Violence, migration, cooperation, gender. Late Portuguese and Spanish colonialism in Africa reconsidered

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Colonialism and decolonisation continue to be thriving fields of study today. Research, however, is still mostly conceptualised within one empire or even one (post-)colonial territory alone. While Britain and France, perceived as the 'biggest' colonial powers in the 20th century, are treated in nearly innumerable studies, their 'smaller' counterparts are considerably less researched and seldom taken into account in comparative literature. Nine specialists addressed this desideratum for the two Iberian powers in Africa at the international workshop „Violence, migration, cooperation, gender. Late Portuguese and Spanish colonialism in Africa reconsidered", held at the University of Bern. By bringing approaches such as Social History and comparative perspectives to bear on a field from which they have largely been absent to date, the presenters tried to shed new light on its very complexity.

After his welcoming introduction, the conference organiser, ANDREAS STUCKI (Bern), announced that ELIZABETH BUETTNER (Amsterdam) would be unable to attend. Her keynote, in which she compared the highly selective colonial memory politics in post-colonial Belgium and Portugal, was therefore distributed in print form.

It seems suitable here to first cite the presentation most explicitly construed to debunk established simplifications. In this respect, ALEXANDER KEESE (Geneva) elucidated the many levels at play in the social history of the Portuguese late colonial state on the Cape Verdian island of Santo Antão. The archipelago witnessed no open rebellion. In the 1950s and 1960s workers' protests on road construction sites and in the cities were interpreted by the political police as the results of rumours spread by a former Creole administrator and members of the nationalist movement (PAIGC). Notwithstanding the (highly doubtable) truth of these claims, Keese emphasised the political police's apparent mistrust in the administration. Local administrators also wanted to strengthen social discipline, as their complaints about workers' drinking and sexual habits indicate. Pointing to the fact that sources would be marked by either a narrative of hysteria (suspecting 'Communist' or PAIGC subversion everywhere) or of homestead improvement (stressing social demands and conflicts on the ground), Keese asked whether historians should further advocate the 'heroic narrative' (claiming widespread participation in revolutionary activity) championed by PAIGC supporters. A focus on social issues would show much more continuity into the post-colonial era.

The Portuguese policies in their wars against the African nationalist movements in Angola and Mozambique were examined by MIGUEL BANDEIRA JERÓNIMO (Coimbra/Lisbon) and ANDREAS ZEMAN (Bern) from very different angles. Jerónimo provided a general assessment of the connected histories of Portuguese late colonial developmentalism and securitarianism. Drawing from a strongly internationalised pool of knowledge and experts on counter-insurgency, Portugal would have implemented inherently militarised social welfare policies which sought to radically 'modernise' and at the same time 'stabilise' rural populations. These policies included the resettlement of roughly two million peasants into fortified villages (aldeamentos) in the two territories. In Angola at least, military men practising social development work would have become a characteristic image of these endeavours – an image which also circulated widely for promotional use. Criticising the prevalent scholarly focus on the belligerent parties, Zeman focused on how the war was experienced by the inhabitants of a village on the eastern shore of Lake Malawi. He explained how they initially supported the nationalist movement Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (FRELIMO), but then in the course of the war became contributors to the Portuguese war effort. In order to disrupt the support FRELIMO initially enjoyed, Por-

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tuguese forces started to resettle the whole rural population into aldeamentos. People evading resettlement were targeted by Portuguese scorched earth policies. These policies led to widespread famine in the zones outside the camps. In response, most people fled to neighbouring countries or to the aldeamentos. In contradistinction to earlier research, Zeman demonstrated that people did not necessarily perceive life in the aldeamentos in a very negative manner. In this case, the aldeamento even created a certain attraction as the local navy base offered many jobs to its inhabitants.

Examining war and forced modernisation in Western Sahara, FRANCESCO CORREALE (Tours) also underlined the divisive effects of late Spanish colonial rule. Moreover, Correale contextualised his findings within the nearly undisputed hegemony of national historiography in and on Western Sahara. The sparsely populated territory initially witnessed a Spanish colonisation of minimalist financial investment. In 1956, a part of the Moroccan guerrilla movement avoided integration into the Moroccan army and withdrew into the mountains. Doubting rapid French defeat in Algeria, they attacked Spanish posts. In a common campaign, France and Spain used their air forces to deliberately bomb the Spanish Saharan hinterland. The recruitment of Sahrawi into their troops gave rise to serious animosities. Additionally, many people were forcibly displaced in the border areas and some deported to the Canary Islands. The territory's inclusion as a Spanish province from 1959 onwards introduced minimal administrative and educational structures as well as social welfare spending, all concentrated in the cities. These measures of repression and cooptation, Correale asserted, left behind many conflicts.

Questions of migration and conflict shaped by colonial intervention and related to the power to define and demarcate national (or sub-national) identities and entitlements were a common focus of the papers of CHRISTOPH KALTER (Berlin) and YOLANDA AIXELÀ-CABRÉ (Barcelona). Kalter focused on the dramatic demographic shift that occurred in the few months after the Carnation Revolution 1974, when between five and eight hundred thousand people migrated out of the colonies to Portugal. Considering the initial difficulties and conflicts they faced, Kalter recounted the subsequent emergence of a narrative of successful integration, advocated by politicians, journalists and sociologists. As this narrative would dominate all debates around the topic, the paper re-examined it's validity by an analysis of state housing assistance. The 15 percent of the retornados without homes were provided in part with primitive facilities in remote districts, with some non-whites even housed in prison cells. These retornados were also 'racially' classified, despite the fact that this classification lacked any legal relevance. According to Kalter, this marked a shift from the rhetoric of racial inclusion to an exclusive official racism. Sensitive to differentials in wealth and skin-colour, Kalter emphasised the uneven nature of the integration of retornatos.

AIXELÀ-CABRÉ compared the role of Bata (Equatorial Guinea) and Al Hoceima (Morocco) in shaping the respective (sub-)national identities. Both cities were created as military posts in settlement areas of Fang or Berber people respectively, with their city centres inhabited for decades almost exclusively by Europeans. The expansion of Bata as the Spanish Guinean mainland's capital reduced the significance of the Bubi, the main ethnic group on the island Fernando Po, as the prevalent colonial intermediaries. At the same time, the Al Hoceima's surrounding villages in the Riff mountains mainly interacted with the city as a market place. The political centralisation of Morocco after independence 1956 marginalised the Riffians and reinforced their distinct group identity. After Equatorial Guinean independence in 1968, many Africans moved to Bata and contributed to its quick growth, most prominently members of the Fang, to which the first president (and soon dictator) Macias Nguema belonged. Both (post)-colonial cities therefore became springboards for the power of defining (sub-)national identity.

Discussing both Iberian dictatorships' official women's organisations and their expanding efforts in the colonies from the late 1950s on, ANDREAS STUCKI (Bern) and ENRIQUE BENGOCHEA TIRADO (Valencia) stressed

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the colonial powers' new focus on women as pillars of African societies. While many in Portugal's elite circles still saw the empire as mainly a man's undertaking, Stucki presented the journeys of members of Mocidade Portuguesa Feminina (MPF) across the colonies in the late 1950s and the concurrent positive reception of the writings of Maria Salema, a teacher born in Mozambique and later a MPF commissioner for overseas, by Portuguese officials as a change in perception. Salema portrayed African women as birth- and workforces of African men and in need of more 'modern' cooking, household and childcare skills. MPF became concerned with propagating and indoctrinating such values to assimilated female elites, who then were supposed to educate more African women. The ideals of MPF were enacted in many places and even staged in prominent competitions. Although these activities worked only as a proxy for the cause of imperial endurance, it created new social possibilities for metropolitan and African women. The dictatorships, Stucki concluded, intervened into the family and thereby blurred the limits between open violence and cultural assimilation.

Focusing on the Spanish counterpart Sección Femenina (SF), BENGOCHEA TIRADO referenced the fact that its foundational purpose in 1934 was to generate supplementary support for the Fascist Falange party. A central aspect of SF's catholic nationalism was regional folklore. After the bloody establishment of Spain's dictatorship, SF had the task of organising different regional folklorist sets in a horizontal manner. When Spanish Sahara was redefined as a Spanish province in 1959, SF was challenged to incorporate Muslim women into its representational canon. While defining Sahrawi Regionalism as 'nearly, but not entirely equal', SF almost monopolised the administrative access to Sahrawi women and codified local dances like the ones in Spain. Sahrawi women were taken by SF to Spain, fashioned as representatives of 'their' region and presented, for example, at the Spring Exhibition in Barcelona. As Spanish Sahara was a colony and its women were Muslim, these integrative efforts remained very limited.

The workshop promoted productive discussion of several aspects of Portuguese and Spanish late colonialism. The debate carved out some distinct contours of Iberian late colonialism, notably its fundamentally authoritarian nature and widespread military activities. Both colonial powers did not allow political participation, because it would have been against the logic of the whole system. This assumption is supported by the centrifugal effects of the introduction of participatory institutions in Equatorial Guinea from 1959 onwards. Taking into account the exodus triggered by the Macías Nguema dictatorship, both Iberian countries witnessed extraordinary post-colonial immigration in the 1970s, although on very different scales.[1] A more specific issue was the uneven relevance of the 'hysteria narrative' in different Portuguese colonies, which was explained by different inter-institutional hegemonies (of the army, the political police etc.). Another unresolved question was the extent to which MPF and SF were able to reach into African societies.

Whereas the presentations revealed some epistemological tensions between proponents of New Imperial History and African History (to name only the predominant approaches), there was agreement on the need to analytically overcome the simplifications of national historiography and other old dichotomies. In that respect, the workshop provided much food for thought towards a both comprehensive and a more nuanced understanding of the contradictory effects of colonialism and decolonisation in Africa.

Conference Overview:

Introduction and Keynote

ANDREAS STUCKI (Bern): Introduction

ELIZABETH BUETTNER (Amsterdam): Keynote Lecture. Europe after Empire:

[1] From the estimated total of 120.000 people who fled Equatorial Guinea in the years 1969-79, about 8.500 went to Spain, 65.000 to Gabon and 35.000 to Cameroon. Max Liniger-Goumaz, Historical dictionary of Equatorial Guinea.Third edition, Lanham (MD) / London 2000, p. 409. For a discussion of several estimations see Yolanda Aixela Cabre, Equatorial Guinean women's roles after migration to Spain: Conflicts between women's androcentric socialization in Equatorial Guinea and their experiences after migration, in: Urban Anthropology, 42 (1, 2), 2013, p. 1-55, p. 13f.

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Decolonization, society, and culture

Section I
Chair: CHRISTIAN GERLACH (Bern)

MIGUEL BANDEIRA JERÓNIMO (Coimbra/Lisbon): The development of repression: Violence, modernisation and the 'social realm' in the Portuguese empire, 1945-1975

ANDREAS ZEMAN (Bern): What about the water? Towards a social history of the war in Mozambique, 1964-1974

CHRISTOPH KALTER (Berlin): The success story of integration and what is wrong with it. Portugal's retornados, 1974-2014

YOLANDA AIXELÀ-CABRÉ (Barcelona): Colonies, migrants, and identity: Spain, Morocco and Equatorial Guinea, 1927-2015

Section II
Chair: TANJA BÜHRER (Bern)

FRANCESCO CORREALE (Tours): Réprimer et coopter au Sahara: le jeu des allégeances « sahraouies » à la colonisation espagnole (1958-1975)

ALEXANDER KEESE (Geneva): Understanding the Portuguese late colonial state as social history: Lessons from Cabo Verde, 1955-1975

ENRIQUE BENGOCHEA TIRADO (Valencia): Sección Femenina in Spanish Sahara: Framing women's body in imperial discourse, 1961-1975

ANDREAS STUCKI (Bern): Charming women's 'hearts and minds'? Mocidade Portuguesa Feminina and Sección Femenina in Africa, 1960-1975

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