto⁵⁶ and Europeanised black elite of Luanda and its hinterland; the new group of black *assimilados*, many of protestant religion, from Central Angola; the black protestant immigrants in the Belgian Congo, the majority belonging to the Bakongo people of Northern Angola. During the 1960s, these groups evolved to form the three Angolan nationalist armed liberation movements, the MPLA, the UNITA and the UPA/FNLA. In 1961 the MPLA and the UPA/FNLA initiated the Angolan war of liberation⁵⁷ which only finished in 1974, when the Portuguese government finally agreed to negotiate Angola's independence with the three armed movements.

How, then did nationalist sentiment amongst Angolan white settlers developed? As we have seen, during the first decades of the twentieth century, Angolan white settlers had developed an autonomist protest. After 1940, the grievances against Portuguese colonial rule became stronger and involved also the younger generation of Angolan born white, as we can see of the statements of Mr. Purnes, British General Consul in Luanda, in 1957: "Since the possibility of a white independence movement remains a trifle less remote than any communist threat in Angola, you may care to have the following list of local grievances which are mulled over in private by the younger generation here (...). First they resent what they call the economic exploitation of Angola by Lisbon and the close control of all business here by the Metropolis. They further regard the official negative attitude to proposals for a university in Angola as indicating a deliberate policy of suppression; and they associate with this the custom of importing all seniors officials from other Provinces or from Portugal, and of posting elsewhere any Angolan-bred person who manages to acquire higher education in Lisbon. A further grievance is that the church is too influential in Angola, particularly in the field of education and in its hold of senior officials"⁵⁸. Therefore, the British Consul in Luanda concluded: "Since there is truth in most of these grievances, I should expect them sooner or later to become the platform of a real movement for, at least, greater independence. Meanwhile

⁵⁵ Douglas Wheeler – "Origins of African Nationalism in Angola: *Assimilado* protest writings, 1859-1929", in *Protest and Resistance in Angola and Brazil. Comparative Studies* (Dir. Ronald H. Chilcote), pp. 68-69.

⁵⁶ First generation mulattoes, sons of white settlers, usually integrated whit Angola born whites. Interview with Adolfo Maria, Angolan born white nationalist, member of MLNA-PCA, FUA and MPLA (Lisbon, January 2004).

⁵⁷ UNITA was formed later and only jointed the national liberation war in 1966. See John Marcum – *The Angolan Revolution* (2 volumes). Massachusetts: Mitt Press, 1969-1978.

⁵⁸ PRO – FO: 371/125894 – *Internal political situation: Angola, 1957* (Grant Purnes, British Consul General, Luanda, to British Embassy, Lisbon, 23/04/1957).

they are discussed only in private and there is no sign either of an organisation or of a leader to harness these potentially powerful ideas to any scheme of action. Their existence indicates a weakness of which the communists could however take advantage; although at this stage the sentiments expressed by local youth remain naively nationalistic”⁵⁹.

In contrast to other settler societies (e.g. Kenya or Zambia), Angolan white nationalism was not exclusively economic in character, furthermore in Angola it involved different generations, not only from the elites, but also from other social strata. Settlers had developed a strong attachment to the land and they considered themselves Angolans. The person who perhaps best understood their identification with Angola was the British Consul General of Luanda J. C. Wardrop, who wrote the following statements: “It is not generally realised how deep are the roots of the European population in Angolan soil. Many were born here, many have come in the present generation with the intention of staying for good. You find them not only in the larger towns and plantations but dotted all over the map in innumerable tiny and remote villages. The majority are humble folk who could not afford to visit Portugal even if they wanted to. They belong here; they know no other home; to them *Angola é nossa* (“Angola is ours”)! They have no parallel in any British colony that I know of. In our former West African possessions the British were administrators, soldiers or business men, the great majority of whom were based on, and retired to Britain. In Kenya and Rhodesia we have, it is true, settlers of longer standing. But in the main they are relatively well-to-do and still have their links with the home country. Only Algeria and South Africa are comparable in this respect with the Portuguese African Provinces”⁶⁰.

In this context, Angolan white settler nationalism evolved along three different lines: a) progressive, which advocated independence under black majority rule, following the principle “one man, one vote”, reflecting developments in the rest of tropical Africa; b) liberal, which proposed independence under white hegemony, but with the nominal political integration of non-whites, (especially the upper echelon of mulatto and Europeanised black elite), following the example of Brazil; c) conservative, which defended selective independence exclusively under white rule, following the example of South Africa and later of Southern Rhodesia.

White progressive nationalism evolved in terms of protest against Portuguese colonial rule which was more ideological than purely economic nationalism. The first expression of this protest was the formation in Huambo of a small movement, known as *Organização Socialista de Angola* (“Angola’s Socialist Organization”), in 1940. Their supporters were mainly high-school students from the Central and Southern Angola, both whites and mulattoes. They demanded an end to discrimination against Angola born whites and mulattoes, the end of forced black labour and, ultimately, the independence of Angola. However, the movement was crushed by the colonial authorities and some of their leaders were arrested in 1941. Nevertheless, their courage served as an example for many other young Angolans. In 1943, some of the ex-members of *Organização Socialista de Angola* (those who had survived the colonial repression) joined a number of Angolan liberal whites to found the *Casa dos Estudantes de Angola* (Angola’s House Students), a cultural association formed by Angolan University students living in Portugal⁶¹. In 1944 this association was transformed in *Casa dos Estudantes do Império* (Empire’s House Students) and it extended its activities from Lisbon to Coimbra and Porto, where it reunited students from all the Portuguese colonies. *Casa dos Estudantes do Império* had an important role in the formation of a national cultural conscience among colonial students, not only from Angola but also from Mozambique, Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde and even S. Tome and Prince. Since it was politically close to the (legal)

⁵⁹ PRO – FO: 371/125894 – *Internal political situation: Angola, 1957* (Grant Purnes, British Consul General, Luanda, to British Embassy, Lisbon, 23/04/1957).

⁶⁰ PRO – FO: 371/161626 – *Internal political situation: Angola, 1962* (J. C. Wardrop, British Consul General, Luanda, to British Embassy, Lisbon, 16/04/1962, p. 3).

⁶¹ There were no University in Angola until 1963.

Portuguese Democratic Opposition and even to the illegal Portuguese Communist Party which opposed the New State dictatorship, it had also a strong role on the anti-colonial ideological formation of Angolan university students. In the meanwhile, the younger generation of Luanda fell into a kind of cultural miscegenation, especially after the formation of the *Movimento dos Novos Intelectuais de Angola*, (“Angola’s New Intellectuals Movement”) in 1948. They expressed their political stance through cultural associations, particularly the *Associação dos Naturais de Angola* (Angola’s Native Association) and *Sociedade Cultural de Angola* (Angola’s Cultural Society) of Luanda, where whites, mulattoes and a few Europeanised blacks essayed the creation of an Angolan national culture through literature⁶². They constructed the idea of *angolanidade*; the “the idea that Angola had an individual cultural identity not only distinct and independent from the Portuguese one (or *portugalidade*), but also free from any kind of racial, ethnic or religious prejudices”. After 1955, progressive white nationalists engaged in politics, side by side with mulattoes and Europeanised blacks of Luanda, and they founded several politics groups of Marxist inspiration, the most important of which was the *Movimento de Libertação Nacional de Angola – Partido Comunista Angolano* (“Angola’s National Liberation Movement – Angolan Communist Party”). But in 1959, the Portuguese political police (PIDE) arrested a large number of Luanda’s nationalists leaders and crushed almost all the progressive nationalists groups in the capital. Those groups members who escaped these measures went into exile or remained silent until the fall of Portuguese dictatorship in 1974 - the progressive line of Luanda was definitively out of the game.

The white liberal nationalist line descended from the liberal autonomist protest of the first decades of the twentieth century. Since freemasonry was prohibited by the Salazar dictatorship in 1935, liberal autonomist freemasons transformed their civic associations into Rotary Clubs, which were tolerated by the regime and could meet freely with legal acknowledgment. Liberal nationalists sought allies among the local agents of the (non-communist) Portuguese Democratic Opposition, which was also tolerated by Salazar after the victory of the Allied Forces in 1945. Indeed, they provided massive support for the Opposition candidate, General Humberto Delgado, in the Portuguese Presidential elections of 1958. In fact, the official candidate – Admiral Américo Tomás – , supported by Salazar, won the elections, but the Democratic Opposition accused Salazar of cheating and considered the elections results a fraud. Nevertheless, the Opposition candidate obtained a significant result in Angola and he won in the Benguela district, with more than double the votes of the official candidate, Admiral Américo Tomás. This was considered by the government in Lisbon as a sign of settlers dissatisfaction with New State’s colonial policy, but it was more than that.

Indeed, in 1957, one year before the Portuguese Presidential elections, the British Consul General in Luanda pointed out the possibility of Angolan born whites and mulattoes attempting create something like the “new Brazil”: “Less remote, perhaps, than the prospect of native pressure for freedom is the possibility of a movement by Angolan-born white Portuguese for independence, or relative independence, from Portugal (...). Should a clear lead ever be given by any person or organization, some sympathy could be expected on economic grounds for a demand for greater freedom; and I have heard it suggested, in a purely speculative way, that Angola’s large mulatto population might welcome an opportunity of

⁶² Christine Messiant – *Vilas et cidades. Bourgs e villes de l’Afrique lusophone* (Dir. Michel Cahen and Christine Messiant). Paris: Laboratoire Tiers Monde, 1989, p. 162: “Elevés avec et comme les Blancs, ces métis s’identifient en majorité comme Blancs et aux Blancs. (...) comme certains Blancs natifs encore, ils ne se sentent pas portugais mais angolais, créoles. C’est cette sensibilité angolaise (et non africaine) qu’exprime surtout une des deux grandes associations d’*assimilados*, l’ANANGOLA, où se regroupent à Luanda après la guerre, comme le disent les *assimilados* interrogés, «les Blancs et les métis de la Baixa». Mas les Blancs dont il s’agit sont bien seulement des Angolais (les Portugais ont leur propre association culturelle) et la différence entre Portugais et Angolais blanc est nette – et cela vaut aussi en ce qui concerne le mouvement nationaliste, dans lequel la position des Angolais blancs et celle des Portugais d’Angola n’est pas la même”.

emerging from the curious limbo they inhabit into the larger world of a new Brazil”⁶³. This idea was present even after the beginning of national liberation war, since in 1964 Mr. Stewart, British Consul General in Luanda wrote to the British Embassy in Lisbon the following statements: “There certainly exist here, though in what strength I do not know, some who secretly favour the Brazilian solution. What deters them from at present pressing their cause is probably not so much fear of the Political Security Police as the lingering shock of 1961 and the feeling that the presence here of metropolitan troops is essential to prevent a recurrence”⁶⁴. Nevertheless, Mr. Stewart suggested “that the future of Angola is most likely to be determined by the European inhabitants acquiring a greater autonomy and finally gaining independence, no doubt with as many of the Africans as they can convince and trust to share power with them, with the help of foreign capital and almost in defiance of the metropolitan Government”⁶⁵. This hypothesis was largely speculative and time proved that it was wrong, but it seems that it was still an attractive hypothesis for settlers in the beginning of the 1960s.

In 1961 Benguela’s liberal nationalists joined some progressive nationalists (of Central and Southern Angola) and founded the most important party in the history of Angolan white nationalism, the *Frente de Unidade Angolana* (“Angolan United Front”) or FUA. Their leaders were Fernando Falcão, a liberal engineer of Lobito, actually born in Moçâmedes and ex. member of the *Casa dos Estudantes do Império*, and Sócrates Dáskalos, a progressive high school professor, born in Huambo, founder of *Organização Socialista de Angola* and also an ex. member of *Casa dos Estudantes do Império*. The FUA was partially the response of whites nationalists of Central and Southern Angola to the beginning of the war of liberation initiated by the black liberation armed movements in the North. The FUA demanded a peaceful resolution of Angola’s conflict and immediate autonomy which would prepare Angola for independence. This independence would signify the recognition of the political participation of the mulatto and black population, but, at the same time, it would assure the political and economical position of whites in a future independent Angolan State. It seems that the FUA had the sympathy of the Brazilian authorities, since some contacts were made between the FUA leadership and the Brazilian Embassy at Lisbon⁶⁶.

The FUA was able to unify not only liberal, progressive and (some) conservative white nationalists, but also the majority of mulattoes and some Ovimbundu (the large ethno-linguistic group) blacks of Central and Southern regions. However, it failed in mobilizing the liberal and conservative white nationalists of Northern Angola, especially those of Luanda, who preferred negotiate a compromise with the Portuguese dictatorship, through its new Colonial (or Overseas) Minister, Adriano Moreira. Indeed, Luanda’s white elite was afraid of losing their privileges and would not accept a black political leadership. The Portuguese government took advantage of the divisions among Angolan white settlers and launched a large scale repressive operation in the beginning of June, arresting and deporting the leaders of the FUA to Portugal. In 1962, some of the FUA’s progressive members were able to escape to France, where they re-organised the movement in exile. In 1963 they established themselves in Argel where they engaged in talks with the Angolan black armed liberation movements, especially the MPLA and FNLA. Their aim was to form a vast nationalist front involving all the Angolan anti-colonial parties and movements, but the later movements rejected the FUA’s proposal. The

⁶³ PRO – FO: 371/125894 – *Internal political situation: Angola, 1957* (Grant Purnes, British Consul General, Luanda, to Foreign Office, London, 16/08/1957).

⁶⁴ PRO – FO: 371/176932 – *Summaries of developments in Mozambique and Angola, 1964* (Mr. Stewart, British Consul General, Luanda, to British Embassy, Lisbon, 14/04/1964).

⁶⁵ PRO – FO: 371/176932 – *Summaries of developments in Mozambique and Angola, 1964* (A. D. M. Ross, British Embassy, Lisbon, to Foreign Office, 21/05/1964).

⁶⁶ However, by the end of May 1961 the Brazilian President Jânio Quadros was dealing with strong internal criticisms of his Third World external politic and little support could be offered by Brazilians to Angolan white nationalists.

FUA tried to re-established itself in Angola, through some contacts in Brazil and created some clandestine groups in Central and Southern Angola. But in May 1963, the Portuguese political policy arrested almost all FUA members of Huambo, Lobito and Benguela and the movement was crushed definitively. As a consequence of Angolan black nationalist hostility and of its internal failure, the FUA exiled committee dissolved in August 1963. Its disappearance signalled the end of liberal and progressive nationalists hopes, since there remained no group or party in the interior of Angola courageous enough to challenge the Portuguese colonial repressive dictatorship⁶⁷.

The white conservative nationalist line was a form of rightwing economic nationalism and it corresponded to a model typical of other settler societies (e.g. Algeria, Kenya, Southern Rhodesia). Angolan conservative white nationalism was mostly supported by those who depended heavily on the exploitation of forced or semi-slave black labour, such as the coffee barons of Northern Angola⁶⁸. Their scope and motivations were not unlike Ian Smith's *United Rhodesian Front* or Algeria's *Organization Armée Secrète*, but they never achieved the strength and power of these organizations. After 1961, they demanded political independence – a brand of independence, which implied the preservation of European control – , but only if it were the case that the metropolitan forces failed to eliminate the black guerrilla threat. This, at least, was the impression of A.D.M. Ross, British Ambassador in Lisbon, who visited Angola and Mozambique in 1962: “In both Angola and Mozambique, however, the settlers are passionately attached both to the land they live and to the Mother Country. There is much talk of independence and breaking away, but this is only likely to happen if the white Portuguese come to the conclusion that the Government in Lisbon could neither eliminate nor come to terms with the pan-African threat”⁶⁹. As matter of fact, many conservative settlers limited their demands to a kind of “internal self-government”, greater decentralization and non interference by the Motherland in the economic interests of Angola.

However, as Alfredo Margarido pointed out, the continuation of Angolan colonial war and the example of Southern Rhodesia Unilateral Declaration of Independence in 1965 had a powerful effect over Angolan white settlers. In 1965 the British Consul General in Luanda stated: “Mr. Smith's action [Southern Rhodesia Unilateral Declaration of Independence] has certainly caused great concern here. I should say that most Europeans in Angola sympathise with him and his associates (...). I suspect that it also reflects the feeling that the Europeans here are in a similar position; and that it is essential for their survival in Africa that the Smith regime should not be allowed to founder and the Europeans in Rhodesia be submerged under the flood of African majority rule”⁷⁰. Mr. Ian Smith's “followers” in Angola were known by the suggestive name of *rodesianos* (“Rhodesians”). By the beginning of the 1970s, the authoritarian Portuguese government of Marcelo Caetano was becoming weaker and weaker, but the Angolan guerrilla problem remained. The conditions for a seizure of power were in place, and a plot to do so began to be formed. This involved important figures of the white settler economical elite, Portuguese army officials and probably the General Governor Santos e Castro (an Angolan born white), but the plot aborted after the Portuguese *coup d'état* of April 25th 1974⁷¹. The conservative forces were taken by surprise and they were unprepared to

⁶⁷ See: Fernando Tavares Pimenta – *Branços de Angola. Autonomismo e nacionalismo (1900-1961)*. Coimbra: MinervaCoimbra, 2005.

⁶⁸ Interview with Adolfo Maria, Angolan born white nationalist, member of MLNA-PCA, FUA and MPLA (Lisbon, January 2004).

⁶⁹ PRO – FO: 371/161641 – *Visits to Angola and Mozambique by HM Ambassador*, 1962 (A. D. M. Ross, British Embassy, Lisbon, to Foreign Office, 23/11/1962). See also: PRO – FO: 371/176932 – *Summaries of developments in Mozambique and Angola*, 1964 (A. D. M. Ross, British Embassy, Lisbon, to Foreign Office, 21/05/1964).

⁷⁰ PRO – FO: 371/182035 – *Political relations: Portugal and Portuguese Africa*, 1965 (British Consul General, Luanda, to British Embassy, Lisbon, 25/11/1965).

⁷¹ Silvino Silvério Marques – *Marcelo Caetano, Angola e o 25 de Abril*. Lisboa: Inquérito, 1995.

respond to the political changes taken by the Portuguese revolutionary government in 1974. White conservative nationalists were split into several parties, the most important of which were the *Partido Cristão Democrático de Angola* (Angolan Democratic Christian Party) and the *Frente de Resistência Angolana* (“Angolan Resistance Front”). They started a last attempt to seize power in October 24th 1974, but the plot was discovered and crushed by the Portuguese revolutionary military forces. Finally, conservative nationalists tried to negotiate a neo-colonial solution with the black armed liberation movements, especially the FNLA and UNITA, but in the end they were obliged to leave Angola and went in exile in South Africa⁷².

Meanwhile, progressive and liberal white nationalists tried to organize themselves into political parties. Liberals demanded some form of white participation in the independence process, but the Portuguese government rejected their claims and negotiated Angola’s independence directly with the three black armed liberation movements (MPLA, FNLA and UNITA). Angolan whites were obliged to support one of the three movements, or leave the country. The majority of progressives and a minority of liberals supported the radical pro-soviet MPLA, of Agostinho Neto, but the majority of liberals and some conservative supported the apparently more moderated pro-Western UNITA of Jonas Savimbi. Yet in 1975 the civil war broke between the three movements and violent struggles damaged the major urban centres, finishing with the victory of the MPLA, the elimination of FNLA and the expulsion of UNITA to the South-eastern bush. As a consequence of the violent battles (and probably of MPLA’s victory), the great majority of Angolan whites – approximately 300.000 people – hurriedly left the country throughout 1975⁷³. The majority of Angolan white exiles went to Portugal, but many established themselves in Brazil, South Africa and Southern Rhodesia. Only 30.000 (10%) Angolan whites remained in Angola, but almost all were politically dependent from the MPLA which assured the protection of their lives against racial vindications. By the end of 1975, Angola had ceased to be a settler society and white settler political ambitions were resolutely ended. Angolan white nationalism ceased to exist.

Analysis of the political behaviour of Angolan white settlers indicates that settlers not only developed a local economic nationalism, but that they actually created a kind of African identification which added a more political character to this nationalism. We probably cannot speak of the existence of an Angolan white national ideology (by which we imply a complete set of white settler national beliefs, such as the Boers had in South Africa⁷⁴), but settlers certainly developed an Angolan national identity which was expressed by the invention of the concept of *angolanidade* and even by in more abstract notion of Angola as a “new Brazil”. On the one hand, we can say that these nationalist ideals were not of great significance, but, on the other, as Alfredo Margarido pointed out: “In 1975 none of the Angolan armed liberation movements had a national ideology of their own. They wanted to be independent and free from Portuguese colonialism, but they didn’t know what to do after the independence – and this was one of Angola’s major problems”. The absence of an Angolan white national ideology was, at least in part, a consequence of the authoritarian colonial rule of Portuguese New State dictatorship and things would surely have evolved differently if a democratic power had been in place in Lisbon. Nevertheless, the analysis of the Angolan case suggests that white settlers in Africa were much more than simply agents or instruments of European colonialism. Indeed, apart from the South African case, we probably cannot speak in an African white settler nationalism as we currently speak of American nationalism, but it would be foolish deny white settler’s identification with Africa. This challenges us to adopt a less simplistic and Manichean perspective when we analyse the place of settlers in the African colonial context and their role

⁷² Interview with General Silvino Silvério Marques, former General Governor of Angola (Lisbon, January 2004).

⁷³ Their exodus was almost the repetition of the *ped noir* exodus from Algeria in 1962.

⁷⁴ Leonard Thompson – *The political mythology of apartheid*. Yale University Press, 1985.

in local nationalist movements. Finally, and perhaps most important, this challenges us to study settler's identity as white Africans, other than simply European expatriates.

The Untraceable Colonialist
Autobiographical Practices and Colonial ideologies in Belgium

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The substance of this paper is drawn from the first conclusions of a research project based on a handful of published texts. Mostly written by Belgians, these texts were conceived of by their authors as testimonies of their past life experiences in the Congo. The background is thus clearly colonial history, even though other dimensions can also be explored. I am currently struggling with the complexity of that history. I therefore thought of this paper as an “internal dialogue” to clarify, firstly to myself, the problems I am facing.

I am going to present a brief retrospective account of my research project, explaining why I have chosen to analyze the documents I’m dealing with for the moment, and what shifts of emphasis this analysis can in turn bring to my wider project. In the second part, I will discuss more closely the sources used, and present some possibilities of interpretation.

From a history of norms to the uncovering of a historical imagination through a history of *imaginaire*

When I first started to work on Belgian colonialism, I decided to focus on the preparation/formation that Belgians received in the metropolis before living for the Congo. My project was an attempt at drawing a cultural history of Belgian colonizers. Focusing on “Whites” in the colonial encounter was not rare at all, but usually bound to a celebratory vision of the European conquest of the world. However, invitations to problematize the figure of the colonizer have been launched already before the end of empires by Bronislaw Malinowski and Georges Balandier. In his effort to promote a practical science, Malinowski considered that the anthropologist should become the interpreter of the natives he was studying¹. To have an influence on the decision-making processes in the colonies, he had to present the African societies as they were, and so to spend some energy in describing the Europeans living there. A few years after the posthumous book of Malinowski was published, Balandier gave a powerful definition of the “colonial situation” in which a binary logic of domination finds only a justification by the production of a legitimating discourse based on the racial and cultural superiority of the dominant group². The sociological agenda of Malinowski and Balandier was replaced in the years that followed by psychoanalytical and critical approaches of the colonizers. The works of such intellectuals as Frantz Fanon and Albert Memmi were deeply empowering for the nationalist movements³. Though, and maybe for that reason, they proposed a quite stereotypical vision of the colonizer which did not really succeed to escape the Manichean dimension of colonial ideology. It is precisely the commitment of colonial studies to go beyond the colonial dichotomy that I found the most inspiring for my research. The importance of colonizers societies’ internal divisions has been powerfully elaborated in the 1990s⁴. In the 1980s already, Vincent Cranpazano’s ethnography of Whites in South Africa

¹ Bronislaw Malinowski : *The dynamics of culture change : An inquiry into race relations in Africa*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1945.

² Georges Balandier : « La situation coloniale : approche théorique », *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie*, 1951, XI, pp. 44-79.

³ Frantz Fanon : *Peaux noires, masques blancs*, Seuil, Paris, 1952 et Albert Memmi : *Portrait du colonisé, précédé de portrait du colonisateur*, Corrèa, Paris, 1957.

⁴ See Stoler & Cooper (1997).

had played an important role⁵. It had notably argued – based on a study of identity politics among Afrikaners and their opposition to the English South Africans – for a distinction between dominance within a system and domination of a system⁶. What is striking in Crapanzano’s ethnography is the extent to which race is silenced in White South Africans’ discourse. The uncovering of the construction of race has therefore been one of the major research lines for students of colonial society. Ann Laura Stoler has shown how problematic were such notions as “White” or “European” in the colonial context⁷. The definition of these categories was nowhere natural; it always implied relations of power. Stoler insists on the importance of the sexual and of the intimate in the “securing” of race. Class became also a matter of exclusion in the definition of race and whites were meant to act along the conventions of “middle-respectability”. Dane Kennedy’s comparative study of Kenya and Rhodesia is particularly clear on how colonial settler societies constructed themselves on racism⁸. Africans were presented as potential sources of disease. Irrational fears about African male raping European women added to the idea that blacks and whites were to be kept separate. However settler societies were based on African labor. If the complete separation was therefore impossible, whites tried to isolate themselves by attitudes of prestige. A whole colonial culture developed around this idea of prestige to keep the white and the black symbolically segregated and in order that each kept being conscious of “his right place”. In that sense, poor settlers, so long as they maintained the appearances, were not a threat to colonial societies.

Taking for granted the constructedness of white colonial culture, I was trying to locate this process, by using the idea of preparation to colonial life. The archives of the colonial university in Antwerp and the colonial school in Brussels, the two main institutions that delivered the pre-departure training at the time, were quite poor and contained little information about the content of the intellectual, ideological and moral baggage the future colonizers were given in those institutions. Another source revealed itself to be more interesting for my research: the handbooks that were published from the end of the nineteenth century until the end of the fifties. These guides were written by experienced colonizers and were intended for the “greenhorns”. The books were moral treatises by missionaries, guidelines specially meant for women, very practical and technical texts for soldiers, or hygienic handbooks written by medical doctors. I was particularly interested by these last ones. The conclusions that I was able to trace corroborated the importance of the body in the colonial experience⁹. The discourse around the colonizer’s body epitomized the contradictions embedded in the colonial project itself. The continuous aim of the preparation discourse was indeed to inoculate a feeling of angst to the colonizer, a feeling that seemed to imply the impossibility of the presence of Europeans in Africa.

Colonial preparation themes were very similar to the ideas developed in essays or even travel books by the colonial ideologists. “Scientific” and “prosaic” discourses met to tell common things about colonization. Their point of view was to be understood in a context of debates, whose nature was shifting with the evolution of the colonial situation. The unity of the arguments of the different ideologists made their normative force, but I interpreted the unified opinions also as a failure of their hegemonic pretensions and as a testimony of the

⁵ Vincent Crapanzano : *Waiting : the Whites of South Africa*, Random House, New York, 1985.

⁶ The very importance of this point can be demonstrated negatively in studies that failed to recognize it. See for example Jeannine Vergès-Leroux’ s work of Whites in colonial Algeria (Vergès-Leroux, 2001).

⁷ Ann Laura Stoler : *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power : Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1997.

⁸ Dane Kennedy : *Islands of White : Settler Society and Culture in Kenya and Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1939*, Duke University Press, Durham, 1987.

⁹ Elizabeth Collingham has forcefully demonstrated how the British body was central in the colonial experience on India, and how it could be used as an epistemological device in the writing of new histories. Elizabeth M. Collingham: *Imperial Bodies: The Physical Experiences of the Raj, c. 1800-1947*, Cambridge, 2001.

existence of other divergent points of view. For example, during the interwar period, the repeated insistence by priests, administrators, politicians and doctors to select more carefully the future colonizers, to make all whites in Africa the members of an elite with an normalized lifestyle, clearly meant that a group of poor, acculturated whites, who shared their life with African women existed.. After WWII, the stance of the authors on a regenerated, reformed and moralized colonialism indicated that many colonizers showed out-of-place racist prejudices in their relations with Africans, or that they considered their stay in Africa as a simple way to earn money, instead of a “civilizing mission”. I based these hypotheses on the discordant voices the existence of which that I assumed more than I was able to trace specifically.

My research project’s epistemological strategy was therefore to substitute narrative forms of discourse to normative ones. My hypothesis was that the discursive identity of the colonizers would be able to show more clearly the tensions of the colonial ideology and the diversity of the living experiences of whites in the Congo. I opposed the normative identity of the medical and moral discourses to a lived identity expressed in personal writings, like letters, autobiography, or amateur photography.

Trying to move forward in my own understanding of my object of research, I tended to use the concept of identity less and less, since it actually brought more problems than it solved. It proved to be more helpful to reflect upon what the sources could teach, as an *imaginaire* expressed through the individual scale of discourse, than to consider them as a basis for the study of colonial identity. The idea was to scrutinize different places where this *imaginaire* was formulated, and to aggregate them in order to reach a complex understanding of the colonial situation and its metropolitan recalling. The first place to be analyzed was the published autobiographies. I will present their study in the second part of the presentation. But before, I should say a word about how this analysis could allow me to reformulate my research anew.

As we shall see in a moment, the autobiographical texts of my corpus were all published after the independence of the Congo, sometimes long after. They present different interpretations of the grand narrative of colonialism, but above all the epistemological rupture entailed by the independence process. They invite us to bring more energy into the analysis of the complexity and ambiguities of this process rather than focusing only on an “authentic” colonial past the authors could straightly recall. Also they make us recognize the urgency of multiplying the contexts of these texts, and their counter-texts.

I would like to put independence at the center of my study. Belgian colonial historiography usually considers June 30th 1960, the date of the independence of the Congo, as its natural full stop. However, the disengagement of Belgium and of Belgians in Africa would linger on late after that symbolic day when King Baudouin and Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba clashed so famously in Léopoldville over the memory of colonialism. Independence has to be approached much more historically; in particular the epistemological break it created must be more deeply understood. Both the colonizers’ lifestyles in Africa without the support of the colonial state and the way the colonial narrative was told once it referred to a past reality can bring a real counterpoint to the normative discourse Belgian ideologists had built since the time of the Leopoldian Free State Congo. Independence also seems like a way to leave the comfort of a Saidian perspective, which consider the colonial discourse as an auto-referential reality performed in and for Europe, to the more perilous, but maybe also more useful, attempt of writing a history matching African and European points of views.

Working with autobiographical texts on Congolese Independence, I am also trying to go beyond the dead-end of memory studies. Memory has been so much used by historians during the past two decades that it has lost a lot of its utility. Therefore, I consider autobiographies more as form of historical writing than of memory writing. In this perspective, ethnography, much more than metahistory, has given a very instructive reshaping of the idea of historical

imagination¹⁰. The insistence on endogenous historical consciousness owned by “non-Occidental peoples” and on the variety of historical modes of representation has to make us question the traditional critique of occidental historiography, focused exclusively on the writing of professional historians. Johannes Fabian’s study of Tshibumba Kanda Matulu’s paintings is exemplary for that matter¹¹. Fabian and Tshibumba got to know each other during the 1970s in the Katanga. The first was carrying on some research on popular painting, while the latter was willing to produce a pictorial history of his country. Fabian became the buyer of those paintings. In their meetings to talk about the meanings of each episode of the history, the anthropologist was considering the painter as an « informant » who would not have been on the other side of the classical divide between those who ask questions and those who respond. Furthermore, Fabian is taking seriously Tshibumba’s claim to the historian’s status. He therefore comes to differentiate between the simple fact of telling a story and the elaborated producing of a history. Appealing to historiology (speaking or writing about history) as Fabian does could also allow us to distinguish autobiographies from collective memory. For “popular” and “academic” histories share a common status: “that of a dialectical process, itself historical and hence contingent”¹².

The autobiographical corpus and its critique

The texts I have gathered for my study are books written by former Belgian colonizers, who, on an individual basis, tried to recall the history of the colony from their own memories. The majority of the books were published during the eighties. Of a total of 17, only 3 were actually issued before 1978. It is true that the writers seem to belong to the last generation of colonizers, those who discovered Africa after WWII; and that these kinds of books were usually written after the end of active life, or what corresponds to the 1980s in this case. But this quasi lack of publications during twenty years is also a sign of the trauma caused by the violence of decolonization. It seems that representations of the Congo have been repressed in the whole of Belgian discourse during this period. Literature and history were also touched by the phenomena at decolonization. During the 1980s however, Belgium finishes its disengagement from the Congo, with the end of the cooperation system in 1988¹³. Several commemorations took place (with the most important, the centenary of the creation of the Leopoldian Free State Congo in 1985). This obviously creates the conditions for the beginning of a reconsideration of the colonial past. I should also mention the federalization process of Belgium which enters a new phase at the end of the 1970s among the factors that explain the return of a discourse on colonialism¹⁴. The colony was closely linked with the unitary Belgian state (just as royal family remained deeply involved in Congolese affairs through the whole colonial period). For the francophone authors I study, the failure of the idea of nation they often closely identified with recalls certainly the failure of the colonial project they served in Africa. But these links are quite difficult to trace in the texts. They appear in the interstices at certain moments, when for example authors evoke the linguistic problems of the fifties in the Congo.

The books of the autobiographical corpus present different qualities that correspond to the status of their author. There is a clear distinction between polished, well written texts of important figures and published by established editors, and less ambitious books of rank-and-files, often auto-published. Among the first category, we find for example the two books of

¹⁰ J. Comaroff & J. Comaroff: *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1992.

¹¹ Johannes Fabian : *Remembering the Present : Painting and Popular History in Zaire*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1996.

¹² *Idem*, 316.

¹³ See G. De Villers: *De Mobutu à Mobutu: Trente ans de relations Belgique-Zaire*, De Boeck, Bruxelles, 1995.

¹⁴ On the relations between colonial memory and federalization, see H. Asselberghs & D. Lesage (eds): *Het museum van de natie: Van kolonialisme tot globalisering*, Yves Gevaert, Brussels, 1999.

General Emile Janssens (1961 and 1975)¹⁵. Born in 1902, he started a classical career in the metropolitan army in 1920. At the age of 36, he asked to be transferred to the Congo. He took part in the war first in Africa, and then in Europe where he remained a few years after the end of the conflict. In 1949 he returned to the Congo, and five years later was given the commandment of the Public force, the colonial army composed of African soldiers and Belgian officers. He was in charge of the public order at the time of independence, and was maintained in his post by Lumumba after June 30th. However their relations were very bad, and Janssens was forced to leave the Congo only ten days after independence. He tried at that moment to encourage the other Belgian officers to follow him in his retreat. Janssens is quite famous for a sentence he may have said to Congolese soldiers in the first days of July 1960: “before independence = after independence”. Whatever the different interpretations this slogan can be given, it is emblematic of the way a part of the colonizers conceived the transition from a colonial to an independent Congo. Janssens’ books are firstly speeches for his own defense. He presents the political events preceding independence to underline his clairvoyance of the chaos and anarchy that would result from the process, and to condemn the role played by the metropolitan authorities as well as those of African politicians, Lumumba *en tête*. His texts don’t say anything of the independent Congo, or at his activities after his return to Belgium.

Paul Raymaekers’ book, written in the early 1990s, is also published by an important editor, even though the author’s contribution to the political history of the country is much less important than the one of Janssens¹⁶. The author tries to recapitulate what he calls his “tumultuous journey”. He was born in the 1930s into a family of the haute bourgeoisie. But he showed early signs of resistance against his milieu and the education he was given. While he accepted the will of his father and studied business, he secretly decided to follow the courses organized by the school of air force pilots at the same time. This kind of semi-rebellion is representative of the way he describes his living choices in the Congo. He first went there to complete his military service, and returned to work for a commercial company in Leopoldville in 1956. He was quite critical of the colonial system and the way the other Europeans behaved. He started then to get involved in benevolent Christian social action towards Africans, and finally decided to move to the *cit  indig ne* (the black town separated from the white one). He progressively retracted from his job to dedicate himself to the writing of a doctoral thesis on African religions. He was then employed by the Lovanium University, but maintained throughout his career an anticonformist position, linking research in different disciplines and a social action, through the organization of working camp to “reeducate” the urban juvenile delinquents. His experience in Africa finished in 1991 with the plundering of the association he had created.

Among the rank-and-file colonizers that have written their memory of colonialism, I would like to stress one in particular: Michel Massoz. Massoz belongs to the same generation as Raymaekers, but his familial background was totally different. He grew up in a large family and was forced to abandon his studies in order to financially help his parents. In 1951, he moved to the Congo with his wife and first child and worked as a railway employee in Katanga. He spent his entire career in the Congo, until he retired in the late 1970s. He returned to Belgium and published a novel, the plot of which is covering the years he spent in Africa¹⁷. The main character of this book, Christian Courtois, is clearly Massoz’s literary alter ego. Some episodes lived by this character are completely fictional, but Massoz has clearly isolated them. For the author, the important is not their fictional aspect, but the “mentalit  bantoue” he thought to have completely understood and wanted to expose, because he believed

¹⁵ Emile Janssens : *J’ tais le g n ral Janssens*, Dessart, Bruxelles, 1961 and *Au fil d’une vie*, Demeyre, Bruxelles, 1975.

¹⁶ Paul Raymaekers : *Nzala : autobiographie d’un coop rant en Afrique Centrale*, Mus e Royal de l’Afrique Central, Tervuren, 1992.

¹⁷ Michel Massoz : *Le Congo de Papa*, Dricot, Li ge, 1983.

it was the reason of African stagnation. Courtois is therefore described as a very comprehensive colonizer, listening to his Congolese workers, but also sometimes acting rudely with them because he knows “how to be a respected chief in the African way”. After independence, his wife returns to Belgium; and he starts a love affair with a young *métisse*. Sexual intercourse between white males and black females are for him the symbols of a truly interracial society that can go beyond the colonial colour bar. For similar reasons he is very enthusiastic about the Katanga secession. But his hopes collapse with the UN intervention that put an end to the “state” of Moïse Tshombe and marks the end of his interracial relation. The second part of the story is on the Mobutu regime and denounces the mistreatments and abuses the whites suffered under it. In this part, the main character, now a widower, and does not succeed to experience any new love affair with an African woman, which is the confirmation, if needed be, of the failure of the regeneration of the colonial utopy.

The three stories I tried to summarize are quite different in content, but also in form. Nevertheless I started quite early to consider them as belonging to a common genre, the autobiographical one. The logical step was therefore to look at the works of Philippe Lejeune, one of the major specialists of this genre¹⁸. Lejeune was one of the first to theorize autobiographical writings in France. He contributed to that by establishing a certain number of criteria that could indicate if a text was an autobiography, and why. It revealed to be very difficult to deal with my texts as autobiographies with the categories set by Lejeune. To be able to continue to consider them as autobiographical, I had to look at critics of him, mainly Anglophone post-modernists, that suggested other definitions of the genre¹⁹. Nevertheless, the true understanding of the nature of the texts was to be searched in their relations to colonial discourse.

One of the key elements of Lejeune’s model is what he calls the autobiographical pact. This pact, the ultimate criterion in the definition of autobiography, is based on an identity between the name of the author of the text and the names of the narrator/main character. This pact is broken by several texts in my corpus, while others would have been disqualified by Lejeune for their lack of orthodoxy. Nevertheless, all the texts share a common dimension which is linked with the author as a subject, and the way he is led to tell his story. The texts are in part shaped by the informal autobiographical practices that filled the past colonial life of their authors. They are also closely related to the colonial discourse, in the sense that both were aimed primarily at telling the “truth” about the otherness of colonial life and of the colonized; and this truth seems to be only authenticable through a lived experience. Those texts are therefore also linked by a kind of pact, based on their autobiographical dimension: the authors, to demonstrate that they are telling the truth are forced to show a certain part of their personal history, proving their concrete experience of life in Africa and the mental shifts they have undergone to be able to understand its otherness.

Another critical matter was to situate the texts in regard to colonial literature. Belgian colonial fiction has been quite well studied by some Romanists, among whom Pierre Halen is the most interesting²⁰. He is also maybe the most difficult to challenge, because his intuitions on the corpus are very powerful, and also because he is committed with a deep sense of history. Moreover, he embraces a great variety of texts, some of which feature in my own corpus of sources. Halen’s analysis is a myth analysis. He attempts to study the colonial *imaginaire* through the diverse myths the texts are telling. This approach is clearly suggested by fiction,

¹⁸ Philippe Lejeune : *Pour l’autobiographie*, Seuil, Paris, 1998 ; *Le Pacte Autobiographique*, Seuil 1996 ; *Je est un autre : l’autobiographie de la littérature aux médias*, Seuil, Paris, 1980.

¹⁹ See K. Ashley & L. Gilmore (eds) : *Autobiography and postmodernism*, The University of Massachusetts Press, Boston, 1994.

²⁰ Pierre Halen : *Le petit Belge avait vu grand : une littérature coloniale*, Labor, Bruxelles, 1993.

thought to be the perfect way to “tell particular and irreplaceable things about human beings”. In certain respects, my texts fit very well Halen’s analyses who links love affairs and family problems of the characters of the novels to the problematics of national identity and the difficulties of colonizers in situating themselves with regard to the metropole. He delivers a great information that allows for example to give a context to the interracial love affair evoked in Massoz’s book.

But the nature of my texts suggests another approach that can stand on the one developed by Halen but tries to go further, to demonstrate different individual attitudes toward the *imaginaire*. The autobiographical texts contribute more to the fragmentation of myths than to their construction. It is perhaps oversimplified, and things are probably more fluid, but we could say that while fictions show the construction of the colonial *imaginaire*, the autobiographical texts, partaking to an elaborated kind of historical imagination, show its fragmentation.

From this point of view, the French anthropologist Marc Augé has presented a interesting statement of the relations between “life narratives” and “grand narratives”. He argues that the personal integration of the totalizing myths of the twentieth century by the people who identified with them tended to weigh on them and to break them up. He also remarks that fascism and communism tend to differ on the fact that while the first was rarely put into personal narratives, the last was told repeatedly. He suggests its superiority as an ideology saying that even after its failure, the people who lived it were not obliged to go back on what they had said, because their personal narrative was not concerned by this failure. While colonialism has been associated as of early with fascism by the postcolonial critics²¹, we can see that it has nevertheless been integrated and translated into a lot of “life narratives”. Yet it is true that nearly all those narratives go back in a certain way on “what had been said” on colonialism. Studying all the means of disowning, and the different forms these take is a good way to understand better what colonialism was about and how it was lived in, sometimes, very different ways by the people who were meant to make it exist.

As a more concrete conclusion, I would like to summarize briefly the different ways in which the three above-presented texts deal with this dimension of denial. Independence exposed the conditions of the colonizer’s common identity, as well as the inner tensions of the dominant group. The first tension is underlined by the choice of some Europeans to stay in Africa, and by others to return to the metropole. General Janssens belongs to the latter. He identifies with a “tough” version of colonialism, clearly based on the model of the settler colony. He criticises the colonial state because it did not assume what for him was its true nature. It naturally gave the independence too early, but was already wrong before “in assuming that indigenous people could be perfected and were able to reach a European standard”. Among the Europeans who made the choice to stay in Africa, solidarity was very high, because of their feeling of vulnerability. Yet tensions also existed between them. For example, Raymaekers and Massoz both deplored the failure of a “euro-african *imaginaire*”, but for Raymaekers the failure was mostly one of the *colonialisme de service*, of social and Christian action. For Massoz however, it was one of *paternalisme*. Both authors have insisted on the importance of the knowledge of African people, itself a colonial project, but this knowledge always revealed to be insufficient and either partly illusory or disenchanting. The men who really knew Africans – that is, better than African themselves – were not taken in consideration or given voices under the colonisation and after under the Mobutu era.

All of the three authors were critical of the metropole. However they seem to diverge on the way they recalled colonial state and ideology. Janssens tended to defend them, while Massoz and Raymaekers more openly criticized them. This divergence can easily be explained by the different responsibilities they were charged with in the Congo. Nevertheless all of them

²¹ See Aimé Césaire : *Discours sur le colonialisme*, Présence Africaine, Paris, 1989.

rejected colonialism in a way, while they also tried to save a part of it. The failure of the colonial experience is not taken as a personal one by the authors, because their historical imagination allows them to claim the role of the other. The failed colonialist is never to be found. It is the colonial culture's ambiguities – already present in the “normative” texts” – that makes him untraceable in the autobiographies.

**Equilibrium and conflict:
Notes on the nature of colonialism**

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This paper tries to revisit two different moments in the history of Portuguese colonialism. The differences between the moment of definition of a borderline between Swaziland and Mozambique, in 1888, and the 1890 British ‘ultimatum’ couldn’t be any more distinguishable. If the first has had an insignificant magnitude in Portuguese colonial history, the second is frequently defined as a watershed in the transition of Portuguese presence in Africa towards a modern imperialism. Again, if the first is defined by ‘equilibrium’, the second was imposed by ‘conflict’. Raising issues of representation, imperial discourse and historiography, this paper points out the need of a dialectical approach in order to contemplate the complementary nature of these two events. Colonial equilibrium and imperial conflict, I argue, are equally part of the constitutive nature of colonialism. Besides providing a good occasion to rethink the Portuguese colonial history, this paper will try to propose a different analytic framing on the nature of the colonial encounter and, consequently, the early stages of the colonial state. In order to do so, I propose the colonial *praxis* of Henrique de Carvalho’s expedition to Lunda (1884-1888) as a valid contrast to the use of the ‘ultimatum’ imperial narrative. But let me begin by a short digression to the opposite coast, in the region disputed between colonial Mozambique and what would be later Swaziland.

Space, sovereignty and the colonial equilibrium.

In the well-known “Analysis of a social situation in Modern Zululand²”, Max Gluckman departs from a particular event in order to scrutinize the moments of ‘equilibrium’ that defined, according to him, the pattern of modern Zululand social structure. The ceremonial opening of the first bridge to be built under the new rules of ‘Native Development’, in 1938, was his ‘social situation’³. The analysis we propose of the 1888 negotiations for the definition of a sketchy borderline between what is today Swaziland and Mozambique will be our colonial situation, abusively transposing Gluckman’s ‘social situation’ into a strictly colonial setting – in the imperial dispute over King Umbadine’s land. As I will argue, this colonial situation is in

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² Gluckman, Max, “Analysis of a social situation in Modern Zululand”, in *Bantu Studies*, Vol. XIV, 1940.

³ As he witnessed it, this bridge was the common celebration of both Europeans and Zulu: “*though ... organized in two groups at the bridge, their presence implies that they are united in celebrating a matter of mutual interest*” [Gluckman: 14], a congealed equilibrium of interdependent relationships [id:28]. The matter of defining whether the inauguration of the bridge was an appropriate ‘ideal type’ as a means of attaining a full description of ‘equilibrium’ of Zululand in colonial context is not to the issue here. Although overlooking moments of conflict that also defined Zulu and Europeans relations – in his attempt to identify patterns and moments of congealed equilibrium –, let us just say that Gluckman allows for contradiction and schism to emerge according to “shifting membership of groups in different situations” [id: 29]. What is more, these temporary moments of equilibrium are but a proof of the instability of the social system that sustained them. Although overtaken by a semiotic turn, where the social situation, as public ritual and symbolic performance would come to the forefront of the analysis, Gluckman keeps valuable lessons for those concerned with the way colonialism shapes, in contradictory ways, a given social context.

itself a crystallized moment of equilibrium between imperial structures of power. And, what is more, the meaning ascribed to the ritual and performative value of this colonial situation allows for understanding the nature of imperial relations – one marked by instability and impractical reason – in their process of colonial domination. Let us keep in mind, however, that unlike Max Gluckman, I wasn't present in the event I will describe. Therefore, the story I will tell is subject to the contingent and mediated nature of a colonial archive – in this case the Portuguese record of the meeting's official minutes. This is the Portuguese official version of the situation I propose to think about⁴.

Briefly summarized, this situation goes as follows: between June 2nd and June 30th 1888, official representatives of England, Portugal, the Boer 'South Africa Republic' [the autonomous provinces of Transvaal and Orange State] and the Swaziland kingdom⁵ met by the Lebombo Mountains southwest of Lourenço Marques (present-day Maputo). The announced objective of this commission was to define the limits between Portuguese territory and 'Mussate' [Swaziland]⁶. During the total of 15 meetings, with morning and afternoon sessions, these men debated the approximate borderline that was to cross King Umbadine's land. Although this was a 'luso-swazi' commission, according to the Portuguese official documents, it was so at the expense of Swaziland itself, whose 'representation' had been 'delegated' in the hands of Theophilus Shepstone, key figure of the British colonialism, a sort of right hand for 'native' matters⁷. However, in order to understand this 'colonial situation' properly, one has to step back for a moment.

On 14 April 1886, J.J. Monteiro Liborio and José Apolónio de Carvalho met King Umbadine, in official representation of the Portuguese government. The purpose of the visit was to request a concession of coal, west of Lebombo mountains, in Swazi lands. The Portuguese delegation carried some gifts that the sovereign would reject on the basis that they had been bought with the money obtained by the Portuguese from the sale of his own land to Transvaal [*Negócios*: 11; 28]. Two years later, during the official negotiations, the event would be brought to the table of negotiations. The Portuguese delegation promptly dismissed the accusation. Some witnesses called to stand for the Swazi king, during the 1888 negotiations, presented another version. According to C.E. Dupont, who claimed to have witnessed this

⁴ A critique of the use of these sources will be developed further ahead. The following observations are extracted from *Negócios Externos. Documentos Apresentados às Cortes na Sessão Legislativa de 1889 pelo Ministro e Secretário d'Estado dos Negócios Estrangeiros. Limites entre o Districto de Lourenço Marques e o Território de Mussate*, Lisboa, Imprensa Nacional, 1889. The transcription of these negotiation sessions, from their original version in English, seems to bear a wrong date. Where it reads July 14th 1889 it should be read 1888, taking into account the Portuguese government acceptance of the terms of the concluding negotiation, by January 1889. See *Negócios Externos*, p. 43.

⁵ Official members: R.E.R. Martin, and the secretary D. G. Giles, representing England; António de Azevedo Vasconcellos, governor of Lourenço Marques province, as the Portuguese delegate; Theophilus Shepstone, for Swazi king Umbadine; G. R. Von Wieligh, for South Africa Republic.

⁶ The differences in Portuguese and English stem from different deviations of 'Mswati', Swazi king who succeeded Sobhuza [U'Sabusa in the Portuguese records] in 1839. About political mutations in this period, and its consequences in the definition of today's Swaziland, see Bonner, Philip, "Factions and Fissions: Transvaal/Swazi politics in the Mid-Nineteenth century", *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 19, n. 2, 1978, pp. 219-238. His article is particularly relevant in the critique of a 'Royal version of Swazi history' [Bonner: 221] as a whole and unified political unit. Instead, he proposes the analysis of the shifting political allegiances and oppositions that defined 'Swazi' relations with the neighbouring Boer province of Transvaal.

⁷ Having had key interventions as 'Secretary of Native Affairs' in Natal, between 1856 and 1877, and later in Zulu and Swaziland. He can be held accountable, as well, of an important role in the annexation of Boer provinces over to British control. Cf. "Shepstone, Sir Theophilus" (1817-1893), Boase, Frederic, *Modern English Biography: Containing Many Thousand Concise Memoirs of Persons who Have Died Since the Year 1850, with an Index of the most Interesting Matter*, Netherton & Worth, 6 vols, 1892-1921. Recently, his relation to Zululand, as in Shepstone's intallation of Cetshwayo. Cf. Hamilton, Carolyn, *Terrific Majesty*.

meeting from a neighbouring hut⁸ – the virtues of an European ear –, the king was aware of a public notice announcing the sale of ‘farms’ in the Lebombo mountains by the Portuguese. Theophilus Shepstone backed up this testimony⁹. But before that, on 22 May 1886 to be precise, a delegation from the Swazi kingdom arrived to Lourenço Marques. Their request was simple: that the “*Portuguese government would remove the foreigners living in Lebombo mountains, for they stole and molested his people*”¹⁰. The official negotiations were about to begin, but not until a final preliminary meeting was held.

It’s October 1887 and Joaquim Machado, chief engineer in Mozambique, meets Theophilus Shepstone, who was to be the official representative of the Swazi claims. Joaquim Machado was a known engineer, presumed responsible for defining the course of the ‘Transvaal railway’ (70 kms), and author of a critical report on the conditions of ‘Obras Públicas’ (public works) in Mozambique¹¹. The Swazi king, on the other hand, presented Theophilus Shepstone, which necessarily entails the question of representation: was this another imperial gesture towards ‘natives’ or was this an uninterested case of colonialism standing for local populations? One case or the other – and we will get there –, the Portuguese delegate grounds his case on the need to include the ‘Libombos’ mountains under Portuguese rule as to face the ‘white’s threat’. His surprising argument went as follows: “*While pacific black people lived there [Lebombo mountains], the government has let them freely be, but since mischievous whites have established there, committing murderers and robberies, escaping justice due to the inexistence of flawless data on where lies the borderline ... [the Portuguese government] has found necessary to entrust me to define the frontier*”¹². The protective wing provided under Portuguese authority would help safeguard the ‘Mussuate nation’ from “*improper behaviour of any respectable white*”¹³, a duty as useful “*to him [king] as to Portugal*”¹⁴. The irony of Joaquim Machado’s report to the colonial authorities lies in the complete reversal of any previous territorial claims. Turning conventional colonial arguments upside down, the ‘civilizing mission’, so frequently pointed out as the driving force of colonial sovereignty claims, would have improper ‘whites’ as a first obstacle¹⁵. An interesting contrast can be given if we look at the arguments put forward by the ‘national subscription for the establishment of ‘civilizing stations’”, a document edited in 1881 that I will consider more seriously further ahead as part of the imperial narrative. In this document, one could read: “[for the Africans]...*we are the true whites. The others are English, French, Dutch; whites, only Portuguese; white language, Portuguese only*”¹⁶. Let us keep this contradiction in mind. Nevertheless, the cards were on the table, and for the Portuguese side of these negotiations, “*the Swazi had a lot to win and nothing to lose with the definition of a frontier line; at least the*

⁸ “I was present at the meeting between the king [*régulo*] and the Portuguese mission; the King placed me in a hut next to the Portuguese secretary [J.J. Monteiro Libório] to listen to what was going on”. *Negócios...*, p. 17.

⁹ *Id.*, p. 47: Shepstone’s letter, 25th May 1887, and Louis de Bois’ written account, both handed in on the June 4th 1888 official meeting.

¹⁰ [My translation, as the following ones when originally in Portuguese], *id.*, p. 44. It is not clear who composed this new delegation from the Swazi king to Lourenço Marques.

¹¹ Andrade Corvo, Minister of the Navy and Colonies, 1872-1877, quotes extensive parts of this 1877 report in his *Estudos sobre as Províncias Ultramarinas*, Vol. II, pp. 380-428.

¹² Report, Joaquim José Machado, October 27th 1887, in *Negócios Externos...*, p. 2-3. The same argument would be later referred to by the Portuguese official delegate to the mixed commission assigned to define the territorial limits. See *Negócios Externos...*, p. 51, António de Azevedo Vasconcellos. See following note.

¹³ According to the official’s Portuguese delegate, António de Azevedo Vasconcellos, June 19th 1888, *id.*, p. 51.

¹⁴ Joaquim José Machado, *id.*, p. 3.

¹⁵ . Although not too clear from the proceedings of these 1888 Swazi meetings – hence another of its limitations, if taken by itself – it seems these ‘whites’ (some of whom testified in these sessions) were Boer, English and also Portuguese (‘os Fonsecas’) traders, with shifting allegiances to the different political structures at stake.

¹⁶ Ao Povo Português, p. 6.

*whites would stop committing crimes, killing the blacks that lived in the Lebombo mountains and stealing their cattle*¹⁷”.

One obvious claim would be that when the official commission met in June 1888 what was being defined was not the respect for king Umbadine’s sovereignty. Although the meeting was nothing but another stop on the road to the definition of the ‘Swazi’ space, a process concluded in 1895 with the sketchy demarcation of Swaziland’s southeast borderline¹⁸, one can’t help but noticing the non-attendance of Umbadine, the Swazi king. Except for the morning session of June 15th, when Umbadine “*is called*” to pronounce his testimony¹⁹, and the 19th, we can suppose that his presence was mediated only through written declarations. And yet, this was a ‘luso-swazi’ commission, in Swazi lands, with Theophilus Shepstone as the king’s representative: was Umbadine irrelevant for the colonial agreement? My argument is that his ‘spectral’ presence, voiced by Theophilus Shepstone, allowed for the ‘equilibrium’ between imperial powers. Carolyn Hamilton’s book, *Terrific Majesty*, provides new insights on this polemic British figure, particularly of his use of local ‘native’/traditional structures of political representation. Her general argument states that Natal’s native policy was decisively informed by Shepstone’s researches on Zulu past and moulded according to what was believed to be Shaka’s figure. This new track of research pushes towards a necessary revision of what is commonly held as the impact of colonial intervention: to be more exact, it would imply that colonial structures of domination were fundamentally shaped according to native structures of power, thus limiting the determining role of the ‘colonial invention’. What to make of this in the context of the discussions over Umbadine’s sovereignty? Hamilton’s argument seems hard to transpose directly to Umbadine’s situation in these negotiations, given its imperial concurrent nature. Although the nature of Shepstone’s representation cannot be imputed on a respect of traditional Swazi structures of representation, it is my argument that Umbadine – embodied in Shepstone, and as him only – had a fundamental role to play during these negotiations. *In absentia*, Umbadine had brought these colonial administrators onto the table of negotiations – with his territorial claims to sovereign control of the area around Lebombo Mountains setting the terms of the negotiating process. The fact that his statements were presented in a written form (but who wrote them?) added in legitimising potential from a colonial point of view; furthermore, they were also the mediating element that separated the imperial performance from a colonial conflict. The ‘equilibrium’ was not disturbed. *In presence*, on the contrary, Umbadine would be the disruptive element in the process of maintaining imperial equilibrium, as in the June 19th meeting, when King Umbadine allegedly threatened the Portuguese entourage²⁰. Put differently, “King Umbadine” – not king Umbadine – provided the legitimising and abiding character of these negotiations. The double paradox lies, first of all, in “King Umbadine’s” rejection of previous treaties²¹ (presented by Portugal during the meetings as an evidence for defining the border by the Lebombo mountains and not further east, as the other parties argued for) by discarding the possibility of “*another chief*

¹⁷ *Id.*, p. 4.

¹⁸ Cf. Masson, J. R., “The first map of swaziland, and matters incidental thereto”, in *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 155, n. 3., Nov., 1989, pp. 335-341. The first official map of Swaziland would be printed, according to the author, in 1896, one year after its definitive limits had been ‘agreed’ upon.

¹⁹ Following a Portuguese request, the meeting proceedings declare that his testimony was accepted “*by mere condescendence ... given that he was represented by the Mussuate delegate [Theophilus Shepstone]*”, *Negócios...*, p. 24-25.

²⁰ According to the Portuguese official protest, the threats were meant for the Mantolla people that accompanied the Portuguese delegation, allegedly for not following King Umbadine authority. However, as the proceedings from the negotiations make clear, Umbadine’s European staff can be held responsible for the event. Cf. *Negócios...*, p. 51 and 27.

²¹ In 1869 and 1875, both treaties recognizing Portuguese sovereignty over Delagoa Bay. The second agreement was named after MacMahon, French President, responsible for the arbitration favouring the Portuguese. See Newitt, Malyn, *A History of Mozambique*, pp. 327-328.

cut[ting] my lands without my presence...” [Negócios: 46]. As the meeting went on, Umbadine was a mere distant witness of this process. Secondly, the imperial paradox lies in the fact that Umbadine’s ‘spectral’ presence – mediated, represented, written and only indirectly voiced – was a condition for the possibility of imperial ‘equilibrium’.

This was the performative nature of the colonial situation. The same can be applied to the use of ‘native witnesses’. Nothing but the colonial power was at stake when these Boer, English and Portuguese men discussed the Swazi sovereignty by resorting to the authority of ‘witnesses’. The staged sequence of contradictory testimonies, each party presenting their own witnesses – both European and local, most of them having been chosen hazardously on the spot – as living evidence of a political allegiance to each side of the dispute, was the ritualising practice of these negotiations. The signified dialectical empowerment of this imperial practice, in a mutually fed maintenance of equilibrium, sustained the negotiating claims at stake and their respective imperial spaces. At the same time, we shouldn’t overlook the instable and unequal forces that allowed this crystallized moment of balance between imperial forces – as it is made clear by the feeble position sustained by the Portuguese delegate. Let us take this question of balance a little further, thinking on the implications it may have to the history of colonialism. If this ‘colonial situation’ was truly a performative moment, to what does it refer back to? What are the cultural implications at stake?

As Max Gluckman maintained, the interdependent relations between Zulu and white communities were sustained by the irresistible seduction of money accumulation [Gluckman: 163]. This ‘colonial hand of Midas’ was also one of the main features of Jean and John Comaroff’s *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination*. Overcoming a reducible approach to history, they clearly revealed how global forces of domination helped the shaping of local realities, and, equally important for those thinking about colonialism, how our understanding of these external systems – world historical? – depend upon an ethnographic study of local cultural contexts²². Let me render this idea more explicit. In “Goodly Beasts, Bestly Goods” Jean and John Comaroff study the role of cattle among the Tshidi, in both its material and symbolic set of values. What could be seen as the fatal destiny of the Tshidi at this devouring colonial / capitalist imposition, as Max Gluckman pointed out, allows instead for an important revision of the notion of political economy. The difference is cultural, and transpires to property, time, money and value. In fact, Jean and John Comaroff demonstrate how the story didn’t end with the replacement of cattle – the embodiment of value and meaning – by money as a commodity. And more importantly (this being an aspect frequently forgotten for those studying colonialism) how there is life beyond capitalism, in the common ground of all social orders, that is, its existence in time, where they must be traced back [Comaroff:22]. Deploying what they call, in a borrowed definition, ‘symbolic realism’ [id:20], Jean and John explore the making of ‘collective worlds’, overcoming strict boundaries of objective and subjective standpoints. By doing so in regard to the Tshidi, they demonstrate how this is necessarily a cultural enterprise. History strikes back, and to understand the relations built by this Tswana people in regard to an external capitalist force, one has to retrace its cultural, power and historical grounding. A good example would be the Nonconformist missionaries: armed with a (cultural) concept of moral economy, they imposed a particular (because culturally marked) mode of production and exchange [id: 144-147], where capital is put to replace the pivotal role played by cattle. This cultural clash deserves a concluding and more general remark about Jean and John’s work.

²² In the opening pages to her *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance* [1985], Jean Comaroff announces this principle of reciprocal transformation: “...I shall also show that the movement from nonmarket to market-dominated relations is not an all-or-none, unidirectional process; it entails a complex oscillation whose cultural dynamics still challenge our understanding”, p. 3.

History is not a handbook, with predestined roles and a strict guideline of successive and intertwining chain of causalities. Instead, it is produced and given a new meaningful order by its actors, where missionaries can play capitalists thus informing the broader historical narrative, so commonly read as an ‘invisible hand’, external and alien to local contexts. Choosing to focus on the missionaries’ action in setting the terms for the imposition of a capitalist mode of production, by forcing the placement of labour power into market, Jean and John Comaroff give a face to apparently ‘alien’ forces. These forces do not exist *per se*, mechanically and detached from local contexts, but in the lives of these peoples, in the way they are performed in complex ‘cultural webs’, both among the Tshidi as with the missionaries²³. Jean and John demonstrate, in their proposed dialectical synthesis of cultural encounters, how colonialism or capitalism are given new cultural markers, in this “*semantic space, the field of signs and practices, in which human beings construct and represent themselves and others, and hence their societies and histories*” [id.27]. History is in culture. In this sense, history lends itself to the action of meaningful cultural codes, shaped differently according to a specific moment in time, space and culture. The appropriation and reinvention of this cultural praxis is never the collective and homogeneous response to a system alien to it. Indeed, these explosive patterns of change depend upon particular contexts: as Sidney Mintz puts it, “*they ‘mean’ because they occur in specific cultural and historical contexts*” [Mintz:153], for there is “*no universal meaning*” [id:ib]

To misunderstand this anthropological contribution to history is to overlook the meaningful context that emerges out of the diplomatic agreement over Swazi lands, the event previously presented. In fact, putting aside all obvious differences, it can be said that the imperial interests in the area (both the English safeguard of the recently discovered gold and diamond mines and, for the Portuguese, the settlement of a definitive borderline that didn’t endanger Lourenço Marques and the potential of its emerging port²⁴) are nothing but part of the question. Needless to say, none of these imperial interests surfaced these meetings: that was the suspended quality of imperial compromise. Although the terms of the final agreement weren’t in accordance with the Portuguese initial claims, the parts set the agreement in the name of equilibrium. Moreover, such equilibrium was designed at the expense of an appearance of Swazi sovereignty. Historical anthropology should challenge this equilibrium. And this is why the epistemological boundary rose between a strict diplomatic history, or a study focused exclusively on the ‘effect’ of world-system models of domination over (passive) populations, or, finally, an anthropological study that overlooks the constitutive nature of these phenomena – in redefining time, space and cultural contexts, the ‘colonial invention’ after all – is necessarily condemned to failure. In one word, colonial studies need complexity, not easy answers. For that reason, these meetings, held over the Lebombo Mountains, should be useful as a reminder of the limitations of a colonial archive, in its official dispositions. Adding in complexity, we would have to call to stand other accounts and perspectives, scratching off the layers of greyness that support this colonial equilibrium. There is where this colonial

²³ Another example of how these systems in action are culturally defined is clear in “Images of Empire, Contests of Conscience”. The Nonconformist missionaries sent to the Griqua and Tswana, in the beginning of the 19th century, came from a specific cultural context – traced back to the emergence of a working class and the growing cleavages of that particular context. Rather than simply putting into practice a new set of capitalist relations, these men “personified the process”. “Here, then, is the thread that weaves together the general and the particular”, p. 186.

²⁴ One would simply have to consider the forthcoming railway construction and the conflicts emerging out of Portugal’s railway concession to Edward McMurdo’s (1884), cancelled in 1887, giving place to CFLM (Caminhos Ferro Lourenço Marques). Cf. Katzenellenbogen, Simon, *South Africa and Souther Mozambique. Labour, Railways and Trade in the making of a relationship*, particularly pp. 16-33. The access to Lourenço Marques’ port from the new mines or the migrant labour supply from Mozambique to Swaziland are other matters that weren’t, significantly, raised in these meetings. Cf. McGregor, JoAnn, “People without fathers: Mozambicans in Swaziland 1888-1993”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 20, n. 4, Dec. 1994, pp. 545-567.

equilibrium is first of all defied, for it is the historical anthropologist's task to search for contradiction where coherence is sacralized, to look for the conflict when consensus are forced, to bring to surface the multiplicity, where unity and unanimity go hand in hand. Let me then proceed by bringing this conflict onto the analysis.

History, colonial praxis and the narrative of imperial conflict.

If on the first part of this work we had the opportunity of understanding how space and sovereignty were defined in the context of a colonial situation, let me try and reverse now our analytical framing. I will do so by mapping the imperial narrative, as discussed in Europe, echoed through historiography and, it is often assumed, put into play by its colonial agents. In order to do so, I will begin by locating the 'grand narrative' of Portuguese colonialism, in the temporal continuum that lasts from the imperial project of the 'rose-colored map' – aiming to join the coasts of Angola and Mozambique – to the contemporary Portuguese historiography. Secondly, I will point out some of the contradictions emerging within this imperial narrative, by focusing our attention on Henrique de Carvalho's (1843-1909) expedition to 'Lunda', an area divided nowadays between northeast Angola and Democratic Republic of Congo. This expedition (1884-1888) is often portrayed as carrying out 'in loco' the rose-colored map. However, the contradiction it entails in the imperial narrative, as I will show, will allow us to think about the uses and abuses of this 'grand narrative'. Thirdly, then, this imperial project offers us the possibility to analyse conceptually the categories on which the colonial project was built upon, reframing and contesting the monolithic way it is often pictured. I will conclude with brief observations on the nature of imperial historiography, and the need to negate the negation implied by the imperial narrative.

Mapping the imperial narrative. Most Portuguese literature about this period endorses a symbolic-driven construction of the Portuguese colonialism, referencing the 'grand narrative' of the 'Rose-colored' map and the 1890 ultimatum – or the 'imperial conflict' – between England and Portugal. The unresolved transition from an historical occupation to a colonial imposition of imperial spaces, on the terms defined by different international conferences, is uncritically echoed by most historiographic works, making a correlative and immediate correspondence between the colonial occupation in its structuring effects and the inter-imperial diplomatic agreements. Finally, the Portuguese historiography concerned with colonial issues has seldom shown any concern on the 'colonial reality' itself, epistemologically choosing a metropolitan gaze over the colonial. I intend to challenge this conception of history by starting to point out the problematic separation of colonial discourse and the material substantiality it is supposed to refer to. To be clear, though, let me say that I do not propose a 'colonial' gaze in opposition to an imperial one, an empirical turn in opposition to its ideological counterpart. They both seem equally problematic if taken in strict opposition to the other. My point, on the contrary, is to show as cogently as possible the need for particular situations and contexts to be studied, where power is deployed and contested, and how they interrelate to a broader imperial narrative. The attempt of lying down a coherent and totalising narrative of colonialism should seem by now necessarily condemned to reproduce the imperial one. Let's see the implications of this idea.

This is how the Portuguese imperial narrative is often presented: the creation, in 1875, of a permanent central commission of geography, formally attached to the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies, and the formalization of the Lisbon Geographical Society²⁵ (SGL) gave way to a consistent exploration of Africa. Although we're interested in mapping the fifteen years gap between the creation of these political structures and the British imposition of a frontier between Angola and Mozambique, known as the 1890 'ultimatum', the historiographic narration layered over this period makes it impossible not to step back in time. And yet, if

²⁵ Although its official statute was only approved in 1876. Henceforth SGL.

different explorations of inner Africa were frequently used as evidence of the historically unshaken presence of Portugal in Africa, this moment is also presented as the beginning of the Portuguese modern scientific expeditions. The three expeditions²⁶ that up until then are usually pointed out as forerunners in the attempt to penetrate inner Africa cannot be integrated inside any imperial strategy, being mostly involuntary and individual incursions outside the imperial sponsorship²⁷. Any colonial effort to trek inner Africa – no matter how close to the small coastal colonial basis – was an adventurous and risky endeavour. By 1877, the Governor of Angola reports back to Lisbon: “*The main establishments [in Angola] are lost islands in the middle of an limitless indigenous ocean; we must therefore sadly confess that our inner empire is imaginary*”²⁸.

This ‘sad confession’ was spun around with the imperial project determined to forge a Southern Portuguese Africa [“*África Meridional Portuguesa*”], under the narrative of the ‘rose-colored map’. If the expedition trekking guaranteed its empirical backing, the assurance of colonial authority over a given territory, the SGL and other colonial structures of this period empowered them scientifically, particularly with the first ‘scientific’ expeditions. Let us take a quick look at the first expedition organized under the scientific auspices of the Society: led in 1877 by Capelo (1841-1917), Ivens (1850-1898) and Serpa Pinto (1846-1900) this expedition was intended to study the hydrographic course of the Congo river. However, when arriving in Angola, the expeditionary team was told of Henry Stanley’s (1874-77) acclaimed success, managing to map what was presumed to be their objective. The redefinition of their purposes led to the breaking up of the team. The imperial objectives, inscribed onto the expedition, were therefore split in two: Capelo and Ivens with a modest territorial goal, going up the Kwango river and thoroughly tracing geographically parts of the inner territory of Angola; Serpa Pinto, decided to lead a crossing of Africa, greatly applauded back home though criticized in terms of its lack of scientific contribution²⁹.

The breaking up of the expeditionary team and the different nature of the results thus obtained embody *in situ* the clashing perspectives within SGL as other colonial circles. The claim, so often vulgarised, of a unique territorial occupation strategy, supposedly materialized in the ‘rose-colored map’, falls by itself. In fact, Capelo and Ivens refer back to a narrative of limited spatial recognition, trying as much as possible to code the trekked surface. The second half of the initial expedition, led by Serpa Pinto, can be included in the imperial narrative standing for a limitless and borderless colonial presence, regardless of neighbouring imperial powers. If for Capelo and Ivens the ‘object’ was total, for Serpa Pinto ‘space’ becomes the total guideline of the imperial master narrative. The enthusiasts of a limitless empire would greet themselves for the results of Serpa Pinto crossing; conversely, those adhering to a partial though systematic exercise of sovereignty would certainly pay tribute to Capelo and Ivens, the

²⁶ Correa Monteiro and Pedroso Gamito (1831-32), Joaquim Rodrigues Graça (1843-47), Silva Porto (1853-54), frequently obliging the employment of *pombeiros* [african frontiersman] in order to be complete. The absence of instruments that could allow the geographical data to be sorted out and the indifference they provoked can be easily exemplified by the expedition held by Gamito e Monteiro (Tete-Cazembe, northwest Mozambique), in 1831-32. In fact, their travel diaries had to wait 20 years before being published in Portugal. See Nowell, Charles E., *The Rose-Colored Map. Portugal’s attempt to build an African Empire from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean*, Junta de Investigações Científicas do Ultramar, Lisboa, 1982.

²⁷ By then, in 1853, the willingness to move from one coast to the other can only be found in a rather vain attempt to encourage the crossing of Africa promoted by the local government in Angola: indeed, despite the rather modest prize money involved – which in order to be obtained required going from Angola to the other coast and returning with a letter from the Mozambique administrative authorities bearing the authenticity of its fulfilment –, the only expedition involved, once again completed by *pombeiros*, was confronted with the indifference of the local authorities on the other side of the coast.

²⁸ October 19, 1877; Governor Caetano de Almeida e Albuquerque. Quoted in Freudenthal, Aida, “Voz de Angola em tempo de ultimato”, *Estudos Afro-Asiáticos*, Vol. 23, n. 1, Jun. 2001, pp. 135-169 and Nowell.

²⁹ Ribeiro, Manuel Ferreira, *As Conferências e o Itinerário do Viajante Serpa Pinto*, 1879.

other half of the initial expedition. Asserting that Serpa Pinto's success instigated the rebirth of the 'old dream' of connecting Angola and Mozambique, as some have done³⁰, seems missing the point. The question, as I see it, is to try and understand not so much the immediate causal grounding – if there was one – of this imperial narrative, but in how it was deployed and later reproduced in historiographic terms. Otherwise, this period will remain epistemologically hostage of its own creation, that is, the attempt of elaborating a convincing explanation for the British ultimatum without looking 'upstream' at the possible contextualization that the production of these rose-colored pages allow. And the first effort in that direction must necessarily go into 'how', more than 'why', the 'rose-colored map' was included in the colonial landscape.

The first cartographical projection of the corridor between Angola and Mozambique occurs in 1881³¹. This fifteen-page document, virtually ignored by imperial historiography³², was meant to promote a national subscription for the establishment of 'civilizing stations' [*estações civilizadoras*] in Africa. In its first page, the reader is confronted with a map signalling different expeditions and projected 'civilizing stations'. Further ahead, one could read:

"Gazing the map attached, one can see with a stronger colour, in central and southern Africa, vast territories; together, they form our provinces of Angola and Mozambique, whose limits, by inland, are necessarily undetermined, as are those spaces even larger, open to our legitimate influence towards that action, imposed on us by the character of a civilized nation and for the legitimate ambition of taking part in our domination..."³³

Afterwards, a similar map is printed in 1886, as part of a diplomatic agreement with Germany, two years after the Berlin Conference had begun. From this moment onward, tracking down the lineage of this map becomes a fastidious diplomatic endeavour, for which I will spare the reader. Its analysis gets lost in the intricate historicity of imperial agreements and negotiations, echoed by historiography: the colonial application of this project depended more on events of political nature held in Europe, between colonizing powers, than in the terrain of proto-occupation in Africa. Let us instead try to locate this map, out of the discursive realm and into the colonial praxis: Henrique de Carvalho's expedition to Lunda, between 1884 and 1888.

Mapping the colonial encounter. This expedition can be viewed from a 'wandering' perspective: geographically speaking (taking a pre-established route that was subject to alteration according to circumstances other than the imperial goals), but above all in terms of the intended cultural codification, subject to meaningful constructions and contingencies that emerged during the course of the expedition. In other words, the expedition should be seen as what it actually was, and *not* in terms of the objectives imprinted on it by the imperial culture – or for that purpose, the imperial narrative. In this sense, the expeditionary team was participating in a highly reciprocal process of cultural construction, involving themselves with, intervening in and acting directly with the yet-to-be colonial subjects. The power of the empire – especially in these moments of great imperial fragility – was built on its accumulated symbolic appeal, called upon the objectives inscribed onto the sending of the expedition, and

³⁰ In the fundamental piece *História das Campanhas de Angola*, René Pélissier shares this perspective, p. 207 and following, although pointing out that the famous map raised interest in but a small group of people.

³¹ Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa, *Ao Povo Portuguez em nome da Honra, do Direito, do Interesse e do Futuro da Pátria. A Comissão do Fundo Africano creada pela Sociedade de Geographia de Lisboa para promover uma Subscrição Nacional Permanente destinada ao estabelecimento de Estações Civilizadoras nos Territórios Sujeitos e Adjacentes ao Domínio Portuguez em Africa*, Lisboa, Imprensa Nacional, 1881.

³² I would be one of those, were it not for the helpful suggestion of Miguel Jerónimo, to whom I am very grateful. Generally speaking, there are very few exceptions to this collective amnesia, one of those being René Pelissier. Although not quoting the document he makes a reference to its existence. See *ob.cit.*, p. 208. In the only work produced exclusively on the matter of the 'Rose Colored Map', Charles Nowell ignores this document. See Nowell, *ob.cit.*

³³ *Ao Povo Portuguez*, p. 3.

its confrontation on the field. It was a question of correlating strengths, a correlation that needs to be understood.

From this point of view, a colonial expedition can be read as an eminently reciprocal process of cultural construction, where culture is constituted out of relations of power and domination³⁴. The standpoint of an ‘empire in motion’, with its precarious maintenance of imperial status, deserves an analysis far more complex than the one we will lay out here. Let me elaborate on two points, though: the first deals with the new concept of ‘total expeditions’ sent to Africa by this moment. Henrique de Carvalho’s expedition tried to complexly codify the trekked space, with a totalising perspective. This expedition, as others, with its new instruments available, put into the colonial stage the study of languages, photographs, botanical samples, meteorological data, and so on. Implicit in the guideline for these ‘scientific studies’ was an attempt of total mastery of the natural object. Science had therefore a double purpose: not only did it provide an ideological grid for understanding the social and mostly natural realms of colonial influence but scientific practice also bared the potential of creating an ontological reality itself, beyond the grid for its understanding [Cohn:1996]. In other words, these scientific instruments cannot be seen as the simple and monolithic deployment of a metropolitan dominant scientific practice. Instead, the colonial encounter necessarily informed the way science was practiced – in ways that need to be better understood.

The second point I want to briefly consider deals with the particular use of history in this context. *As Colónias Portuguesas*, a colonial journal founded by Henrique de Carvalho, announced on the moment of the expedition’s departure: “*The importance that may or might have the expedition to Muata-Yanvo only time will tell and history record it*”³⁵. Before that and shortly after the expeditionary team left Lisbon on board the steamship São Tomé, the same newspaper published:

“if we had taken advantage of the route that Joaquim Rodrigues Graça and other Portuguese (traders in the Angola province) established for us and the advice and information that they left us as a legacy, we would surely gain the advantages that those modern German explorers³⁶ (under the shade of our prestige and with the help of our people) have wisely gained through their persistent efforts to establish ties of friendship and commerce with the powerful potentate Ianvo and his subjects”³⁷.

‘Under the shade of (Portuguese) prestige’, others had managed to ‘gain advantages’, for their own benefit from the advice and information that ‘they left us as a legacy’. The implicit prominence of the idea of legacy, as well as a metaphor representing the shade and potential gains from the expedition recalls what has been termed a ‘genealogy’ of Portuguese travellers³⁸. In the specific case of Henrique de Carvalho, these gains from the empire’s symbolic accumulated capital came from the expedition by Joaquim Rodrigues Graça in 1843 and the knowledge gained from the Machados, traders in Angola³⁹. The appeal of the tradition

³⁴ The relation of knowledge, particularly anthropological, with the colonial enterprise is a debate 30 years old. The extensive literature available on the colonial encounter broadly considered makes it impossible to quote some of the most relevant works in this area. See Asad, Talal (ed.), *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, 1973; Comaroff, Jean and John, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination*, 1992; Cohn, Bernard, *Colonialism and Its forms of knowledge. The British in India*, 1996; Cooper, Frederick, Stoler, Ann L, “Tensions of Empire: Colonial Control and Visions of Rule”, *American Ethnologist*, 1989, among many others.

³⁵ Castilho, António, “A expedição ao Muata Yanvo”, in *As Colónias Portuguezas*, nº 7, ano II, 6 Julho 1884.

³⁶ Paul Pogge or Max Buchner, in 1876 and 1880, among others. See Henriques, Isabel de Castro [1995] and Tavares, Ana Paula Ribeiro [1995].

³⁷ [Anonymous], “A expedição ao Muata Yanvo”, in *As Colónias Portuguesas*, no. 4, year II, April 25 1884.

³⁸ “The strenght of the modern charcater of the expeditions led by Capelo, Ivens, Serpa Pinto and Henrique de Carvalho drew both on their novelty in comparison to previous journeys and their inclusion in a long genealogical line of ancient Portuguese explorers in unravelling the mysteries of Africa” and the fact that the ‘organization of the expedition was preceded by reading, analysing and commenting on the writings of the former travellers”. Roque, Ricardo, *Antropologia e Império*, p. 294.

³⁹ Saturnino and Custódio Machado, specifically their expedition from Malanje to Cuango.

in terms of geographical and ethnographic knowledge gained from the exploration of Africa introduces a new concept, that of the imperial archive, a sort of an archive of colonial imagination, epistemological protection against the challenges of the journey. Making part of a ‘hagiography’ of Portuguese expeditions, the one led by Henrique de Carvalho made appeal to this historical tradition while making use of a new set of knowledge made available by then to reach ‘Muatiânvua’, the capital of the ‘Lunda kingdom’⁴⁰. There, he was supposed to establish diplomatic ties and the imposition of Portuguese sovereignty, for which he established different ‘civilizing stations’ on the path to his destiny. Under the scientific auspices of SGL and the political patronage of the overseas board [Direcção Geral do Ultramar], this expedition had the conditions for the imperial success. Besides, both Science and History in the context of this expedition should remind us that this was eminently a cultural enterprise. Empire did have a culture.

But let us go back to where we were. The Lunda region that Henrique de Carvalho was to reach is important, from an imperial standpoint, for two reasons: first, it was the renowned centre of the ‘Muatiânvua Empire’; the second, for its vicinity with the Congo State. The four years he spent in the region, between 1884 and 1888, were crucial in terms of imperial negotiations in Europe. By the beginning of the Berlin conference, Henrique de Carvalho was already crossing the Kwango river; after reaching the Mussumba, the Muatiânvua capital of the Lunda empire, the first official version of the Rose-Colored map is printed, in 1886. However, by the time the expedition was over, Henrique de Carvalho acknowledged not only the formalization of the Congo State – withdrawing from a prospective Portuguese sovereignty some parts of the region – as his sudden cartographic exclusion of the Portuguese expansionist territories. Indeed, and this appears as a key moment that contradicts the whole imperial narrative, what was supposed to be an expedition destined to submit politically and commercially the whole Lunda region was suddenly scratched from the imperial ambitions. Although the area trekked by Henrique de Carvalho was included in preliminary versions of the famous ‘rose-colored map’, it is hard to understand this sudden ‘de-colonization’ of a colonial agent under the service of the metropolitan imperial structures. Henrique de Carvalho shared this surprise: “*When in January of this year [1890] the big map of Africa was made public..., I asked the...commission to accurately change that same map including in Angola the Muatiânvua territories that became Portuguese de facto after the work developed from 1885 onward...⁴¹*”. Following Henrique de Carvalho’s own resentment, “*as in the questions of political share of the African continent, the powers interested in it puzzle and mess up everything, destroying the good possession titles to replace them for some imagined and forged at the time⁴²*”. Some historians justify this exclusion by pointing out the technological contingency that made communication difficult; this explanation, however insufficient, contradicts the most obvious facts: not only had the telegraph line reached Luanda in 1886 as the expedition diplomatic success (from the imperial standpoint) was known in Lisbon by consecutive and thorough reports, though irregular and frequently with over one year delay. The answer, as I will try to show further ahead, lies in a reversal of the way this subject is dealt with. The answer, as I see it, lies in culture.

One final word must be said on the geographical objectives of this expedition, as they seem to contradict a “coast to coast” exploration. Indeed, aren’t we rewriting the past by ascribing every colonial action into this rose-painted narrative of the imagined colonies? Wouldn’t we be reading the colonialism by the light of a unique script when analysing Henrique de Carvalho’s expedition as contributing coherently to the imperial project of the

⁴⁰ These observations are based on different works published by Henrique de Carvalho, newspaper articles and different secondary sources.

⁴¹ CARVALHO, *Memoria. A Lunda ou os Estados do Muatiânvua domínios da soberania de Portugal* 1890, p. 412.

⁴² *Id.*, p. 413.

rose-colored map? By the same token, aren't we withdrawing from this colonial situation its own historical context, emerging out of a particular moment in time and space, in the name of the imperial narrative, to the detriment of the emergence of conflict and the different obstacles each colonial situation had to face⁴³? The metaphors of a 'capillary' or 'tentacular' colonialism are but obscure characterizations of the complexity that defined these moments of colonial encounter, blurring epistemologically its particular context of action. This expedition, I believe, allows clear insights on this matter. Suddenly 'de-colonized' from a yet-to-be colonial presence, Henrique de Carvalho can be said to be a ruler among rulers [Comaroff: 184]. What is more, the imperial narrative, when confronted with a mapped colonial encounter, does not stand the simple empirical test of 'historical accuracy' – on the field of confrontation –, let alone its usefulness to understand the Portuguese colonial project. Was it only a matter of imagined colonialism?

The negation of negation. After the British reaction to the Portuguese ambitious expansion, in 1890, the Lunda region became suddenly a source of interest for the Portuguese colonial project, although the initial region explored by Henrique de Carvalho's team was shared between two imperial powers (North Rhodesia but mostly Belgian Congo, of which the definitive borderline was far from being thoroughly established)⁴⁴. As it is often presented, that was the consequence of the ultimatum, the moment of conflict between imperial forces⁴⁵. The question I would like to think about relates precisely to the inevitability of this 'ultimatum' in most historiographic works, either defining it as a watershed in Portuguese colonialism⁴⁶, or in debunking the discursive grounding on which it is established. How to get out of this vicious and all-encompassing circle? What is, after all, this ultimatum and how to understand it historically? Paraphrasing Marshall Sahlins, we are tempted to see this ultimatum as the 'historical metaphor of a mythical reality'. However enlightening it may be, we would have to

⁴³ As when it is said that "Capelo and Ivens crossed Africa; Serpa Pinto and Augusto Cardoso explored Nyassa; Henrique de Carvalho made his way through Lunda. In a combined effort they drew *in loco* the Rose-colored map", Santos, 1998, p. 400.

⁴⁴ Henrique de Carvalho's scientific contribution seems beyond question, although the way that contribution affected the management of the colonial space – or its anticipation – seems harder to trace. In fact, if his ethnolinguistic study came just a few years before a military expedition was sent to guarantee the region under the Portuguese administration, proving to be a quite successful enterprise (the region became a major diamond producing area early in the 20th century), it would be too easy to think of an immediate functional chain of 'knowledge-power'. Besides, Henrique de Carvalho never enjoyed the beatification awarded to other explorers in Africa who worked for the Portuguese colonialism (in fact, after being the first governor of the new administrative region of Lunda for a year, he was arrested under false accusations). His later historical revival (Saurimo, the province colonial capital, was to be named after him in 1923, and later, under the *Estado Novo*, he was to be granted officially the fitting honours) is a matter that deserves further investigation. In anthropological terms, however, Victor Turner's famous *Schism and Continuity in an African Society* [1957] pays Henrique de Carvalho the recognition his work never had within Portuguese scientific-colonial circles. In different points of the book, particularly the first chapter, Victor Turner draws explicitly from Henrique de Carvalho's historical account of these four years in Lunda.

⁴⁵ For those unfamiliar with this event, let me quote this significant passage from Malyn Newitt: "...it now began to look as though Portugal would establish 'effective occupation' in the Shire and Lake regions, the very possibility of which had so often been scornfully dismissed by the British....There followed three months in which the tiny British community in the Shire highlands tried every device to prevent Serpa Pinto's expedition proceeding beyond the Ruo. A farce of flag-raising and spurious treaty-signing tried to buy time and commit the British government to the recognitions of a protectorate. More seriously, the British in the Highlands encouraged the Makololo to attack the Portuguese ... Following this battle, Serpa Pinto's expedition invaded the Makololo country and quickly received the submission of the chiefs...Pinto then crossed the Ruo, which ...had acquired an unofficial status as the frontier between Portuguese and British interests, and by December 1889 had occupied much of the Makololo territory to the north. ... On 11 January Salisbury presented the Portuguese with an ultimatum.", Newitt, Malyn, in "Mozambique and the Scramble for Africa, 1879-1891", *A History of Mozambique*, p. 346-347.

⁴⁶ This moment is often seen as the turning point for a 'sacralized empire' or, alternatively, as the driving force of a transition to modern colonialism.

take a little further his discussion of event within the imperial, which does not seem operative in this context. Nevertheless, Sahlins recalls to us the need to – not in a one-sided process – “*explode the concept of history by the anthropological experience of culture*” [Sahlins:72]. In culture, we may find an answer to this imperial conflict – not the lost ‘whys’ in history, but a new perspective on how – and if – this ‘event’ motivated a ‘structural crisis’ (to persist on Sahlins’ terms), as it is often pointed out. From that moment, I hope, historians and anthropologists may carry on their researches, further complicating our understanding of colonialism, without a constant and persistent reference to this imperial conflict.

Until then, our task is to acknowledge. Ranajit Guha once said that the ‘*historical discourse is the world’s oldest thriller*’ [Guha:55]. In that famous piece, he proposed to deconstruct the historical narrative put together over time on the Santal’s uprising of 1855, colonial India. Tracking in time the way knowledge gets deployed, often at the expense of the speaker’s presence, Guha concludes on the necessary limits of an historical account: linear reports on cultural and socio-economical context (‘the cause’), followed by a faceless ‘event’, to which the historian would, in the end, provide a bird’s-eye-view perspective [*id.*: 65; 74]. Guha concludes that the attempts to eliminate or, in reverse sense, reduce the gap between the insurgent’s consciousness and the historians’ are fruitless. Instead, historians have to acknowledge the inevitability of such gap. Here too in relation to the 1890 ultimatum, our task is to acknowledge the gap – in terms of negation – that persisting on this historical metaphor entails.

The first negation one needs to acknowledge is ontological. To perpetuate the centrality of the rose-colored map, and, from it, a successive and unstoppable chain of events leading to the ultimatum, is negating any ontological role to Africa and its history. As a blank space waiting to be filled out, the history of this project obscures our understanding of local contexts. This idea couldn’t be made any clear if one thinks of what was happening in Lunda, during the expedition we tried to revisit in the light of this ‘imperial script’. Looking for a Lunda mythical empire, Henrique de Carvalho is faced with a political body on the verge of total dismemberment⁴⁷. Thsokwe, in a process concurrent with the imperial initiative, were pressing traditional Lunda regions, changing local dynamics rapidly – Mussumba, the Muatiânvua capital, was occupied in 1887⁴⁸. Henrique de Carvalho was a simple witness of history unfolding in front of his very eyes. In the same way, the imperial narrative was overtaken by African history. To think in terms of cartographic imagination and imperial conflicts, in this context, is negating this history. The second negation at stake deals with complexity. Looking for straightforward answers, in easy dichotomies and inevitable causal explanations, the history of these imperial conflicts overlooks the real conflict. To focus on the ‘ultimatum’ to the detriment of the rose-colored map, for instance, ends up by raising unsolved contradictions, as I tried to show before. Merely echoing that this map was meant

“for Portugal to take part in the honourable movement [of colonial occupation], began in modern centuries by our grande Infante [Henry the Navigator]...and to defend, by the means of a patriotic and scientific society, the position we hold entitled to of conserving and developing in Africa, as discoverers, civilisers and proprietors of large domains⁴⁹”

⁴⁷ This is a fundamental moment in the region’s history, which should have been taken further into account in this analysis, were not for the fact that this paper is mostly interested in understanding the construction of the imperial narrative of conflict or, in reverse sense, the maintenance of equilibrium, looking for the contradictions that emerge within the colonial project. For more information on the political processes of the late 19th century Lunda, see Henriques, Isabel de Castro, *Commerce et Changement en Angola au XIX^e siècle. Imbangala et Tshokwe face à la modernité*

⁴⁸ Henriques adds a fundamental mutation to this equation, by pointing out the development of commerce to this transformation. However, contrary to many interpretations, she places the responsibility for much of these transformations in the action of local populations, going against a perspective of ‘legitimate commerce’ as an European invention. HENRIQUES, *ob. cit.*, p. 15

⁴⁹ *Ao Povo Portuguez...*, 1881, p. 3.

is perpetuating an accomplice silence, that of negation. By itself, in the attempt to uncritically insert this imperial narrative in a coherent strategy of colonial occupation, the analysis is taken over, monopolized by its 'grand narrative' of epic men – like Serpa Pinto, an imperialist fanatic elevated to the startling role of pivotal engine of history, or, in a possible alternative narrative, “with Lord Salisbury whose diplomatic good sense abandoned him temporarily in December 1889 and January 1890”, keeping therefore “much of the blame” [Newitt:347]. Thus the need to, once acknowledged, negate this negation: a little bit of Hegelian dialectics, therefore.

The dialectics of equilibrium and conflict. Positioning himself against the veil of apparent knowledge, Hegel defines the in-itself recognition and the outward positing of existence in itself, i.e., for itself, as the historical process of self-consciousness accomplishment, through – some might say – a mechanical self-referring negativity⁵⁰. Negating the negation implied and imposed by the imperial narrative amounts to restate the terms colonialism has been read, allowing for understanding how the imperial narrative was produced in time and reproduced through history. And then we will be able to revisit the rose-colored map, again. Right now, this map remains a puzzle, with intertwining pieces: if one is missing, the whole sequence becomes broken.

As for mapping the imperial narrative, a dialectical approach can be one way of getting out of this self-referring history of imperialism. As in every cartographic representation, a map refers back to a spatial territory, and vice-versa. A dialectical approach to the study of cartography, as an imperial science, must consider this movement back and forth. Local realities shape general models from which, on its turn, a thorough understanding of a particular context may emerge, and so on. This dialectics is cancelled when one of its constitutive elements stops informing the other – that was the case with the rose-colored map. In fact, extracted from a geographical reality to which it should respond to, this map lost its significance. It became an artefact of discourse, a cultural relic informed by the narrative of historiographic work. This map, detached from what it is supposed to project, is but an imperial self-referring escape. Accordingly, the same goes with the ‘ultimatum’: it loses its meaning if put in relation to a ‘spaceless’ map and it is meaningless as an ‘effect’ of this map. And this is where the dialectics become important, giving way to new and exciting fields of knowledge in relation to colonialism, in the dialectics of macro and micro-histories, world-systems and local contexts, centres and margins, ideology and material practices, equilibrium and conflict.

We can finally understand the context on which Andrade Corvo (Minister of the Navy and Colonies, 1872-1877), an ardent defender of free trade and modernized colonial structures – besides a worshipful reader of Herder⁵¹, refers to the possibility of a coast to coast map:

“it seems to us opportune – though it will be regarded badly by those who dream of limitless empire – to remember how dangerous the fantasy is, how imprudent the pretension is, to presume all central and southern Africa to be ours, from one sea to the other”⁵².

If one is careful enough to read the previous paragraph, one can see: “*West of Lebombo mountains rests the Amasvasis country, in the border with Transvaal; independent country, that some say belonged to the Lourenço Marques district, though we find no record or document that proof it or event point at it*⁵³”. Equilibrium and conflict come together. As I tried to show, both situations – a table of negotiations over the Lebombo Mountains or the mapping of the imperial narrative of conflict – are flawed if taken isolated. ‘Equilibrium’, when colonial powers appease their divergences and ‘Conflict’, when they seem to concur in space and time,

⁵⁰ Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, particularly §166-§175.

⁵¹ An admired passage from Herder’s *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man* (1784-91) opens the III volume of *Estudos sobre as Províncias Ultramarinas*.

⁵² Corvo, João de Andrade, *ob. cit.*, Vol. II, 1883, p. 177.

⁵³ *Id.*, p. 176-177.

are both part of the constitutive nature of colonialism. In order to complicate our understanding of colonialism, history will have to learn to diversify its historical sources, bringing silenced voices onto the forefront of analysis – something made here *en passant* – and the mundane world of everyday life, where external forces are given faces, out of a motionless perspective of history; anthropology, however, should not fall in the temptation of seeing the past as a simple reflection of our collective present. Let us then, after Andrade Corvo, finish with Herder, who will know how to give an end to this:

“The philosopher of history can proceed on no abstract notion, but on history alone; and he is in danger of forming erroneous conclusions, if he do not generalize at least in some degree the numerous facts before him. I shall attempt to explore the way, however: yet, instead of launching out into the ocean, I shall rather coast along the shore; or, to speak in plain terms, confine myself to undoubted facts, or such as are generally considered so, distinguishing them from my own conjectures, and leaving it to those who are more fortunate, to arrange and employ them in a better manner⁵⁴”.

If ‘coasting along the shore’ will mean an end to the uncritical reproduction of the imperial narrative, as it is often echoed by historiography, this paper has been useful for something. As I tried to argue, the attempts of finding in the ‘particular’ a direct and correlated illustration of a general case (Herder’s ‘ocean’) are bound to failure. Instead, I believe that our understanding of the particular should inform the general, and not the other way round. In a sense, this is the anthropological lesson to history.

⁵⁴ Herder, *ob. cit.*, Book VIII, p. 338.

PART III: IMPERIALISM, COLONIALISM, IDEOLOGY AND PRACTICE:
REFLEXIVE APPROACHES

**Human skulls and museum work:
sketch of a perspective on miniature histories¹**

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Do objects have history? Yes, they do. Recently, students of material culture have announced a discovery: objects have history; they have cultural biographies, have a social life. A basic tenet of “material culture studies” since they re-emerged in the 1990s is that objects are historical processes, have no fixed identities, being constantly in a “state of becoming” as they move in and out of their various contexts or phases of use. On the assumption that objects go through various recontextualizations and possess individual histories analysable in biographical terms, a field of studies has flourished.² In being so one can tell their “cultural biographies”³, can analyse their “social lives”⁴, or investigate their “histories of appropriation and recontextualization”⁵. They are then means to understand people, cultures, or intimate personal lives. Movements of objects leave behind traces that the researcher, superiorly equipped with the tools of biographical recontextualization, can then reconstruct in the form of a historical account.

Particular to this affirmation of discovery of the objects’ history has been the claim to unearth their colonial historicity. Museum objects collected in the colonial period have thus been central to this field of studies. They can be thought of as having different uses or recontextualizations on their way to museums, but their origin in the context of colonialism –

¹ This paper is the result of a PhD research in progress at the Faculty of History, University of Cambridge, entitled ‘The human skull and the material life of colonial anthropology, c. 1870-1930’. I thank the Portuguese Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia for a research grant (BD/9048/2002) of which this paper is one outcome. Fieldwork in Australia was carried out with the support of a Smuts Research Grant, Smuts Memorial Fund, University of Cambridge, and a Finley Grant, Darwin College. I thank Ron Vanderwal, Sandra Winchester, and Frank Job (Museum Victoria, Melbourne); and Denise Donlon (Shellshear Museum, Sydney) for outstanding support in Australia, as well as for informative conversations. Different versions of this paper were presented at the seminars *Artefacts in Fieldwork & Theory*, Cambridge, 11 May 2004; *Colonialism and Imperialism: between ideologies and practices*, Florence, 21-22 May 2004; and *Health, Nature, and Expertise*, Lisbon, 7-8 June 2004. To the audiences I am indebted for thought-provoking discussions, critiques, and comments, some of which remain unanswered. I would like to thank in particular to the organizers Amiria Henare (Cambridge), Diogo Ramada Curto (Florence), and Sofia Bento (Lisbon) for the challenge; and to the discussants Tiago Moreira and Vololona Raberihaoa (Lisbon), and Alexis Rappas (Florence) for insightful remarks. Christopher Bayly and Kim Wagner read earlier drafts and offered generous and stimulating comments.

² The *Journal of Material Culture* is perhaps a good example of the activity in the field. One should note, however, that although I am stressing principles of similitude, there are certainly distinct positions within the field. But for a recent state of the arts and an excellent review from the perspective of exchange theory, see Fred R. Myers, “Introduction: The Empire of Things”, in Fred R. Myers, ed., *The Empire of Things. Regimes of Value and Material Culture*, Santa Fe/Oxford, School of American Research Press/James Currey, 2001, pp. 3-61. See also a short review in Chris Gosden and Yvonne Marshall, “The Cultural Biography of Objects”, *World Archaeology*, 31, 2 (1999) pp. 169-178. Compare with J. Hoskins, *Biographical Objects: How Things tell the stories of People’s lives*, London, Routledge, 1998.

³ A seminal reference is Igor Kopytoff, “The Cultural Biography of Things: Commodification as Process”, in Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986, pp. 64-94. For developments of this approach, see Gosden and Marshall, “The Cultural Biography of Objects”, and the contributions to *World Archaeology*, 31, 2 (1999). One of the few instances of a cultural biography of a museum human skull in the colonial period is Edgar V. Winans, “The Head of the King: Museums and the Path to Resistance”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 36, 2 (1994), pp. 221-241.

⁴ Arjun Appadurai, “Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value”, in Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things*, p. 5.

⁵ Nicholas Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1991, p. 9.

their contexts of field collecting – concentrate attention.⁶ To reconstitute these via the production of histories of objects assumes especial urgency today, partly due to heated political and ethical debates caused by claims for the repatriation of artifacts and human remains to the original communities from which they were taken away in the colonial past.⁷ As Michael O’Hanlon pointed out, histories of collections are intertwined with “moral issues”, “in terms of questioning the equity of the transactions that brought ethnographic artifacts to metropolitan countries and, in some cases, as passionate calls for their repatriation.”⁸ Histories of recontextualization and collecting can then be a way of unveiling the hidden colonial history of things in museums, its immersion in colonial relations of power. Furthermore, it provides a research program which helps current generations of museum professionals to construct a detachment from their predecessors, at the same time recovering professional status and epistemological authority lost with the end of the museum period in the 1930s.⁹

Not long ago, I began my initiation as a practitioner in this field of studies. I set myself to write a history of anthropology and the museum collections of Papuan and Timorese human skulls between 1870s and 1930s, thus covering an intense period of the “museum era” of anthropology.¹⁰ From the outset, I have been puzzling about the problem of historicity as a property of museum things, a property itself emergent in time. My perception that such historicity has only recently been “discovered” by the above literature on material culture and collecting has since turn into a source of discomfort. Indeed, as I went through that literature, I found myself confronted with an assumption, generally unquestioned, underlying the recent discovery of “objects with colonial history”. I refer to the idea that, back in the world of museum anthropologists of the 19th and 20th centuries, objects had been deprived of context and historicity, cut off from their colonial contexts. In the past, in early museum anthropology, historical reflexivity was absent in the objects, especially as regards colonial circumstances. Anthropology, then, was a discipline “out of time”, in which objects were understood as self-sufficient entities, ahistorical things in themselves; “denying coevalness” to the Other they stood as static representatives of an irretrievable “primitive” epoch of Man’s march towards civilization.¹¹ Museums may be seen as one amongst other “contexts”, not more than a particular recontextualization of the objects. Yet museum contexts are distinct in their temporal politics. They share a politics of time that deprives objects of history, producing timeless, ahistorical entities. Today, in contrast, scholars see themselves offering historicity (particularly a colonial historicity) and cultural contexts to objects left without context and without history by the work of 19th century museum anthropologists and collectors. Critical historians and biographers of things tend to see themselves devolving to museum objects a history erased, destroyed, or occulted by colonial actors and museum anthropologists back in the 19th century

⁶ See Michael O’ Hanlon and Robert Welsch, eds., *Hunting the Gatherers. Ethnographic Collectors, Agents and Agency in Melanesia, 1870s-1930s*, Oxford, Berghan Books, 2000; Chris Gosden and Chantal Knowles, *Collecting Colonialism: Material Culture and Colonial Change*, Oxford, Berg, 2001.

⁷ On repatriation issues see Cressida Fforde, Jane Hubert and Paul Turnbull, eds., *The Dead and their Possessions: Repatriation in Principle, Policy and Practice*, London, Routledge, 2001.

⁸ Michael O’Hanlon, “Introduction” in O’ Hanlon and Welsch, ed., *Hunting the Gatherers*, p. 28.

⁹ Stocking refers to the drastic decline of the “professional status” of museum curators in the anthropological profession as parallel to the growing disinterest for museums and their collections in the 1960s. See George W. Stocking, Jr., “Essays on Museums and Material Culture”, in G. W. Stocking, Jr., ed., *Objects and Others: Essays on Museums and Material Culture*, Madison, Univ. of Wisconsin Press, HOA v. 3, 1985, p. 9.

¹⁰ This is Stocking’s periodization. See Stocking, “Essays on Museums and Material Culture”, in Stocking, ed., *Objects and Others*, pp. 6-8.

¹¹ Cf. Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1983; Nicholas Thomas, *Out of Time. History and evolution in anthropological discourse*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1996. The target of these critiques has often been the evolutionist paradigm and its particular museum methods of arrangement and display. For a detailed study of Pitt Rivers’s evolutionist museum methodology see: William Henry Chapman, “Arranging Evolution: A.H.L.F. Pitt Rivers and the Typological Tradition”, in Stocking, ed., *Objects and Others*, pp. 15-48.

and early 20th century. Objects in collections lack historicity because museums and anthropologists gave it away; the contemporary analysis of objects has the epistemological privilege of giving it back.

This idea seems to emerge in diverse theoretical sensitivities in the history of museum objects. Historian of anthropology George Stocking has noted the paradox that, although objects in museums are experienced as “coming out of the past”, they are however “timeless – removed from history in the very process of embodying it, by curators seeking (among other goals) to preserve objects in their original form.”¹² Studies of colonial field collecting seem to concur with the notion that, in the “museum era”, specimens were considered “self-sufficient” scientific data, and therefore did not require “commentary as to the political and economic circumstances in which they had been gathered”.¹³ Marx’s critique to “commodity fetishism” in capitalist societies has inspired some authors to view in the museum objects’ early appearance as essentialising representatives of the Other a strategic occultation of the actual relations of power behind their production as “museum things”. In a recent book, the historian Andrew Zimmerman has opposed 19th century German anthropologists’ ahistorical view of non-European objects to his own work of “historicizing” those very same museum objects. “Colonial exchanges”, he says, have “began the process of stripping those [anthropological] objects of their history”¹⁴. In contrast, Zimmerman views them as integral to a colonial political economy, conceiving of his work as undoing the erasure of colonial context by museum anthropologists and collectors¹⁵. Semiotic and Marxist-inspired approaches, such as the work by James Clifford and Susan Stewart, have gone as far as to assert the destruction of context in museum collections. Structural to the passage of indigenous objects to Western collections is the strategy of “cutting objects out of specific contexts [...] and make them ‘stand for’ abstract wholes”, therefore occulting the historical relations of (colonial) power that produced the collection.¹⁶ Museum collections, as Susan Stewart influentially announced, are, very simply, “context destroyed”: “The collection seeks a form of self-enclosure which is possible because of its ahistoricism. The collection replaces history with *classification*, with order beyond the realm of temporality. In the collection, time is not something to be restored to an origin; rather, all time is made simultaneous or synchronous within the collection’s world. [...] While the point of souvenir may be remembering, or at least the invention of memory, the point of the collection is forgetting [...]”.¹⁷

Suppose, however, that there were other workers telling stories of museum objects prior to contemporary claims to reconstitute their history. I mean not professional historians, nor present-day anthropologists and sociologists in specialized published literature. I speak of the museum and colonial actors themselves, and of them having a historical reflexivity not fundamentally different in nature from historical activity in “colonial historiography”, “history of collections”, or “cultural biographies of things”. What can happen to the premises of those modes of doing history if, instead, human skulls and other museum objects were not such

¹² Stocking, “Essays on Museums and Material Culture”, in Stocking, ed., *Objects and Others*, p. 4. See also Thomas, *Entangled Objects*, p. 4. “[...] objects are not what they were made to be but what they have become.”, wrote Thomas, “This is to contradict a pervasive identification in museum research and material culture studies which stabilizes the identity of a thing in its fixed and founded material form.”

¹³ O’Hanlon, “Introduction”, in O’Hanlon and Welsch, eds., *Hunting the Gatherers*, p. 2. O’Hanlon is here following Helen Gardner, “Gathering for God: George Brown and the Christian Economy in the Collection of Artefacts”, in O’Hanlon and Welsch, eds., *Hunting the Gatherers*, pp. 44-45.

¹⁴ Andrew Zimmerman, *Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2001, p. 150.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶ James Clifford, “On Collecting Art and Culture”, in his *The Predicament of Culture. Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard Univ. Press, 1988, p. 220.

¹⁷ Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, Baltimore/London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984, pp. 151-152. [emphasis in original]

timeless “things in themselves” back in the “museum period”? What happens if racial anthropologists doing museum work and colonial agents collecting objects were not occulting or *destroying* historical context and historicity, and, instead, were producing and *adding* historical context, actively and laboriously inventing a memory for objects in circulation, and specifically a memory of their colonial circumstances? What if that “discovery” of objects with history was not a discovery after all? What if museum networks and their agents were working hard to produce some kind of historical narration or biography of things; what if they were collectively doing historiographical work? In being so, what history could we, can I, tell, today? These are the issues I would like to raise in this paper. The purpose is not so much to give them full answer, but to find a way of gaining an alternative perspective on the production of the historicity of museum objects. That is why I need to ask again: Do objects have history – did they have history back in the museum period?

Anthropological trajectories and the notion of historiographical work

I will invite the reader to accept a different positive answer to that question. I argue that historiographical work was constitutive of museum organizations and anthropological science, as well as of the collective networks that circulated anthropological things from the colonies to museums. As we shall see, museums seem inhabited by many miniature historical accounts and modes of indexation. Such a suggestion interferes with the above assumption of ahistoricity, and adds reflexive complexity to history-making in what concerns material bodies in museums. Rather than being devoted to the *destruction* of context, an important part of museum trajectory work is oriented to the *construction* of historical context; it aims at producing the objects’ historicity and memory, including the attribution of some sort of colonial context. I will designate the type of knowledge practices affecting the association between museum things and historical circumstances as historiographical work. Empirically, I will consider historiographical work in my research context – the history of museum collections of human skulls –, mobilizing evidence from my fieldwork experience in museums, which, I believe, is especially insightful for these considerations. Certainly human skulls embody specificities that cannot be paired to all museum objects. In Western culture, for example, they evoke a potent symbolic field of danger and liminality associated to death, and to the definition of the self and personhood; and, today, in contemporary museums they are normally under special ethical treatment, as a direct consequence of post-colonial issues on repatriation. I will not explore these specificities here. For my suggestion is that the perspective and theoretical reflections that follow bear general implications to the historical study of museum material objects.

But to get there I have to dismiss some of the premises of those studies that enabled me to originally answer “yes” to the question with which I began this paper. The reason is that they make the history I wish to explore invisible, neglecting the circulation of museum objects as an event of trajectory-building. To start off, I have to create a somehow different methodological and theoretical context. Firstly, I will try to historicize anthropological materials not against the grain of early museum workers and collectors, but with them, learning from them. This is a recommendation with which field methods in ethnography, qualitative sociology, or ethnomethodology are probably too familiar. Thus it is not a matter of revealing something occult, unseen or destroyed by their work, but of describing what people tried to do in order to take a specific material object physically into the museum and epistemically into a condition of properly “anthropological”. Thus, when I argue that there is historiography of objects in the making throughout colonial networks or museums I am not saying that every museum object has necessarily been historicized, or equally historicized. It goes without saying that, for example, sometimes an object might have been attributed a history; sometimes it might not; other times histories might have been criticised, and rejected. What I would like to call attention to is that historical knowledge practices are constitutive of museum trajectory work; to attach histories to things is expected, valued, and consequential, and the absence or

uncertainty of those histories is a source of trouble. The methodological point is that the precise pattern of these historiographical articulations is to be learnt from the situated activities of actors.

Secondly, I will propose another theoretical context that can give visibility to history-making as a process. My argument requires a vocabulary sensitive to collective practical work in museums and along their networks of collecting, rather than a vocabulary devoted to imagine objects moving through atomised clusters of meaning. For that purpose, I will borrow the notions of “trajectory” and “trajectory work” from the sociology of health and medicine. I am here mobilizing a specific definition of trajectory brought forward by the sociologist Anselm Strauss in his studies on chronic illnesses and medical work in modern hospitals.¹⁸ Before attempting a translation of these notions into my analysis, let me briefly put them in the context of Strauss’s studies. Trajectory, as applied to illness, is a twofold concept. It refers (i) to the “physiological unfolding of a patient’s disease” in the material body over time; (ii) but also “to the total *organization of work* done over that course, plus the *impact* on those involved with that work and its organization”, that is, the ensemble of interactions shaping the course of a phenomenon as well as its effects overall.¹⁹ In the hospital, an “illness trajectory” is constantly affected by disruptive contingencies, and therefore has to be managed and shaped by “trajectory work”, which is done by many different agents in multiple work sites of an organization. Agency in trajectory work is distributed in the activities of nurses, doctors, patient’s families, medical technologies, etc., and in the action of the patient himself/herself. There are various types of practices in trajectory work, sometimes having to tackle multiple illness trajectories in a same patient. One type of trajectory work to which Strauss calls attention is “biographical work”. This refers to the practices of inquiring, recording, analyzing and transmitting knowledge on the patient’s symptoms, his/her medical past, life-style, or social history. It can be done by different people at different times; ignoring or failing to do it rightly is crucially consequential for an illness trajectory: without it, doctors might not be able to produce an accurate diagnostic; nurses’ tasks might be resisted by the patient, etc.²⁰

This is what the concept of illness trajectory suggests. I believe one can use the power of this conceptual framework to find out more about objects and skulls in museums. Being the “objects” at hand parts of the human body the analogy is not deprived of sociogenetic historical links. The presence of human skulls and skeletons as privileged objects of anthropological work shares its roots with the rising of modern surgery and anatomy in the late 18th and early 19th century. Craniology, the anatomical and anthropological study of human crania, as well as the assemblage of collections of skeletal material for racial study were the project of medically trained men.²¹ Indeed, anthropologists (especially physical anthropologists) have been

¹⁸ Anselm Strauss, Shizuko Fagerhaugh, Barbara Suczek, and Carolyn Wiener, *Social Organization of Medical Work*, New Brunswick, Transaction, reed. 1997 (1st edition 1985).

¹⁹ [emphasis in original] I am here combining Strauss’s more specific definition of trajectory as applied to illness in his work of 1985; and the more general definition of 1993. Strauss *et al*, *Social Organization of Medical Work*, p. 8; Strauss, *Continual Permutations of Action*, New York, Aldine de Gruyter, 1993. Recent developments of the trajectory concept in the study of medicine include Stefan Timmermans, “Mutual Tuning of Mutual Trajectories”, *Symbolic Interaction*, 21, 4 (1998), pp. 225-240; Timmermans, “Closed-Chest Cardiac Massage: The Emergence of a Discovery Trajectory”, *Science, Technology & Human Values*, 24, 2 (1999), pp. 213-240; Susan Leigh Star and Geoffrey Bowker, *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences*, Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 1999, chap. 4. Compare with Michel Callon and Vololona Rabeharisoa, “De la sociologie du travail appliquée à l’opération chirurgicale: ou comment faire disparaître la personne du patient?”, *Sociologie du Travail*, 41 (1999), pp. 143-162; Tiago Moreira, *Incisions: A Study of Surgical Trajectories*, Department of Sociology, University of Lancaster, PhD Dissertation, 2000.

²⁰ Strauss *et al*, *Social Organization of Medical Work*, pp. 137-138.

²¹ On the early history of skeletal collections see Paul Turnbull, “Enlightenment Anthropology and the Ancestral Remains of Australian Aboriginal People”, in A. Calder, J. Lamb, and B. Orr, eds., *Voyages and Beaches: Pacific Encounters, 1769-1840*, Honolulu, University of Hawai’i Press, 1999, pp. 202-225. A. M. Luyendijk-Elshout,

participating in a peculiar medical culture of objectification of the dead human body emerging as a result of the transformations in late 18th century medicine and anatomy.²² Not surprisingly, the institutionalization of anthropology as scientific study of man's unity and diversity was professionally attached, since the late 18th century, to surgeons and anatomists.²³

There are other empirically significant reasons to bring these notions into the above discussion on the emergence of the objects' historicity in museum practices. They can help us to see museum things as trajectories, an open product of collective trajectory work. Analogically, one can think of museum human skulls as having the kind of trajectories that Strauss evokes, as having *anthropological trajectories*. By anthropological trajectories I mean the physical duration, movements in time and space, and material configuration of an object, as well as all the collective work (i.e., *museum trajectory work*) involved in shaping human skulls as anthropological objects. Museum trajectory work is composed of every regime of practices affecting not just the temporal and geographic movement of a material body but also its epistemic, ethical, or political constitution as a museum thing. Certainly, as we shall see, this work cannot be normally seen as formally structured, physically circumscribed and institutionally organized as the work taking place in a hospital. It is distributed by various people in organizationally complex networks, sometimes very ephemeral and apparently not under any form of rigid, common, institutional order. Frequently, collectors, intermediaries, skulls, and museum scholars were put into connection, into network, in the act of circulating museum objects. Regardless of this fluid organizational format, the actors in these networks apparently shared a pragmatic problem of turning human skulls into anthropological trajectories, of doing trajectory work. A type of practical activity key to trajectory work in those fluid networks extending in and out of the museum is what I call *historiographical work*. Historiographical work is inspired in Strauss's notion of biographical work. With it I intend to emphasize the collective labor involved to provide an object with individual history and contextual historicity as a means to order its anthropological trajectory. Such that, like in Strauss's biographical work, ignoring, interfering, or effectively breaking the connection between histories and objects is likely to have unpredictable and problematic effects in an object's trajectory – e.g., in scientific taxonomies, professional careers, museum organization, repatriation claims. Historiographical work, though, is not certainly the only form of activity implied in shaping and orienting anthropological trajectories: skulls have to be collected, exchanged or stolen, shipped, safely packed, measured and described in laboratories, and so forth. Other discursive and non-discursive activities are involved. But, as I hope to show, it is an important one.

In museum organizations, historiographical work is visible in the form of short individual histories. One can start thinking of human skulls as anthropological trajectories in the colonial period when one takes note of their presence in museums. It is there that the research of anthropological trajectories begins, and where historiographical work appears to the sight of the researcher. Let us, then, begin in the museum. It is to that concept as emergent in the practices of museum work that I now turn.

Miniature historiography in the museum and its networks

“MoV X 12917 Human remains, unmodified
Date 10-08-1904

“Opening address: the Magic of the Skull: ‘Commercium craniorum’ in the 19th Century”, *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology*, 7 (1997), pp. 571-574.

²² Michel Foucault, *Naissance de la clinique*, Paris, PUF, 1963, esp. cap. VII and p. 143.

²³ It is significant, for example, that in 19th century Europe the teaching of physical anthropology often occurred as part of the curricula of medical education. See Robert Proctor, “From *Anthropologie* to *Rassenkunde* in the German anthropological tradition”, in Stocking, ed., *Bones, Bodies, Behaviour: Essays on Biological Anthropology*, Madison, Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1988, p. 141.

Sources: Foster, F.O.

Store: Cab. 713/4

Provenance: Papua New Guinea, Gulf Province, Turama River

Group: Cultural: Omaidai

Maker:

Measurements:

Description: Skull of an adult male. (Register)

Comments: On attached card the following: [']Skull of man from Omaidai Tribe, Turana River. This man was a notability in his tribe and his skull has been preserved for many years. It was saved from the destruction of all skulls, that is carried out by Government Parties, by being hid in a woman's dress and hung in a tree, where it was found by the collector some days later [']. The suggestion is that the skull was part of a skull rack destroyed by 'government parties'. There is some doubt about the 'notability' of the man, as skull racks house the skulls of enemies taken in war. RLV

Cranial Index 76.3, age estimate 30-40, Male."²⁴

This is a catalogue entry in the computer register of Museum Victoria (Melbourne, Australia), as kept today by the Senior Curator of anthropology. The entry above represents the individual record of a human skull from Papua New Guinea, one of the many skulls belonging to non-European populations held by the museum, and one of the many thousands held today by many other museums and institutions, mostly in Europe, Australia, and the USA.²⁵ Alike any other museum object, each of these many skulls is likely to have existence in a similar form of individual recording which is systematically applied to the ensemble of the collection. It is so because the existence of material objects as "anthropological things" in museums is expected to be consistently grounded on the work of keeping individual records about each and every material body worth of being in the museum. Technologically, one could compare these museological records of objects to "clinical records" of patients in a hospital, and ultimately to every technique of biographical recording developed by modern disciplinary institutions to order the lives of their subjects.²⁶ These records might appear more or less standardised, existing in the form of old labels or individual cards, written down in manuscript papers, published as catalogues, or already transformed into a computer database. There, skulls can appear invariably numbered, or somehow codified, but the type of entries and their contents may vary. One might find (or not) details and narratives on the circumstances of collection, donation, or purchase; a name for a donor or collector; a geographical origin, or provenance; a code index to a shelf, a box, a storeroom, where the material body can be found; a morphological description of the object; craniological measurements; cultural uses, or meanings, in the original society; name, sex, age, tribe, of the deceased subject; miscellaneous comments and remarks; and even references to associated bibliography or archival documents. These entries, the registers, labels, cards, correspondence, and catalogues collectively constituted what I often heard museum curators and technicians call the object's "documentation", or the object's "history".

Register entries such as this have been the starting point of my visits to museums. They were the first thing curators would eventually hand me on. Sometimes they have been the endpoint too, all that curators can tell me about an object. Indeed, registers rarely display

²⁴ National Museum of Victoria, Melbourne (hereafter NMV): Register entries of human remains collections. Computer database. RLV stands for Ron Vanderwal, the present Senior Curator, Oceania, Indigenous Cultures, Museum Victoria (Australia). Register entry accessed in November 2003 by kind permission of Ron Vanderwal.

²⁵ For general surveys of contemporary skull and skeletal museum collections, see Christine Quigley, *Skulls and Skeletons. Human Bone Collections and Accumulations*, Jefferson/North Carolina, McFarland & Company, 2001, cap. 3. In the US, see Rose, Green and Green, "NAGPRA is Forever", pp. 81-85; In England, see Jane Weeks and Valerie Bott, *Scoping Survey of Historic Human Remains in English Museums on behalf of the Ministerial Working Group on Human Remains*, published in the internet http://www.culture.gov.uk/global/publications/archive_2003, February 2003.

²⁶ See Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et Punir*, Paris, PUF, 1975.

information for every entry, and blank spaces are frequent. Museum staff I have contacted frequently complained and excused about the problematic “lack of information” they had on many of the specimens – as if they should have more to tell me...²⁷ As they handed on lists of register entries to me, curators expected that their “histories” and their “documentation” were relevant to me – and they were right. They are relevant; not just because of the “facts” that they “objectively”, as it were, show about a specific object, but because of what they make visible about how museum objects are the emergent product of trajectory work. Museum professionals, in their turn, have strong scientific and ethical reasons to value the attribution of histories to human skulls, and to expect researchers to contribute to their historiographical project. Good individual records, good “histories”, are of paramount value for the scientific work of physical anthropologists working with human bones. Commenting on a Sydney collection of Melanesian skulls, an experienced physical anthropologist claimed that remains without history are scientifically useless: “the work on a collection not well-provenanced is not good science. You have bone [but] you don’t have the context. [For instance,] to understand variation we need a database, known ancestry, age, sex, [etc.]”²⁸ Problems with these histories can trap those who do science out of human remains. Nowadays, the documentation of human remains is also a source of anxiety and concern for those committed to the agenda of repatriation. Australia is promoting the National Skeletal Provenancing Project²⁹; and in Britain, quite recently, the Working Group for Human Remains in Museums Collections recommended an advisory panel to investigate the “original circumstances of removal” of human remains.³⁰

From the register entry one knows that Museum Victoria does not simply hold a Papuan skull, a material body, among its anthropological collections. One learns that the Museum holds skulls *with* “histories”, and histories with skulls. Each material body is specifically indexed and attached to individual archives and peculiar “histories” that become definitional of material bodies themselves. From these histories, I am learning important things about skulls in museums. Firstly, I learn that museums enact *historiographical reflexivity in the form of multiple short histories of objects*. That, prior to my arrival to museums – being expected and self-representing myself as a historian –, various people in the museum, in the past and in the present, had long been at work producing histories of collections, either artefacts or human bones! Museums do not just held passive archives. Their workers reflexively and actively make “histories”, articulating various kinds of knowledge, histories that concern each specific material body and can be embodied in cards, catalogues, etc.; a history that can thus be transmitted, transformed, corrected, re-inscribed, re-organized by successive generations of curatorial staff. In a nutshell, they are doing historiographical work.

²⁷ Consider the answer to my enquiry on museum holdings of Papuan and Timorese human remains, from the “collection manager” of an English museum of natural history (which I will keep anonymous): “We have in our Collections some human material originating in Papua New Guinea, but nothing from Timor. Unfortunately, we do not have any archival documentation pertaining to these specimens, only entries in our Catalogue of Crania based on an information found in a card index rediscovered in 1960s. Because the information is very limited (and short) I am enclosing it with the list of skulls.” Personal email, 29 March 2004.

²⁸ Denise Donlon, Shellshear Museum of Physical Anthropology and Comparative Anatomy, University of Sydney, personal communication, 13 October 2003..

²⁹ See Deanne Hanchant, “Practicalities in the Return of Remains: The Importance of Provenance and the Question of Unprovenanced Remains”, in Fforde, Hubert and Turnbull, eds., *The Dead and their Possessions*, pp. 312-316.

³⁰ This is one of the proposals for addressing the problem of consent in repatriation claims: “[...] one matter for consideration by the [proposed Human Remains Advisory Panel] will be the circumstances in which the material in question was removed and acquired, and the extent to which the museum knew of the those circumstances. It is therefore natural to look to the history of a particular acquisition, from the time of removal onwards, in judging the merits of its current possession.” *Report of the Working Group on Human Remains in Museum Collections*, published in the internet, http://www.culture.gov.uk/global/publications/archive_2003, p. 120.

What museum workers call “histories” can entail various kinds of knowledge combining to produce the identity of an object. In the entry above, one can distinguish the technical tradition of anatomy and physical anthropology in the metrological notes (“measurements”; “cranial index”), or in the age and sex estimations. But this sort of technical knowledge combines with another type of knowledge which I would like to call *miniature historiography*.³¹ With this expression I designate a form of historical knowledge that commonly (though not exclusively) circulates in labels, catalogues, registers, or correspondence associated to the museums or their agents; it can also figure (sometimes as anecdote) in other more noble literary genres, such as travel accounts, or anthropological articles on museum objects. Its miniature qualities derive, too, from being usually written in the mode of a short narrative (instead of a long, elaborated, ‘grand narrative’), and/or expressed in a dry classificatory style. In general, it does not claim to establish the past of the object in a scale other than the immediate micro-context of those circumstances, incidents, or persons bearing relation to the identity of the material thing, the colonial moment of collecting, or the mode of acquisition by, or donation to, the museum. In the entry above, miniature knowledge is evidenced in two types of biographical indexation that enact the object’s identity as genealogically linked to a past single origin: (i) a *classificatory* indexation, defined by the use of categories such as “date”; “provenance”; “source”; “maker”; etc.; and (ii) a *narrative* indexation, a storytelling.

Let us concentrate on the latter. Consider the entry “comments” of the Papuan crania, an instance which can illustrate the narrative dimension of miniature historiographical reflexivity at work, as well as some of its complexities. Ron Vanderwal, the present Curator, writes down a story mentioned on “an attached card”, which he has transcribed to the entry “comments” of the computer database. This story is a narrative on the circumstances of collecting that particular skull in colonial Papua, on the identity and purposes of the collectors, on the social and gender identity of the indigenous holder as well as of the living human body to whom the skull originally belonged. But there are two competing versions of this history. There is the version of the “attached card” and the version of RLV, Ron Vanderwal, who doubts some of the events told in the story. He is particularly contesting the social and tribal identity of the man from whom the skull was taken. Thus, as much as he is transcribing the narrative from that presumably old card he is intentionally adding to it, transforming the skull’s historiography on the basis of his own experience about the cultural uses of crania in the Gulf Province of Papua New Guinea, the region from where the skull is presumed to have come from, and where Vanderwal has done extensive fieldwork as anthropologist.³² He had in mind a general cultural pattern found by anthropologists working among the Papuan Gulf tribes: the preservation of the “skulls of enemies taken in war” in skull racks, inside longhouses. This practice was prevalent back in the colonial past. He therefore inferred that the male skull in the Museum was unlikely to have belonged to “a notability in his tribe”, the Omaidai, therefore suggesting, instead, that the skull was from an unknown (and probably less notable) male individual, an enemy of the Omaidai tribe. Vanderwal, then, felt uncertain about the story, partly re-told it and interfered with a narrative that *preceded* his own. He was doing trajectory work by transforming a miniature history.

³¹ Because it restricts historical accounts to a “micro” scale, I originally referred to this historiographical knowledge as micro-histories. Yet in the course of the discussion of a version of this paper at Florence and Lisbon, various colleagues rightly called attention to confusions arising from direct overlap of this term with the methodological tradition of “Micro-History” in the history discipline, a confusion which needs to be avoided.

³² See, for example, Ron Vanderwal, “Kinomere village, Papua: sixty years after Hurley”, *COMA-Bulletin of the Conference of Museum Anthropologists*, 4 (1984), pp. 21-25. I thank Ron Vanderwal for showing me some of his notes on head-hunting and the cultural uses of skulls in the Papuan Gulf. He informed me that a book on the subject is forthcoming.

I will soon return to other things one can learn from the transformative dynamics of story (re-)telling. Now, I'd like to call attention to the circulatory properties of trajectory work, as well as to the collective aspect of miniature history-making. This leads me to my second point: *miniature histories are circulatory, a temporal emergent product of distributed, collective, historiographical work*, a set of properties which turn this kind of histories, to borrow a phrase by Bruno Latour, into some sort of "circulating entity", mobile, rebel, transformative.³³ The writing of the story on that card, then, certainly precedes the curatorship of Ron Vanderwal, probably in many years. It dates at least from that year 1904, when the object was registered in the museum; or maybe a bit later. The register does not tell us who wrote that story, or who actually attached it, on the card, to the skull. Probably it was written by another curator, or maybe it was told by other actors mentioned as participating in the history of the skull: "the collector", the "government parties", "a woman", the "tribe", or "F. O. Foster", a name given certain prominence as the "source". Whoever was the author of the story on the card, it seems certain to me that the miniature history of that Papuan skull was not the work of a single person, or of a single museum curator, set in a same time-space.

At a glance, this is an instance of circulation as movement from place to place, from hand to hand; as we shall see below, it is also an instance of circulation as epistemic transformation of miniature histories. But let us begin with circulation in time and space. In 1904, human skulls from colonial territories such as New Guinea, under British and Australian colonial administration since the 1880s, had to travel long distances if they were to get to museums. They circulated in a physical sense, across land and water, crossing territorial borders. By coming from the Gulf area in New Guinea to the city of Melbourne, down in Southern Australia, the Papuan skull in that catalogue entry was an event of the sort of colonial networks of collecting and trading museum objects that historians of anthropology have recently talked about. The very large number of exotic anthropological objects in flux between 1850s and 1920s were a combined effect of anthropology's institutionalization as a scientific discipline in the museum and of the vigour of networks of collectors and intermediaries worldwide in action, accompanying the coeval imperialist presence of European colonizers overseas. Historians suggest that museum anthropology was inextricably enmeshed in a "global political economy", in which the museum was a central node of an extensive and complex collective network linking indigenous societies, colonial agents, various intermediaries, and museums and museum scholars from various countries in the process of collecting and transporting various types of artefacts and human remains.³⁴ But other things could circulate from hand to hand, as it were, at the same time material bodies of skulls were travelling from Papua to Australia. Such a "political economy" did not just move objects from place to place, more or less violently; did not just trade objects as gifts or commodities. Those networks also moved and traded information, documents, correspondence, etc. Along with objects, they were circulating miniature histories – such that the epistemic circulation of these histories could draw trajectories not necessarily coincidental with the physical movement of the object. There could be two kinds of things physically and epistemically moving, two kinds of

³³ Bruno Latour, "On recalling ANT", in John Law and John Hassard, eds., *Actor Network Theory and After*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1999, pp. 15-25.

³⁴ Zimmerman, *Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany*, p. 151. See also H. Glenn Penny, *Objects of Culture: Ethnology and Ethnographic Museums in Imperial Germany*, Chapel Hill and London, University of North Carolina Press, 2002. Stocking and Jacknis have made mention to the existence of a "commodity economy of evolutionary anthropology" moving ethnographic artefacts to museums. See Stocking, "Philanthropoids and Vanishing Cultures: Rockefeller Funding and the End of the Museum Era in Anglo-American anthropology", in Stocking, ed., *Objects and Others*, p. 2; Ira Jacknis, "The Ethnographic Object and the Object of Ethnology in the early career of Franz Boas", in Stocking, ed., *Volkgeist as Method and Ethic. Essays on Boasian Ethnography and the German Anthropological Tradition*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1996, p. 192.

trajectories that trajectory work had to try to bring together: material bodies and their specific historical indexation.

The story told on the attached card was produced at some point in these networks. Other (maybe many) actors, in many places other than the museum were likely to have been at work to bring skulls – both physically and biographically informed as they can be seen on the galleries, the shelves, or read on the register entry –, into the museum. The register entry gave insufficient information on this collective work, but provided some indexation enough to pursue it across more documentation. The latter had to be found beyond the margins of the register entry, in other places of Museum Victoria. In the Museum, I was guided to places where this associated information is kept, normally museum correspondence. In one of the inward correspondence boxes, I found a file under the name of Foster, F. O. In there, were two letters he wrote to the Director of Museum Victoria, R. Henry Walcott, back in 1904. Foster, a dentist resident in Queensland, was acting as intermediary between the Museum and his friend Mr. Geoffrey W. Jear, who had written to the Director a few months before offering some Papuan crania for sale to the Museum.³⁵ The offer was accepted; the price negotiated; the skulls packed and shipped to Melbourne. Not just the “skulls in themselves” were sent, though; along with them went their “histories”, told on a letter and labelled on the materials. In the letters I read, virtually *ipsis verbis*, the story transcribed to the register entry “comments”:

“I am writing you on behalf of a friend of mine a Mr. Geoffrey Jear who has some New Guinea Ethnological specimens to dispose of and about which I believe he has already communicated with you & at your request I now append the history of each consisting of two male two female & one juvenile skull.

N.º 1. A male skull: the skull of a man from OMAIDAI tribe, TURAMA river. This man was a notability in his tribe, and his skull has been preserved for many years. It was saved from the destruction of all skulls, that is carried out by Government parties, by being hid in a woman’s dress and afterwards hung in a tree, where it was found by the collector some days after. [...]”³⁶

“I beg to advise having forwarded you by this same mail six ethnological specimens four (4) Papuan and two (2) Queensland Aboriginal which I trust will reach you safely and prove satisfactorily. Kindly forward cash by P. O. O. payable F. O. Foster, Rockhampton. I have labelled each specimen with the particulars as far as available. [...]”³⁷

In these passages, one captures the history on the register entry in the collective process of being elaborated as it was handed on by Foster to Walcott. One understands that museum director was offered some skulls for sale, while expecting also the offer of their histories; that Mr. Jear and Foster answered to the expectation by providing the histories and labelling the skulls – for this would enable the transaction to proceed and add economic value to the materials. Here, the storytelling is happening as the product of an *interaction*, in which stories were expected with skulls, and in which both were *negotiated* and exchanged as a commodity. Skulls and histories, indeed, were the object being exchanged for a certain amount of money.

In this case, circulations of skulls from place to place were done in which material objects moved concomitantly with their stories, without problems. Miniature historiographies were the product of a temporally emergent work taking place both at the museum and extending into a network of other interactions that ramified to the outside of the museum building. A museum curator, an intermediary, and someone maybe in New Guinea³⁸ were, in

³⁵ NMV: Inward Correspondence, Geo. W. Jear to R. Henry Walcott, Esq. Director of the Museum Victoria. Rockhampton (Queensland) 26 January 1904 and 27 February 1904. I thank Frank Job for having kindly sent me these letters by post.

³⁶ NMV: Inward Correspondence, 1900-1931, Archive Box 00335, F.O. Foster to Director of Museum Victoria. Rockhampton (Queensland) 10 June 1904. [my emphasis]

³⁷ NMV: Inward Correspondence, 1900-1931, Archive Box 00335, F. O. Foster to Director of Museum Victoria. Rockhampton (Queensland) 28 July 1904. [my emphasis]

³⁸ Not to mention other participants possibly invisible at this point, such as indigenous people, other traders, shipping companies, material technologies, more museum staff, etc.

interaction, actively, reflexively, practicing history, doing historiographical work. In so doing, they were making museum anthropological objects – objects neither skulls nor histories only, or just materials nor discourse, but which were both things at a time: skulls *and* histories. “Histories” and documentation were affecting the material bodies of skulls so that they could become anthropological things in museums. The Papuan crania N. 1 sent in 1904 was not an “object in itself”; it was material and discursive, narrative and classificatory indexation, bone and storytelling, in connection. In practice, between the two, the material and the record, fundamental difference does not exist as to what makes both, in the museum and in transactions, definitional of human skulls as anthropological objects. This seems to apply both to the curator Ron Vanderwal in 2003, and to Foster, Walcott and Jiear in 1904.

These observations highlight the third of my lessons with this register entry and museum work. These circulations evidence the *complex relational dynamics of association and dissociation between miniature histories and the material bodies of human skulls*. This dynamics is the product of situated collective work, and is also collective in its effects. From the point of view of curators and museum staff, historiographical work should be oriented to the production of a reliable and accurate link between words and things, skulls and stories. Skulls’ material bodies and their miniature historiographies (both as classificatory and narrative indexation) should be kept together as an entangled entity. I found John Law’s insight that “there is no important difference between stories and materials”³⁹ descriptive of what miniature histories might represent in the context of museum trajectory work:

“[...] stories, effective stories, perform themselves into the material world – yes, in the form of social relations, but also in the form of machines, architectural arrangements, bodies, and all the rest. This means that one way of imagining the world is that it is a set of (pretty disorderly) stories that intersect and interfere with one another. It means also that these are, however, not simply narrations in the standard linguistic sense of the term.”⁴⁰

Sets of “(pretty disorderly)” stories can be a similar form of partly imagining the museum world and its extensive networks. Colonial miniature histories are not “contexts” or “people’s culture” insufflating empty things with “meaning”, in a vocabulary characteristic of anthropology and of cultural analysis. They “perform themselves into the material world”: into human skulls, certainly; or into other material regions of the museum – distributing objects through certain storerooms, certain shelves, certain boxes; or situating them into ethical regimes, or scientific taxonomies. In miniature historiographies this is true to both its classificatory and narrative modalities. Imagine that the human skull was not attributed a number and a code. How could the curator look for it in the storeroom, among the hundreds or thousands of other things held in the collections? Imagine it was not attributed a provenance, a place, or a tribe. How could it be studied scientifically by anthropologists back in 1904? Imagine that we do not know whether or not the skull belongs to an individual of the Omaidai tribe. Can this skull ever be repatriated? Imagine that a different story of male skull “N. 1” was told by Foster and his friend; or that no history at all was told. Had they not told a story of a skull rare and socially noteworthy, would Foster and his friend ever get Fuller to pay a good price for the human skull? Would the human skull ever get to the Museum Victoria at all? Without attaching a colonial context to it, *what* can that human skull be? Problematic collective consequences can occur when historiographical work is not done, is badly done, or becomes contested. Problematic consequences can occur when historiographical work does not hold skulls and stories together. That is why doing historiographical work in museums was so important in the colonial past, as it continues to be, today.

³⁹ John Law, “On the Subject of the Object: Narrative, Technology, and Interpelation”, *Configurations*, 8 (2000), p. 2. See also John Law, *Organizing Modernity*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1994.

⁴⁰ Law, “On the Subject of the Object”, p. 2.

Making stories and classification in register entries problematic is then very consequential. Such that the performative properties of micro-historiographies become especially visible in the moments characterizing the circulatory character of museum objects not simply as things in geographic movement, but as things subject to changeable arrangements, to new classifications, to new narrations. We saw above that the words-things connection defining the anthropological identity of the skulls had to be laboriously produced by different people in multiple sites. Miniature historiographical work is a process open to creative and transformative modifications along the various points and actors of their collective networks – the other way of viewing it as a “circulating entity”. The history on the letter of 1904 and on the register entry is not the same, either in form, style, or content. There are new elements (such as measurements), and old elements are contested (Vanderwal doubts Foster’s story). Important consequences are performed into the skull as Vanderwal’s comments make an apparently unproblematic history until 2003 problematic thereafter. Re-telling the story affects the relational dynamics of “keeping skulls-and-stories together” required for putting the skull into the position of anthropological object. Vanderwal is not just interfering with a narration in the linguistic sense of the term, or with a context external to a material body; he is interfering with the skull itself as something at the same time epistemic and material, multiplying its ontology, and having unforeseen collective consequences. He is interfering with museum trajectory work as it was done in the past and with trajectory work to be done in the present and the future. That Papuan skull N. 1 is turning into a problematic museum object (potentially, it turns not into a museum anthropological object!) because the connection (until then apparently unproblematic) between the skull’s physical trajectory and the skull’s historiographical trajectory is being potentially undone.

I began this text by suggesting that historical studies of museum objects and material culture are arguing for the need to historicize museum objects against a tide, a lasting tide of history-making enacted in and out of the physical space of the museum, as well as before, during, and after the arrival of objects to museums. In contrast, I attempted at taking these histories seriously, giving them transparency, and bringing forward a proposal for analysing them as collective activities; not as mere narrations to be debunked or denounced as wrong, but as effective practices that order and disorder human skulls and their anthropological trajectories. Instead of imagining the work of bringing objects into museums as occulting, destroying or denying colonial historicity, memory or context to objects I set myself to imagine the opposite: museum things, as they circulated back in the museum period, are likely to have been embedded in a miniature colonial historiography. As I tried to show in this case-study, colonial context was done in museums and was produced – *not* suppressed – by historiographical practices in museum networks. If human skulls are seen as anthropological trajectories (including not simply the course of an object in time, but the work implied to configure them as museum objects, as well as its impact) then some kind of historiographical activity – either in the form of classification or narration – can be involved in the making of skulls as anthropological objects. Miniature histories are the typical products of historiographical work as it appears to the observer in museums, both as collective practice and effect; they are performative discourses, not simply a cultural “context”.

We can therefore recognize earlier historiographical work and describe it as such, while reserving an analytical position for ourselves. There is nothing to lose in giving actors a first say in historiography-making. On the contrary. I experimentally explored the study of these practices of historical reflexivity in the context of trajectory work: what they are; how are done; what they cause. Reintegrating miniature histories paves the way for a historical perspective on museum objects that focus on the mutual and complex articulation between

materiality and discourse in the course of time. I hope this paper is a step in this direction. One, I hope of “adding reality”⁴¹ to museum anthropology and colonial knowledge, not one of taking it away. Perhaps one has been too concerned with criticizing evolutionist views of history and racist theorizing to note how imposing miniature histories can be in museum work. In any case, to exclude – involuntarily or not – this form of historicity from our post-colonial and post-“museum era” descriptions of the past can perform into the history of museum collections and colonial networks a strange occultation. Yes, I might say then, a “context” is on the path to destruction, stripped of museum objects. Not their historicity, not their colonial memory, but the infrastructural, subtle, and minute practices of historiographical work in the museum period.

Today, miniature histories of the museum period are not alone. They have partners and competitors. Colonial histories of museum things are undertaken in many different and possibly contradictory ways. As we saw, museums held skulls with historiographical work undone, register entries incomplete. Curators and museum staff continuously work upon the construction of catalogues, cards, labels, and digital databases; the moral and political agenda of repatriation debates also requires a return to historiographical work; material culture studies flourish as a scholarly field... Certainly any history one might tell about human skulls is likely to be entrapped in these flows of history-making, intersecting in various ways with other narrations, coeval or not. As historiographical practices, the cultural biographies of things, the histories of collecting or my attempt to historicize trajectory work in anthropological trajectories do not escape this fact. But they are not *the same*. Like Ron Vanderwal re-telling Foster’s story, our narratives can perform other colonial contexts into skulls, into museums, into ethical regimes, into scientific anthropology, into the past and the present, or into ourselves. And making these differences, as I claim, can be very consequential. As these forms of history-making follow their (not necessarily coincidental) courses, one has to reflexively cope with their complex interplay – in particular, the interplay between practices of historiographical work in the post-colonial present and in the colonial past. What effects can stories perform, and how these histories can intersect and affect each other is what, perhaps, makes new historical knowledge on museum objects such a challenging and captivating responsibility.

⁴¹ Cf. Bruno Latour, *Pandora’s Hope. Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*, Harvard, Harvard University Press, 1999.

**Entrenching the Colonial State
Some Reservations about Matthew Lange’s “Embedding the Colonial State”**

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The broad disciplinary span of colonial studies is a telling sign of its dynamism. Anthropologists, historians, sociologists, political scientists and philologists have all provided analyses underlying each time specific features of the colonial phenomenon¹. More importantly, these disciplines have often been in constant interplay with each other, thus enriching the debate over this controversial topic. It is in this context that we should welcome “Embedding the Colonial State: A Comparative-Historical Analysis of State Building and Broad-Based Development in Mauritius”, published by *Social Science History* in the fall of 2003² as an interesting contribution by the sociologist Matthew Lange to this debate. It is, however, a contribution that is not without posing certain problems.

Recognizing Mauritius’ astonishing postcolonial development, Lange argues that the country’s developmentalism actually began prior to its independence. According to the author, Mauritius’ impressive development over the past 60 years was sparked by the conjuncture of “two separately determined historical processes” (p. 403). The first of these processes was the construction of a strong and bureaucratic (colonial) state, and the second one was the slow development of a “society with dense associational ties” (p. 403). These two dynamics met during a prolonged period of labor riots, which Lange refers to as a “critical juncture period” (p. 404), and initiated major social transformations through the expansion of relations between state and society: local communities helped the colonial establishment implement major social welfare reforms and had greater opportunities to participate—and even at times take the initiative—in this reformist effort that would eventually lay the ground for Mauritius’ development in the postcolonial period.

The main problem in Matthew Lange’s article is that its conclusions lead to a somewhat problematic rehabilitation of the colonial state, a specter believed to have disappeared with the death of modernization theories. This rehabilitation is largely the result of the application of the “developmental state” model to a colonial setting. We suggest that this causes him to incorrectly assess his two main variables—the state and what as a shorthand might be termed civil society. In addition, we question his description of the relations between the colonial state and society as collaborative and developmental. Finally, we claim that the author misuses comparative methods, with erroneous consequences.

Defining the Variables: State and Society in a Colonial Setting

The first variable in Matthew Lange’s developmental scheme is the existence of a strong bureaucratic state. Indeed, faithful to the institutionalist paradigm, Matthew Lange uses the concept of “bureaucracy” such as defined by Max Weber’s ideal-type. However in observing Weber’s ideal-type of bureaucracy in action, studies in the sociology of organizations have stressed the “dysfunctions” inherent to any type of bureaucracy, creating

¹ This critique has been written with substantial contributions from Gunvor Simonsen, PhD research student, European University Institute and Dr. Jasper Chalcraft from the Sainsbury Research Unit of the University of East Anglia and I hereby express my warmest gratitude for their help.

² Matthew Lange: “Embedding the Colonial State: A Comparative-Historical Analysis of State Building and Broad-Based Development in Mauritius”, *Social Science History*, volume 27, number 3, pp. 397-423.

what has been called “unanticipated causes of purposive social action”³. Matthew Lange’s implicit equation between “bureaucracy” and “efficiency” might therefore appear partial in its recourse to an ideal form of bureaucracy which, to be sure, better serves the purpose of the article.

In fact, a careful study of the correspondence between British governors and the Colonial Office shows that officials both in London and in the colonies were aware of this growing “inappropriateness” of the colonial personnel to their tasks. Indeed, the main mission of a British colonial administrator was to maintain “law and order” in the colony he was assigned to⁴. In order to do so, it was believed that a colonial administrator should make his presence constantly felt within the colonial society through regular tours. However, from the turn of the twentieth century onwards, through the combined effects of a growing specialization of the administrators’ tasks and the multiplication of internal regulations within the colonial state, the work of British colonial officials became increasingly “bureaucratized”, a process implying the development of “paper work” and “red tape” to the detriment of “field work”.

Moreover, the presence of British officials in the various dependencies was further reduced through a drastic reform stemming from the metropolis in the early thirties. From 1930 onwards, the Colonial Service, from which civil servants serving in most British colonies were drawn—Mauritius included—underwent a thorough reform the aim of which was to increase the mobility of colonial officials from one colony to another (Unification of the Colonial Service) . A side-effect of this measure was to shorten the length of stay of these officials in each colony, thereby impeding them to develop the intimate knowledge of the societies they were called to administer.

As colonial societies became increasingly foreign to colonial officials, the latter grew more and more foreign to the inhabitants of the various colonies. In other words, the natural evolution of the relations between a “colonial state” and a “colonial society” seems to be that of a growing estrangement rather than that of an increasing “embeddedness”. Indeed, in studying the “embeddedness” of a colonial state in a given society, one has also to observe the relations between the individuals embodying the “colonial state” and those constituting the said “society”.

Finally, this “inappropriateness” of colonial bureaucracies was in most cases coupled with structural incoherencies. Conflict often occurred between the various branches of the colonial government, especially between the judicial and administrative officers and between the latter and the central government (Secretariat). The colonial state’s policymaking, or, as Matthew Lange names it, “state-capacity”, was therefore often strongly constrained by lengthy debates over procedure, precedence among officers and litigations opposing various branches of the government.

In dependencies such as Mauritius where “direct rule”—insofar as we accept this category and its opposite, “indirect rule”, as reliable categories⁵—the colonial state relied on a very small minority of British officials and an overwhelming majority of indigenous officials. Naturally, the existence of a “colour bar” impeding native officials from reaching the higher posts of the administration further complicated the functioning of the colonial state and its “corporate coherence.” To summarize, in constructing the first variable of his developmental

³ Robert K. Merton: “The Unanticipated consequences of Purposive Social Action”, *American Sociological Review*, 1/6, 1936, pp. 894-904. Same author: *Social Theory and Social Structure*, The Free Press, New York, 1968 (or. ed. 1949).

⁴ Anthony H. M. Kirk-Greene: *Britain’s Imperial Administrators, 1858-1966*, Macmillan, Oxford, 2000.

⁵ Akele Afigbo: *The Warrant Chiefs: Indirect Rule in Southern Nigeria, 1891-1929*, Longman, London, 1972; see, more recently, Veronique Dimier: *Le Gouvernement des Colonies: Regards Croisés Franco-Britanniques*. University of Brussels Press, Brussels, 2004.

scheme, the colonial state, Lange has relied too heavily on an ideal-type, thereby favouring too much the “system” at the expense of the “actors”⁶.

The second ingredient of Mauritius’ development is, in the author’s words, the “dense associational ties” within the island’s various cultural communities. Each one of these is presented as internally homogenous. Presenting them as such is a choice that serves the author well: it allows him to claim that their increasing representation in the state apparatus equalled the integration of state and civil society. Nonetheless, the very nature of ethnic ascription has always been interwoven in Mauritius. In fact, religion cross-cuts ethnic recognition within the state, and it is this kind of web of intricate connections which should have appeared in Matthew Lange’s analysis in terms of state/society relations.

More to the point, the key actor in the article is definitely the Indo-Mauritian community. Clearly, however, the main difficulty in Matthew Lange’s approach is to present this community as homogeneous. What role did the Tamil elite play for instance, who arrived in Mauritius as merchants and free-men and formed a kind of sub-elite between the Franco-Mauritians, Chinese and indentured labourers? The analysis is based on the rural protests of Indo-Mauritian sugarcane workers who later dominated the Mauritian Labour Party. In a sense then, this wave of protest is supposed to be a rural wave, gradually conquering the city. But what exactly were the links between a rural subordinate population and urban subordinates challenging the colonial state? How can we assume the diffusion of the waves of protest when, for example, urban and rural Mauritian Tamils tended not to intermarry⁷ ?

Moreover, the viewpoint of the Franco-Mauritian elite is only partially analyzed. By not mentioning the response of this early twentieth century elite, when confronted with growing assertiveness on behalf of the Indo-Mauritian agricultural workers, we are left to believe that they more or less accepted, perhaps even supported metropolitan reform policies. And then, labor riots do not always convince the ruling class that they should give some of their power away.

The reductionism which affects Matthew Lange’s presentation of the complex ethnic reality of Mauritius is not only due to functionalist purposes. That is to say, it is not only due to the fact that this reality has been transformed into a function of a developmental scheme. It is also, if not mainly, a problem of sources. Indeed, the primary sources used by Matthew Lange are exclusively official documents produced by the colonial state. To what extent do these sources allow us to infer the development of the associational ties within Mauritian society in a macro-historic perspective extended over two hundred years? And to what extent do they faithfully portray the relations between this society and the colonial state? It has now become a basic rule for historians to consider official archives (statistics, census, reports) as first and foremost the colonial establishment’s way of portraying itself and the subject society, rather than a faithful depiction of reality. Matthew Lange’s argument is biased primarily because he does not confront the printed official papers with sources emanating from the “subordinate groups”.

These are the few qualifications that seem necessary in the author’s definition of the two variables of Mauritius’ developmental scheme. But the strongest problem appears to lay in the linkage between these two, i.e. the “embeddedness” of the colonial state in the colonial society, a precondition for the island’s development, which allegedly occurred during the “critical-juncture period” of the Indo-Mauritian labor protests in the early thirties.

⁶ Michel Crozier and Erhard Friedberg: *Actors and Systems*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1977.

⁷ T. H Eriksen: “The Cultural Context of Ethnic Differences.” *Man* 26 (1), 1991, pp. 127-144.

Defining the Mechanism: Embedding the Colonial State through the Critical Juncture Period

According to the neo-institutionalist paradigm, “virtuous circles of development” (p. 416) exist where the state can obtain the participation of the society, and the society has the means to force the state to adopt its reforms to a changing reality. Matthew Lange argues that this “embeddedness” of the colonial state occurred in Mauritius during the “critical juncture period” when, in the late 1930s, a wave of labor riots conducted mainly by the Indo-Mauritians forced the state to implement reforms. No matter how appealing this formula may seem, it stumbles against two main problems linked, on the one hand, to the theoretical influences of the model proposed and, on the other hand, to a depiction of the colonial state as paternalistic and benevolent.

Matthew Lange’s theoretical framework is mainly defined by the state-society model developed in the works of P. B. Evans but also by the “path-dependent” paradigm, explained by J. Mahoney⁸. Though basically focused on the role of the colonial state and the reforms it implemented, Matthew Lange tempers this somewhat “top-down” approach by mentioning the active participation of “voluntary associations” stemming from the colonial society (p. 408). This is attractive, as it seemingly restores an agency to the colonized. It is also inspired by a trend in developmental theories based on what can be called “grassroots participation” or “bottom-up” approach. But as we have seen, we are left in the dark as regards the dynamics within the cultural groups at play, mainly the mutual aid societies. Must we assume that they formed a model which other ethnically-identified groups adopted? An answer to this question might have compromised the conclusions of the article, as the transposition of a model designed for contemporary societies in a colonial setting seems to be a haphazard undertaking indeed.

This preeminence of the paradigm over the case studied leads to worrying conclusions, that is, to the depiction of the colonial state as a benevolent state. In fact, by stressing too much the synergistic aspects of the relations between rulers and ruled, Matthew Lange’s approach brushes aside the inherent conflictual dimension of such relations. In applying a developmentalist approach based on the reappraisal of the state, Matthew Lange’s analysis does not lead to the reappraisal of just any state, but to that of the colonial state. To be sure, a colonial state may have been a “developmental state” (pp. 403, 412, 417). But colonial states usually implemented developmental policies only insofar as it allowed them to reassert their authority where they felt it was being challenged. The author’s concept of “state capacity” leads in fact to a dilution of the colonial state’s primary objective which was to maintain “law and order”, that is, to control and police the subordinate groups, mainly in the best interests of the ruling classes, whether indigenous or foreign⁹.

Towards the end of the article, Matthew Lange even suggests the further application of his model in other colonial settings in order to check the validity of the premises (p. 416). In fact, his concern for providing an interpretative model for postcolonial societies is subjacent in his approach based on a “comparatively informed analysis” drawing on examples from other colonies.

Reflections on the “Comparatively Informed Analysis”

Throughout the article Matthew Lange refers to development in continental Africa and Asian postcolonial states. This is his version of a “comparatively informed analysis”. Comparative history and analysis does, however, demand more than a somewhat random choice of units of comparison. To get a better understanding of the importance of the state and

⁸ J. Mahoney: “Path Dependence in Historical Sociology”, *Theory and Society* 29: 2000, pp. 507-548.

⁹ David Anderson and David Killingray (eds): *Policing the Empire: Government Authority and Control, 1830-1940*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1991.

associational society for development we need to find examples in which these two factors are actually more or less identical to what we find in Mauritius and yield the same results; only then can we mention casual links between state, society and economic, social and political development. We mention the following examples to show that a more cautious choice of units of comparison might in fact have invalidated the paradigm.

Zanzibar, for instance, had a strong state under direct British rule and linked to a diversity of associations. This, however, prepared the ground for a more repressive state that strongly mortgaged the possibility of the development of an occidental-like civil society¹⁰. An even more telling example is perhaps the case of the British Caribbean colonies. Here we deal with colonies that had the same metropolitan government, which had experienced a similar development, in which plantation, post-slavery and Asian indenture were some of the main characteristics of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century society. Throughout the 1930s, the British Caribbean experienced major riots pushed forward by organized labour movements. These labour riots caused the reform of metropolitan policies. In the Caribbean, the British metropolitan state responded by attempting to integrate oppositional segments of the population, in a way rather similar to what Matthew Lange describes in Mauritius. What did not happen in the Caribbean, however, was the post-independence development that Matthew Lange attributes to the colonial state's awareness of the need to incorporate broader segments of society. So, one must ask, what was actually the reason for Mauritius' development and should we trust the colonial state with the kind of foresight that the author seems to find in Mauritius?

The Danger of Considering History as an Attic of Facts

In concluding this review of an interesting yet controversial article, we could state that Lange's choice of comparisons, his selective use of source material, a rather theoretically idealized description of the heterogeneity of the Mauritian population and of the colonial state, and of the potential of direct colonial rule, have all contributed to the elaboration of a model more faithful to the paradigm of state-society synergy and path-dependent development and the trends now dominating development theory in political science than to a real scrutiny of Mauritian history. In doing this, Matthew Lange has used the authority of the historical method to prove a sociological theory. To invoke the authority of history as a storehouse of facts—which, precisely because they can appear untinged by theory constitute the evidence for a sociological proposition—leads to a theoretical dead end. History is after all full of facts, and if we chose selectively we can certainly prove more or less anything. To use history to prove theory is a dangerous game. To do it well, we must reflect on what our sources show us, we must dare to confront those facts that are threatening to our proposal, and we must make clear which are our units of comparison and why.

¹⁰ William Bissel: "Colonial Constructions: Historicizing Debates on Civil Society in Africa" in J. J. L. Comaroff (ed), *Civil Society and the Political Imagination in Africa*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1999.

Author's Response

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Alexis Rappas and his colleagues at the European University Institute provide an interesting and forceful critique of my article “Embedding the Colonial State: A Comparative-Historical Analysis of State Building and Broad-Based Development in Mauritius.” In doing so, the authors comment on diverse aspects of the analysis and provide many valid concerns about using theory for social research. The most serious assertion made in the critique is that I reify models of Peter Evans² and James Mahoney³, forcing colonial Mauritius into them haphazardly and thereby resulting in a flawed analysis. Specifically, they write that the inaccuracies result from my misinterpretation of the colonial state, colonial society, and state-society relations and my misuse of comparative methods. As argued below, I believe these charges are incorrect. Instead, I suggest they criticize my analysis not because of faulty, theory-driven data assessment but because my findings do not fit their own model of colonialism.

Primary Critique: Reductive History

To begin, the authors claim that I accept an unrealistic version of the state and thereby fail to recognize that bureaucracy can be very constraining and dysfunctional. And, they assert that Mauritius' colonial state was far from the benign ideal and therefore could not have had positive effects on development. In response, I agree that the Mauritian colonial state suffered from problems that affected its effectiveness. In particular, it was not responsive to the needs and interests of its inhabitants throughout the majority of the colonial period, and state power was concentrated in the hands of those who controlled the colonial bureaucratic machine: the Governor and the Secretariat. As a result, the colonial state in Mauritius was far from a developmental ideal.

Yet, a rule-based bureaucracy—even with these problems—has considerable capacity to prevent state actors from abusing their power, thereby obstructing state predation and making possible corporate state action. While this might simply allow for a more effective predatory state if the bureaucratic elite are bent on extraction, it can also have positive benefits for the subjects when the goal is simply the maintenance of law and order, something my critics and I agree was the primary objective of British colonialism during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In colonial Mauritius, for example, the legal system enforced a relatively unbiased rule of law that empowered dependent laborers and thereby helped many of them to become middle class landowners. One way it did so was by offering laborers a framework that allowed them to defend themselves against exploitation at the hands of the planters: During the 1860s, 20 percent of all indentured laborers brought lawsuits against their employers to court, and nearly 75 percent of these cases resulted in successful convictions⁴. Thus, even a non-responsive and autocratic state can have developmental benefits when it uses its might and rule-based organizational principles to regulate societal relations.

¹ Matthew Lange had at the time (May 2004) just completed his PhD Dissertation at Brown University. He is now professor of Sociology at McGill University, Canada.

² Peter Evans: *Embedded Autonomy: States and Industrial Transformation*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1995.

³ J. Mahoney: “Path Dependence in Historical Sociology”, *Theory and Society* 29: 2000, pp. 507-548.

⁴ Richard Allen: *Slaves, Freedmen, and Indentured Laborers in Colonial Mauritius*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1999.

The critique is correct, however, in stressing that a non-responsive and hierarchical bureaucracy would not likely implement broad-based developmental reforms on its own accord. Notably, this was the point of my article. I argue that pressure from London and persistent labor movements in Mauritius forced the colonial state to implement decentralizing and democratizing reforms that allowed Mauritians to gain control of the colonial state during the final two decades of colonialism and experience impressive social welfare improvements. The problems of non-responsiveness and power concentration were thereby placated, and the Mauritian colonial state's relatively high capacity to act corporately was therefore employed to benefit most of the island's population.

Turning from colonial state to colonial society, the critique states that I fail to recognize the diversity of Mauritian society and inaccurately represent it in an attempt to force the case into my theoretical framework. In response, I believe such claims are misguided, as I neither think Mauritian society is—or ever was—highly integrated nor have ever suggested that it is. I believe the article clearly shows this, although apparently not with the depth that my critics feel is necessary. I chose not go into detail because the diversity of Mauritius has been the primary focus of anthropological, historical, and sociological work on Mauritian society and therefore does not need to be reiterated⁵. If I used a more specific analysis that described at-length Mauritius' ethnic diversity, the analysis would indeed be more nuanced yet completely congruent with the present findings and quite possibly too long for publication as an article.

For example, the critics claim that I do not sufficiently discuss the Franco-Mauritian elite, which gives the impression that “that they more or less accepted, perhaps even supported metropolitan reform policies.” In fact, Franco-Mauritian efforts to retain power were considerable during the late colonial period yet had only limited success because they were unable to counter the British administration and the electoral strength of the Mauritian Labour Party. As a result, some Franco-Mauritians left the colony, while most were forced to accept their loss of relative power, something that was somewhat easy to stomach given that they retained considerable economic and political resources and that the Mauritian Labour Party did not champion land distribution. Admittedly, the above information helps to paint a more complete picture, but the failure to add this detail in no way affects the accuracy of the findings presented in my article: The reforms were successful despite Franco-Mauritian opposition.

Third, the authors suggest that my claims of ‘embedding’ the colonial state are misguided for several reasons, most importantly because of the “inherent conflictual dimension of the relations between colonized and colonizers in colonial settings.” As my critics state, conflict between colonized and colonizer was undoubtedly present in colonial Mauritius. After the 1948 Legislative Council elections, for example, the government-appointed positions were given to conservative elites in order to limit the strength of the Mauritian Labour Party (MLP), which won 13 of the 19 elected seats. As Simmons (1982) notes, “The nominations destroyed whatever goodwill had been built up during the constitutional negotiations. The elected members, convinced now that the government did not want to cooperate with them, began to oppose it at every turn” (110-111). Yet, the colonial administration soon realized that the MLP was the most moderate party in the Colony and began to back it strongly. As a colonial official remarked, “we must recognise the need to play along with the moderate politicians, who at present have most of the political power, and who in spite of belonging to what is called the Labour Party are politically in the center, with an irresponsible opposition to the right and to

⁵ Richard Allen: *Slaves, Freedmen, and Indentured Laborers*, *op. cit.*, 1999; Burton Benedict: *Mauritius: Problems of a Plural Society*, Praeger, New York, 1965; T. H Eriksen: “The Cultural Context of Ethnic Differences”, *Man* 26 (1), 1991, pp. 127-144; Oddvar Hollup, “The Disintegration of Case and Changing Concepts of Indian Ethnic Identity in Mauritius”, *Ethnology* 33 (4), 1994, pp. 297-316; Rosabelle Laville: “In the Politics of the Rainbow: Creoles and Civil Society in Mauritius”, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 18 (2), 2000, pp. 277-294; William Miles: “The Creole Malaise in Mauritius”, *African Affairs*, 98, 1999, pp. 211-228.

the left”⁶. With this change in the Government’s willingness to collaborate with the labor party, the Governor noted that an “administrative revolution” occurred in which power began to be transferred to local politicians while the politicians and the state officials continued to respect one another’s interests⁷. Thus, we see that conflict was not completely absent, but that colonial officials and local politicians still collaborated extensively.

Contemporary Mauritian academics also recognize this relatively non-confrontational relationship. A recent conference on Mauritian decolonization emphasized collaboration and claimed that there was no independence movement in Mauritius because the inhabitants—other than the Franco-Mauritian and Creole elites—looked favorably on their colonizers. As one local historian who participated in the conference claims,

“British colonization was never perceived as exploitative The British who were the administrators of the island were not seen as the direct exploiters of the labour as the economic power has always been in the hands of Franco-Mauritians. What the people in Mauritius in the 20th century remembered was that the British abolished slavery, established equality before the Law, developed liberal institutions and increased the political participation of the middle classes on a qualified franchise.”⁸

With this lack of animosity and relatively high levels of collaboration, ties between the colonial state and local communities expanded, largely through state relations with local councils and associations. And, I claim that these ties made possible the two-way exchange of resources and information needed for the successful implementation of social welfare and political reforms during late colonialism. To this, the critique claims that the sources I use are biased and fail to provide sufficient evidence into state-society relations during the colonial period. In all honesty, I wish I had more data on state-society relations. While I completed research in Mauritius and London, it would have been advantageous for me to interview former officials and association members to get specific information on instances of state-society relations. My limited time and resources as well as the fact that many of the individuals involved are now deceased prevented this, however. As a result, I have used available data—both colonial documents and diverse primary and secondary sources—to piece together what was going on, and the evidence suggests that state-society relations were vital for the implementation of social welfare and political development during the late colonial period. Obviously, new data might conflict with this interpretation. Yet, considerably evidence exists in favor of my claim, and my critics offer nothing more concrete than an argument to the contrary. Following my critics belief that data must be given precedent over theory, I therefore stand by my findings until evidence is found that contradicts them.

Finally, the fourth point of criticism concerns my use of comparative-historical methodology. For the article, my methods are primarily historical, in particular, process tracing within an individual case. In certain places within the analysis, I make brief comparisons with other British colonies in Africa and Asia. The critique suggests that the choice of comparisons is random and useless. If my work attempted detailed and focused comparisons that investigate how similar and different processes affect the outcome among cases, such claims would not be far off the mark. Admittedly, I believe focused comparisons provide a powerful basis for inference and require much thought into which cases to select. This is why I have discussed the importance of focused comparisons and nested research designs elsewhere⁹. Yet, such comparisons are almost impossible to use in an article-length

⁶ J.H.Robertson: “Letter from 2 October”, 1959b, Public Records Office, CO1036/572.

⁷ Robert Scott: “Mauritius: Political and Economic Development”, Public Records Office, CO1036/381, 1959.

⁸ S.Reddi: “People, The Labour Party and the Independence of Mauritius”, Paper presented at the Conference on “Transfer of Power and the Decolonization Process: The Mauritian Experience”, Mahatma Gandhi Institute, Moka, 1998, p. 1.

⁹ Matthew Lange: “The British Colonial Lineages of Despotism and Development”, Ph.D. Dissertation, Brown University, 2004.

piece that attempts to describe a relatively undocumented and complex historical phenomenon—one really needs a book.

The comparisons I make in the article are of a different sort and are not without merit. Their basic purpose is to situate Mauritius within a broader context that helps one understand the position of Mauritius, something necessary for a country which many if not most readers have not heard of. Specifically, I compare Mauritius to former British colonies in Africa and Asia for two reasons. First, I have data on the form of colonialism for each, which is one of the focuses of the paper and makes possible rapid comparisons. Second, most recent work on Mauritius' developmental state describes the country as an African miracle. My intention was to show that Mauritius, although located in the sub-Saharan African region, is quite distinct from them and is in fact closer to certain Asian colonies that have been praised as dynamic developers.

Due to their interest in focused comparison rather than comparisons that situate a case within a broader set or context, my critics claim that comparison with other former British plantation colonies would have been most appropriate. In addition, they suggest that Mauritius and other plantation colonies all experienced direct forms of rule, labor movements during the 1930s and 1940s, and a reformist state after World War II; but they claim that Mauritius had postcolonial development that was far superior to other plantation colonies and that comparison with other plantation colonies therefore contradicts my findings. I agree with their claims that the key similarities among former British plantation colonies should have promoted similar—albeit far from identical—postcolonial developmental trajectories if my theory were correct. However, I disagree with their claims that Mauritius has had superior postcolonial development than other former British plantation colonies. Indeed, using the United Nations' Human Development Index as a crude measure of broad-based development (the score aggregates measurements of economic development, educational achievement, and societal health), 9 of Britain's 13 former plantation colonies had scores higher than Mauritius in 2000.¹ And, the average Human Development Index ranking of all 14 places them at the 63rd percentile of the world's countries—not exceptional, but better than average. Yet, their mean position appears poor only relative to the dominant Western European countries and the white settler colonies: When these are excluded, the former British plantation colonies are concentrated within the top quartile. Moreover, if one looks at democratization, former British plantation colonies are among the most democratic in the world—something that Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens (1993) attribute to some extent to the British colonial state. Thus, I argue that the comparison with other former British plantation colonies does not contradict my findings but actually lends it considerable support: Direct rule combined with broad-based social-welfare reforms during the late colonial period appears to have had positive effects on human development.

Reassigning Reductionism

As I have briefly described above, I believe my critics' claims of theoretical reductionism are incorrect and that my analysis is a relatively accurate assessment of historical evidence. Why then did my article irk some readers without any particular interest in Mauritius so much that they decided to write a scathing critique? While one cannot rule out disciplinary differences between history and the social sciences and the latter's greater willingness to use theoretical models, I believe the disagreement results from my critics' unwillingness to accept findings opposed to their own model of colonialism as necessarily discriminatory, exploitative, and ruthless.

As its main points of contestation, the critique derides my analysis as a “problematic rehabilitation of the colonial state, a specter believed to have disappeared with the death of modernization theories.” Now, there is good reason to criticize colonial rule and to try to avoid anachronistic descriptions of it as a ‘civilizing’ mission. Obviously, one cannot comprehend

colonialism and postcolonialism without knowledge of the all-too-many devastating events and conditions, and any analysis must therefore acknowledge colonial atrocities and inequalities and analyze how they have affected the colonized. Yet, analyses that exclusively emphasize the exploitative aspects of colonialism often acquire a conspiratorial tone and attribute all the problems of colonial and postcolonial society to colonial rule. In this way, 'colonialism' has become a normative construct meaning little more than evil incarnate and is assumed to be an unappetizing apple that adulterated paradise and instigated lives of toil. The ideal of value-free social analysis is therefore blatantly disregarded, and analytic bias is therefore inevitable.

That said, I did not write the article in an attempt to justify colonial rule in Mauritius. Instead, the combination of commonly accepted ideas led me to investigate whether Mauritius' postcolonial developmental success was influenced by colonial foundations. First, as mentioned in the introduction of my article, many researchers find that the postcolonial state was an extremely important actor promoting the country's economic and human development over the past 40 years. Second, historical institutionalist analyses have provided convincing evidence that state building is a difficult process, and the construction of effective state legal-administrative institutions therefore takes considerable time and effort. Third, many recognize that independence rarely sparked dramatic changes in colonial state institutions. Together, these points suggest the possibility that colonialism had at least some positive effects on postcolonial development in Mauritius.

And, as described above and in my article, I found evidence that impressive state-led development actually began during the late-colonial period. As such, my 'rehabilitation' of the Mauritian colonial state does not appear to be an unfounded and mangled interpretation based on an inappropriate theoretical model. Instead, I counter with my own claims of theoretical reductionism, arguing that a one-sided postcolonial view emphasizing the inherently exploitative and destructive character of colonialism seems ill-equipped to analyze this case—and quite possibly others—and would result in a flawed historical analysis.

Notes

¹ Britain's main plantation colonies include Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Fiji, Guyana, Jamaica, Mauritius, the Seychelles, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, and Trinidad and Tobago. Notably, plantations were found in a few additional British colonies (such as Ceylon and Malaya), but these colonies were distinct from those in the list above because plantations were not total institutions that dominated economy and society.

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