



## The death of a football player. Eusébio and the struggle for Portuguese History

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The death, in 2004, of Eusébio da Silva Ferreira, considered the greatest African footballer of all time, was followed by a process of nationalization, led by the Portuguese state, and the player's body was moved into the National Pantheon, a site devoted to the celebration of the country's heroes. Born in the capital of colonial Mozambique, Eusébio came to Portugal at the age of 18, where he played and represented the national team. The celebration of Eusébio as a Portuguese hero offered the state a vehicle, able to narrate the traumatic end of its empire and evoke the virtues of the colonial experience. Tapping into the affective economy generated by football, the official biographical construct of 'people's hero' elides the edification of a violent and uneven colonial society in Mozambique, and reifies a symbolic order created during the Portuguese colonial rule.

Keywords: Portugal, nationalism, colonialism, popular culture, football, Mozambique.

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### **A morte de um futebolista. Eusébio e a luta pela história portuguesa**

A morte em 2014 de Eusébio da Silva Ferreira, considerado o maior jogador de futebol africano, deu origem a um processo de patrimonialização conduzido pelo Estado português, que levou o seu corpo ao Panteão Nacional, lugar de celebração dos heróis nacionais. Nascido na capital de Moçambique colonial, Eusébio veio para Portugal com 18 anos, onde jogou e representou a seleção portuguesa. A celebração de Eusébio enquanto herói português ofereceu ao Estado um meio de narrar o processo traumático do fim do seu império, evocando as virtudes de uma excepcional experiência colonial. Explorando a economia afetiva gerada pelo futebol, a construção biográfica oficial "de um herói do povo" oculta o processo de edificação de uma sociedade colonial violenta e desigual e reifica o lugar social do subordinado. Palavras-chave: Portugal, nacionalismo, colonialismo, cultura popular, futebol, Moçambique.

# **The death of a football player. Eusébio and the struggle for Portuguese History**

Nuno Domingos\*

## **The state institutionalisation of a national hero**

On 3 July 2015, the body of the footballer Eusébio da Silva Ferreira, born 25 January 1942 in Lourenço Marques, the capital of the then Portuguese colony of Mozambique, was moved into the National Pantheon (Panteão Nacional), where he joined an array of other dignitaries of the nation. A year and a half after his death on 5 January 2014, Eusébio was granted the highest honour afforded to a Portuguese citizen. Eleven times Portuguese champion and the highest goal scorer over seven seasons, Eusébio won the European Cup and reached the final of this competition on three other occasions, was the highest goal scorer in Europe in 1968 and 1973, as well as in the 1966 World Cup, held in England, and he remains the highest scorer for Benfica of all time (473 goals in 440 matches). His name often appears in the lists of the world's best ever players and he is regarded as the greatest African footballer of all time.

Eusébio was the first sportsman, but also the first black person, to be welcomed in the National Pantheon. He was not, however, the first person from a working-class background and without extended formal education to be granted the honour of entering the Pantheon – given

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a few years earlier, to the fado-singer Amália Rodrigues (1920-1999). The elevation of Amália and Eusébio to the status of national heroes signalled the state's acknowledgment of two popular figures among the Portuguese population, two personalities who did not sit easily alongside the existing residents of the Pantheon: four presidents of the Republic; three writers, all of them with an active political voice; and a military officer that opposed the Estado Novo regime, which ruled Portugal between 1933 and 1974<sup>1</sup>. It was the Estado Novo, headed by António de Oliveira Salazar, that reopened the Panteão Nacional in the Igreja de Santa Engrácia in 1966, decades after the Republican government had first given this building the role of celebrating national heroes. Yet, unlike the other Pantheon residents, Amália and Eusébio had not strut on the political stage, even though it was common among some opponents of the Salazar regime to consider their star status to be part of an apparatus of cultural control that included football, fado and the Catholic cult that originated in Fátima.

According to the law that reconfigured the function of the National Pantheon, published in 2000, the Pantheon is “meant to pay homage to, and perpetuate the memory of, Portuguese citizens that have distinguished themselves for their services to the country, in the exercise of high public office, high military service, in the expansion of Portuguese culture, through literary, scientific and artistic creation, or in the defence of the values of civilization, for the benefit of humanity and the cause of freedom”<sup>2</sup>. While Amália Rodrigues's voice can be seen – albeit unorthodoxically, some will argue – within the category of ‘artistic excellence’, as defined by the above criteria, Eusébio's talents raised more questions. The resolution by the Portuguese Parliament to grant Eusébio a place in the Pantheon was intended to pay homage to “the national symbol, the charitable person, the exceptional footballer and sportsman, thus evoking his status as a key reference in the dis-

1 Presidents Manuel de Arriaga, Teófilo Braga, Sidónio Pais and Óscar Carmona, writers Almeida Garrett, Aquilino Ribeiro and João de Deus, the military officer and politician Humberto Delgado. After Amália Rodrigues, but before Eusébio, the poet Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen joined this select group.

2 Law 28/2000, 29/11/2000.

semination and globalisation of the image and relevance of Portugal in the World”<sup>3</sup>.

The official celebration of these performers, while approaching the political establishment to the habits and consumption practices of large sectors of the population – and more significantly the male population – was also testimony to the importance attributed to popular culture disseminated by the mass media in the construction of Portuguese nationalism. Such trend promotes, within an expanded media-pervaded public space, the banalisation of nationalism through popular culture, making the space for the symbols of national heroism to shift<sup>4</sup>.

This meant that the navigators from the time of the “discoveries”, the African explorers, the heroes of the African wars of the late 1800s, the key politicians, writers and scientists, all of those that had helped narrate the nation through the education system, the commemorative monuments, the state rituals, statuary, toponymy, and historiography, now had to share that space with popular singers and sports personalities. While, in the history of Portugal, there had always been heroes from the lower classes – anti-state heroes, social bandits, religious figures usually co-opted by the Catholic Church, and patriot heroes integrated into the narratives of the state, alongside collectively celebrated anonymous heroes, these were never granted the honour of a spot in the site where the state enshrines the heroes of the nation’s elite. Eusébio and Amália brought the football field and the musical stage onto a universe that, until then, had been limited to the battlefield, the space of the institutions that represent the state, universities and the rarefied world of scientific or literary genius<sup>5</sup>.

3 Resolução da Assembleia da República, n.º 21/2015.

4 On the relation between popular culture and nationalism, see Orvar Lofgren, “The Nationalization of Culture”, *Ethnologia* XIX (1989): 5-23; Tim Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life* (Oxford: Berg, 2002); Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995).

5 On the Portuguese social identity see, among others, José Mattoso, *Identificação de um País. Ensaio sobre as Origens de Portugal*, 2 vol. (Lisbon: Editorial Estampa, 1985); Francisco Bethencourt and Diogo Ramada Curto, eds., *A Memória da Nação* (Lisbon: Livraria Sá da Costa, 1991); Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Pela Mão de Alice – O Social e o Político na Pós-Modernidade* (Porto: Edições Afrontamento, 1994); João Leal, *Etnografias Portuguesas (1870-1970). Cultura Popular e Identidade Nacional* (Lisbon: Publicações Dom Quixote, 2000); Vitorino Magalhães Godinho,

The placing of Eusébio in the National Pantheon allowed the Portuguese state to make official an exemplary personal history, celebrating the player and the man but also, at one and the same time, engendering a narrative of Portuguese national history that accommodates the traumatic end of its empire and reintegrates the colonial experience into contemporary discourses on national identity. This biographical account plays into the imagination of an idealised, universalistic and harmoniously integrated Lusophone cultural space. Eusébio's qualities as a 'man of the people', evoked to justify his presence in the Pantheon, naturalised social classifications of the popular classes, historically produced by the social and political elites<sup>6</sup>. In the Portuguese colonial context, these qualities encapsulate the desired behaviour of the assimilated African<sup>7</sup>. The official biographical construction of Eusébio seeks to establish and cement principles of division and representation of a geographical, but also social and historical, colonial space that was already legible, to a large extent, by the majority of the population. However, this reinforcement of a shared national identity – where formal and informal nationalisms are superimposed<sup>8</sup> – operates through its appropriation of other social intimacies, "other idioms of identity formation"<sup>9</sup>, namely, in this particular case, those that emerge from the practical and symbolical exchanges that operate as a bond between football fans<sup>10</sup>.

*Portugal: A Emergência de uma Nação* (Lisbon: Colibri, 2004); Sérgio Campos Matos, *Consciência Histórica e Nacionalismo – Portugal, séculos XIX e XX* (Lisbon: Livros Horizonte, 2008); José Neves, *Comunismo e Nacionalismo em Portugal – Política, Cultura e História no Século XX* (Lisbon: Tinta-da-china, 2008); Luís Trindade, *O Estranho Caso do Nacionalismo Português* (Lisbon: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2008); José Manuel Sobral, Jorge Vala, eds., *Identidade Nacional, Inclusão e Exclusão Social* (Lisbon: ICS, 2010); José Manuel Sobral, *Portugal, Portugueses: uma identidade nacional* (Lisbon: FFMS, 2014) and Fernando Catroga, *A Geografia dos Afectos Pátrios. As Reformas Político-Administrativas (séculos XIX-XX)* (Coimbra: Edições Almedina, 2014).

<sup>6</sup> As part of a process of moral integration into a symbolic order. See Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and symbolic power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991).

<sup>7</sup> Jeanne Penvenne, *African Workers and colonial racism. Mozambican Strategies and Struggles in Lourenço Marques, 1877-1962* (London: James Currey, 1995).

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Hylland Eriksen, "Formal and informal nationalism", *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 16 (1993): 1-25.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Herzfeld, *Cultural Intimacy, Social Poetics in the Nation-State* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 4.

<sup>10</sup> Nuno Domingos, *Football and Colonialism. Body and Popular Culture in Urban Mozambique* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2017), 9-12.

### An economy of affections

The nationalisation of Eusébio's life story would not have been possible without the political appropriation of the bonds created between the football fans and the player. An apparently banal leisure activity, football becomes a serious matter, inasmuch as individuals invest their time in them, and project their expectations desires and aspirations onto it<sup>11</sup>. Without the spectacularisation of modern sports and its insertion into wider forms of popular culture, which turned Eusébio into a popular hero, the use of his biography as a legitimate vehicle for the construction of a national narrative, over a period that coincided with the outbreak of the colonial wars, would have been impossible<sup>12</sup>. Eusébio, the popular idol, was someone onto which desires and expectations were projected, of which Salazar's Estado Novo was always wary, but which it ultimately attempted to use for its own purposes<sup>13</sup>. In Portugal and through the Portuguese colonies, Eusébio was a key protagonist of a relation between football as a spectacle and the everyday lives of countless people, namely the fans of his Club, the popular Benfica of Lisbon. The protagonist of a global spectacle that brought individuals together and represented them in national and international competitions, Eusébio reached world fame through the European victories of Benfica and through his performance in the 1966 World Cup. The culture industries' means of dissemination, radiating especially from the Anglo-Saxon world, later turned him into a contemporary visual icon

11 Eric Dunning, "The Figurational Dynamics of Modern Sport" *Sportwissenschaft* 9, n.º 4 (1979): 358–59; Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning, eds, *The quest for excitement: sport and leisure in the civilizing process* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986).

12 Jennifer Schultz and Ronald L. Breiger. "The strength of weak culture", *Poetics* 38, n.º 6 (2010): 610-24.

13 Marcos Cardão, "Um significante instrumental. Eusébio e a banalização do lusotropicalismo na década de 1960", in *Esporte, Cultura, Nação, Estado. Brasil e Portugal*, ed. Vítor Andrade de Melo, Fábio de Faria Peres and Maurício Drumond (Rio de Janeiro: 7Letras, 2014), 172-88. Despite this late instrumentalization of football by the Estado Novo, the use of sports games in the colonial terrain as part of a large policy of indirect rule and cultural domination does resemble in length and efficiency what was documented for the English case. On the Portuguese case see Domingos, *Football*. On the English experience see, J. A. Mangan, ed., *The Cultural Bond: Sport, Empire, Society* (London: Frank Cass, 1992); Brian Stoddart, "Sport, Cultural Imperialism, and Colonial Response in the British Empire", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 30, n.º 4 (October 1988): 649–73; Roger Hutchinson, *Empire Games: The British Invention of Twentieth-Century Sport* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1996).

and a piece of the collective memory of a generation, alongside other 1960s figures of popular culture. Although Eusébio, mainly through his performances with the Portuguese team, had a widespread national reputation, he was not unanimous. In the domestic competitions, Benfica's opponents considered him a menace. Such internal clashes, which divided the fans, were sharper in relation to the other Lisbon major club, Sporting Clube de Portugal, who fought for his transfer from colonial Lourenço Marques. These disputes, considerably important for the formation of personal identifications and beliefs, coexisted with the recognition of Eusébio's football excellence.

The uncountable joys Eusébio's genius afforded to his football fans cemented a collective memory, transmitted through personal, familial and media narratives. Unsurprisingly, the response to his death was emotional and immediate. Thousands of people made their way to the Sport Lisboa e Benfica stadium, with the expectation of seeing the player's body for one last time. In the attempt to find a reason for this affection for Eusébio, many "common people" were asked to speak in front of television cameras and to radio and newspaper journalists. Their public discourse, however, grounded in affects and an everyday practical reason that translates awkwardly into words, seemed to prove the argument of those who consider football a form of alienation and who view its "common" fans as "second-class" citizens, whose rationality is shrouded by an inexplicable bond. In the face of this explanatory vacuum, it would fall on politicians and high official of the state, representatives of the Catholic Church and a set of specialists, media punters, opinion-makers and celebrities – the "professionals of representation" – to provide the most acceptable explanation for the shared economy of happiness and intimacy generated by football<sup>14</sup>. It was these official voices that made the greatness of Eusébio legible: they commented on the athlete and the man, and on his relation to the national memory. These discourses, enunciated on the radio, television and in newspaper articles by these authoritative voices, would later inscribe themselves

14 Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and symbolic power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 243.



in the nation's official memory, in a more systematic and organised fashion, on the occasion of the transference of Eusébio's body to the Pantheon and, later, in the commemorative exhibition organised at the Portuguese Parliament, inaugurated in 2015.

### **Genuine, simple and humble**

After his death, compliments to Eusébio's genuineness, humbleness and simplicity spread. These qualities were invoked as a justification for the transference of his body to the National Pantheon. The official discourse passed into law the various and consensual discourses about the player, many of them coming from the political sphere in the first place<sup>15</sup>.

The then President of the Republic, Cavaco Silva, stated that Eusébio had "exceptional human qualities", namely "humility and amiableness". In the preface to a biography of the player published in 2012, Cavaco Silva expressed a similar point of view: "His hours of glory did not go to his head and anyone who knows Eusébio admires his simplicity, his kind heart, his sense of solidarity"<sup>16</sup>. The then Prime Minister, Pedro Passos Coelho, described Eusébio as "a generous and compassionate man" who took "Portugal's flag and pride to the four corners of the world", thus bringing together "Lusophone peoples". The Minister for the Presidency, Luís Marques Guedes, highlighted "captivating simplicity and congeniality". The then leader of the main opposition party, António José Seguro, lamented the loss of a man who, through "his magic on the football pitch and with his simplicity, spread Portugal's name around the world and made us proud to be Portuguese". The official statement by the other party in the government coalition, CDS-PP, recalled "a talented and humble man (...) who lived for his passion, football". The leader of this party, Paulo Portas, described Eusébio's general demeanour as "simple and cheerful". In a press release, the Left

<sup>15</sup> Statements compiled at <http://www.ionline.pt/artigos/portugal/veja-aqui-reaccoes-morte-eusebio> accessed at 18/1/2018.

<sup>16</sup> João Malheiro, *Obrigado Eusébio* (Lisbon: Estar Editora, 2000), 10.

Block (Bloco de Esquerda) defined Eusébio as “a national symbol and a symbol of Lusophone Africa”. Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, the most popular television pundit and now President of the Republic, underlined Eusébio’s importance for “national unity”. Unlike others, “who are born among the people and who forget they are of the people”, Eusébio “never forgot his background”. “One of the reasons for Eusébio’s success, just like Amália”, Rebelo de Sousa continued, “is that he was of the people: he was born of the people and died of the people”. The former President of the Republic Mário Soares stated, more spontaneously and a little off-key, that Eusébio was “a modest and very friendly man (...) a simple person, with little education, but very pleasant to be around”.

Common and oft-repeated, these assessments were presented as justification for a football player to join other notable personalities of the nation in the Pantheon. This was despite the fact that there is no indication that those Eusébio was joining were especially known or valued for their ‘simplicity’ or ‘humility’, namely because their office or position demanded personal qualities habitually associated with statesmen and those of political sphere in general, a space where the natural naiveté attributed to Eusébio could hardly be presented as a necessary trait. The text approved by all the parties with a seat at Assembleia da República read as such: “Sporting success, however, is not more impressive than his humane side: glory never went to his head and all those who knew him personally admired his simplicity, humility and sense of solidarity. (...) For his sporting achievements, for a grandeur that goes beyond the country’s borders, as well as for his generous and humble personality, Eusébio da Silva Ferreira has become a popular hero and a symbol of our country, honouring Portugal and making the Portuguese proud”<sup>17</sup>.

### **A state ceremony**

The rendering of Eusébio’s memory by officialdom, a mode of ritual that ultimately led to his body being interred in the national Pantheon,

<sup>17</sup> Assembleia da República. 2015. Honras de Panteão Nacional a Eusébio da Silva Ferreira, Projecto de Resolução n.º 1232/XII, 9/1/2015.

was a highly staged moment, geared to generate a sense of communion around the celebration of a national symbol. The acclamation of Eusébio expressed the attempt by political agents and other social elites to reinforce a moral consensus, one dimension of which was the recognition of a national history and, in particular, the place of empire within that narrative. The reiterated appeals to unity, echoed in so many of the speeches heard during the ceremony, should also be interpreted within the frame of Portugal's dire economic situation at the time of the ceremony, which led to the application of heavy austerity measures that undermined the already fragile Portuguese social contract<sup>18</sup>. This state ritual was a performance conceived with television viewers in mind, transmitted live by dozens of reporters from an array of media organisations, including at least five television channels.

In prominent and symbolically-charged places, throughout the ceremony, one found politicians, the officials from the club and national football organisations, church members, his family, professional colleagues and notable figures of Portuguese life. Eusébio's fans, unlike what had occurred in the ceremonies after his death, with the funeral as its climax, were less keen to participate in this official ceremony<sup>19</sup>. Placed on a horse-drawn cart, accompanied by 54 mounted soldiers and 22 police motorbikes, the urn then made its way to the Portuguese Football Federation's headquarters and later to the Portuguese Parliament. In both places, the ritual was re-enacted along the same lines: high officials from the Federation first, and Members of Parliament later, gathered briefly around the cart, and it quickly went on its way.

The more relevant perspectives, from the point of view of the construction of a national memory, were arguably those made by members of the Cath-

18 Headed by a troika of institutions: the European Commission, the Central European Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

19 There is example of this right at the start of the ceremony, when the body was being taken from the Lumiar cemetery, access to which was blocked by the police ("There are very few common people at Largo da Luz... 30 to 40 people", the RTP reporter informed) (RTP, *Transladação de Eusébio para o Panteão Nacional*, 2015). At the Luz seminary in Lumiar, where the private mass was held, the SIC TV reporter noted that there were "more police officers than fans" (SIC, *Eusébio no Panteão*, 2015).

olic Church<sup>20</sup>. The private mass, led by father Delmar Barreiros was transmitted live on all television channels, explicitly engaged in the rhetoric of symbolic (and not necessarily civic) integration ‘of the weak’ into the national narrative.

“Today is a great day, great for us, as Christians, great for us a people, and our fatherland is celebrating... we are welcoming a hero, he whom the people made a hero,” “[I]t is from among the simple folk [that emerge those that will honour us. One need only think at the sailors of a bygone era, to see the kind of people who made us great. When we chant out our national anthem, there comes that phrase that makes us shiver: *amid the mists of memory, oh fatherland one hears the voice of your venerable forefathers, who shall lead you into victory.* Who are these venerable forefathers, our ancestors? The great, the great are not only the learned, but likewise the farmers, sailors, soldiers, all those whose lives dignify Him, and dignify the fatherland [...], this fatherland has its heroes, citizens of the calibre of Eusébio, and can thus be proud of itself, and so this is a day to rejoice, a day of national pride, as is the will of the people, and there is a saying, of the people, that tells us that the voice of the people is the voice of God”<sup>21</sup>.

Meanwhile, on the SIC news channel, Father Vítor Melícias, who conducted Eusébio’s funeral mass, extended this religious and patriotic

20 The historical role that the Catholic Church had within the construction of a Portuguese national grandeur was closely linked to the imperial experience. On the colonial presence of the Portuguese Catholic Church in Africa see, Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo, *The “Civilising Mission” of Portuguese Colonialism, 1870-1930* (London: Palgrave, 2015). On the presence of the Catholic Church in Mozambique see Éric Morier-Genoud, “The Vatican vs. Lisbon. The Relaunching of the Catholic Church in Mozambique, ca. 1875–1940”, *Basler Afrika Bibliographien Working Papers* (Basel: *Basler Afrika Bibliographien*, 2002); Kathleen Sheldon, “I Studied with the Nuns, Learning to Make Blouses: Gender Ideology and Colonial Education in Mozambique”. *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 31, n.º 3 (1998) : 595-625; Michel Cahen, “L’État Nouveau et la Diversification Religieuse au Mozambique, 1930–1974. I. Le Résistible Essor de la Portugalisation Catholique (1930–1961)”, *Cahiers d’Études Africaines* 40, n.º 2 (2000): 322; José Augusto Alves de Sousa, *500 Anos de Evangelização em Moçambique* (Maputo/Braga: Paulinas, 1998).

21 SIC, Eusébio no Panteão, 3/7/2015.

rhetoric, bolstered by a discourse on Portuguese universalism, so often associated with Portuguese Catholicism:

“Eusébio as a Christian” gave “strength to all of us, the Portuguese, to dignify our symbols, to dignify our values, those values that define Portuguese identity and which have led our way through history. [...] A people that can take pride in itself and its history. [...] A Portuguese people that had a share in, that was a part and an agent within this wondrous space that today we call Lusophony, a man that came from a different ethnic background, from a faraway land, but that came to live as a Portuguese person, in the deepest sense that Portugueseness contains, the sense of universality, the plural understanding among cultures, religions and races, even in his humility, as he came from a poor neighbourhood, close to Maputo, then Lourenço Marques, to join a people that did not know him... and became integrated, and integrated himself as a great Portuguese”<sup>22</sup>.

The rest of the speeches were saved for the final stage of the ceremony, next to the National Pantheon. No one from Mozambique was invited to speak at this ceremony. At the Pantheon, many people tried to see the ceremony, but the official protocol kept them far away from the group of notables invited by the state<sup>23</sup>. In the funeral eulogy at the Pantheon, Eusébio’s former teammate António Simões praised his talent as a player and highlighted how he has earned the respect of all politicians across the ideological spectrum. Assunção Esteves, the president of the Portuguese Parliament, reinforced the idea of universality, associated with Eusébio: in Eusébio one sensed “the joy of the purest innocence”, he was “a maker of joyous feelings”, “he generated a positive

<sup>22</sup> SIC, Eusébio no Panteão, 3/7/2015.

<sup>23</sup> As pointed out by a TV reporter from SIC: (“The police blocked any access to the pantheon area, and the only people there are those who live in the vicinity”) (SIC, Eusébio no Panteão, 2015).

cohesion that brought everyone together”, he was “a celebration of all our consensuses”. President Cavaco Silva then underlined the role of that ceremony as a much-needed example of national union at a time of crisis:

“The charitable man”, responsible for “the globalisation of Portugal’s image around the world”, celebrated “by unanimous decision among the MPs and parliamentary groups”, “a gesture by the people’s representatives, that reflects the people’s own feelings”, “as a sportsman, as a human being, he was always above, far above, the petty quarrels and controversies that mark our everyday, the admiration we all have for his outstanding personality is shared by all the Portuguese and cuts across ideological divisions and club sympathies, so Eusébio in fact is a heritage that belongs to all of us” (...) Eusébio had a remarkably humble attitude towards the greatness of his genius, admired by millions, and he addressed each and every one with a natural simplicity that is the trademark of the truly great, those that have nothing to prove and have no need to show off... his service to Portugal knew no bounds... today, the tears of Eusébio are Portugal’s tears, a champion in sport, a legend in football, he is the embodiment of a unity among all the Portuguese, but also across the Lusophone world...”.

In the countless interviews with the many notables present at the ceremony, from the General-Secretary of the Portuguese Communist Party to the party on the farthest right of the political spectrum, CDS-PP, praise for Eusébio’s humility, simplicity, and authenticity was echoed. The ceremony did not allow room for the exercise of politics as such, that is to say, for dissent and debate. The electoral stakes were too high: Eusébio’s exemplary narrative emerged unscathed. On television, commentators underlined the consensual atmosphere, even

though a handful of journalists, mostly reporters on the ground, did occasionally, point out the elitist contours of the ceremony<sup>24</sup>. Still, even for reporters, the risk of upsetting the emotional consensus was significant and potentially harmful not only to the appeasing tones of the nationalist ritual, but also to viewer ratings.

The praise of Eusébio's qualities, his simplicity and humbleness, though they may be worthy of praise in their own right, must be understood through their historical genealogy as well as within their current context of enunciation. This stereotyped representation was less present among teammates and football fans. On the contrary, many statements described Eusébio, the "King" as he was known by his football colleagues, as being ruthless to his opponents, a professional feared for his talent and very much aware of his own worth. In fact, there were plenty of descriptions of Eusébio in the press and on the radio that depicted him as a brilliant player whose unique talent was bolstered by a forceful personality. He was characterised as a skilled, bold and fearless professional. The interpretative frame among the intimate community of football fans was complex and therefore in contrast with the narrow view served by state officials and by a set of notable public sphere figures, especially after his death. This official fabrication is not merely, or necessarily, the outcome of a programmatic or intentional stance, bound to specific political circumstances. It should be related to processes of naturalisation of a particular relation of power reproduced not only by the inheritance and permanence of objective inequalities but also through the action of a system of hegemonic symbolic classifications produced by the elites on the popular classes<sup>25</sup>. The enunciation of what it means to be humble, simple or naive has its roots in the historical institutionalisation of power relations that had a specific unfolding within the colonial world and particularly in Mozambique's capital, Lourenço Marques.

<sup>24</sup> As it was the case of the reporter from the TVI news channels, who said: "this is a ceremony that is not a ceremony for the people; there aren't as many fans as you'd expect" (TVI, Eusébio no Panteão, 2015).

<sup>25</sup> Bourdieu, *Language*, 129-31.

### A singular Portuguese citizen

While the official celebration of Eusébio in 2016 granted the Portuguese state a figure who was able to narrate its recent past, how, we may ask, does the life of this footballer serve as an illustration of the nation's memory? Eusébio embodied a portion of Portuguese twentieth-century history, namely the closing period of its empire, a troubled time for a nation that had built its nationalism by reclaiming the historical feats of colonial expansion, particularly since the end of the nineteenth century. In fact, Eusébio's biography had started to be shaped long before his death. Its initial moment can probably be traced back to the publication of his autobiography in 1966, written on the basis of a series of interviews with a journalist from Emissora Nacional (the state radio), Fernando F. Garcia<sup>26</sup>. In this book, translated and published across various European countries, a biographical model emerged to account for Eusébio's trajectory from his origins to stardom, a model that has since been replicated countless times, and more explicitly recuperated after he passed away.

During the period in which Eusébio became a vehicle for the dissemination and globalisation of the image and relevance of Portugal in the world, a role that was highlighted in the official document that sealed the transference of his body to the Pantheon, the Estado Novo government was attempting to hold on to an empire that was under threat on three fronts, in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea. As a fundamental justification for the continuation of its colonial world, Portugal argued for the existence of a historical and cultural unity, an integrated Lusophone space that was socially and racially harmonious, unlike the colonial territories of other European powers, which were then going through a process of decolonization<sup>27</sup>.

When Eusébio arrived at the metropole in December 1960, black individuals made up a marginal number of the population of Lisbon. While, in the sixteenth century, imperial networks had brought a size-

<sup>26</sup> Eusébio da Silva Ferreira, *My name is Eusébio* (London: Routledge, 1967).

<sup>27</sup> Cláudia Castelo, *O Modo Português de Estar no Mundo. O luso-tropicalismo e a ideologia colonial portuguesa (1933-1961)* (Porto: Afrontamento, 2001).



able contingent of African slaves to Lisbon, this flow had decreased and, in the nineteenth century, the black population in Lisbon was scarce, only to almost entirely disappear later<sup>28</sup>. This demographic shift did not, however, restrict the circulation of representations of African people. The exotic and scornful image that had been appended to Africans remained present in popular novels, light theatre, comedies and fairground shows. Often represented as a valet or servant, with bizarre accents and awkward turns of phrase, Africans were a constant target of sneer and mockery<sup>29</sup>. Well into the twentieth century, these representations of Africans in contemporary metropolitan Portugal persisted in literary works, images, newspapers, comic books, advertising campaigns and jokes<sup>30</sup>. They existed alongside, and in articulation with, popular images of the African continent, wherein Africans were depicted as wild, cannibals and exotic beings, to be exhibited in colonial exhibitions. The presentation of the African as a member of a civilization that was defined as inferior and backwards by the science of the time legitimised the civilising mission of Portuguese colonialism<sup>31</sup>.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, the Portuguese system of *indigenato* (indigenous status) granted a specific form of citizenship to most colonised peoples, a model that officially ceased in 1961. Eusébio was an *indígena* until July 1959, when, having completed his third-year exam, he obtained the status of *assimilado* (assimilated)<sup>32</sup>. If the Estado Novo regime had contributed to the dissemination of a generalised paternalistic racism, attempting to couch itself in scientific discourse, the post-World War II international context, brought about by the beginning of the process of African decolonization, demanded a different rhetoric, to which the Lusotropicalist theory of the Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre lent

28 Isabel Castro Henriques, *A Herança Africana em Portugal* (Lisbon: CTT, 2009).

29 José Ramos Tinhorão, *Os negros em Portugal. Uma presença silenciosa* (Lisbon: Caminho, 1988).

30 Henriques, *A Herança Africana*.

31 Frederico Ágoas, "Estado, universidade e ciências sociais: a introdução da sociologia na Escola Superior Colonial (1952-1972), in *O Império Colonial em Questão*, ed. Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo, (Lisbon: Ed. 70, 2012), 317-48; Jerónimo, *The Civilising Mission*.

32 António Simões, *Eusébio. Como nunca o viu* (Lisbon: D. Quixote, 2015), 18.

a scientific weight<sup>33</sup>. The international defence of the Portuguese colonial project, from the 1951 constitutional change onwards, recast as an overseas project: that of a Portuguese society that had assimilated Africans, and folded these territories into the nation<sup>34</sup>.

As it was presented to foreigners Eusébio's dazzling career offered an example of the integration of an African into Portuguese metropolitan society. Receiving ample media coverage, his military conscription in 1963 showed how this illustrious Mozambican man had joined the war effort, even though fighting in Mozambique only began in 1964 and Eusébio was never in the war zone. The athlete also took part in the campaigns in support of the Portuguese soldiers organised by the National Feminine Movement (Movimento Nacional Feminino)<sup>35</sup>. In December 1966, he would receive the Silver Medal of the Order of Prince Henry (Ordem do Infante D. Henrique) and was received, alongside the other national team players, by Salazar. During a brief conversation, the dictator allegedly said to Eusébio that he was a national treasure, which would have been the reason why his transference to a number of foreign clubs was blocked, against the player's will<sup>36</sup>. In various interviews, the footballer addresses this situation as well as the exchange of words he had had with Salazar, whom he addressed as 'godfather'. In a recent interview, Eusébio acknowledged his wish, at the time, to continue his professional football career abroad and spoke of his visit to Milan in 1966, to sign for Inter, a transfer that, according to Eusébio, was barred by Salazar personally<sup>37</sup>.

33 Patrícia Ferraz de Matos, *The Colours of the Empire: Racialized Representations during Portuguese Colonialism* (New York: Berghan, 2013). See, among other works by Freyre: Gilberto Freyre, *O Mundo que o Português Criou* (Lisbon: Livros do Brasil, 1951); *Integração Portuguesa nos Trópicos* (Lisbon: Junta de Investigações do Ultramar, 1958); *O Luso e o Trópico* (Lisbon: Comissão Executiva das Comemorações do Quinto Centenário do Infante D. Henrique, 1961). During the Portuguese Estado Novo some scholars, like the anthropologist Jorge Dias, consolidated this perspective through their works. See Jill Dias, "Elementos fundamentais da cultura portuguesa", in *Ensaaios Etnológicos* (Lisbon: Junta de Investigações do Ultramar, 1950).

34 See Valentim Alexandre, *Origens do Colonialismo Português Moderno* (Lisbon, 1979); Malyn Newitt, *A History of Mozambique* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

35 Cardão, 'Um significante'.

36 Ana Santos, *Heróis desportivos: Estudo de caso sobre Eusébio: De corpo a ícone da Nação* (Lisbon: Instituto do Desporto de Portugal, 2004).

37 Eusébio da Silva Ferreira, 'Interview by P. Candeias and B. Roseiro', *Expresso, Revista Única*, November 12, 2011, 48.

Eusébio's autobiography, published in 1966, comes short of expressing the player's closeness to the Portuguese political regime. Eusébio's military conscription is explicitly mentioned, something that was deemed relevant in the context of the ongoing colonial war<sup>38</sup>. The most emphatically political moment in the book deals with an official reception to the national team in the wake of the 1966 World Cup, where players were awarded medals by Salazar ("spoke words of high esteem for us"<sup>39</sup>). At the time, Salazar's words must be interpreted within the frame of the international criticisms that targeted the country engagement in the African wars: "The World championship passes, but your effort and sportsmanship endure, making more speak of Portugal in the highest terms during those days when you were able to honour the Country"<sup>40</sup>.

However, more than sweeping ideological statements, this narrative produces a descriptive apparatus that naturalises the history of a social and imperial structure. As a singular individual with an outstanding and unparalleled talent, Eusébio was presented as someone aligned with an everyday moral compass, embodied in a set of institutions that offered the appropriate social and labour frame: the school system, the church, the traditional family, the employer or company (in this case, his club), the national team, and the state. His story is also the history of these institutions, so present in the colonial endeavour, and of the legitimacy of its moralities. Between the 1966 autobiography and the exhibition in the Portuguese parliament in 2015 very little changed in the biographical account of Eusébio's formative period. Using the bounteous *memorabilia* provided by the Benfica museum, but also images from the various stages of his life, the exhibition appeared as a staging of Eusébio's 1966 autobiography, supplemented by the sporting achievements that followed. Very few biographical elements offered any kind of resistance to this official narrative<sup>41</sup>.

38 Ferreira, *My name*, 83.

39 *Idem, ibidem*, 158.

40 *Idem, ibidem*, 159.

41 When Eusébio died, some commentators argued over the degree to which he was subject to

### The naturalisation of colonial society

The exemplary life of Eusébio, as expressed in his autobiography, narrates a sporting and personal life and, more subtly, the social landscape in the colonial city of Lourenço Marques. This particular historiography reify a collective imaginary anchored on a chronology of salient moments that together produce a moral narrative.

Living in a precarious house in Mafalala, in the suburb of colonial Lourenço Marques, Eusébio was raised by his mother, Elisa Anissabeni. His father, Laurindo António da Silva Ferreira, a mestizo Angolan who worked in the railroad and died at the age of 37, is excluded from the biographical portrait. Described as a diligent student and a devout Catholic who gradually falls in love with football, young Eusébio stands out in neighbourhood matches, where he played for an informal group known as “the Brazilians”. He later moved to the “downtown” matches, and played for Sporting de Lourenço Marques, and, finally, was transferred to Lisbon’s Benfica. There is no mention in his autobiography that, only at age 16, did he cease to be *indígena*. The elision of his mother’s surname contributed to this process of de-indigenisation.

Eusébio’s autobiography describes the neighbourhood he grew up in as you would describe a tourist destination, expressed according to the structure of feeling of its European readership, who expected the exotic Africa that was so abundantly represented in the western popular culture<sup>42</sup>. It was simultaneously, however, a portrait of an integrated Africa that was, furthermore, modernized by the colonizer: “The native quarter, a Negro district, had a special life and colour that I have never forgotten and which I even now remember with nostalgia [...] “the district

political instrumentalisation during the Estado Novo, given Salazar had blocked his move to a major European club. In the various biographies of Eusébio published between then and now this fact is sometimes repeated and explained through a wider framework of labour exploitation pursued by the Portuguese state. See Malheiro, *Obrigado*; Afonso de Melo, *Viagem em redor do Planeta Eusébio* (Lisbon: Primebooks, 2004), Simões, *Eusébio*. Less common are references to Benfica’s unfavourable treatment of Eusébio when his career was in decline, or later when he became an employee of the club, prior to gaining his place as the club’s key symbol.

42 John M. Mackenzie, *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986).

of Xipamanini is a world full of movement, where there is everything, from cinema to trade” [...] “In all this coming and going we come across native women, picturesque in their robes, slender and elegant, carrying their children on their backs”<sup>43</sup>. What Eusébio, however, loved about his neighbourhood was, he says, the old indigenous street market, where “there was everything” for “a hurried multitude of African and Europeans<sup>44</sup> (“Our districts are like that”, he concludes, “– colourful, lively, hectic).<sup>45</sup> Eusébio “was very attached” to his “neighbourhood and very seldom ventured outside these ‘domains’”<sup>46</sup>. In one of his rare visits to downtown Lourenço Marques<sup>47</sup>, he discovered a “city of pleasures and mysteries unknown”: “Everything happened to me and astonished me: cafés, boulevards, people, many people, a new throng to which I was not accustomed. [...] men and women eating and drinking wonderful things that were even beautiful for the eye to see, and which I had never yet tasted”<sup>48</sup>. Reading the description, Eusébio sounds like a tourist in his own city, of which he knew nothing beyond the suburb in which he lived.

The representation of modern Portuguese cities in Africa, namely the “European” city centres – organised, safe, lively and white – had long been a concern of the organs of colonial propaganda<sup>49</sup>. Eusébio’s story continued to reproduce this image, as is also shown in the well-known 1990 comic book *Eusébio. Pantera negra*, a resounding commercial success, the contents of which follow the 1966 autobiographical account: “It’s 1942, the capital of Mozambique, Lourenço Marques, nowadays Maputo, is, at the time, a beautiful and developed city”, the narrator tells us.<sup>50</sup>

43 Ferreira, *My name*, 6.

44 *Id.*, *ibid.*

45 *Id.*, *ibid.*

46 *Id.*, *ibid.*, 7.

47 *Id.*, *ibid.*, 8

48 *Id.*, *ibid.*

49 As shown in works like Oliveira Boléo’s *Monografia de Moçambique* (Lisbon: Agência Geral do Ultramar: 1971); Alexandre Lobato, *Lourenço Marques, Xilunguine: Biografia da cidade* (Lisbon: Agência Geral do Ultramar, 1970) or in the newsreels *Actualidades de Moçambique*, promoted by the propaganda state agency *Agência Geral do Ultramar* and showed in Mozambique’s cinemas from 1956..

50 Eugénio Silva, *Eusébio. Pantera Negra* (Lisbon: Meribérica/liber 1990), 3.

In fact, Eusébio lived in the poor suburbs of Lourenço Marques, which had over 100,000 residents<sup>51</sup>. A large portion of this population was a labour force contingent reproduced at a low cost in an unsanitary environment<sup>52</sup>. This labour force, carefully identified by a system of urban surveillance, was mostly employed in domestic service, in docks and on the railways, public works, in the series of private companies as well as in informal commerce. In the suburban neighbourhoods, the individuals also built and struggled for the city, created religious, sporting and associative institutions, and sought ways to deal with a coercive and racist political system and its precarious economic situation, features of the specific brand of Portuguese apartheid in Lourenço Marques, as described early by Marvin Harris<sup>53</sup>.

This miserable suburb, divided by and discriminated against by the racism of the colonial state, was absent from Eusébio's autobiography, or from the multiple reverberations of his trajectory until the present, which includes the exhibition at the Portuguese Parliament. Also absent from these accounts is the history of the institutionalisation of football in this Mozambican suburb, fostered by the clubs that were clustered in the Associação de Futebol Africana (African Football Association), founded in 1924<sup>54</sup>. Up until 1959, these clubs could not take part in the competitions of the other association in the city, the Associação de Futebol de Lourenço Marques (Lourenço Marques Football Association), which gathered the white settlers' clubs<sup>55</sup>. Because of his

51 On the history of Lourenço Marques during the twentieth century, see Lobato, *Lourenço Marques, Xilunguine*: António Rita-Ferreira, "Os Africanos de Lourenço Marques", *Memórias do Instituto de Investigação Científica de Moçambique* 9, série C (1967-1968): 95-491; Penvenne, *African Workers*: Valdemir Donizetti Zamparoni, "Entre Narros e Mulungos: colonialismo e paisagem social em Lourenço Marques, c.1890-c.1940" (PhD thesis., Faculdade Letras e Ciências Humanas da Universidade de São Paulo, 1998); Nuno Domingos, *Football and Colonialism*. On the centrality of labour migration in the south of Mozambique, including the urban space, see Patrick Harries, *Work, Culture, and Identity: Migrant Laborers in Mozambique and South Africa, c.1860-1910* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1993).

52 Penvenne, *African Workers*.

53 Marvin Harris, *Portugal's African "wards": A First-hand Report On labor and Education in Mozambique* (New York: American Committee on Africa, 1958).

54 Domingos, *Football*.

55 On similar situations of colonial discrimination in sport, see Phyllis Martin, *Leisure and society in colonial Brazzaville* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Laura J. Fair, *Pastimes and Politics: Culture, Community, and Identity in Post-Abolition Urban Zanzibar*,

talent, and benefitting from having attained the status of an assimilated, Eusébio broke through the racial barrier and began his professional trajectory in a context where metropolitan clubs had privileged access to the colonial market<sup>56</sup>.

According to his exemplary narrative, Eusébio lived in a society that was pacified, ordered along the lines drawn by Portuguese culture. After his arrival in Lisbon, he once again expresses awe of the modern urban world, to which he was nevertheless able to adapt. As in the colonial space, his behaviour in the metropole remained exemplary, so the narrative goes, something that could be attested through his unwavering work ethic but also his stable family life. The player's marriage to the Mozambican Flora Bruheim, a young *mestizo* woman from Lourenço Marques, is offered as the *dénouement* to a teenage love that was, at first, unrequited. More than a personal mismatch, the initial barrier to their encounter was the class difference between Flora, who belonged to the *mestizo* elite, the great-granddaughter of a German, and the poor and uneducated Eusébio<sup>57</sup>. The lack of a compatible family tree, in the case of Eusébio, was ultimately compensated by the media and popular consecration of Benfica's star player.

In Lisbon, already married, the humble African from the Mafalala would behave privately in the way fitting the role of the "head of the family" (*pater familias*) in Salazar's Portugal<sup>58</sup>. Entitled to rights that were denied to women, the husband was the head of the family unit, which was, in theory, of a different mould from that associated with the African, indigenous and polygamous family life, from which Eusébio came from, and which the colonial regime deemed primitive and bar-

1890–1945 (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2001); Bea Vidacs, *Visions of a Better World: Football in the Cameroonian Social Imagination* (Berlin: LitVerlag, 2010).

56 On the labour trajectories of players from Portuguese colonies, see Todd Cleveland, *Following the Ball: the Migration of African Soccer Players across the Portuguese Colonial Empire, 1949–1975* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2017).

57 On the class contradictions within this colonial elite, see Jeanne Marie Penvenne, "João dos Santos Albasini (1876–1922): The Contradictions of Politics and Identity in Colonial Mozambique", *The Journal of African History* 37, n.º 3 (1996): 419–64.

58 Anne Cova and António Costa Pinto, "Women and Salazarism", in *Political and Historical Encyclopedia of Women*, ed. Christine Fauré (New York: Routledge, 2003), 397–405.

baric. Newspapers and magazines at the time helped to crystallise the image of Eusébio as a “family man”<sup>59</sup>. Photographed at home with Flora, he lived in Linda-a-Velha, away from the city centre, “comfortably, but dispensing with luxuries” or extravagances. Bruheim looked after the domestic space and Eusébio was established as the devoted husband.

Eusébio’s marriage to Flora Bruheim lasted until his death. The media then reproduced the familiar story of this quiet family man, even though former teammates and friends often talked about Eusébio as someone who enjoyed parties, who spent a significant amount of time in social gatherings rather than at home, and who was keen to enjoy the pleasures of life. As the national team coach Fernando Santos told a RTP reporter, in the context of the ceremony at the Pantheon, “he was also amazing off the pitch, around a lunch or dinner table”<sup>60</sup>. During this TV programme, with a degree of restraint and composure, journalists told similar stories of Eusébio’s social life, typical of professional footballers who spent so much of their life away from the domestic sphere<sup>61</sup>.

### **The historical construction of “the good boy”**

Two years after the birth of Eusébio, the *Regulamento dos Serviçais Indígenas* [Regulation for Indigenous Servants] came into force<sup>62</sup>. This law was applicable mostly to ‘native populations; that lived in colonial cities or their outskirts, as is the case with Lourenço Marques. According to its rationale, the *indígena*, a category that applied only to the African population, which was the overwhelming majority, was essentially defined as a servant. Their presence in the urban space depended on their labour activity. The vast majority of Africans in an urban

59 *Flama*, June 10, 1966.

60 RTP, Transladação de Eusébio para o Panteão Nacional, Radio Televisão Portuguesa, July 3, 2015.

61 Journalist José Manuel Freitas, on TVI, said that Eusébio enjoyed life’s pleasures (TVI, Eusébio no Panteão, July 3, 2015) and the journalist David Borges, on the SIC programme, said that “Eusébio was not a saint, he was a man, with a man’s weaknesses” but “in time he became aware of his institutional weight, as an ambassador for Portuguese football and, furthermore, an ambassador for the Portuguese state”. SIC, Eusébio.

62 Law n.º 5565, 12/6/44 (revised in 1949, Law n.º 7798, 2/4/49).



context continued to be classified under the category of the *indígena*, even if the process of adaptation to the city had opened the way for these populations to gain habits and competences that did not fit easily into the legal description of the *indígena*, officially sanctioned by the Portuguese state. If the colonial government had established the possibility of an *indígena* to attain the status of ‘civilised’, through a process of ‘assimilation’ that rhetorically justified the colonial venture, the number of ‘assimilated people’ continued to be, up until the end of the indigenous statute in 1961, extraordinarily marginal when set against the whole of the population, namely in the colony of Mozambique<sup>63</sup>.

In his work on the making of an African working class in Lourenço Marques, Jeanne Marie Penvenne makes reference to the figure of the “good boy” (“bom rapaz”)<sup>64</sup>. This urban type embodied a specific model of behaviour that resulted from the labour and urban insertion of Africans in the colonial city. More than a racial, cultural, or ethnic category, the “good boy” was a social type defined by the individual’s conformity to the rules of ‘European civilization’, and its Christian mould, but especially recognised through a particular work ethic, which translated into the figure of a compliant, pacified worker, who fully accepted established hierarchies. In Lourenço Marques this labour status was inseparable from skin colour. Furthermore, being a “good boy” was not a status that one could acquire for good, but rather one that needed to be established and reasserted each and every day by means of the right “theatrical” performance. The cunning dimension of this performance, carried out by suburban black youth that sought work in the city centre, had a clear strategic dimension, all the while expressing the uneven conditions underlying the everyday interactions within the terrain of the colonizers and their institutions. By adjusting themselves to the expectations of the employers and other authority figures, these Mozambican workers, coming from suburban neighbour-

63 In 1955 there were 4555 assimilated, 0,08% of the total population. David Hedges, *História de Moçambique, vol. 2. Moçambique no auge do Colonialismo, 1930-1961* (Maputo: Livraria Universitária de Maputo, 1999), 182.

64 Penvenne, *African Workers*, 126.

hoods such as Mafalala, Xipamanine and Chamanculo, chose to adopt a servile and pacified stance, which was more effective as a means of gaining employment, which of course was essential for their survival<sup>65</sup>.

The performance of this role had then to be sustained during the whole period of employment. The servility of the “good boy”, his humility and simplicity, somewhat akin to the model of the god-fearing Christian, allowed them to avoid the violence and humiliation imposed by state authorities and employers, who continuously invoked the African’s laziness as a justification for punishment. Access to civilisation did not merely imply meeting a series of objective conditions, such as language proficiency, rejection of traditional customs, holding a job; it also forced African workers, and suburban residents, more generally, to become subaltern. While this role cut across a wide range of labour interactions and distinct urban encounters, it applies all the more clearly, a fortiori, to the context of a labour market characterised by the constant obsequious presence of the domestic servant<sup>66</sup>. The models of a paternalistic relation, reproducing the idea that Africans were akin to overgrown children, generated their own control apparatuses, namely through the threat of violence. The existing channels for social mobility demanded an air of respectability from the worker that was grounded on a latent and often manifest violence<sup>67</sup>.

Eusébio’s social mobility hinged on his talent but also, in equal measure, on him adopting an exemplary labour attitude, in the form of simplicity and humility. This celebrated image offered a contrast to the widespread image of the worker, incapable of handling the demands of the modern world, incapable of taking on responsibility, immature, childish, prone to drunkenness and bad company, which included the risk of politicisation. Historically, this model had in African indigenous people, a category considered culturally distinct from metropolitan

65 *Id.*, *ibid.*

66 Based on data from 1960, Rita-Ferreira concluded that 56% of total wage employment was in the domestic service. António Rita-Ferreira, “O emprego assalariado em Moçambique”, *Indústria de Moçambique* 3, n.º 8, (August 1970): 281.

67 Penvenne, *African Workers*.

workers, its superlative example, its archetype<sup>68</sup>. The African's escape route from his primordial condition, which was categorised and defined as that of the *indígena*, implied their transformation into the 'respectable worker': such was the price to pay for integration into modern life. In Eusébio's autobiography there is a recurrent insistence on this respectability, obvious, for example, when he defends himself against criticism by his former coach, Béla Guttmann, who accused him of leading a loose, undisciplined life. Eusébio was keen to point out that his life was professional and domestic, despite the temptations he was subjected to<sup>69</sup>.

When this process of assimilation, such as in the case of Eusébio, was mediated by an entertainment industry that could transform an anonymous person into a mass idol, the state, ill-prepared to handle the specificities of these new markets built on celebrity, had to search for an adequate response, regulating and co-opting the process, and, in exceptional cases, even granting them state honours.

### **The politics of the subordinate**

In the Portuguese colonial context, the political repertoire that characterised the actions of the 'good boy' remained difficult to convert into any form of collective action. Unlike in other colonial contexts, the so-called "late colonialism" under the Estado Novo maintained the prohibition of political and trade union association beyond official legal frameworks<sup>70</sup>. The context of war led to an increase in surveillance and repression. The impossibility of organised political and labour representation, while not avoiding the political significance of self-subor-

68 See David Goodhew, *Respectability and Resistance: A History of Sophiatown* (Westport: Praeger, 2004).

69 Ferreira, *My name*, 125.

70 On the late colonial period in Mozambique, see also Jeanne Marie Penvenne, *Women, Migration & the Cashew Economy in Southern Mozambique: 1945-1975* (Rochester, NY: James Currey, 2015) and Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo and António Costa Pinto, "A Modernizing Empire? Politics, Culture and Economy in Portuguese Late Colonialism", in *The Ends of European Colonial Empires: Cases and Comparisons*, eds. Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo and António Costa Pinto (Hampshire: Pallgrave, 2015).

dination strategies<sup>71</sup>, limited the capacity for political intervention of these populations, who had never been called upon by the political establishment for any kind of participation, nor were they ever granted an active voice. Yet the distance created between the population and issues of a political nature was one of the dimensions of the social contract that defined the participation of the subaltern in colonial public space, something that in other colonial contexts had begun to change after the Second World War<sup>72</sup>.

Despite the specificities of the Portuguese colonial situation, which made it especially violent and coercive, and where the racial question was a determining and established means of governance, this political impossibility also defined the political public space in the metropole. Historically limited to dominant groups, political participation was organised along clear dividing-lines, between the elites and the general population, which led to the systematic exclusion of subordinate groups from public and political engagement. The long established mistrust of the people's participation in public affairs, namely in terms of the right to vote, justified the existence of a non-universal suffrage – even during the Republican period, prior to Estado Novo – that excluded the poor, the uneducated, and women, and that reproduced a logic of the patron-client system<sup>73</sup>. The Estado Novo reinforced these tendencies. In the metropolitan context, the regime reified countless declensions of the “good boy”, whether it be the “rural man” bound to a cultural community that was aestheticized and staged by state propaganda, thought to be obliging, hardworking and subservient, or “the good wife”, under the thumb of the ‘head of the family’, the urban wholesome and compliant worker, integrated by the corporative system and entrepreneurial paternalism<sup>74</sup>. Within this longstanding framework, the colonized, the

71 James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak. Everyday forms or peasant resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

72 Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945-1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

73 Pedro Tavares de Almeida, António Costa Pinto and Nancy Bermeo, eds., *Who Governs Southern Europe? Regime Change and Ministerial Recruitment, 1850-2000* (London/Portland: Frank Cass, 2003).

74 On the rural population, see Vera Maques Alves, *Arte Popular e Nação no Estado Novo:*

indigenous, the black, were the objects of a radicalised version of this paternalism.

In contrast with the subaltern condition, devoid of political rights, which had been naturalised within the Portuguese sphere, foreign academics and journalists sought to interpret Eusébio as a political, quasi-militant figure individual, in the mould of other notable black athletes throughout the twentieth century<sup>75</sup>. The Mozambican footballer, after all, was one the greatest black athletes in history, the best African player of all time, having come from a background marked by colonial inequality. The imperialist and racist contours that shaped his trajectory made him an even more relevant figure, namely because sport had been converted into a means and field of struggle against racial discrimination and for anti-colonial movements<sup>76</sup>.

Through the process of digging for a politicised angle to Eusébio's discourse, academics and journalists continued to receive evasive answers and the standard retreat into the world of football. "I am football", Eusébio defined himself in an interview<sup>77</sup>. Faced with the insistence of the interviewer, who considered Eusébio to be the most famous African in the world after Nelson Mandela<sup>78</sup>, the Mozambican player replied: "I do not get mixed up in politics, I don't like politics, my only politics is football"<sup>79</sup>. The same evasive stance blocked the questions he was asked about the tumultuous 1970s, ones that addressed the colonial war, a subject he declined to comment upon<sup>80</sup>. In a more recent

*A Política Folclorista do Secretariado da Propaganda Nacional* (Lisbon: ICS, 2013). On the gender issue, see Inês Brasão, *Dons e disciplinas do corpo feminino: os discursos sobre o corpo na história do Estado Novo* (Lisbon: Deriva/Outro Modo, 2017).

75 Ben Carrington, *Race, Sport and Politics. The Sporting Black Diaspora* (London: Sage, 2010); William L. Vand Deburg, *African-American Heroes in their times, 1960-1980* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 84-126.

76 *Id.*, *ibid.* See also Peter Alegi, *Laduma: Soccer, Politics and Society in South Africa* (Natal: University of KwaZulu- Natal Press, 2004); John Nauright, *Sport, Cultures and Identities in South Africa* (London: Leicester Universty Press, 1997), 124-56.

77 Gary Armstrong, "The Migration of the Black Panther: an interview with Eusébio of Mozambique and Portugal", in *Football in Africa, Conflict, Conciliation and Community*, eds. Gary Armstrong and Richard Giulianotti (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2004), 247-68.

78 *Id.*, *ibid.*, 253.

79 *Id.*, *ibid.*, 263.

80 *Id.*, *ibid.*, 261.

interview he once again rehearsed his position towards the world of politics: “My politics is a football at my feet! [...] My politics has always been and always will be football. That’s where I can discuss with and talk to any politician in the world — when the ball’s on my feet, I am in my element”<sup>81</sup>. He further added that the name for which he became known, “the black panther” (“a pantera negra”), given to him by the *Daily Express* journalist Desmond Hackett after a match between England and Portugal at Wembley, in 1961, had caused trouble for him, given its echo of the North American political movement, the “Black Panthers”, which he had no wish to be associated with<sup>82</sup>.

Despite his outstanding sporting career and the social mobility that came with, by keeping away from politics Eusébio was not simply giving voice to a personal view, Though it is true that the detachment from politics is common in his particular field of activity, in that usually football does not mix with politics, his attitude should be interpreted by considering other pervasive constraints. This stance took him back to where he came from, a landscape shared with the other inhabitants of colonial Mozambique, particularly the urban workers and servants of Lourenço Marques.

The arrival of a black man from Mozambique, with no formal education, an idol to his fans for his genius in a minor art, was anchored on services rendered to the nation, performed in the contentious context of the end of an empire, but also to the persistence of the qualities that historically defined the condition of the subaltern, particularly the imperial subaltern. Hence, Eusébio’s humility and simplicity, qualities that could be worthy of praise in a number of circumstances, and evoked on the occasion of the death of a noteworthy citizen, the fitting moment for hyperbolic praise, should, however, be interpreted within the frame of wider processes of social classification and categorisation. The use of these classifications reveals how this operates as an interpretive instrument of political culture and of power relations that

81 Ferreira, ‘Interview’, 43.

82 Simões, *Eusébio*, 41

are embodied in institutions but which survive in habits, bodies, and representations. Put another way, in the face of Eusébio's silence and the lack of any historical counterpoint to his exemplary narrative, the power to represent the subordinate and to speak of, and in the name of, the subordinate, even when he or she is exceptional, survives in those who have enough power to generate a representation of a football player that also operates as a representation of Portugal, its empire and particularly of Mozambique's history.

### **Conclusion**

Named a hero of the people, Eusébio was placed in the Portuguese Pantheon for his popularity in an activity that was widely appreciated, but also because he was "a man of the people" who had, according to his biographical narrative, exemplary behaviour, who was simple, humble, and genuine, who did not forget where he came from, and where he should not tread. Yet, on the football pitch, to the unhappiness of his rivals, Eusébio proved ruthless, intransigent and talented, qualities that would end up defining the relation between fans and his art, though mediated by mass media.

The co-optation of his life by official discourse on Portuguese national memory left Mozambique out of the commemorations. This was in spite of the circumstances in which Eusébio's career unfolded, closely intertwined with the country's recent history and the recurrent reference, by Portuguese authorities, to his role in the creation of the very idea of Lusophony. However, by managing and circumscribing the terms in which Eusébio's history was told, the Portuguese state also controlled a period of Mozambican history in which it was its imperial ruler. The acclamation of Eusébio as a monument to Portuguese history was also a means of narrating colonial history in order to tailor it to contemporary Portuguese nationalism. The official story of Eusébio fits well with a narrative about Portugal's colonial history whose causalities are explained through cultural values: the Mozambican player sacrificed himself to honour Portugal and his club, even when, in fact,

he wished to pursue his professional career, for a higher wage, in foreign clubs<sup>83</sup>.

Somewhat perversely, this official narrative feeds on an economy of affections – of happiness, fulfilment, disappointment and resentment – offered by football, the key reason for its scale, as a screen where aspiration, imaginations and desires for social participation of those who have no voice in the account of Eusébio's story, including himself, are projected. More than forty years after the revolution of 25 April 1974, which put an end to the Estado Novo regime and paved the way for the end of the Portuguese empire in Africa, Eusébio's story continues to narrate the history of empire and Portugal's place in the world along lines that are, in many ways, similar to the representation generated in the 1960s. The conversion of football's economy of happiness into a nationalist capital reified the condition of the subordinate, even when he is a notable figure, and once again elided the aspirations, desires and the logic of practices of football fans. Simultaneously this narrative device becomes a means to re-narrate, through an exceptional biography, the history of Mozambique under Portuguese rule.

83 At a particular scale, this rationale replied the debate about the economic nature of the Portuguese colonial venture. Much in accordance to the Portuguese diplomacy R. J. Hammond supported the argument about the weakness of the economic factors in the Portuguese colonial experience. Years later Gervase Clarence-Smith sustained that those factors were very much present and were central to understand the Portuguese third empire. See Richard James Hammond, *Portugal and Africa, 1815–1910: A Study in Uneconomic Imperialism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966) and Gervase Clarence-Smith, *The Third Portuguese Empire (1825–1975): a study in economic imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985).



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