

**VICENTE, F. L. (ORG.) (2014). *O IMPÉRIO DA VISÃO: FOTOGRAFIA NO CONTEXTO COLONIAL PORTUGUÊS (1860-1960)*. LISBOA: EDIÇÕES 70.**

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*O Império da Visão: Fotografia no Contexto Colonial Português (1860-1960)* developed out of a working group in Portugal titled “Knowledge and Vision: Photography in the Archive and Colonial Portuguese Museum,” lead by the book’s editor Filipa Lowndes Vicente. An interest in photography’s role in colonial exhibitions and the ways in which photography’s use produced a visual culture that marked the historical periods of these particular exhibitions informed the group’s research. This editorial project entailed a classification of collections in public museums and archives in Lisbon and Porto, Portugal, and resulted in work on an array of textual, oral, and visual materials. The selected authors aim to unpack photography’s relationship to colonization, the institutions and actors involved in the documentation (and ultimate unfolding) of Portuguese colonization, and the politics of representing such histories then and now. Many featured scholars interrogate historical moments that influenced their respective disciplinary trainings and understandings of Portugal’s colonial and post-colonial histories. In turn, the book under review here does not only appeal to scholars interested in the Lusophone world but also anthropologists, art historians, historians, cultural theorists, and museum curators in general.

The book includes articles printed in Portuguese, which presents an obstacle for non-Portuguese speaking audiences. Barriers to discursive and spoken language have previously prevented the consideration of Portuguese scholarship on questions of colonization, nationalist movements, and histories of photography both *within* and *beyond* the Lusophone world. For example, in Mozambique, there was a state-sponsored project (1975-1986) to tell a history of Mozambique’s independence from Portugal through the perspective of the colonized subject and not the colonizer. This effort to produce social history initiated at the University of Eduardo Mondlane resulted in the labeling of archival collections in Portugal as representative of the colonizer’s perspective. Such suspicions informed Mozambican efforts to translate scholarship not from Portugal but instead from the United States, the Eastern Bloc, and more recently South Africa. This is then, one of the merits of *O Império da Visão*: to consider theories of photography presented by Anglo and Francophone theorists included Ariella Azoulay, Susan Sontag, Christopher Pinney, Georges Didi-Huberman, and Elizabeth Edwards, and bring them to the discussion in Portuguese. Methodologically speaking, *O Império da Visão* innovates by tracing across an ample panorama the practices of photography, its uses, its material

circulation, and the ways in which it informed popular perceptions of colonialism in the Portuguese-speaking world.

The book's first section, "Classification/Mission," demonstrates the various phases and states associated with colonialism in the Portuguese-speaking world. Section authors document how individual archaeologists and anthropologists, such as António Mendes Correia (Patrícia Ferraz de Matos) and Elmano Cunha e Costa (Cláudia Castelo and Catarina Mateus), and institutions, including the Mozambique Company (Bárbara Direito), the Anthropological Mission of Mozambique (Ana Cristina Roque), and the Anthropological and Ethnographic Mission of Guinea-Bissau (Ana Cristina Martins), produced, used, and viewed photographs on a daily basis. These individual and institutional actors challenged and redefined what Portugal considered as its colonies. In some instances, photographers and their prints traveled directly between Angola and Mozambique, thereby both defying and redefining the Metropole-Colony dichotomy. Island nations, such as São Tomé and Príncipe, also were formative to photographic and visual practices embraced by Portuguese administrators. Based on the analysis achieved in the first section, the authors suggest that the Portuguese state located and defined its foreign territories not through the activities of its officials but instead individuals and non-state institutions, which designed and operated vast infrastructures of buildings, photographic technologies, and employees. For example, Bárbara Direito studies the production of photo albums by the Mozambique-based photographer José dos Santos Rufino, and she argues that photographs generally relegated to the category of portraits were instrumental in Portuguese officials' formulations of class and racial categories. The hierarchies established the context for the challenges that the Portuguese state faced to its rule during the 1950s and 1960s. By extension these same photographs, used by Portuguese officials in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century to consolidate their control and legitimacy, reveal the complex lives of their producers beyond the dichotomy of colonizers and colonized. Ultimately, this section proposes the need to refine definitions of Portuguese colonization through a rethinking of how an individual chronicles and understands the chronicling of Portuguese colonial rule.

Themes that run throughout the book's second section, "Knowledge/Circulation," include disinformation, visual representation, and the role of imagination as intermediary. The focus here is on how photography contributed to the formation of knowledge on tropical environments, plants, and human populations. The authors also consider how individuals and institutions archived historical experiences by taking pictures, collecting them, and even publishing them. This analysis highlights how knowledge gathered in the colonies reached Portugal and informed the creation and operation of major research and administrative institutions and centers of archiving, such as the Society of Geography, which oversaw and carried out Portuguese colonization in Africa and Asia from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The reader thus learns about the methods used by naturalists to identify plants, and how in some instances they misidentified species because they viewed cropped photographs. In another instance, Teresa Mendes Flores proposes that the practice of medicine in colonial Angola revolved around the picturing of modern-designed

hospitals and clinics in conjunction with pictures of physically deformed Africans. The articles of Nuno Borges de Araújo, António Carmo Gouveia, and Paulo Jorge Fernandes introduce the imaginative as a critical space through which colonizing and colonized populations attached certain social and political relationships to the colonizing project. Here, the “colonial” is not a reality but a type of worldview that characterizes the late 19<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We learn in this section how the Portuguese used pictures of African workers not only to win support for its economic and touristic projects, but also to justify the building of infrastructures to fill the physical landscape (that is, precisely the voids documented by Santos Rufino and some of the other photographers addressed in the book’s first part). Mário Machaqueiro analyzes newspaper publications that included pictures of Black Muslim populations from Africa, and how the Portuguese used these pictures to display their own influence, including officials’ roles as intermediaries and facilitators. Machaqueiro argues that captions and other forms of textual qualifications did not necessarily represent the photographed subjects’ actual cultural practices and nationalities, which government agencies classified according to religion, ethnicity, or skin color. When read across the span of Portuguese colonial rule, these photographs and accompanying text reveal the different priorities of the Portuguese state, which sometimes prioritized religion over ethnicity or skin color over nationality depending on the state of colonial affairs.

Posters, atlases, *cartes-de-visites*, books, and photo albums act as the backdrop for Portuguese colonialism’s unfolding. When reading the book’s third part, “Exhibition/Reproduction,” one is easily drawn to the photographs that depict officials of the colonizing state either looking at other photographs or being photographed in front of other photographs. Such pictures suggest that administrative officials connected with the colonies largely through photographs —acts of looking— and other presentations featured at the countless exhibitions that the Portuguese state hosted, or participated in, across Europe and in its own colonies in Asia and Africa. But what audiences saw at exhibitions in Portugal was not necessarily what visitors encountered in curated spaces in Africa and Asia, as Filipa Lowndes Vicente notes in her article on the exhibition of Goa and Goans across the Portuguese Empire. Exhibitions across the Portuguese colonial world introduced complicated social, economic, and diplomatic spaces that Portuguese officials always felt compelled to define, defend, or challenge depending on the circumstances. Atlases and photo albums represented the travels of Portuguese populations across vast geographical spaces in Africa and Asia, but they worked in tandem. Through their illustrative capacities to facilitate a type of mapping, atlases and photo albums allowed the Portuguese state, again largely through the imaginative realm, to bridge distances and divides that posed challenges to its social and economic projects. Vicente explains that the very same photographs deployed by Portuguese officials to map and represent the Portuguese Empire also depicted populations native to the colonies holding cameras and looking back with both their eyes and camera lenses at colonizing agents. The consideration by Maria do Carmo Piçarra of a history of filmmaking in the colonies introduces issues of censorship and reception, in particular how audiences responded to pictures

and the controversies that engulfed certain forms of visual representations. Portuguese censorship, it seems, was in tension with filmmaking, and in turn, Portuguese officials embraced photography as the preferred mode of representation.

At the book's outset, the esteemed historian James Ryan makes two important interventions. First, he inserts the histories of photography in the Portuguese-speaking world into a broader panorama of colonial histories of photography, where the Anglophone and Francophone worlds still dominate. This intervention allows readers to identify certain similarities and differences in the appropriation and use of photography in global colonizing efforts. Second, in response to the discovery of new photographic and illustrative materials as a result of digital platforms, Ryan warns scholars that their investigations and analyses are neither separate nor different from the historical actors and institutions that they document. In turn, Ryan urges attentiveness to today's practices of knowledge production and the need to contextualize them within broader historical trends. The book's last section, titled "Resistance/Memory," takes up Ryan's provocations while building on previous sections in terms of its emphasis on the networks of people connected through the practice, use, and viewing of photography and in terms of evaluating the influence of photography on Portuguese colonizing efforts, specifically in terms of rallying and using public opinion to legitimize its activities. The authors included in this section explore how photography informs and structures the "telling" of history. Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo's study of pictures of atrocities in Congo suggests that photographs are inherently biased through the ways they force viewing publics to confront and label what they understand "suffering" to mean. In her article on the colonial war and liberation struggle in Guinea-Bissau, based on oral histories with former African combatants, Catarina Laranjeiro highlights how soldiers did not keep colonial-era photographs out of fear of arrest and public humiliation. Of particular interest are the very ways that the visual, here understood as either the photographic print or the recalling of seeing photographs, has influenced combatants' experiences and memories of Portuguese colonialism and war. Afonso Ramos studies the ways in which Portuguese officials based in Lisbon used the calculated presentation and circulation of photographs of dead civilian bodies killed on 15 March 1961 during a key military incursion of African liberation forces in Angola to influence and mobilize public opinion for Portuguese military interventions in Africa. It is striking how the experiences of Guinea-Bissauans viewing photographs resonate with those of civilians living in Portugal at the time of the liberation struggle — both informed by fear derived from photographs and what photographers were perceived to illustrate.

By inserting the history of photography in the Portuguese-speaking colonial world into a broader scholarly panorama, *O Império da Visão* introduces new conceptual and methodological approaches to the study of photography and prompts a rethinking of the central questions that up until now have informed the study of photography and colonialism. As an encyclopedic resource, the text offers a much-needed guide to navigate some of the diverse archival collections specifically in Portugal. Conceptually, the collection of essays rightly reminds the reader of the need for broad and changing definitions

of photography, characterizations that do not limit photography to simply the taking of pictures and that highlight photography's complex and evolving roles in processes of colonization and decolonization. Lastly, the book highlights the historical politics of writing and studying photography in the geographical, historical, and imaginative spaces of the Portuguese Empire and contemporary Portugal. //

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#### **BIOGRAPHIC NOTE**

Drew Thompson received a PhD in History from the University of Minnesota, and is currently Assistant Professor of Historical and Africana Studies at Bard College, where he teaches and writes on the topics of visual history, African liberation struggles, post-colonial theory, and histories of technology. He co-edited with Paolo Israel and Rui Asubuji a special issue of the peer-reviewed journal *Kronos* titled "The Liberation Script in Mozambican History," and at present is working on a monograph tentatively titled "Photography's Bureaucracy: Constructing Colony and Nation in Mozambique, 1960 to Recent Times".

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