

## Introduction

This collection of essays is part of a larger strategy for a cultural history of the Portuguese Empire. They were published mostly in Portuguese from 1997, although they have also appeared in English and French. To call them chapters would be constricting, since the word, in spite of everything, has a global meaning and belongs to someone who wants to define the emergence of a unit connected with the formation of a national identity – Capistrano de Abreu, Sérgio Buarque de Holanda and António Candido. It is better to go to the seventeenth century to note the expressions of several discourses, the miscellany and epanaphora used by Manuel Severim de Faria, Miguel Leitão and D. Francisco Manuel de Melo. In all the studies, analyses of events, biographies and literary exercises listed under such expressions, there was a moral dimension or a political lesson that was seen as inherent to any act of evincive creation. I was inspired by this dimension to trace the different relationships between the sphere of production of discourses – realizing that today only some of them are considered as being of a literary order – and a sphere of political activity. This book also contains the heterogeneous character of each of the fragments related to the whole that the writers of the seventeenth century exemplified in their works, determined as they were to break with some of the rhetorical canons that were more firmly in place. On this, Leitão de Andrade spoke provocatively of his *Miscelânea* (1629) as being a salad. The Chantre de Évora, Severim de Faria, went further, considering that his *Discursos Varios Politicos* (1624) were a preparation for a great work to be published later, so capable of being compared with the *Batracomiomaquia*, a satirical poem attributed to Homer that was believed to have been written as a preparation in the writing of epic poetry. Seeking to legitimize himself through an allusion to one of the most classic works of antiquity and a genre seen as epic, the Chantre thus introduced, in his reflection on the forms of saying and making policy, an effect that was comparable with satirical parody of the epic poems of Homer.

In spite of its fragmentary and incomplete character, the intention of this book is to analyse how the Portuguese expansion was regarded

and recorded in writing. It is a process that implies the formation of an imperial culture that is hard to reduce to a homogenous whole, where glorifying tendencies are combined with criticisms of the most diverse situations and types of organization; that is, where the most dogmatic interpretations of an imperial identity in its various configurations were accompanied by doubts and reflections of scepticism regarding the expansionist mission. The almost constant existence of colonial projects was one of the most regular dimensions of this culture; it married the analysis of imperial frameworks with the almost utopian idealization of scenarios of control and was therefore compatible with situations in which the Portuguese presence was extremely weak. Besides working on this dimension, granting it the standing of a principal argument, a cultural history of the empire interested in reconstructing the point of view of the agents taking part in this process or entering in contact with it would have to consider many other operations of construction relative to the empire: the specificity of each type or tradition in the several forms of communication; the effects of the author on the ideas adopted by groups and social bodies; and the role of institutions (councils, tribunals, districts, etc.) on economic groups and interests demonstrated by centres of political decision-making. Besides these aspects of a more contextual nature, the development of investigation on imperial Portuguese culture will depend on the acceptance of four main aspects – that is, the reinforcement of comparative mechanisms, particularly regarding other European empires; the analysis of reactions to the Portuguese and the respective local responses; the broadening of the type of sources besides those considered actually literary; and a work of reflection on the historiographic models and ideological organisms. Clearly, a study of imperial culture that mainly takes note of written records should also make explicit the variety of themes and genres, as is the case with a) linguistic encounters and methods of translation; b) political ceremonies and diplomatic rituals; c) the different discourses that assume a use of the past, from epic poetry to historiography; d) the perceptions of space and the different forms of mapping it out; e) the vast common denominator of descriptions, reports of voyages and scientific expeditions; f) the methods of conversion and religious debates; g) projects, counsels, decisions and instructions on government; h) letters, rumours and the circulation of books; i) more individualized petitions and writing practices; and j) discussions on imperial ideas, discourses of resistance and rebellion, and discourses of economic policy.

The enunciation of all these forms of communication, supposing an analysis of various types of discourses, contexts and points of view, is not intended to replace an explanation of a method but rather to reflect

on the constitution of an imperial archive in its relations with forms of government and colonial control, even when these appear extremely weak. On this, the study of forms of knowledge, celebration, criticism and resistance caused by the existence of an empire implies a recovery of the role of the Portuguese and of the powers they represent, including the colonial state in the creation of different imperial configurations. This is the same as saying, to use an expression recently used regarding the British Empire, that it is necessary to bring back to the centre of our analyses the colonial state with all its limits as an agent of history.<sup>1</sup> Only thus is it possible to go beyond a euphemistic, exceptional vision of the Portuguese Empire that far from considering it an actual empire sees it either as a trade network or as a mere group of interests that is extremely fragmented and subject to local forces and relationships. It is in part against this euphemistic vision, which is a type of neo-lusotropical perspective that was so frequently disseminated and that adopts the character of an incomplete work – that the studies presented in this book appear. It is not by chance that this vision fitted well with the new times of celebration of the empire, where nationalism that saw the Discoveries as a golden age served as a romantic panacea for an obsession as to identity, demanding at the same time an adjustment to new conceptual fashions (from mixed blood to spreading connections promoted by the Portuguese throughout the world). It is only through this euphemized vision of the Portuguese Empire that it is possible to continue to celebrate it while relegating to the sidelines the numerous forms of violence, exploitation, intolerance and racism that characterized it.

Indeed, from the beginning of the post-colonial age or, in the case of Portugal, from Goa's independence and the outbreak of wars in Portuguese Africa, the historiographies of the European empires in general and the Portuguese Empire in particular were concentrated around the questions of violence and racism.<sup>2</sup> That this concentration revealed opposing ideological points of view seems to me to be a clear statement that exemplifies the political use of history. Meanwhile, one should also recognize that it is the analytical aspects capable of noting the same themes within a general framework in which many other acts and situations of collaboration against the resistance of the native population are conceived that have shown a greater distance and objectivity in the political use of history. At the beginning of the 60s, the discussion around 'lusotropicalism', understood as a colonial ideology of the integrating capacity of the Portuguese adopted by Salazarism in the post-Second World War era, led to a particularly intense and polarized discussion. It was at this moment that the voices of Charles Ralph Boxer and Vitorino Magalhães Godinho rose against the ideologues of the regime (defenders

of mixed blood and the civilizing mission of the Portuguese). These are, without doubt, the two most important historians of the second half of the twentieth century to the study of the Portuguese Empire.<sup>3</sup> Racism and violence as revealing themes of an attention to the logic of conflict involved in the construction of an empire are thus opposed to the admiration of integrating mechanisms used by the Portuguese worldwide. Whatever the case, the aspect to be argued here relates to the fact that those involved in the debate are not all on the same level. That is, those who praise Portuguese practices of integration were closer to a commemorative version of history, full of anachronisms, since it is concerned with serving a political regime that was anxious to find an exceptional ideological basis for its colonial policy. This was a uniting point for the two great historians of the Portuguese Empire, although there is a divergence between Boxer's conservatism and the progressive vision of the citizen for which Godinho fought throughout his life. From a more methodological perspective, one should also stress the attention given by the former to the tenacity of individuals, as opposed to the study of the great structures defended by the latter. To summarize, for future generations who learnt to create history by reflecting on the meaning of the works of giants such as Magalhães Godinho and Boxer, the historical and political debate that coincided with the war in Angola took on an enormous importance.

There is meanwhile an interval of about twenty years between the discussions at the beginning of the 1960s and the moment when my generation began to study history. During this interval, there were many who chose exile in order to oppose the Salazar regime. Alfredo Margarido was in this regard an emblematic figure in Portuguese historiography and, in spite of the dispersal of his work and the little attention given to it in Portugal, he perhaps represents one of the most consistent forces in studying thoroughly and reflectively the colonial history of the time of the end of the empire. However, the reasons that explain the neglect of many of Margarido's texts, which should be granted the stature of being the foundations of a new historiographic orientation destined to give voice to the oppressed and criticize many existing ideas, are extremely revealing as to how historical research was organized under the empire and ex-colonies in Portugal – quite simply, it suppressed voices that were uncomfortably critical and dissonant.

Alongside this, the impact that the paradigm formed around questions of modernization had on Portuguese historiography after the 60s, which replaced reflections on Portuguese decadence that were more than a century old, can be evaluated by research that concentrates on the limits of the Portuguese territories, both European and continental. One of the

most relevant works among those centring on the questions of modernization of the Portuguese territories is *Estrutura da Antiga Sociedade Portuguesa*. Its author, Magalhães Godinho, suggested the bases that inspired other, more localized studies on Portugal's economic and social sanctions. Following 25 April 1974, the withdrawal from the colonies and the plan to join the European Community intensified this tendency, so Godinho's disciples who had begun the investigation at the start of the 80s, among whom I am one, decided upon centring their first projects on an analysis of continental Portugal.<sup>4</sup> The history of the empire in its more institutionalized forms as inherited from the Salazar regime is akin to crossing the desert, benefiting from complicity by and the use of conservative Catholics aligned to a reminiscing, traditional right wing. The possibilities open to investigation for a series of commemorations of the discoveries that took place in the middle of the 80s allowed the heirs of this lineage to strengthen and even broaden their institutional positions. For this reason, the neo-lusotropicalism that could present a different version of the Portuguese Empire also settled in the most institutionalized centres of research and even won an international reputation.

It is within this framework of clear polarization that the studies in this book should be read. I cannot hide the fact that my sympathy is with the historians who, being able to put the past in perspective, reveal a particular interest in explaining the mechanisms of oppression, racism and violence. Obviously there are many other acts, situations and representations involved in a process of imperial and colonial expansion. However, I believe that without dealing with the questions of violence, both practised and symbolic, our understanding of the historical process under investigation would not only be incomplete but it would also be corrupt. I also believe that the fact that one of the great recent works on the colonial period, *O Trato dos Viventes* by Luiz Felipe de Alencastro, was dedicated to the victims of the Brazilian dictatorship reveals that there, too, it is possible to detect those same polarizations within an historiographic field that is characterized by a wealth of traditions and centres of research.

The presentation of this book would not be complete without a reference to all those who have supported me and to whom I should like to express my gratitude. Francisco Bethencourt, Rosa Maria Perez and Abdool Karim Vakil challenged me, each in their own way, to study in greater depth the empire, and for this I am extremely grateful. This book also owes much to the working conditions I experienced at Brown University, where, during five academic years, I was warmly welcomed by Onésimo Teotónio de Almeida, Philip Benedict, Norman Fiering (director of the John Carter Brown Library), Anthony Molho (a colleague and

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The organization of this book follows a chronological and thematic sequence to be found in “A Língua e o Império”, *A Literatura e o Império: Entre o Espírito Cavaleiroso, as Trocas da Corte e o Humanismo Cívico*, in Francisco Bethencourt and Kirti Chaudhuri (eds), *História da Expansão Portuguesa*, vol. 1 – *A Formação do Império (1415–1570)* (Lisbon: Círculo de Leitores, 1998), 414–54; ‘Cultura Escrita e Práticas de Identidade’, in Francisco Bethencourt and Kirti Chaudhuri (eds), *História da Expansão Portuguesa*, vol. 2 – *Do Índico ao Atlântico (1570–1697)* (Lisbon: Círculo de Leitores, 1998), 458–531; ‘As Práticas de Escrita’, in Francisco Bethencourt and Kirti Chaudhuri (eds), *História da Expansão Portuguesa*, vol. 3 – *O Brasil na Balança do Império (1697–1808)* (Lisbon: Círculo de Leitores, 1998).

In Chapter 4, I have added texts that I wrote for the book I published, *O Tempo de Vasco da Gama* (Lisbon: Difel, 1998). Chapter 7 includes a selection from the introduction to the work of Charles Boxer, *Opera Minora*, vol. II – *Orientalismo / Orientalism* (Lisbon: Fundação Oriente, 2002). In Chapter 8, there is an extract from the chapter entitled ‘Quadro

da Presença dos Portugueses no Oriente’, in Rosa Maria Perez (ed.), *Os Portugueses e o Oriente: História, Itinerários, Representações* (Lisbon: D. Quixote, 2006). Chapter 5 and 10 include extracts from ‘Descrições e Representações de Goa’, in Rosa Maria Perez (ed.), *Histórias de Goa* (Lisbon: Museu Nacional de Etnologia, 1997), 45–86; English version entitled *Stories of Goa* (Lisbon: Museu Nacional de Etnologia, 1997), 45–86. In Chapters 13 and 16 I have added extracts from a chapter initially written in English, ‘Political Culture’, in F. Bethencourt and D. Ramada Curto (eds), *Portuguese Oceanic Expansion, 1400–1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Part of Chapter 14 was initially published in French and entitled ‘Idéologies Impériales dans l’Afrique Occidentale au Début du Dix-septième Siècle’, in Luiz Felipe de Alencastro and F. Bethencourt (eds), *L’Empire Portugais Face Aux Autres Empires* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2006), 203–47. In Chapter 16 there is an extract translated into Portuguese of ‘Notes on the History of European Colonial Law and Legal Institutions’, *Quaderni Fiorentini per la Storia del Pensiero Giuridico Moderno*, vol. 33–34 (2004–2005), 13–71. In the same chapter there is also a partial translation of an introduction to a volume I collected entitled ‘Jesuits as Cultural Intermediaries in the Early Modern World’, *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* (Rome, 2005). In the same chapter is a paper I presented at ‘Portugal Índico: A Conference of International Historians and Anthropologists on the Portuguese Presence in South Asia in the Colonial Period’, organized by Rosa Maria Perez and Stephan Halikowski Smith, Brown University, Department of Portuguese and Brazilian Studies, 6–17 May, 2003. Finally, Chapter 18 includes a translation from French of ‘Notes à propos de la Nobiliarquia Paulistana de Pedro Taques’, *Arquivos do Centro Cultural Português*, 39 – *Biographies* (Paris, 2000), 111–19.

## Notes

1. Bayly, *Origins of Nationality in South Asia: Patriotism and Ethical Government in the Making of Modern India*, 276–78.
2. Fanon, *Peau Noire, Masques Blancs*, pref. (1952), endnote (1965) de F. Jeanson; *ibid.*, *Les Damnés de la Terre*, pref. by J.-P. Sartre; Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 123–302.
3. See by the author, ‘O Atraso Historiográfico Português’, VII–LXXXVII.
4. Godinho, *Estrutura da Antiga Sociedade Portuguesa*.