

MARTINS, L. P. (2012). *UM IMPÉRIO DE PAPEL. IMAGENS DO COLONIALISMO PORTUGUÊS NA IMPRENSA PERIÓDICA ILUSTRADA (1875-1940)*. LISBOA: EDIÇÕES 70.

Inês Vieira Gomes

Leonor Pires Martins, an anthropologist, is the author of the book *Um Império de Papel. Imagens do Colonialismo Português na Imprensa Periódica Ilustrada (1875-1940)*, published by Edições 70, currently on the second edition (1st edition: 2012; 2nd edition: 2014). The postface is by Manuela Ribeiro Sanches, investigator from the Center for Comparative Studies of University of Lisbon, and coordinator of the research project funded by the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) “Dislocating Europe: post-colonial perspectives in anthropology, art, literature, and history”. This book is one of the results of the project.

In the category of “Visual Culture”, the book analyses and explores the images published in the Portuguese periodical press during the affirmation and the “consolidation” of the Portuguese Colonial Empire between 1875 and 1940. Although the exponential rise of publications of the Contemporary Empire over the last years, the images produced in this historical context did not had the same importance as the written sources. The images in this book are not mere illustrations of the text; on the contrary, the text helps to contextualize the images, and the author proposes a critical revision of this iconography (Martins, 2012, p. 15). Refusing a superficial reading, Leonor Pires Martins discusses the images through their contexts of production, manipulation and circulation, showing that the image is not dissociated from the writing. This book is a part of a field of work with little research tradition in Portugal in the various Portuguese social sciences groups: analysing the image as an object in itself (and not as a mere illustration) when appropriately contextualized, allows it to be critically analysed.

The book has 5 chapters: Imagining the Empire (1); Turn to Africa and race to the images (2); The imagetic occupation (3); Zoom to “white” Africa (4); On paper and alive: the empire on display (5). All the chapters are abundantly illustrated. With 214 pages, the book reproduces 312 images (the author inventoried around 900 images) providing the reader a rare opportunity to see all the images together with the assumption that politics are also made through the image, covering an ideological dimension of instrumentalization of knowledge and colonial propaganda.

The chronology of the book is justified by two key-moments: 1875, the year of the foundation of the Geographical Society of Lisbon, one of the most important institutions that promoted the “race to Africa”, by sponsoring several expeditions, but also playing a central role in the affirmation of the Colonial Empire, through conferences, exhibitions and the publication of monographs; 1940, a symbolic date of a political cycle ending.

Between 1939 and 1940 the albums *Aspectos das Viagens Presidenciais às Colónias* are published in five volumes with hundreds of photographs of the visit of General Óscar Carmona to Angola, Cape Verde, Sao Tome and Principe, Mozambique and Union of South Africa. Also, in 1940 Lisbon hosts the Portuguese World Exhibition that exhibited a recreation of the indigenous villages from the overseas provinces and it was the last great manifestation, in terms of dimension and symbolism, of the Portuguese Colonial Empire (after the Portuguese Colonial Exhibition in Oporto in 1934).

The invention of photography - in 1839 and its uses in subsequent years – was contemporary to the hegemony of the European colonialism in Africa and Asia. The technological development of a device that captured “the reality” was seen as an essential tool in the expeditions of knowledge and territorial exploration. Continuing a policy of territorial and administrative by force, photography reproduced an action, although more subtle, of colonial violence, ethnic and gender, in order to record and register the places and their natives, in regard to understand and better exploit a still unknown Africa.

Despite technological advances in the first years, photography was still a lengthy and expensive process. Capturing photographs in African expeditions revealed additional difficulties: safely transporting materials (to avoid broken glass plate negatives or the bottles that containing the chemical reagents); difficulty in obtaining distilled water to the photographic processing; and conditioning and sending the negatives to the metropolis. When the photographs arrived in the metropolis they did not have always the desired quality. In general it was common to reproduced photographs on engravings, so the possible technical defects were thus avoided by refinishing or adding elements that improved the visual composition.

The publication of engravings in the periodical press is connected to photography. The first announced photograph in Portugal was in 1841. The daguerreotype taken by Francisco Mocenig was reproduced by an engraving in the newspaper *O Panorama* (1841, p. 1).

The engraving is one of the Fine Arts categories as painting, drawing or sculpture, but in Portugal was used as a tool of reproduction of works of art. In the press, the engraving was assumed to reproduce photographs, drawings or advertising, through techniques such as photolithography, photozincography or heliography. However, this was not a simple process of reproduction. The book’s author proves, multiple times, that the engraver had liberty to add or omit elements that were not in the original photographs. It is possible to see in the figure No. 39 of the book, an engraving by Caetano Alberto published in the newspaper *O Occidente*, the visual composition reproduces the portrait of some Africans who participated in the Serpa Pinto expedition. It is also possible to confirm in the book *Como Eu Atravessei África*, Serpa Pinto was originally on the photograph, and there are unknown reasons why the engraver did not included him on the image published by the newspaper. These references throughout the book reveal the methodological approach of the author, that confronting different sources identifies the practice of manipulating visual representations according to underlying motivations.

It is also considered relevant the attention that the book’s author has with the images, as can be seen for example, in figures No. 114 and No. 115. The figures reproduce

two engravings, exactly the same published in the journal *O Occidente* in different years. This example shows the need to cross sources, analysing different mediums. The circulation of images was recurrent and, from a vast study, it is possible to find examples of the same images - engravings or photographs - reproduced in magazines, books or leaflets, in different years and contexts, but also for distinct audiences.

The introduction of photographs in the periodicals newspapers or books comes later in Portugal. For example, after the Expedition to Muatianvua, Henrique de Carvalho directed the newspaper *África ilustrada. Archivo de conhecimentos úteis* between 1892 and 1893 only reproduced the prints. None of the photographs of his expedition were present, although a few copies of a photographic album were published. According to Leonor Pires Martins, the first printed photograph – the portrait of Gungunhana in the boat on the way to exile to the island of Terceira in Azores - was published in the newspaper *O Occidente*, only in 1896, i.e. 57 years after the advent of photography.

There are other interesting examples of photographs published in the Portuguese illustrated press, revealing images of «war scenarios» in Africa. In 1907, the newspaper *Ilustração Portuguesa* published photographs of Campanha dos Cuamatos (Cuamatos' Campaign), in Angola, some of them of José Velloso de Castro, a Portuguese military and responsible of one of the most incredible photographic collection in Angola between 1904 and 1912, and Director of the colonial newspaper *Lusocolonial. Revista de defeza e propaganda* (18 numbers between 1927 and 1929), with dozen of photographs; and in 1908, some photographs of the military campaigns in Guinea between 1907 and 1908 from José Henriques de Mello, a professional photographer who collaborated with the newspapers *O Século* and *Ilustração Portuguesa*, property of the first journal.

Over the twentieth century, there are other illustrated newspapers as *O Notícias Ilustrado* (1928-1935) or *O Século Ilustrado* (1933-1989), responsible for publishing a vast number of images of the Empire, *with a pedagogical intention, it should be noted, that cannot be disassociated from an ideological motivation that aimed to create connections between the metropolitan population and overseas territories* (Martins, 2012, pp. 149-150). During the Portuguese Colonial Exhibition in 1934 in Oporto and the Portuguese World Exhibition in 1940 in Lisbon the number of articles and images about the Portuguese Colonial Empire increased, especially in the Colonial Exhibition in Oporto, as emphasized by the author.

One of the main aspects of the Portuguese Colonial Exhibition was the “recreation” of villages with an indigenous representation (integrated in the tradition of “human zoos” popular in Europe). This is not the first time in Portugal. In 1932, in the Portuguese Industrial Exhibition, in Lisbon’s Eduardo VII Park, a Guinean village was built, and the visitors had so much curiosity, that police support in the Exhibition was necessary (*Jornal O Século*, 1932, p. 3). The presence of the “natives” of the Portuguese Colonial Empire in Oporto, in 1934, increased not only the number of visitors but also the number of photographs reproduced in the newspapers. The periodical press reproduced several aspects of the indigenous villages, focusing mainly on showing the natives of the Empire, the most popular “attraction” of the exhibition. As the author concludes, the Portuguese

World Exhibition in 1940 had not the same echo in the press regarding the “indigenous representation”.

Um Império de Papel. Imagens do Colonialismo Português na Imprensa Periódica Ilustrada (1875-1940) is a consistent book with an important contribution to the study of iconography produced within the Portuguese colonial context, revealing images that are not part of a national collective memory. Moreover, it is a contribution to the history of the recent past which tends to be built with the absence of the image. Sometimes, the sources lack of visibility but these abound in the archives, libraries and national museums. In fact, it is necessary to note that the colonial iconography - prints, photographs and postcards - will certainly be one of the most obvious results of material and visual production of the empires. There are few cases of colonial paintings, but this subject does not reveal an especial interest in the Portuguese artists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Although more distant from the Portuguese Colonial Empire, the images produced in this context linger in multiple ways. The use or reproduction of these images, in recent years, due to the exotic fascination that often is confused with nostalgia remains to this day. Otherwise, the author’s book analyses the images critically, focusing on their production context, reproduction and manipulation. It questions that the colonial iconography cannot be understood in a superficial reading.

However, it is necessary to reflect the role that these images had in the past. Could Portugal be a country without images as António Ferro, the first director of the Secretariado de Propaganda Nacional (National Propaganda Office), regrets? What uses did the images, engravings or photographs, had? Did they had a consumption and an impact only at national level? Or also did they had repercussions both in the colonized territories and in other colonial empires? //

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Inês Vieira Gomes, art historian, is a PhD student at the Institute of Social Sciences (Inter-University History Program PIUDHist) and her thesis focuses on the Portuguese African colonies between 1890 and 1940. She worked as a fellow by Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, USA, in the National Museum of African Art – Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives and Warren M. Robbins Library –, and in the project *Knowledge*

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She graduated in Art History at the Faculdade de Letras of the University of Lisbon, in 2007, and completed her Master Degree in the history of 19th and 20th century art at the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences of the NOVA University of Lisbon, with a thesis on the Portuguese engraver society in 20th century (Sociedade Cooperativa de Gravadores Portugueses), in 2011. She collaborates regularly with in Modern Art Centre of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in the research and writing about the collection.

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