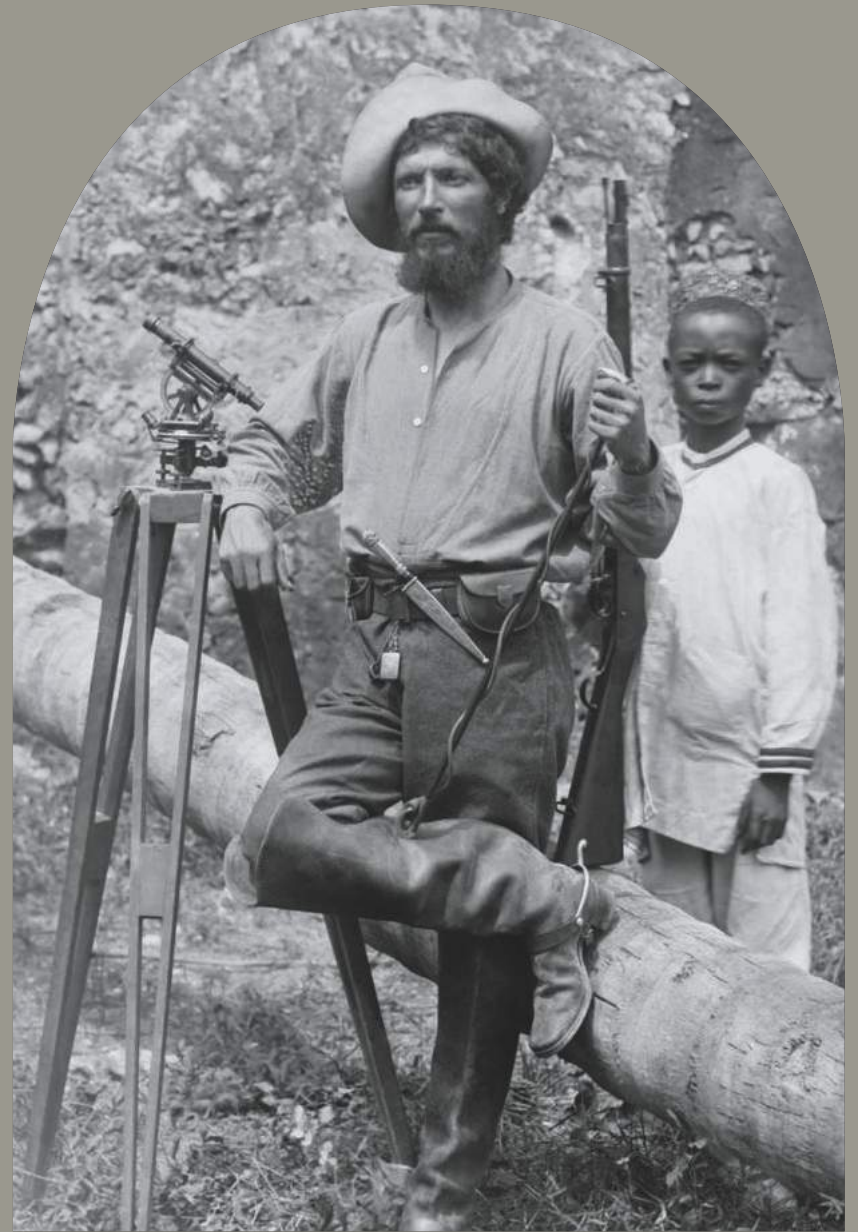


V I S I O N S
— OF —
E M P I R E





MIGUEL BANDEIRA JERÓNIMO
AND JOANA PONTES

Photography was a crucial element in the history of modern Portuguese colonialism. The idealization and knowledge of the colonial territories, their resources and populations, would have been different in its absence. Photographic images were staged and commercialized with diverse purposes. They changed hands, both officially and secretly, and they were forgotten or destroyed. They documented individual and collective dreams and memories. They fueled the imagination around colonial domination, helping to make it come true. They contributed to defining a particular vision of the “Other” as *essentially* different – regarding ways of life, customs and mentality – and to the establishment and maintenance of laws and practices founded on political, social, economic and cultural discrimination and drawn along racial lines. But they also served to denounce the iniquities and violence of colonialism, encouraging aspirations for a more humane and egalitarian future that spanned various political hues and orientations. Their uses in the past and their legacy in the present were, and still are, vast, heterogeneous and long-lasting. *Visions of Empire* offers us a glimpse into the contexts of production and the uses of photography, connecting them to some of the main events and processes that shaped the history of the modern Portuguese empire.

What about the Others



What about the Others who loved and raised other people's children, who built houses, roads, factories, hospitals from which they did not benefit? If they only made them, if they only poured sweat and blood during and after their conception.

What about the Others robbed of feelings of despair or sadness, since the strength of non-feeling was their only weapon against the ruler?

What about the Others who recounted their sorrows by word of mouth, running the risk of seeing them dissipate with time, wane through lack of detail, dismissed with *you weren't there, you must be exaggerating?*

The uncivilized, the tamed, the conquered whose stories were not told on classroom blackboards. Stories that are still untold. They hope to see them told one day.

What about the Others who were deprived of their customs, traditions, and names? They rejoice in the silence of the night, shrouded by the dark possibility of reliving who they are.

And so much of the Other we were yesterday and will be tomorrow. And so much of the Other we impatiently expect, desperately hope, and ardently pray that the world will have the decency to never usurp again.

Then we will tirelessly pray and honor The Others.

F I E L D S

2



From geography to medicine and anthropology, numerous scientific disciplines were called on to support the mission of colonizing and “civilizing” the territories and populations under Portuguese rule. The “scientific occupation” of the colonies was a crucial goal of the imperial state. Images of fieldwork and scientific progress helped legitimize Portuguese rule over distant lands and peoples. They were proof of the supposedly altruistic pursuit of moral and material advancement that underpinned Portuguese and European colonialism. Moreover, images depicting the implementation of scientific knowledge gave the sometimes accurate impression of solid domination, control and materialized progress. These images corresponded, however, to a more complex reality, one marked by a frequent scarcity of human and material resources and by a significant reliance on the cooperation of local populations until the end of the empire.

CLÁUDIA CASTELO
AND CATARINA MATEUS

O F S C I E N C E



DOCUMENTED

2

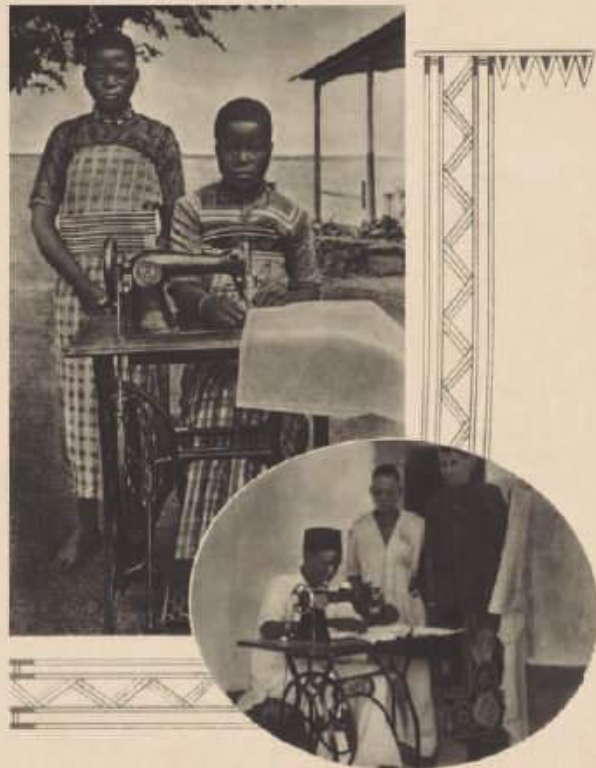


In order to rule over diverse populations it was necessary to broaden the knowledge about their “traditions” and “customs”, forms of social organization and interaction, and political, economic and socio-cultural practices. Tax collection, the securing of labor and the exploitation of colonial raw materials would have been impossible without it. This process, in turn, reinforced existing conceptions about the “Other” as essentially different, overshadowing common traits that unite all of humanity. To this end, photographic images were powerful instruments, underlining the “exotic” nature and “backwardness” of these peoples. Eventually they became flesh and blood, such as the infamous “human zoos”. In this way, they convincingly and efficiently projected the belief in a “natural inequality” between races, legitimizing European tutelage over a diverse group of human beings and validating their subjugation and exploitation. These effects can still be felt today.

MIGUEL BANDEIRA JERÓNIMO
AND JOANA PONTES

(AND EXHIBITED)
“OTHERS”

DISTRITO DE MOÇAMBIQUE



"Hava" Domestica and Tula.

Comissão e oficiais locais.

Comissão de trabalho agrícola.



The archived “other”



The place occupied by colonial photographic production in archives is defined *a priori*, since in it the “Other” depicted in the images only exists as an observed object. Identifying and cataloguing difference has always been the responsibility of those who establish the canons. They were the creative minds, they were the ones who set the standard to be followed. They always looked at the “Other” as different, an object for analysis, without even considering that they might be observed themselves. The individuals who established the canons did not think of themselves as different from anyone. They were the rule, the default, the law. Those photographed, i.e. the “indigenous”, “native”, “exotic”, “assimilated”, and so on, they were different, they were curiosities. Those who photographed, or told others to photograph, were the model to be followed, the hegemony that created and set the rules, frameworks, and ways of seeing.

CARMEN ROSA

“PROOFS” OF



“CIVILIZATION”



“Slave cocoa”



The abolition of slavery and the slave trade within the Portuguese empire in the 19th century did not mean the sudden end of coercive forms of labor and inhumane working conditions. It was followed by the legalization of forced labor among the colonized populations. Accusations of “modern slavery” within the empire multiplied, especially from abroad, acquiring an international resonance. The “cocoa scandal” was a prime example of this.

Based on complaints regarding the lack of freedom of thousands of Angolans and Mozambicans who were forced to migrate to São Tomé and Príncipe to work in plantations (roças), it involved missionaries, industrialists, journalists, doctors, plantations owners, and public authorities. The captured images served many purposes: they were the “proof” of “civilization” mobilized against evidence of the “civilized savagery” promoted by Portuguese and European colonialism.



From “pacification” to “pacification”



The visual projection of authority and sovereignty, at times painstakingly staged, was a constant element of colonialism. In this process, photography was decisive, fuelling visions of power and order, loyalty and obedience, “civilization” and “progress”. Its symbolic power was well-known.

But photography also documented the material and symbolic violence that shaped colonization, from the numerous “campaigns of pacification” until the decolonization wars. Many of these images still endure in the collective imagery of our colonial and national past.

“On the difficulties to make the natives work”



How to overcome the “difficulties to make the native work” and fight the native communities’ supposed “natural idleness”? Markedly racist, the responses of the Portuguese authorities agreed on at least one aspect: without African arms, the creation of “new Brazils in Africa” would be impossible. Their labor was crucial in “scientific missions”, construction of infrastructure, extraction of raw materials, cultivation in plantations, and even the “pacification” of the colonized. The “moral obligation to work”, applied exclusively to Africans, sometimes under “conditions analogous to slavery”, prevailed in public discourse, legislative texts, and administrative practices. This obligation was enshrined in legislation until 1962. More than education or religious conversion, the Portuguese “civilizing mission” depended on it. Despite the rhetoric and propaganda widely promoted by photography, the idea of “civilization through work” endured. The inequality in wages, rights and social benefits, drawn along racial lines, shaped labor and social relations until the end of the empire.



The “workshops of the soul”



From early on, education and evangelization were presented as tools and goals of the “civilizing mission” by both colonial rulers and religious and educational authorities. Their materialization, however, was far from corresponding to the imperial rhetoric.

The causes were to be found not only in the dearth of human and material resources, but also in the lack of political will to endow African populations with the same political and social instruments and rights awarded to Europeans.

Nonetheless, in the realm of organized faith, we can identify important differences between the catholic and protestant sectors, including a greater proximity to and reliance on the Portuguese colonial administration by the former. Regarding education, despite

numerous visual performances with overt political and ideological purposes, racial discrimination was always present. There were, however, a few later efforts, especially from the 1960s onwards, to expand the access to education to the autochthonous populations.

THE WORLDS OF

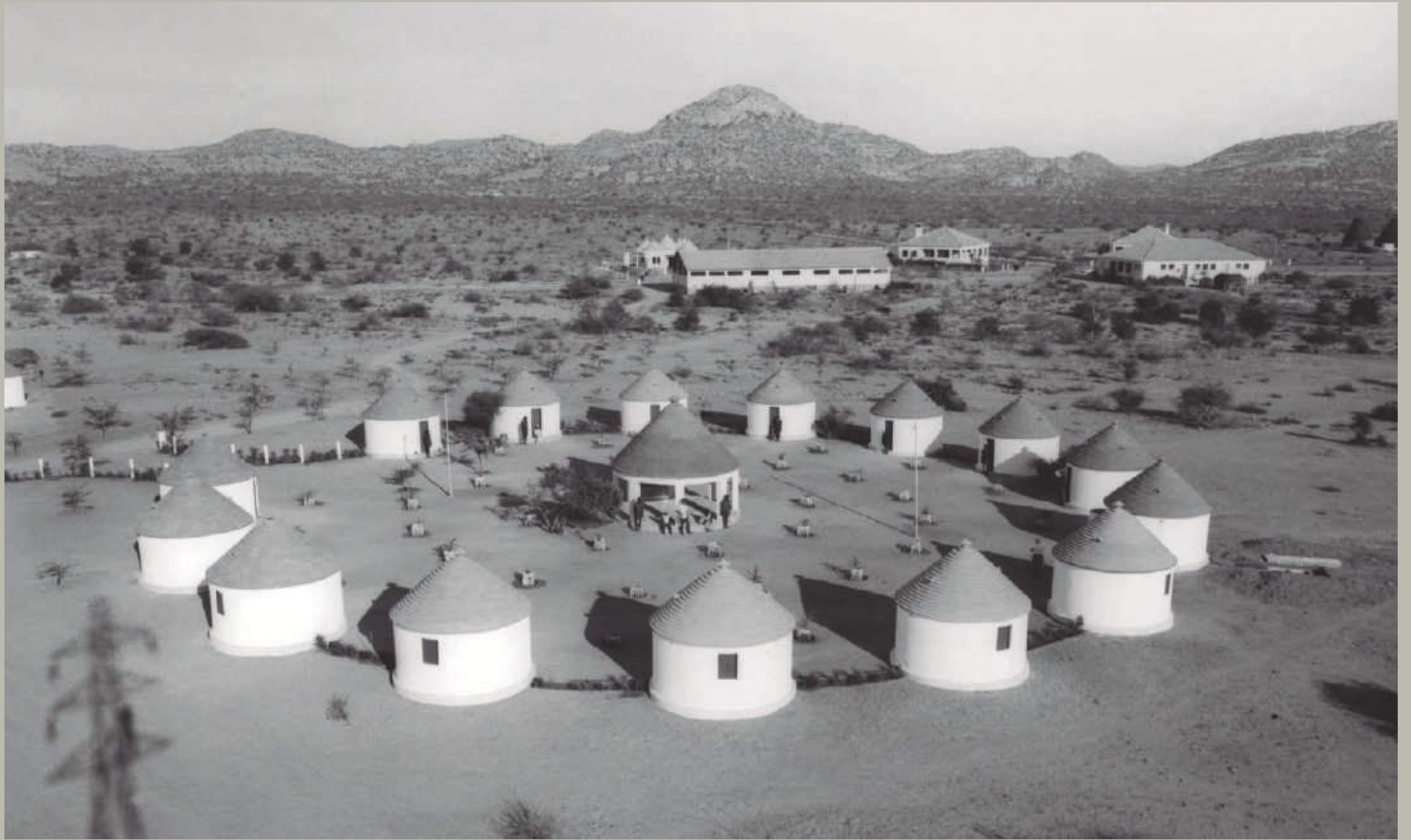


(UNDER) DEVELOPMENT

Populate, resettle and control



Since the end of the 19th century, the project of transforming Angola and Mozambique into “white settlement” colonies was regularly discussed, albeit with little success. Portuguese emigration was mostly headed for Brazil. Moreover, the Estado Novo feared the political and social effects of the arrival of settlers with little education or capital. From the 1950s onwards, the majority of those who migrated to Africa settled in cities, worked in the tertiary sector, and took their place in a social structure based on profound racial inequality. “White settlement” was seen as a tool for advancing the progress of the colonies. Nonetheless, the efforts for an organized and directed colonization were not solely focused on the European population. They extended to African populations, striving to contribute to their economic and social “development”, while also facilitating a tighter social control. This trend would intensify during the wars of decolonization: the “concentration” of populations in “strategic villages”, which entailed the forced relocation of African populations, mostly women and children, represented a fundamental tenet of the Portuguese “counter-subversion” strategy, combining repression and “development”. Numerous photographs recorded this process, sometimes with propaganda goals.



The battle for development



The promise of material progress and improvement was intrinsically connected to the Portuguese occupation of Africa. “Colonial development” was mostly understood as economic growth. Only in the 1960s did the provision of social services start to gain traction. The access to social benefits and provisions, however, was still marked by profound racial inequality and discrimination. The norms and programs fostered by international organizations, which focused on the development and emancipation of individuals and local communities, were selectively and instrumentally appropriated: it was crucial to show some conformity with international agendas, even if Portugal’s motives and desired results were different, that is, mostly the perpetuation of colonial order. As political and military turmoil grew, development plans increasingly incorporated securitarian and military concerns. The “battle for development”, which included the systematic use of photography, was an important factor in resisting the “winds of change”.



THE PRACTICES



The dynamics of social and economic development that characterized the Portuguese colonies in the second half of the 20th century profoundly transformed colonial societies. This was certainly the case in cities, where more and more Africans arrived, escaping from forced labor, compulsory cultivation schemes, and the discretionary power of the colonial and “traditional” authorities that prevailed in rural contexts. Africans largely contributed to the construction of the “European city”, but were mostly pushed to segregated suburbs, where they preserved their beliefs, traditions, and ethnic affinities. But they also embraced what the modern city had to offer. Africans organized sports clubs and competitions, they tried their hand at cinema, recreated musical practices, and appropriated global styles. Some of those born in the outskirts proved to be talented performers, both in sports and in music. Some were given instrumental use by the authorities: they were useful in enhancing the prevailing luso-tropicalism at a time of growing opposition to Portuguese rule in Africa. In the colonies, however, the logic of racial discrimination continued.

NUNO DOMINGOS

OF CULTURE



THE WARS

2



The outbreak of armed conflict in Angola in 1961, and its expansion into other territories in the following years, was accompanied by the massive production and circulation of photographs. Their uses varied: they gave form to propaganda and public relations strategies (that did not, for the most part, correspond to the facts) and fueled discourses denouncing or praising Portuguese colonial rule, in Lisbon or Luanda, in British newspapers or in the United Nations' headquarters in New York. This "evidence" was globally reproduced in newspapers and books.

The photographs documented (and manipulated) atrocities, the everyday lives of troops, and the choreographies of the conflict. They reflected individual and collective victories and suffering, on both sides. In these images military and strategic aspects are rendered, but also other social and cultural dimensions that deeply shaped the conflicts. In them we find pain and faith, doubt and certainty, euphoria and sorrow. The plural worlds of a war with its parade of hardships.

MIGUEL BANDEIRA JERÓNIMO,
JOSÉ PEDRO MONTEIRO, JOANA PONTES,
AFONSO DIAS RAMOS

OF THE WAR

The kingdom of (in)visibility



In the second half of the 20th century, the Portuguese colonies were known as the kingdom of invisibility in the international press. With the war, the Estado Novo's propaganda and censorship apparatuses furthered their efforts to limit the access of public opinion to images related to the conflict. Nonetheless, the massacres initiated in the north of Angola against the colonial presence, in March 1961, generated the world's greatest campaign of shocking images promoted by the Portuguese authorities. On the other hand, the circulation of a single photograph showing the reprisals inflicted by Portuguese soldiers and militias entailed imprisonment. There are few images of the guerrilla fighters, sometimes invisible, other times portrayed as cannibals, meant to incite a moral panic. The public display of the victims' corpses was useful for the regime, justifying the military resistance to decolonization. With the aim of mobilizing social society, intimidating the rebels, and silencing the critics, the regime also meticulously crafted a cult of images of multiracial harmony and social consensus. Visuality was an asymmetric manifestation of power and played a central role in the waging of war, i.e. in the way in which it was recorded and is now remembered.



From Luanda to New York



Modern Portuguese colonialism was the object of international denunciation and accusation since its inception. In a context characterized by debates concerning global decolonization, the Portuguese reluctance to promote actual and effective political and social reforms and, above all, to recognize the right to self-determination of the colonial populations intensified this criticism.

The denunciation focused on ethnic-racial discrimination, repression of civil rights, lack of political rights, and violation of human rights, linked to the exploitation of forced labor, for example. At the United Nations, the Portuguese tried to defend themselves against the accusations, using photographs to prove a supposed social harmony and progress.

2



A few years after the bus boycott held in Montgomery, Alabama (U.S.A.), and soon after the “Luanda riots” of 1961, a photograph provided by the Portuguese UN delegation showed white and black people sitting side by side on a bus. But hundreds of documents – texts and images – confirmed the opposite of what the photograph suggested.

In the makeshift black board calculations were made. Such arithmetic went beyond numbers and additions. There, destiny was multiplied.

This image, this simple image can be a testimony that neutralizes oblivion. It is an image that insists on testifying: this crime occurred, this past happened, these people belong to the group of survivors.





The people look like they are made of light. A feeling of order prevails, the resigned wait for the arrival of an authority who will emerge from the building that, in the distance, might be a mere façade.



This the ordering of chaos. On the table (is it a table, a bed, or a coffin?) lie conveniently folded clothes (are flags the clothes of a country?).



On the other side of the river, lives the unknown. The bush. The forest. In that mist hide enemy troops. But the real war is always waged against an invisible enemy.



What is briefly pretense, becomes the cruelest reality the next minute.



Does the war medal reward bravery or treason? Does it celebrate loyalty or cruelty? This commendation has no scenery, there is no time or place. It is a ceremony without a ceremony.

Signs of life



I found this photograph of an unknown soldier at the flea market. I do not know his name or where in Africa it was taken. From the insignia on his uniform, I conclude that he is a private first class. From the badge on his cap, that he belongs to the Infantry. He is wearing his combat uniform near a small altar, perhaps the Company's chapel. Behind him, there is the image of Our Lady of Fátima. Like many others, this photograph circulated between Africa and the metropole, by mail or aerogram, refreshing the memory of those who left and those who stayed, since *the eyes want to see what the heart cannot forget*. Being thousands of miles away from home, for at least two years, was an experience that would leave scars forever. Like many others that circulate in the public space today, this image only shows us the body of a man posing for the photographer. Can we find in the small details what is believed to be hidden? Someone holding a camera crystalized a fraction of time, a moment that summons memory and history. This is the bridge offered by photography.

Instants of the conflict



Portugal became involved in a colonial conflict spanning three African territories in 1961-1964. It was an anachronistic political decision. Internationally, it was unreasonable and went against the will of the community of nations. But, for the regime, it was the justification of its own survival. In fact, to negotiate the colonies' status would have meant calling into question one of its main ideological pillars, the myth of a multiracial and pluricontinental country. It was only when the Movement of Armed Forces seized power in 25 April, 1974 that Portugal started negotiating with the liberation movements, putting an end to the war and bringing the dreams of the colonized to fruition. When visiting this period of the recent history of Portugal and of the new countries we encounter a world that suddenly disappeared, but whose marks are concealed in the societies that came after. These are wounded societies, vulnerable to arguments perpetuated by pain, but in general willing to discuss the past and envision balanced futures. In this context, photographs are fascinating documents, since they allow us to “see” an instant that existed, posing endless questions.

ANICETO AFONSO



VISIONS OF

2



Photography also played a central role in documenting the political emancipation associated with decolonization. Conceived and inspired by the anti-colonial struggle and the ensuing political projects, the images of the independent “new” men and women became central in the visual and written rhetoric of the new powers. New bridges between banks ravaged by destruction, discrimination and poverty were envisioned. The narratives around national identity were also defined by a confrontation with history, the heritage and legacy from the colonial period, from statues to violent and sadly memorable episodes. These visions of independence contrasted with other images, which documented the urgency of departure, abandonment and “return” (often to places where one had never lived). These images recorded for posterity the sudden loss of privileges and rights acquired not only by personal effort, but also thanks to conditions of severe racial discrimination. With diverse meanings and uses, these images indelibly marked the decolonization period and still shape the memories of the colonial past.

MIGUEL BANDEIRA JERÓNIMO
AND JOANA PONTES

INDEPENDENCE

A non place (about *Nação*)



I speak from a non-place
where the shadow
is regarded as the reality.
A non place
of non-legitimation
of belonging.
A non-place
where the insult,
the indifference,
the invisibilization,
the aggression
and the impunity
are the norm...

I speak from a non-place
where there are those
who remain in silence
since their privilege
allows a choice...
I speak from a non-place
where the Past
has been whitewashed,
the Present
was captured
and the Future
is constantly postponed.
I speak from a sick nation
A non-place!

FROM MY POINT OF VIEW

Nação



ROMARIC TISSERAND

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Amílcar Cabral

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Nação - Romaric Tisserand. Installation
Wallpaper and Video. Production: Lightdreams
Productions. Landscapes - Nicolas Mandelbaum
5' 12". © 2014 O artista and Lightdreams Productions

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Anthropologist, assistant researcher at Instituto
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R O M A R I C T I S S E R A N D

Visual artist and performer.

T E L M A T V O N

Social worker, performer, rapper and writer.

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