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*Interdisciplinary*

*Historical Trajectories of the Third  
Portuguese Empire: Re-examining the  
Dynamics of Imperial Rule and  
Colonial Societies (1900-1975)*

Special Theme Issue

Editors: Cláudia Castelo, Philip J. Havik,  
and Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo

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SPECIAL THEME ISSUE

HISTORICAL TRAJECTORIES OF THE THIRD  
PORTUGUESE EMPIRE: RE-EXAMINING THE  
DYNAMICS OF IMPERIAL RULE AND  
COLONIAL SOCIETIES (1900-1975)



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## Historical Trajectories of the Third Portuguese Empire: Re-examining the Dynamics of Imperial Rule and Colonial Societies (1900-1975)

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IN HIS STUDY OF THE (BRITISH) IMPERIAL ARCHIVE, Richards concluded that the idea of actual domination of vast territories beyond Europe by Britain in the late nineteenth century largely amounted to a “fictive thought of imperial control.” The role of information and knowledge in holding together the heterogeneous imperial mosaic was therefore much more relevant than it appeared to be in the imperial imagination. His critique of historians of the British empire, i.e. that they tended to confer a lot more unity on it than was justified, reflects not only upon the British case but also on the historiography of other empires. The question of how rule related to local situations and improvisation thus has a particular relevance for the reading of the paper trail of empire. The growing imperial bureaucracy in the 1800s, described by Richards as the ‘*paper empire*’, was faced with a problem in terms of organizing and unifying an increasing amount of information and knowledge that was being collected. The need for registering, classifying and collating data and transforming it into a policy tool represented a formidable challenge. Not surprisingly, it would eventually be transformed by the powers that be into a means of actually ordering a global empire, reducing it to “file cabinet size.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Richards, *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (London: Verso, 1993), I, 3-4.



In her work on the archival grain, Stoler turns her attention to the imperial archive as the “operational field”—and center—of “projected total knowledge,” as Richards called it.<sup>2</sup> Seeing the gathering and ordering of knowledge as a processual dynamic and regarding the archive as an “epistemological experiment,” she proposes its use as a tool for “fieldwork.” This familiar reference to the anthropological method and privileged site of research serves as a reminder of the multifaceted nature of researching the content of the imperial archive and putting it into historical context. Above all, it is important to note here that imperial archives are also colonial: the documents were not only produced by metropolitan *vogons*, but also compiled by officialdom in the colonies themselves. This hybrid trans-continental and polyvalent body of data thus contains sources that upon closer scrutiny permit an evaluation of stated policy intentions and their implementation on the ground as a dynamic process. Given the hierarchical and compartmentalized nature of the institutions involved, the political and spatial contexts in which documentation was produced and circulated tend to vary considerably. Thus, characterizing the archive as a “repository of meanings” implies a deconstruction of explicit and tacit narratives whose significance and understanding is subject to change over time and context.<sup>3</sup> As empire perfected the methods and means by which it collected, circulated and analyzed information, it strove to standardize the guidelines and procedures that regulated the process.

However, this exercise was by no means straightforward owing to the imperial archives’ inherent asymmetry. Whereas much has been published over the last three decades on imperial archives, their colonial satellites above all those located in former colonies, have not received similar treatment. Indeed, as Mahila states, “the content and use of colonial archives in Africa do not feature prominently in the literature of archival science.”<sup>4</sup> In view of the social, economic, political and racial criteria that informed the

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<sup>2</sup>Ann Laura Stoler, “Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance.” *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 1-2, 87-109; and Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain. Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

<sup>3</sup>Erik Ketelaar, “Tacit Narratives: The Meanings of Archives,” *Archival Science* 1 (2001): 131-141.

<sup>4</sup>Ellen Ndeshi Namhila, “Content and Use of Colonial Archives: An Underresearched Issue,” *Archival Science* 16 (2) (2016): III-123 (III).



collection of data relating to colonizers and colonized, using a colonial archive as a “repository of meanings” demands a careful scrutiny of location, subject, content, and context.

In the case of historiography of the (Third) Portuguese Empire, which has been the subject of intense debate over the last decades<sup>5</sup>, the archival collections that became available over the last forty-five years both in Portugal, in Africa<sup>6</sup> and in Asia, have enabled researchers to gradually penetrate the empire’s organization and dynamics.<sup>7</sup> The assembling, classification and availability of documentation to the wider public and research community has been gradual and asymmetrical largely depending on the archives’ location, conservation, funding and means of dissemination. Since 2010 digital tools for on-line access to inventories of the records of the *Ministério do Ultramar (1951-1974)* constitute an invaluable data base for the research community.

<sup>5</sup>Richard J. Hammond, *Portugal and Africa, 1815–1910: A Study in Uneconomic Imperialism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966); Valentim Alexandre, *Origens do colonialismo português moderno* (Lisbon: Sá da Costa, 1979); Malyn Newitt, *Portugal in Africa: The Last Hundred Years* (London: Longman, 1981); William Gervase Clarence-Smith, *The Third Portuguese Empire (1825-1975): A Study in Uneconomic Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983); Cláudia Castelo, “O modo português de estar no mundo”: o Luso-tropicalismo e a ideologia colonial portuguesa (1933–1961) (Oporto: Edições Afrontamento, 1998); Valentim Alexandre, *Vêlbo Brasil, Novas Áfricas: Portugal e o Império (1808-1975)* (Oporto: Afrontamento, 2000); Omar Ribeiro Thomaz, *Écos do Atlântico Sul* (Rio de Janeiro: UFRJ/Faperj, 2002); Manuela Ribeiro Sanches, ed., *Portugal não é um país pequeno: contar o império na pós-colonialidade* (Lisbon: Cotovia, 2006); Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo, ed., *O Império colonial em questão* (Lisboa: Edições 70, Coleção História & Sociedade, 2012); Nuno Domingos and Elsa Peralta, eds., *Cidades e Império: dinâmicas coloniais e reconfigurações pós-coloniais* (Lisbon: Edições 70, 2013); Patrícia Ferraz de Matos, *The Colours of the Empire: Racialised Representations during Portuguese Colonialism* (New York: Berghahn, 2013); Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo and António Costa Pinto, eds., *Portugal e o fim do colonialismo: dimensões internacionais* (Lisboa: Edições 70, 2014); Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo and António Costa Pinto, “A Modernizing Empire: Politics, Culture and Economy in Portuguese Late Colonialism,” in M. Bandeira Jerónimo and A. Costa Pinto, eds., *The Ends of European Colonial Empires: Cases and Comparisons* (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2015), 51-80; Philip J. Havik, Alexander Keese e Maciel Santos, *Administration and Taxation in Former Portuguese Africa 1900–1945* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015); Diogo Ramada Curto, Bernardo Pinto da Cruz and Teresa Furtado, *Políticas coloniais em tempo de revoltas – Angola circa 1961* (Porto: Afrontamento, 2016).

<sup>6</sup>Philip J. Havik, *Lusophone Africa in the Archives: Institutions and Collections*; <https://networks.h-net.org/system/files/contributed-files/archiveslusophoneafrica2016.pdf>

<sup>7</sup>Although the Third Portuguese Empire was centred on Africa, three remnants of Portugal’s First Empire in Asia, i.e. Goa, Macau and Timor formed part its global possessions well into the twentieth century.

Unfortunately, most of the documentation produced by the *Ministério das Colónias/Ministério do Ultramar* is not included in that database since the Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino was not a part of that inventory program.<sup>8</sup> The dispersal of these archives following the Carnation Revolution in 1974 had made them largely inaccessible for decades, impeding an assessment of the records as an organic whole, and thereby incurring a loss of oversight and obscuring understanding of context of a highly complex bureaucracy.

However, these collections have so far, unlike other imperial archives, only been the subject of limited epistemological debate, but for a few notable exceptions. As a result it is difficult to promote an epistemological debate about the Portuguese imperial archive without an inventory of the documental universe.<sup>9</sup> The fact that the governance of the Portuguese Third Empire would involve three different political regimes, i.e. the Monarchy (until 1910), the First Republic (until 1926) and the New State suggests successive political and ideological transitions had an impact on colonial policies and practices and the ordering of memory. While the central metropolitan archives that once pertained to the Colonial Ministry created in 1910<sup>10</sup> enable broad oversight of colonial affairs, the collections in the former colonies are “crucially important” for containing “detailed reports and information at grass roots level about local conditions and the daily lives of Africans themselves, which were not passed on to Lisbon.”<sup>11</sup> Owing to the fact that “record-keeping was often ‘thin’, erratic, and episodic while the colonial production of knowledge was marked by fluidity and complexity,”

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<sup>8</sup>For more information, check the following link: <http://arquivos.ministerioultramar.holos.pt/source/presentation/pag.php?pag=0>

<sup>9</sup>Jill R. Dias, “Portuguese Archives in the History of Africa,” in *Proceedings of the 5<sup>th</sup> National Congress of Librarians, Archivists and Documentalists: Multiculturalism*. Papers (Lisbon: Associação Portuguesa de Bibliotecários, Arquivísticas e Documentalistas/BAD, 1994), II: 21-33; Jill R. Dias and Rosa Cruz e Silva, eds., *Construindo o passado angolano: as fontes e a sua interpretação* (Lisbon: Comissão para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, 2000); Patrice Ladwig, Ricardo Roque, Oliver Tappe, Christoph Kohl and Cristiana Bastos, *Fieldwork between Folders: Fragments, Traces, and the Ruins of Colonial Archives* (Halle: Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, 2012; WorkingPapers, n.º. 141).

<sup>10</sup>Pedro Tavares de Almeida and Paulo Silveira e Sousa, “Ruling the Empire: The Portuguese Colonial Office (1820s-1926),” *Revista da História das Ideias* 27 (2006): 137-169.

<sup>11</sup>Dias, “Portuguese Archives in the History of Africa,” 30.

archival 'fieldwork' is often confronted with fragmentation, discontinuities, omissions and silences.<sup>12</sup>

During the 1960s and 1970s, armed conflict between Portuguese authorities and liberation movements endangered the preservation of collective memory in Angola, Guinea Bissau and Mozambique. Both the latter and Angola were to experience civil wars that lasted until 1992 and 2002 respectively. During the armed conflict in Guinea Bissau in 1998-99, the country's historical archives in the capital were partly destroyed; efforts have since been made to preserve and restore the surviving collections. Despite these circumstances, recent research demonstrates that important archival material produced by the local level of colonial administration survived the civil wars (see some of the contributions in the present volume).<sup>13</sup> However, memory is also kept in company or personal archives which while being crucial for biographical purposes, are not always readily traceable or accessible to the researcher. In recent years, former colonial officials and leaders of liberation movements have though increasingly sought to publish their memoirs, as the last generations that experienced the colonial era are progressively ageing and disappearing.

Besides colonial state archives, in the Portuguese case company archives constitute key sites for insightful fieldwork on the operation of private enterprises in colonial spaces. Above all, the issue of African labour, which has been a prominent focus of reports and studies since the early 1900s, has benefited from these collections in the case of Angola, Mozambique and São Tomé e Príncipe. In recent years, a series of publications have documented the intricacies of organization, methods, strategies and resistance regarding African labour recruitment drives and working conditions in cotton, diamond and coffee production in these territories. In this respect, the relevance of the archives of international organizations has also been demonstrated.<sup>14</sup> Missionary archives have equally provided valuable sources for

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<sup>12</sup>Ladwig *et al.*, *Fieldwork between Folders*, 3.

<sup>13</sup>Ladwig *et al.*, *Fieldwork between Folders*, 15-20. The Fundação Mário Soares (FMS) has coordinated efforts since the Bissau war to recover surviving collections of the country's national archives. The Fórum dos Arquivos de Língua Portuguesa (FALP) has with the support of the Portuguese National Archives and Portuguese Development Cooperation, as well as UNESCO, provided assistance to archives in Lusophone countries in Africa and Asia (East Timor).

enquiries into imperial and colonial dynamics.<sup>15</sup> Personal collections from the colonial period have also become the subject of interest in recent years, above all with regard to photographic archives and family albums. While academic incursions into this field has been rare, the publication of an innovative multi-disciplinary study which provides a both broad and detailed inventory and analysis of collections of images on the Portuguese empire in personal as well as public archives has filled an important knowledge gap.<sup>16</sup>

Four aspects should be emphasized here in terms of the content and context of Portuguese imperial archives, their relevance for an understanding of colonial situations and comparisons with the paper trails left by other European empires. The continental and insular colonies that formed the mainstay of the country's imperial project until 1974/5, illustrate its dispersal and lack of territorial unity and continuity. None of these colonial spaces maintained common borders, each forming autonomous units maintaining with direct links to Lisbon rather than with each other. Also, the empire's

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<sup>14</sup>Eric Allina, *Slavery by Any Other Name: African Life under Company Rule in Colonial Mozambique* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012); Catherine Higgs, *Chocolate Islands: Cocoa And Slavery in Colonial Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012); Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo and José Pedro Monteiro, "Internationalism and the labours of the Portuguese Colonial Empire," *Portuguese Studies* 29 (2) (2013): 142-163; Jeremy Ball, *Angola's Colossal Lie: Forced Labor on a Sugar Plantation, 1913-1977* (Leiden: Brill, 2013); Alexander Keese, "The Constraints of Late Colonial Reform Policy: Forced Labour Scandals in the Portuguese Congo (Angola) and the Limits of Reform under Authoritarian Rule (1955-1961)," *Portuguese Studies* 28 (2) (2012): 186-200; Alexander Keese, "Forced Labour in the 'Gorgulho Years': Understanding Reform and Repression in Rural São Tomé e Príncipe, 1945-1953," *Itinerario* 38 (1) (2014): 103-124; Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo, *The 'Civilising Mission' of Portuguese Colonialism, 1870-1930* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Todd Cleveland, *Diamonds in the Rough: Corporate Paternalism and African Professionalism in the Mines of Colonial Angola, 1917-1975* (Athens: Ohio University Press/Swallow Press, 2015); Jorge Varanda and Todd Cleveland, "(Un)healthy Relationships: African Labourers, Profits and Health Services in Angola's Colonial-Era Diamond Mines, 1917-75," *Medical History* 58 (1) (2014): 87-105; José Pedro Monteiro, "A Internacionalização das políticas laborais "indígenas" no império colonial português (1944-1962)," PhD dissertation (ICS-UL, Lisbon, 2017).

<sup>15</sup>Eric Morier-Genoud, "The Catholic Church, Religious Orders and the Making of Politics in Colonial Mozambique," PhD Thesis (State University of New York, 2005); Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo, *A diplomacia do Império. Política e religião na partilha de África (1820-1890)* (Lisboa: Edições 70, 2012); Didier Péclard, *Les incertitudes de la nation en Angola* (Paris: Karthala, 2015); Hugo Gonçalves Dóres, *A Missão da República. Política, religião e o império colonial português em África (1910-1926)* (Lisbon: Edições 70, 2015).

<sup>16</sup>Filipa Lowndes Vicente, ed., *O império da visão: Fotografia no contexto colonial português (1860-1990)* (Lisbon: Edições 70, 2014).

protracted survival—with the exception of Goa's incorporation into the Indian state in 1961—until after most European colonies had gained independence by the early 1960s singles the Portuguese empire out from its British, French and Belgian counterparts. This asymmetry also related to intra-imperial relations: whereas from the early 1960s to the end of empire, Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique would experience a phase of intense armed conflict in a Cold War setting, Cabo Verde and São Tomé e Príncipe remained largely unaffected by the 'winds of change'. In addition, the dictatorial nature of the regime that ruled the Third Empire for most of its trajectory, the New State or *Estado Novo*, needs to be taken into account at the level of the production and circulation of information. From 1926 to 1974, censorship was a powerful instrument for filtering information by authorities at all levels, and drown out dissenting voices; thus researchers are obliged to exercise particular caution while screening documents for information, owing to subtle nuances and omissions which determine their meaning in a given context.

The editors of the present special issue have aimed to bring to the fore recent, innovative research on a wide variety of territories and topics that explore the imperial archive and memory to bring to life colonial situations in different locations. From the outset, it was our intention to demonstrate the geographical, social, economic, political and cultural diversity of empire through a broad thematical prism. The most recurrent topics with regard to the Portuguese empire such as (forced) labour, race, ideology, economic underdevelopment and conflict, have been complemented with studies that take a closer look at the state and colonial administration, colonial accounts, private enterprise, science, public health, violence and gender. Their contributions show to what extent archival 'fieldwork' has succeeded in unearthing and deconstructing the ongoing business of empire and colonial rule on the hand, and the role of colonial and indigenous societies on the other in different spaces, periods and contexts. The time frame of these contributions, from the late nineteenth century to the end of empire, and the spatial focus including Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Angola, Mozambique and Goa, provide an example of the current state of the art of archival fieldwork on the 'modern' and 'late' Portuguese colonial empire and its populations. They illustrate the variety and the richness of contemporary research on Portuguese imperial and colonial history, demonstrating a solid critical engage-

ment with its multifaceted archives and memory, and also with published literature in particular cases and contexts.

This special issue is divided in five sections, which illustrate some of the most important avenues of research being developed today.

In the first section, *The science of empire: knowledge, transfers, and laboratories*, Philip J. Havik, Samuël Coghe and Cláudia Castelo exemplify the need to undertake further investigations into the historical development of public health and scientific knowledge systems in colonial contexts, identifying key actors and projects, but also the actual consequences of their implementation in diverse historical conjunctures and local conditions. All highlight the intersections and transfers between international, imperial and colonial institutions, and reveal the need for multiscalar approaches. Havik's focus on the rural dimensions of welfare and public health, dealing with organizational and managerial as well as with trans-colonial political and scientific dimensions, analyses different approaches to disease control and population health. The tracing of the evolution of policies, practices and debates in colonial and nationalist circles, provides novel insights into the historical genealogies of contemporary health systems and infrastructures targeted at vulnerable populations. Coghe tackles two under-researched vertical campaigns of mass chemoprophylaxis against sleeping sickness in Portuguese colonial Africa and treats them as windows on the ways in which medical knowledge and practices *in loco* were an outcome of multiple engagement between intra- and interimperial and international actors and institutions, acting and competing in different spaces. The attempts to "nationalise" such knowledge and practices and their local variations are assessed here against the background of intra-imperial engagement with methods and programmes as well as international competition in the interwar period and after 1945. Castelo stresses the need to understand local contexts in terms of scientific interventions regarding agro-pastoral systems in the arid and semi-arid regions of south-western Angola. The specification of "vernacular science" is seen as crucial here, as well as the exploration of its connections with other spaces and instances, i.e. its engagement with international politics and development policies and the existing connections with interimperial dynamics.

In the second section, *The labours of the empire: on scales and comparisons*, José Pedro Monteiro and Teresa Furtado offer novel insights into a number

of empirical, methodological and analytical problems that animate contemporary historiography. Already touched upon in the previous section, the articles further address the importance of promoting a multiscalar approach to the study of colonial phenomena, and mobilise comparative tools for analysis, using it on many levels as a heuristic device. Both authors provide examples of why these two methodological and analytical strategies are fruitful. Monteiro focuses on the politics and policies of “native labour” within the Portuguese empire, exploring the extent to which international and transnational dynamics interacted with metropolitan and colonial processes. Among other important aspects, this contribution critically examines the political and social imagination contained in social policies, and related rationales of “reform”, in the post-war years. Furtado compares the private policies of social welfare and control, including “counterrevolutionary” initiatives enacted by DIAMANG and COTONANG in Angola. As in the case of Monteiro’s contribution, the problem of colonial “native” (forced) labour and entrepreneurial politics is a crucial element in this promising research project, which also focuses on the policies of population control and intervention in the realm of health services, amongst others.

In the third section, *The (re)ordering of the empire: on the development of control*, Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo and Hugo Gonçalves Dores on the one hand, and Bernardo Pinto da Cruz and Diogo Ramada Curto on the other, address, in different but connected ways, the combined centrality of population control and resettlement and developmental rationales in late colonialism. Jerónimo and Dores address an early manifestation of their articulation, inspired by other historical contexts, rationales and dynamics, by looking at the *aldeamentos* (villages) and the *reducciones* (reductions) of the Society of Jesus in Brazil and Paraguay. The “efficiency” of civilization—the “reform of the spirits” and the disciplining of the (working) bodies—was considered an outcome of pre-existing tested, and allegedly successful, models, despite their violent and extractive historical record. Again, the transfer and selective appropriation of imperial frameworks is highlighted here. So is the importance of bringing the ecclesiastical and religious dynamics back into the study of colonialism, promoting the study of their intersections with political and even economic ones. Cruz and Curto focus on another angle with respect to plans of population concentration, associated with novel policies of rural reordering and “detribalization containment”, which

were epitomized by the creation and implementation of *regedorias* from 1961 onwards. Highlighting interimperial and regional inspirations and illuminating particular cases, the text argues that late colonialism in Angola was “pro-totalitarian”, based on variegated technologies of social control and coercion operating at many levels, and organized around “good” and “bad” concentrations.

In the fourth section, *The administration of empire: repertoires, improvisations, and aftermaths*, Maria da Conceição Neto, Luís Filipe Madeira and Alexander Keese tackle some of the administrative repertoires, assessing their formulation, intentions and actual consequences. Neto deals with the administration of justice, highlighting the tapestry of normative contexts and institutions in which rule was enacted and legitimized in the context of the *indigenato*: the colonial judicial system essentially aimed to ensure the legalization of (forced) labour recruitment and the maintenance of racial privileges. Exploring examples from Angola, Neto shows how the failure of colonial administrations to elaborate a legal code based upon customary law resulted in a system in which administrators presiding over “native courts” acted as all-powerful judges, thereby criminalising African societies along racial lines. Madeira addresses a crucial, yet understudied problem: the “creative accounting” of colonial finances, and the ways in which this was used as a political tool and a propagandistic instrument, at home and abroad. The depiction of the financial administration of the colonial empire as a balanced system served many purposes; understanding the mechanisms at play also enable a more rigorous assessment of the late colonial political economy. Keese provides an excellent example of why a social history of decolonization “on the ground” is a fundamental historiographical necessity. Focusing on Cabo Verde, this text raises methodological and analytical questions that could guide research on other colonial case-studies. The “improvised” administration of decolonization, the transition from colonial rule to independence, posed many problems for the new elites, including the need to administer multiple imperial and colonial legacies, that need to be more systematically studied.

Finally, in the fifth section, *The cultures of empire: gender, identity, memory*, Filipa Lowndes Vicente and Maria José Lobo Antunes exemplify the pressing need to further develop the historical scrutiny of questions of gender, identity and memory in colonial contexts, mobilizing a solid empirical basis. Vi-



cente provides look into the rich production of writing by Goan women, originating essentially from local Brahmin Catholic families, in the late colonial context of Portuguese India. By contextualizing their authorial voices and trajectories, she aims to add their voices to (Portuguese) colonial studies in order to provide insights into women's biographical itineraries and kinship networks as well as providing a model for the construction of memory by means of written and oral narratives in other geographical and social spaces within the late Portuguese empire. Antunes tackles another crucial topic, that has benefited from numerous recent contributions, including her own: the memories of war and what they may reveal regarding past and contemporary political situations, in which a particular identitarian rhetoric and a form of imperial nationalism prevailed, and still prevails in many ways. She confronts the inherent contradictions between the ideal-typing of empire in a Lusotropical perspective inherited from colonial times based upon racial harmony and cultural adaptation, and local realities characterised by coercion and violence imposed by 'white' colonial rule on Africans. Antunes demonstrates the longevity of colonial narratives—and the lack of contemporary alternative discourse—in ex-combatants' memories. The last contribution of this special issue uses first-hand testimonies as historical sources, an approach that enables new questions (along and against the grain) to the imperial archive, and enriches the history of the Third Portuguese Empire.

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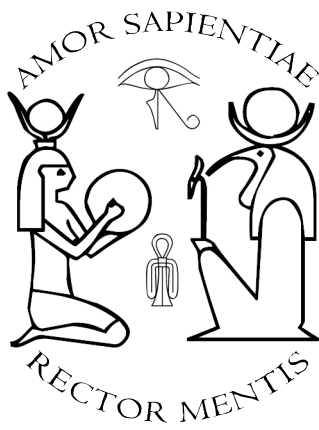
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