
AFRICA EM LISBOA - OS INDÍGENAS DA GUINÉ NA GRANDE EXPOSIÇÃO INDUSTRIAL AND GUINÉ ALDEIA INDÍGENA EM LISBOA - 1932: THE PORTRAYAL OF THE FEMALE BODY

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Abstract

In this essay I will discuss the iconographic constructions developed by the Portuguese colonial project, arguing that Estado Novo has used cinema to consolidate social categories defined by the regime propaganda, using a discourse based on reality and authenticity and through the projection of stereotyped structures such as race and gender. Moving in the background of the theoretical frame on the concepts of archive and digital archive, the analysis will focus on a deconstructive re-interpretation of colonial and dominant narratives in two documentaries realized for the Portuguese industrial exposition in 1932, *África em Lisboa – Os Indígenas da Guiné na Grande Exposição Industrial* ((Africa in Lisbon- The Indigenous People of Guinea in The Great Industrial Exhibition) and *Guiné Aldeia Indígena em Lisboa – 1932* (*Guinea Indigenous Village in Lisbon- 1932*). The discussion will hence be centered on the representation and the construction of relations of dominance and power over the black female body.

Keywords

Visual studies; colonial representations; Estado Novo; cinema; archive; black female body



Figure 1: Some of the princesses of the Portuguese Colonial Exhibition 1932
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¹ Retrieved from <http://digitalq.arquivos.pt/viewer?id=1214797>, Album no. 024, letter G - 3ª and last part, Cota: PT/TT/EPJS/SF/001-001/0024/1093G, Empresa Pública Jornal O Século 1880/1979, Photography, 1932

IMAGINING THE EMPIRE

The discursive tie between the colonized,
the enslaved, the noncitizen, and the animal
—all reduced to type, all Others to rational man,
and all essential to his bright constitution—
is at the heart of racism and flourishes,
lethally, in the entrails of humanism.
(Haraway, 2008, p. 73)

In an article which examines the portrayal and reception of public art in Portugal in the first decades of Antonio de Oliveira Salazar's regime, researcher Ellen W. Sapega (2002), based on the theoretical constructs of Visual Culture developed by Nicholas Mirzoeff (1999), demonstrates that through the study of the visual we can understand that creations, concepts or prejudices, born during the New State period, have maintained an important role in the imagination of the nation and the Portuguese identity.

Sapega regards the 1930s and 1940s as a useful starting point for the study of the visual culture in Portugal, when, taking into account the low level of literacy, the New State built its discourses of power also utilizing a visual communication imbued with sensual immediacy (Mirzoeff, 1999, p. 9) to reach the public.

Along the same lines, Margarida Acciaiuoli states that it was around the thirties that Portugal, in addition to placing the arts at the service of those in power, had the ambition to transform the exercise of power into a form of artistic creation, a phenomenon that led to the international recognition of Salazar's governmental action in Portugal as a *work of contemporary art* (Acciaiuoli, 2008, pp. 13-26).

In order to analyze the legacies that were built visually by the regime's discourse, from the Portuguese film, iconographic and audiovisual universe, I have focused my research on colonial-themed documentaries made by the Portuguese (1926-1945) concentrating on representations of the inhabitants of the colonized countries in Africa and the correlative construction of the Other. In this article, I propose to raise a debate around these themes, presenting a study on the representation of the body of the black woman, based on the critique of the image, showing the relationship between image, look, visual pleasure (Mulvey, 1975) and the subaltern's inability to speak (Spivak, 1988). Through the analysis of the two documentaries "*África em Lisboa – Os Indígenas da Guiné na Grande Exposição Industrial*" (Africa in Lisbon- The Indigenous People of Guinea in The Great Industrial Exhibition) and *Guiné Aldeia Indígena em Lisboa – 1932* (Guinea Indigenous Village in Lisbon) I seek to document the portrayal of the female body: a silenced, colonized and black body.

Produced for the occasion of the Portuguese Industrial Exhibition, in 1932, in Lisbon, they bear witness to the reproduction of a Guinean village and the exposure of women and men who were transported to Lisbon for the event.² As Joana Pimentel writes (2004, pp.

² The interest and curiosity stirred by them led to the production of other documentaries such as *Guiné Bafatá- Portugal Colonial* of 1932, *Pretos da Guiné* of 1933 and *Batuques da Guiné* of 1935 (Matoz-Cruz: 1998; Cunha: 2013). On the presence of the inhabitants of the Portuguese ex-colonies, there is also *I Exposição Colonial Portuguesa- Porto 1934* (1935), by Anibal

73-82), the idea of fitting an African village within the Industrial Exhibition was inspired by the success that colonial exhibitions had had in Europe during the twenties. For the event organizers, there was nothing more exotic than these natives of Guinea, a small, little-known Portuguese colony with a long history of resistance against colonial domination.

In the course of my analysis based on the study of these images, of film design but also on the conservation efforts as regards these materials and files, I was confronted with the urgent need to consider the amount of material available. Above all, I had to reflect on our way of looking, that is, our way of dealing with our relationship with colonial files, taking into account the post-colonial context whose priority, from my point of view, lies in the possibility of decolonizing representations, images and languages³: the development of other ways of *looking*.

Thus, dealing with the legacy of the colonial past, nowadays, means finding ways to deconstruct the mechanisms of power, as Foucault suggests, typical of the fields of knowledge (Foucault, 1976; Vega, 2003).

The image in general and the film in particular shed light on the dynamics of colonial performance. The textuality and visuality of the Empire were established from a set of conventions and mimetic and symbolic practices (discursive, textual, aesthetic) that Europe and the colonizing countries developed over territorial expansionism and colonization through their propaganda and invention of the colonial discourse.⁴

To open the film archives is to elicit, incessantly, the re-memorialisation in archival spaces in a re-evocation of memory, through the deconstruction of historical processes (Ricoeur, 2003) to chart a decolonized route capable of handling the existing crisis within the systems implanted by the former colonial powers, which did not completely disappear. These systems are characterized by dichotomies (primitive/civilized, ancient/modern, centre/periphery) that, in moving images, manifest in a white norm that produces canons based on biblical explanations for the cultural differences and that obsessively repeat the objective of the civilizing mission of producing an imperial consciousness through the classification of human beings and society (Mudimbe, 2007, p. 28).

Before turning to the documentaries chosen to reflect on the above-mentioned aspects, I consider it relevant to dwell on the notion of representation, the means of connection between language and culture that allows our imagination to create references to objects, people, real and unreal facts. In this regard and in relation to the representation

Contreiras, which is incomplete. The natives who took part in the documentary also starred in *I Companhia de Infantaria Indígena de Angola em Lisboa* (1933 Paulo Cunha (2013)), *Guiné- Bissau: As Imagens Coloniais*, Simpósio os Cinemas dos Países Lusófonos, 5, 2013/Mostra dos cinemas dos Países Lusófonos, 7, 2013, pp 33-48.

³ Other preliminary questions pertain to the method of study of these images, with what we mean by decolonized image or how to free the bodies in the visual reproductions, how to think of a decolonization of the scientific thought. Considering the use of the word post-colonial, but also highlighting the analysis of concepts such as post-modern and post-structuralism, I echo the views of authors such as Albertazzi (2004), Appiah (2010) Stuart Hall (2001), and Vega (2003), among others, on a non-temporal consideration of the post-colonial time, but with a focus on improvement and a methodological approach that leads to decolonial and non-racialized processes.

⁴ A colonial discourse, as María José Vega suggests in *Impérios de Papel. Introdução a la Crítica Postcolonial* - that shows the implication of knowledge, of textual and artistic practices in the relations of the power in which the Empire's textuality and visuality are analyzed as typical conceptual constructions of the cultural and epistemological context according to the relations of culture, discursivity and empire and presented by Michel Foucault and Edward Said (2003, pp. 15-35).

made of black bodies, Stuart Hall states that this process is the result of a critical exercise of cultural power and normalization “They had the power to make us see and experience ourselves as Others” (Hall, 1990, p. 2), because they are non-neutral representations connected to the structural power to subalternise the Other.

An important feature of colonial discourse to the ideological construction of otherness is its dependency of the concept of “fixity.” Fixity, as a sign of the cultural/historical/racial difference in the colonialism discourse, constitutes a paradoxical mode of representation. It evokes rigidity and an immutable order and disorder, degeneration and compulsive repetition. (Bhabha, 1994, p. 143)

A fixity that, as Homi Bhabha draws attention to, locks the individuals in an essential difference between race and gender, “the portrayal of the colonial individual in the discourse and the exercise of colonial power through discourse demands a combination of the forms of racial and sexual difference” (Bhabha, 1994, p.143).

In an attempt to confer fluidity to the images that I will now analyze, I examined the documentaries looking at the diversity of voices that appear to break the universalism that has conditioned us to consider a unique History and not the disruptions and the *stories*.

VIEWS

Because it is a systematic negation of the other person and a furious determination to deny the other person all attributes of humanity, colonialism forces the people it dominates to ask themselves the question constantly:” In reality, who am I?”
(Fanon, 1968, p.250)

The colonial-themed film production will determine the setting of cultural differences in the Western countries and *other-countries* through an imperial propaganda machine that provides images that will consolidate the stereotypes for the political, cultural, social and economic creation of otherness and the indigenous individual, the subaltern, the oppressed and the black. It is a look based on colonial practice and makes the film out to be structured as a tool for those in power.

As for the viewing of images, it should be noted that the camera’s lens composes documentaries that proclaim the colonial identity and greatness of the Portuguese and it utilizes the rigidity built through the represented bodies to sustain the colonial discourse in the dichotomous construction of the film discourse. Thus, the opposition in the assembly of scenes that present us the aspects linked to the black inhabitants of the colony as opposed to the settler, the white man and the colonizing activity, creates order and taxonomies to indicate the definition of what is the Metropolis and what is the Empire Periphery.

Regarding the intertitles of the silent films of the period to which this article relates, I would like to stress their narrative and descriptive function, of identification or

synthesis, which informs the viewer and, simultaneously, the function of message control and its presentation to the public through the cinema.

The narrations herein are presented as a projection of the discourse of otherness produced by the consolidation of the imperial identity that utilizes the image, the word, the subtitles, the speaker and its diegetic and non-diegetic characters for its purposes. To reconsider, therefore, these films in a postcolonial reading, is to question the way in which the narratives in the films intertwine with history, subjectivity, epistemology and politics.⁵

What is this discursive character of power and what kind of look is built on the Portuguese colonial-themed cinema?⁶

ÁFRICA EM LISBOA – OS INDÍGENAS DA GUINÉ NA GRANDE EXPOSIÇÃO INDUSTRIAL⁷

<p style="text-align: center;">DIDASCALIC SEQUENCE</p>
África em Lisboa – Os Indígenas da Guiné na Grande Exposição Industrial
...where they lack nothing
Grinding rice, their main food
Prince Abdulbaden and his sister the Princess
Guinea's finest, whose eyes lie for not having faith...
At the sound of the phonograph the Fulani learn to play «A Portuguesa».
Indiscretions of the camera...
The Fulani in their picturesque dances and songs and their black colour ...

Table 1: *África em Lisboa*. Didascallic sequence

In 1932, in Parque Eduardo VII, in the middle of Lisbon, a replica of an indigenous village was built and the inhabitants from Guinea were placed there. The documentary *África em Lisboa – Os Indígenas da Guiné na Grande Exposição Industrial*, by Raul Reis and Salazar Diniz, with Oscar Viegas's subtitles, is a testimony of this event and of the brutal racial representation that these women and men suffered, not very different from the human zoos that, from the mid-nineteenth century, displayed the *exotic* body throughout

⁵ In methodological terms, in an attempt to reconsider the images in colonial documentaries, I refer to the analysis of filmic structure (close-ups, scenes and sequences) and of the modality of the cinematographic work organization (Seabra 2011, 2014) but, above all, I attempt an approach that in post-colonial film studies considers the need to question the colonial paradigms of knowledge and power beyond the mere image but in the branching of cultural and political aspects and of subjectivity (Ponzanesi, 2012).

⁶ Noteworthy studies have been carried out on the appearances portrayed by the colonial cinema in the Estado Novo, on the filmic analysis of fiction and documentary, as well as of the propaganda, by Convents (1986, 2011), Matos-Cruz (1990), Piçarra (2012, 2013), Paulo (1994, 2001), Pina (1977), Seabra (2011), Silva (2006), Torgal Kings (2008, 2011) and Vieira (2010).

⁷ Retrieved from <http://www.cinemateca.pt/cinemateca-digital/Ficha.aspx?obraid=3138&type=Video>

Europe. The opening of the documentary, in true imperial style, is characterized by three typical aspects of the Portuguese colonial iconography:

- the world map at the opening of the documentary;
- the sea, the water, indicating the passage of a vessel;
- the map of the settled area - Guinea in this case - where an arrow indicates the Bolama region (see Figure 2).

It is only after this preliminary information that the camera shows the village reproduced in the industrial exhibition, the “*new village of Sam Corlá*”.

The map is a device of effective representation and immediate understanding that facilitates the presentation of colonial cartography and that proves the supposed *reality* of the process. Africa is configured as an emblematic case in the mapping process under the settlement, which certifies the knowledge and the conquest of the territories that is symbolically an iconic device that portrays the European superiority over the African continent and, in Portugal’s case the *effective* occupation of colonized territories (Pougala, 2012, pp. 12-13).

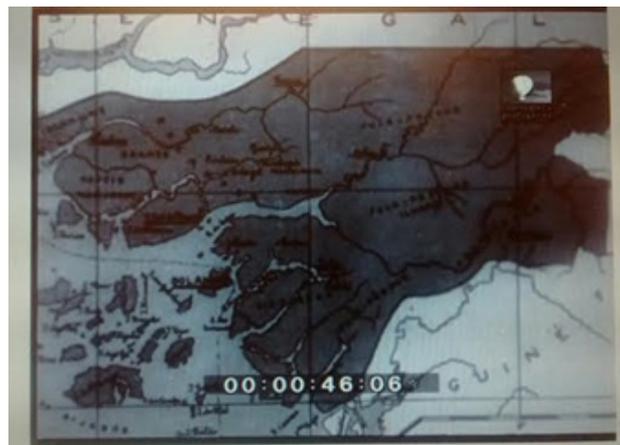


Figure 2: *África em Lisboa* – 1932
© Cinemateca Portuguesa

The sequence of the documentary next takes us to the village and its inhabitants. Interesting is the message of early welfarism preceded by the subtitle “... *where they lack nothing...*” which features pictures of chickens and cattle, followed by the appearance of the villagers in the scene. From the beginning, plenty of close-ups and how the faces of the individuals filmed remind us of the images that once accompanied the studies of criminal anthropology. We witness scenes of life in the artificial village: a man at the center of the field between two huts, the passage of several women, a man sitting with his eyes closed, another man in prayer, women sweeping, a man smoking a pipe.

Women grinding rice (see Figure 3), a man repairing a sieve, another one sewing by hand or with a machine and women trying on clothes are shown in the following images (see Figure 4).



Figure 3: *África em Lisboa* – 1932
© Cinemateca Portuguesa

Worthy of note is how the individuals filmed carried out the director's instructions, as shown in the image of two women spreading a cloth and who seem to be looking for a signal off-camera, a small disruption in the integrity of the narrative discourse that is quite frequent in this type of documentary.



Figure 4: *África em Lisboa* - 1932
© Cinemateca Portuguesa

There are many pictures dedicated to the music, the dances, the kora players, displaying an abundance of unnamed people and bodies. During this period and for these types of documentaries, anonymity reinforced the inferiority of the inhabitants of the colonies; the exception that proves the rule is the identification of Prince Abdulbaden in the subtitle *Prince Abdulbaden and his sister the Princess*. Note, however, that the name of the princess is not mentioned.

In addition to the relegation to anonymity, the female body is suffering from a further discriminatory representation in the sexualisation of the construction of the documentary seen in the images and in the language of stage directions, "Guinea's finest, whose eyes lie because they have no faith ...".

The proliferation of faces and female bodies continues with profile or front images where women are placed in front of the camera to be observed and inspected (see Figure 5).



Figure 5: *África em Lisboa* - 1932
© Cinemateca Portuguesa

It is an inspection that attests to the power of the camera, shot from a colonizer's perspective, of domination and sexism which films the woman's body in terms of oppression, subordination and racialization, presented faithless and sexualized through cunning portrayal either by the shooting or through the content of the subtitles.

The production of bodies and faces in the cinematic discourse represents the black men and women of the Empire via what Pascal Blanchard calls “*le paradigma de l’indigène*” (Bancel, Blanchard, 1994; Blanchard, 2004) showing how the inhabitants of the *good savage* colony becomes the *good black people* in a creation based on symbolic practices of inclusion and actual exclusion. Inclusion because of their placement within the Empire as indigenous individuals to be assimilated within the civilizing mission of colonialism; exclusion, because they cannot be free, they are made inferior in exploitation and are merely laborers.

The artificiality is evident in the sequence with the subtitle “*At the sound of the phonograph, the Fulani learn to play «A Portuguesa»*” comprising images of musicians playing the *kora* and the caption highlights the supposed educational character of learning the Portuguese national anthem. We will never be able to know if the phonograph glimpsed at the feet of the musicians is really playing *A Portuguesa*, but it is ostensibly a message of assimilation and civilization of the Portuguese mission.

The violence of the colonial discourse climaxes with the exhibition of the female presented with the caption *Indiscretions of the camera* that shows three women bathing and where we witness the invasion of the camera in these women’s privacy (see Figure 6). Worthy of note is the film technique (which opts for a derivation of the Kuleshov Effect): the women’s bodies are juxtaposed five times over the face of a man, which causes the spectator to deduce that the vision of the black female body causes the malice of the black man and that the notion that the desire and the sexualisation of the woman’s body is consolidated through the image of the man who, in the foreground, observes the intimacy of the bodies, laughing and putting a finger to his mouth.

It seems, therefore, that the “order of discourse” (Foucault, 2007) shows a desire that cannot belong to the operator that is behind the camera, not to a white spectator, but to the black man. The body represented – oppressed, black and female - becomes the embodiment of the sexual taboo that hides the white man and the camera’s desire for the black body and causes this to be linked exclusively to the black man through the film technique, a technique of domination that diminishes the bodies of the Guineans.

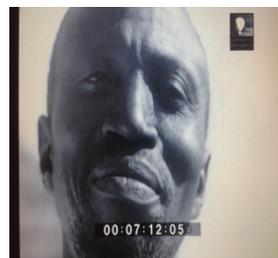
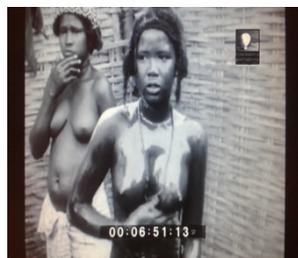




Figure 6: *África em Lisboa – Os Indígenas da Guiné na Grande Exposição Industrial*
© Cinemateca Portuguesa

To better understand the dynamics of representation of these images, I refer to the essay by Laura Mulvey called *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975, 6-18) which, through the political use of psychoanalysis, analyzes how the fascination of the film was built on pre-existing patriarchal models and the belief of phallocentrism is central in the popular cinema.

The author examines the manipulation of visual pleasure that develops in popular cinema, a pleasure that has to be destroyed and which is manifested in the portrayal of the female figure as an object of male desire and significant in the threat of castration. Mulvey, following Freud, recognizes two kinds of pleasures: scopophilia and narcissism. Scopophilia - the pleasure of looking - implies the assumption of the other as an object according to a look of control and the pleasure of sexual objectification (Mulvey 1975, p. 8). Scopophilia is sexual because it uses the person as a stimulating object while watching and it adds the voyeur fantasy of the public, which is enhanced by the contrast of the darkness in the cinema as a structure and several characters on the lit screen (Mulvey, 1975, p. 9).

From the Lacanian reading of the mirror phase, the author points out that scopophilia in its narcissistic nature offers an analogy between the child's ego formation and the pleasure of cinematic identification and presents two contradictory ways of viewing pleasure: one that leads back to scopophilia and the other to narcissism in a relationship of proximity/distance in which the first phase has to do with the separation of the subject's erotic identity with the object on the screen and the second develops in the recognition and identification between the visual object and the viewer (Mulvey, 1975, p. 10).

In these two pleasures, the woman holds the role of the object of desire not only for the spectator, but also for the male character in the movie story. According to this author, popular film industry is structured around two key moments, the story and the show, where the former is associated with the idea of the active male figure and the latter to the passivity of the female character. The male viewer focuses his gaze on the story of the hero to fulfill the formation of his ego and, through the hero over the heroine (the erotic look), to satisfy the libido. The first look pertains to the recognition in front of the mirror-screen; the second gives the woman a secondary position connoted by the sexual difference and that, in the absence of the penis, is a threat of castration and therefore of no pleasure.

To destroy this threat, the male gaze chooses the devaluation, punishment and recovery of the guilty object or the transformation of the figure represented in a fetishistic object⁸ (Mulvey, 1975, pp. 13-14).

While, as Mulvey states, in popular cinema the woman is the object of desire not only for the spectator but also for the male character in the story of the film, in the case of this colonial documentary, we can say that the woman becomes, indirectly, an object of pleasure for the spectator and for the device that is filming. The white man's desire is not assumed and is manifested through a displacement of the scopic pleasure from the spectator to the look of the black man filmed. In fact, in the construction of the documentary *Africa in Lisbon* it is the black man who, when laughing, is desiring the black female body.

As for the public, the pleasure that involves the viewer unfolds between desire and taboo: desire of sexual pleasure connected to the woman's body in an erotic look, taboo because it is linked to the body of a black woman, which in the racial and sexual difference, is a threat of castration and non-pleasure. In reality, it is of an inferiorization involving both colonized subjects and which is based on race construction. The camera, through the gaze of the white male, produces a double devaluation of the woman's body as a woman, colonized and black, and also of the man's body, the latter also devalued by the cinematic apparatus as black and colonized.

In this context, racial assumption is transversal to all the film technique, evident in the following sequence of images, the dances presented by the subtitle "*The Fulani in their picturesque dances and songs and their black color ...*," that presents, in this case, several images of dances of the village inhabitants. Of interest, in this regard, is the final structure of the documentary that ends with the dichotomy between the civilized/uncivilized in a panoramic which, starting from the artificial village, shows Lisbon and the Avenida da Liberdade with cars to demonstrate progress and the overall contrast and differentiation as the hitherto displayed images.

As for the production of this documentary, it should be noted that it was produced by Ulysseia Film, a private company, and that the language used is full of clearer distinctive and discriminatory connotations than in the documentary for the same event produced by Agência Geral das Colónias⁹ (AGC) [General Agency of the Colonies], *Guinea Indigenous Village in Lisbon*.

⁸ In an analysis on the body of the black woman, on fetishism and exclusion of women's presence made by the cinematic apparatus as a control instrument of the appearance based on considerations presented by Mulvey, see also Anna Camaiti Hostert, Metix (2004)?.

⁹ A governmental body established by paragraph 16 and subsequent paragraphs of Article 15 of the Colonial Legislative Statute no. 43 of 30 September, 1924.

GUINÉ ALDEIA INDÍGENA EM LISBOA - 1932 (00:12:25)¹⁰**DIDASCALIC SEQUENCE**

Guiné Aldeia Indígena em Lisboa

Complementing the colonial section in the Portuguese Industrial Exhibition, the Agência Geral das Colónias set up

An indigenous village with natives from Guinea in Parque Eduardo VII

A visit from the Minister of the Colonies

Some of the most interesting scenes, and partly unpublished, of the life of Guinea's black people in their makeshift village consisting of eight huts, inhabited by a prince, a princess, four chiefs, a manservant, 39 indigenous people, chickens, pigeons, pigs, goats, a donkey and a dairy cow.

Grinding rice

Young girls of characteristic beauty, the envy of many white girls

A princess with dark eyes full of faith...

Morning prayer

The polite prince Abdalbader

The Fulani's heads

Black beauties

Every day a huge, impatient and noisy crowd gathers outside the gentile village

Black men and women, dancers, singers and players of strange and noisy instruments, display their classic drums

In a sort of crazy Charleston

The chiefs with their rich and oddly embroidered clothes

An interesting ceremony: chiefs awarded with the Medal of Distinguished Service Overseas

Lieutenant Colonel Garcez de Lancastre, General Agent of the Colonies, justifying the ceremony

Colonel Silva Lopes, giving the four chiefs their award

The Prince giving his thanks, on the behalf of his father and the other chiefs

Table 2: *Guiné Aldeia Indígena em Lisboa* Didascallic sequence

As mentioned before, also in 1932, AGC produced the documentary *Guiné Aldeia Indígena em Lisboa*, a copy of which is deposited in the Arquivo das Imagens em

¹⁰ Retrieved from <http://www.cinemateca.pt/cinemateca-digital/Ficha.aspx?obraid=2540&type=Video>, Agência Geral das Colónias - Companhia Produtora Portugal, 1932, Genre: Documentary, Length: 00:12:25, 16fps, Format: 35mm, PB, without sound, AR: 1:1,33 ID CP-MC: 3005702-001-00.02.00.01

Movimento/[Archive of Images in Motion (ANIM)] of the Cinemateca Portuguesa/[Portuguese Cinematheque], and available online through the digital Cinematheque. Restored in 1984, the documentary presents the cinematic discourse constructed by the official body and which is also reflected in the filmic language with images related to the award ceremony presenting the chiefs with a medal during the visit of Lieutenant Colonel Garcez of Lancaster and words of appreciation by the prince.

The subtitles tell us that the village has eight dwellings inhabited by a prince, a princess, four chiefs, a manservant who is an officer at the chiefs' private service that corresponds to the private service of an officer of the metropolis - and 38 other Guineans. We saw the animalization of the inhabitants of the makeshift village in the discourse portrayed by the subtitles because, in the description of the village there is a list of animals - *a donkey, a dairy cow, pigs, etc.* - along with the reference to the Guinean inhabitants, in a general and indistinct enumeration of men and animals (see Table 2).

Also in this production, the representation of the female body is the dominant feature of the colonial cinematic discourse (see Figure 7) referring to the “Young girls of characteristic beauty, the envy of many white girls.”



Figure 7: *Guiné Aldeia Indígena em Lisboa - 1932*
©Cinemateca Portuguesa

Unlike in the documentary examined previously that mentioned “*eyes that lie because they have no faith,*” the caption “*A princess, of dark eyes full of faith ...*” precedes the image of two women shot in the foreground, who look to the camera, although one of them looks away in embarrassment caused by being the object of filming (see Figure 8). In general, examining the text accompanying the images of the film, the language used is discreet compared to the *indiscretions of the camera* presented by the subtitles of *Africa in Lisbon*. It is a choice that, in my opinion, is deliberate on the part of AGC, the company producing the documentary, which in this case seems to filter the speech.



Figure 8: *Guiné Aldeia Indígena em Lisboa - 1932*
©Cinemateca Portuguesa

Another analogy arises with the caption *black beauties*, which shows images similar to those of *indiscretions of the camera*, of semi-naked women with towels around their waist, leaving their dwellings. The women's reaction alternates between serious looks and clumsy smiles. The second woman looking at the camera seems to wait for a nod of approval from the director. What changes, compared to *Africa in Lisbon*, once again is the discourse of the subtitles, which in this case also filters the images (we do not witness intimate moments of hygiene, as in the other documentary) but this does not in any way reduce the violence of colonial representation. We are in the presence of the production of a complex of visuality which, according to Nicholas Mirzoeff (2011), develops through the act of classifying and separating, and in which the imperial visuality represents a centralized model in controlling colonized settlements. In this case, the village of Sam Corlá is the artificial creation of the natives of the Guinean colony, the invention of the indigenous man and woman. In addition to the visuality and the immutability of the representation, it also produced the concept of *visageité*, which defines the relationship between the face and the power, which is the role and function of the face within its use by the dynamics of power. According to Gilles Deleuze (1987) it is a relationship that can be beneficial in the materialization of the "production of faces" between the supremacy of the narrator and the inferiority of the narrated Other. The way the bodies of black women were represented in the film will sustain the colonial discourse as a story of a violent relationship, whose enunciation of the colonial system is implemented in the reproduction of the silence of the Other (see Figure 9).



Figure 9: *Guiné Aldeia Indígena em Lisboa - 1932*
©Cinemateca Portuguesa

In general, the use of words that emphasize the dissimilarity through dichotomous marks and the inability to provide valid readings of the cultural aspects of the village inhabitants transposes them to the unknown: *noisy and strange instruments, crazy Charleston, odd embroidery*. Of interest is the presentation of the award ceremony of the chiefs with the medal for distinguished service Overseas, which, on the one hand, considers

chiefs and princes as political subjects at the service of the Empire, and on the other, the adjective next to the word prince- which indicates friendliness- seems to eliminate the political connotation of the royal figure. With the exception of Prince Abdalbader¹¹, the bodies of men and black women in the documentary are nameless, and with the exception of the Prince voicing his gratitude, what remains is the silence of the black man, and especially of the subaltern woman.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak explains the woman as a subaltern who cannot speak and when she tries to do so, she does not find the means to be heard, highlighting her impossibility to speak and be heard (Spivak, 1988) and adds that only from the awareness of the invisibility of the woman - the native, subaltern, marginalized woman whose story has been narrated always from the stories of Others, destined for silence, always having someone who speaks for her - may one possibly deconstruct the colonial imagination around the subaltern (De Lucia, 2013, pp. 95-114).

The author goes on to argue that the lack of words of the subaltern and her silence are the result of the impossibility to exist, to be visible, present and recognized in public. She uses this as a starting point to arrive at the theorization of *epistemic violence*, that is, of violence of the forms of knowledge carried out by Imperialism: the violence of the signs, values, world's representation, culture, organizations of life and society of the colonized countries in a world that has built the Subaltern according to the structures of power and control which Spivak destroys through a deconstruction that is a political strategy (De Lucia, 2013, p. 100; Spivak 1990, p. 429).

In both documentaries, silences and silencing are manifested in the bodies of nameless women in the racialized and sexualized representation of the black woman, and in the complete absence of the white woman, also marginalized. Silences in the recognition of the Other as simple colonized subjects at the service of the Overseas Empire and incapable of political subjectivity. Silencing in an attempt to *whiten* the African cultures in favor of Western cultures, visible in the presentation of progress whereby the exhibition of the “primitive” indigenous village is followed by showing the use of Western machinery, clothing and many other aspects present in the moving images that propose a dichotomous view of wild/civilized, colonized/colonizer, metropolis/periphery, white/black.

Patricia Ferraz de Matos (2006, pp. 253-254) explains how the topic of indigenous people shows the contradiction between the equality defended and the inequality expressed by the political discourse of the time, based on Portugal's mission of civilization and which, in 1930, was institutionalized through the Colonial Act, legitimizing the ownership of the overseas territories and civilization of their peoples, distinguishing between citizens, assimilated people and indigenous natives (Matos, p. 250). This condition is clearly visible in the documentaries in which, without exception, all those represented are considered indigenous. The author also reveals, in the process of civilizing and evangelizing the exotic populations, the underlying paradox in defending an assimilatory process but which never suggested the choice of miscegenation to achieve it. Matos exemplifies

¹¹ In the documentary *África em Lisboa*, the name of the Prince is Abdalbaden and not Abdalbader as in the subtitle of *Guiné Aldeia Indígena em Lisboa*.

this aspect by pointing out that the documentary portrays the individuals selected to participate who had a degree of civilization already recognized in the community of origin and by the Portuguese, yet they were still different and inferior to them, thus illustrating how much there was still to do in the overseas territories (Matos, pp. 253-254).

STEREOTYPES, RESISTANCES AND FILES

We can now see that Orientalism is a praxis of the same sort, albeit in different territories, as male gender dominance, or patriarchy, in metropolitan society: the Orient was routinely described as feminine, its riches as fertile, its main symbols the sensual woman, the harem and despotic-but curiously attractive-ruler.
(Said, 1985, p.103)

Thus, we realize that otherness in the Portuguese colonial film is a problem and is an invention produced through a strategy of domination which, at the same time, misrepresents and superficially connotes the reality of the colonized peoples through a deforming filter. A discourse based on rhetorical, tautological constructions in inspections and silencing that generate stereotypes (Mulinacci 2004, pp. 42-44). This aspect is the main point of subjectivity in the colonial discourse either by the colonized or the colonizer, the desire for an original form, threatened by the differences of race, color and culture (Bhabha, 1983, p. 13). The stereotype, according to Bhabha is not a mere simplification because it is a false representation of reality, but because it is a fixed form of refusing the set of diversities and it is a problem of representation of the individual in his meanings of psychic and social relationships.¹²

I find it important, however, to consider Foucault's assumption that any system of power, as dominating and persuasive as it might be, works flawlessly and is able to permanently eliminate the subjectivity and the resistance of subordinates (Mellino, 2004, p. 76).

As for the documents submitted, I consider it relevant to suggest interpretations of rupture that the images so far analyzed also offer us. On the one hand, we see the attempt to fix the subject colonized by the camera. On the other, we see the resistance which manifests itself in the images, directly or indirectly. This *resistance* is evidenced by the looks of the filmed individuals that break with the dominant narrative, derailing the discourse constructed by the images or by the captions. Another aspect is the disruption of the silence with which the filmed individuals escape the filmic construction, in a re-appropriation of the word, rare scenes but still present, such as the appreciation of Prince Abdulbaden and the images of women who directly address the camera.

¹² On the theme of stereotyping, please also see Richard Dyer's work, *The Matter of Images* (1993), who, in the essay "The role of stereotypes," (pp?) analyzes from the theories of Lippman and highlights the idea that stereotypes, as aspects of human thought and representation, are not wrong in themselves, but rather the people "who control and define them, and the interests they serve" (Dyer, 2004, p. 19). The analysis goes on to present the stereotype as a process of planning, shortcut, reference to the world and expression of values (2004, pp. 19-26).

There is resistance in the eyes of women who refuse to look at the camera, in contrast to the descriptions that want to make their body an exotic object, and that, in fact, produce representations of dignity in contrast to the colonial discourse of representation.

If the colonial system presents a dichotomous order it is therefore necessary to investigate the intermediate space, which, in the words of Mudimbe, is a marginal space (2007, p. 26) and possibly one of resistance. The real or imaginary aspects listed above are therefore needed in the analysis so that the stereotypical reading and representations of subjects are silenced in favor of a subjective image of the black man and woman.

In this brief focus on colonial issues, through a look able to decolonize the imagination, we could offer immense reflections on the concept of *file*, on the idea of an *archive inside and outside the image* and the inherent conception and function: not innocent phenomena.¹³ Finally, I limit myself to considering the issue of access as essential, which is easier or more difficult depending on whether it is material or digital, formal or informal, open or closed, and the institution it belongs to (Ian Chambers et al, 2008).

Having analyzed documents belonging to the digital file of the Cinemateca Portuguesa in this paper, I believe what the researcher Marta Cariello (2014) argues in relation to digital files is relevant when she ranks them as being democratized and horizontal, with their produced narrations different from the official, conventional and authorized files because they are open to wider reading and are accessible to all.¹⁴

It is a revolution that has allowed, as Appadurai (2003) writes, the release of the State archives and of the inherent official networks, able to break down the interventions that Foucault assigned to files. This revolution makes the invention and the destruction of stories possible in an attempt to view the file as a result of a process that gives new meanings to notions and which is manifested in what Appadurai presents as the “capacity to aspire”. This “capacity to aspire” comes through the effort of imagination that benefits from new interactive tools to produce new, simultaneous and participatory readings.

The author shows that the proliferation of digital files has contributed substantially, through their non-hierarchical features, to reduce the conceptualized difference between mind and body and between the biochemistry of memory and the respective social function that considers the file “an aspiration more than a recollection “ (Appadurai, 2003). It is, therefore, in the horizontal and accessible file that, stripped of its function of control and surveillance, lies the possibility of producing “documents”, stories, fragments in a plural and dynamic declination between the file and memory. ✍

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¹³ For a better understanding of the concept of file presented here, I consider the conceptualizations made by Clifford (1999), Derrida (1990), Didi-Hubermann (2012), Grechi (2014), Hamilton et al. (2002), Mbembe (2002) to be essential. On the file and the Portuguese film contest, the conservation process of the Portuguese cinematheque Baptista (2011, 2012), Piçarra (2012)

¹⁴ Olga Solombrino's PhD research project (2016, Università degli Studi di Napoli “L'Orientale”), which deals with new territories, political and poetic affiliations of *palestinianness* within the digital spaces and of the re-elaboration of the digital archive concept, was also a key resource for my work.

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