

Xavier, Ângela Barreto and Cristina Nogueira da Silva. *O Governo dos Outros: poder e diferença no Império Português*. Lisbon: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2016. ISBN: 978-972-671-372-2.

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O Governo dos Outros: poder e diferença no Império Português [The Government of Others: Power and Difference in the Portuguese Empire], organized by historians Ângela Barreto Xavier and Cristina Nogueira da Silva, brings together a series of texts that summarize the results of a project developed by researchers from ICS-Ulisboa (Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon) and CEDIS (Research Center on Law and Society, Faculty of Law, Universidade NOVA de Lisboa) with the collaboration of colleagues from other research centers. The goal of the project was to conduct research on a long time span (1496-1961), looking at how “the government of different populations of the Portuguese empire was thought about, debated, legally framed, and realized in narrative terms.” The research was closely linked to a number of other studies that also examined the political and institutional history of the Portuguese metropolitan and colonial space, involving a constant review of the terms of analysis of the historical processes of its government and administration. The studies adopt an almost Foucauldian approach to the question of power, looking for the structural indicators, beyond the individuals, that define action and discourse in history. The time span chosen for the project and which, broadly speaking, guided the preparation of the texts, runs from the date of the decree ordering the expulsion of the Jews from the kingdom of Portugal (1496) until the abolition of the political, civil, and penal sanctions contained in the statute governing indigenous workers (1961). It is a period of almost five hundred years. The choice of this time span is one of the book’s most daring moves. Could it mark the beginning of long-term historical trajectories in the study of politics and power structures: “big is back?”

The book goes far beyond merely grouping together related essays. It is a cohesive work with a clear guideline—proven by the excellent synthesis written by the coordinators

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in the first essay of the book, which, rather than being a simple introduction, constitutes an autonomous collaboration in its own right, composed in the form of a cohesive narrative. The book proposes a transverse reading of the issues identified with the *government of others*: the management of diversity and difference in the Portuguese imperial experience. Where required, some authors engage in a comparative, or rather analytical, study of other imperial contexts, without which the Portuguese Empire could not be understood. The Spanish case, which is the most evident and the closest to the Portuguese one, is frequently referred to in all the texts—most notably in those concerned with the modern era.

For the organizers, there are three main concepts that serve to structure the book: government (understood more precisely as the management of peoples); the “other,” representing “the recognition of difference,” and its “transformation into a legal and socially operative otherness,” (p. 22) (applied not only to colonized peoples, but also often to the settlers and colonists themselves); and citizenship, which relates to the processes of inclusion and exclusion (i.e. the attribution of rights by a central power). The government of others is thus defined not in opposition to the government of oneself (ethics), but as the government of peoples that are beyond the “Portuguese identity.” This identity is established precisely through the processes of confrontation, encounter, and mixture, referring here to a tradition that had Gilberto Freyre as its great exponent. To define the other, therefore, is to define oneself. Governing the other, however, is identified here with the processes of domination and control of peoples under Portuguese sovereignty, which represents the power of a monarchy in new areas of conquest. Colonization, seen as the process of the conquest, settlement, and development of new territories, includes the anticipatory experience of a sovereignty centered on domination. Power is the fact of domination and to rule others is to dominate them. In this sense, I believe that, underlying these three central concepts (government, the other, and citizenship), there are two others that serve as their foundations, but which are not explicit: empire and colonization. For this reason, we must consider the two opening chapters of the book as decisive: the article by Antonio Manuel Hespanha on “how to make an empire with words” and the article by Giuseppe Marcocci on the links between slavery and the empire.

The first allows us to understand one of these constants of governing others in Portuguese imperial experiences. António Hespanha paints the picture of a discontinuous and heterogeneous empire, based “on a more pragmatic and economic logic, founded on the autonomy of its parts, on modular architecture, and cost-saving strategies” (79). Legal pluralism, rather than monism and universalism, would have allowed for the production of

“differentiated statutes,” capable of transforming difference into alterity; that is, transforming the peoples placed within the limits of the expanding sovereignty into categories to be appropriated. In other words, one of the central axes of the book is precisely the understanding of this process of the creation of the other as an entity destined to be governed, which in terms of the language of the empires means the construction of citizenship (a category of belonging) to the imagined political body. The reference, which is evident here, is to the Edict of Caracalla (212), the starting point of the chapter written by Jane Burbank and Frederik Cooper, devoted to the study of citizenship in the context of twentieth-century empires. It is an enlightening text, since it shows how the concept of citizenship in the context of an empire (quite different from what we understand today as citizenship in the nation-state) presupposes different populations belonging to a political community, with distinct rights, and being governed in an unequal way.² What António Hespanha reveals to us was expressed in the context of the Old Regime under the institutional framework of *naturalness*. The empire was the place of *de facto* domination and we must understand it (according to Hespanha) not as a perfect machine or a codified system, but as a flexible, heterogeneous set of configurations of power, hierarchies, and spaces of collaboration. It must not be forgotten, however, that this domination includes the conquest, and sometimes the destruction, of the “others.” The chapter by Giuseppe Marcocci refers to another kind of confrontation with reality: the link between empire and slavery, between the domination of peoples and their exploitation (by means of this institution, i.e. this specific form of property and violence). This link “influenced, and partly structured, the forms assumed over time by the ‘Government of Others’, that is, through the inclusion of the non-Portuguese in a system of multicontinental domination, which extended from Africa to America, and to South and East Asia” (127).

The book then speaks of a place in history—which is in fact our history from the beginning of the modern era until the present day—defined by this tension between legal plurality, the institutional ways of approaching power, the place of the people, and the harsh violence involved in the conquest, submission and domination of peoples. These “others” were forced to work, sacrificed to the creation of mercantile gains and tax rewards, as well as to the construction of forts and the machines required for a war that was escalating and therefore needed their improvement to guarantee the expansion of this

² The text was originally published in *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 3, 495-531 (2008). In 2010, the authors published a book offering a comparative perspective on how empires govern dispersed and diverse populations: *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton, Princeton UP, 2010.

“European world.” Also, we must never forget the destruction and the complete elimination of many of those who did not even manage to transmute to the status of “others.” After all, indigenous genocide is a structural fact of America’s colonization process. Whether in Paraguaçu or in the mountains of the Andes during the sixteenth century, in the sierras and wilderness of Brazil in the seventeenth century, or even today in southern Mato Grosso, in the tragedy that the Guarani Kaiowás are currently experiencing... There is an evident continuity here. A structure perceived in the long term.

As already stated, the option for this long period of study (1496-1961) is undoubtedly one of the book’s most daring moves. It is fulfilled only within a few chapters, but it is mainly noted in the sequencing of themes. The dangers of working with such a long time span are the dangers of traveling at high speed. We might, at times, apprehend the whole picture but we always miss something; not just a small detail, but something that could be essential. I think the authors understand this well and, like us, were distressed by what was not done as much as by what could still be done. However, history is precisely this very territory of the unfinished in which there is always something to be revealed, new landscapes to be built, buried rocks that might help us—like geologists—to understand the formation of mountains and plains, deserts, and forests. Nevertheless, there are also other determinants to be noted; some coming from afar, some that might escape us.

In the historiography of empires, the interest in extended periods of time has never disappeared, as one can see in the works of historical sociology or in those linked to the theory of world-systems. Indeed, even going beyond a Marxist perspective, there is still the understanding of the explanatory power of the role of capital in the formation of the modern world; the impact of mercantile exchanges on the planning of the modernization process, which justified this approach based on a long time span. Another justification for this long-term approach, as demonstrated by David Armitage and Jo Guldi, is undoubtedly the chance that it offers to view events from a global perspective. In a different book, written in collaboration with Armitage,³ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, one of the authors of *The Government of Others*, had already spoken of the approach of “connected histories” leading towards a “transitive global history:” a decentralized history conceived from different equivalent points looking at the connections between similar phenomena. Subrahmanyam participates in this book with a comparative study (over the long period) of the Mughal, Iberian, and Ottoman empires. Nevertheless, it does not seem to me that the eyes of the

³ Armitage, David and Subrahmanyam, Sanjay. *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context, 1760-1840*, 2009.

other authors are focused on this global perspective. Instead, what they attempt to do is to formulate a narrative that focuses on the historical process of an empire understood in terms of its peculiarities. The longer time span serves more as an interpretive key that can help to reveal the permanencies and the continuities.

For the reader, the dates are useful beacons. The first one, 1496, derives from the understanding that the expulsion of the Jews was, in the words of the organizers, a “critical event for the configuration of relations with the otherness developed in the Iberian empires of modern times” (32). The excellent chapter by Jean-Frédéric Schaub (“Reflections regarding a political history of racial categories in the West,” my translation), shows us how the dissolution of difference, the search for integration through conversion, and the erasure of marks of distinction—a violent and radical act—led, contradictorily, to the emergence of new forms of differentiation. According to the French historian, in the Peninsula and in the areas of colonization, “two crucial discriminatory processes for the emergence of racial categories in the Western world converged and came together: not only the Jewish and the Muslim questions, but also slavery” (32). The narrative explores the period of time that extends until the extinction of the indigenous statute, in 1961, in the post-war context, when Luso-tropicalism challenged racist policies, encouraging a new legal-political turning point. Claudia Castelo’s texts about the settlement model set up in the 1950s by the Estado Novo in Angola and Mozambique and the texts of José Pedro Monteiro on the changes in policies that organized native labor in the early 1960s reveal this new framework.

As is always the case in history, the choices are sometimes quite arbitrary. They are not fully justified and there will be some who question the chosen time frame. However, what is important is to note the defense of a view that stretches further in time, enabling the search for comparisons that could reinforce a constant, identify elements of continuity, or, conversely, present moments of rupture or the emergence of a new structure or configuration. With regard to the question of citizenship, for example, the book helps us understand how there came about a time when legal pluralism, moderated by the force of Christian universalism, was predominant. A second moment, in the eighteenth century, marked the consolidation of a collective imagination, leading to the assimilation of peoples through their belonging to the same political contract, but which also allowed for the confirmation of a process of acculturation, Europeanization and the elimination of differences. The “other,” (previously Gentile or Pagan, Moorish, Jewish, the contrary or negative infidel, or the unredeemed, in other words [namely those of St. Thomas]) will no

longer be a part of the prevailing order because he has been converted, but rather because he has been assimilated.

At the end of their journey, readers will note the omission of some of the places of this multicontinental empire. They will miss the nineteenth century, which is relatively underrepresented here (even though it is very well represented in Ricardo Roque's study about the voice of the gangs and their appropriation by Timorese elites and in Sandra Lobo's essay on citizenship in Goa in the nineteenth century). I believe readers will mostly miss the economics and war among the processes that mainly underlie the creation of this political space, a space of domination and violence. After all, colonizing does not only mean conquering and dominating, but also producing (or controlling what is produced). The market is both the means and the purpose of such domination. The economic dimension of this empire (and of all modern empires from the fifteenth to the twenty-first century) cannot be neglected. The taxation dimension, so deeply embedded in the flows of commodities, currencies, and capital, is crucial for our effective understanding of the construction of the mechanisms of power and the sustenance of government technologies. The administrative machinery, the church structures, and the military apparatus (which is expensive, and includes the costs of soldiers, armaments, forts, and prisons) all require a government dimension which is that of managing the taxation machinery: the Treasury House, income, and expenditure. Therefore, we must realize that what is sometimes understood as negotiation with the local elites is in fact flows of political communication within the state machinery itself. Nevertheless, I do not want to go to the other extreme, looking for an economic determination. We know full well that social phenomena and the forms through which power was institutionalized, seen from the viewpoint of its economic control and conditioning, must be analyzed (and this, once again, was a precept of Weber's writing) in a prudent way and freed of all dogmatism.

Finally, the importance of this book should once again be noted: it deals with a long time span, and an area the size of the globe, in terms of its structures of power and of exclusion, domination, and assimilation. Therefore, for this very reason, it suggests a very rich path for the renewal of historiography. Due to the quality of individual contributions and the interest that each of the themes addressed in the chapters can arouse, but especially due to the strength of this joint approach, the book displays an uncommon importance in the territory of history.

We should also note that the team coordinated by the two researchers were careful enough to provide access to a digital archive on a website. This new archive brings together

the basis of historical sources of the Portuguese law (going further with the *Ius Lusitaniae* project, coordinated by the two authors and Pedro Cardim), gathering together the *Boletim do Conselho Ultramarino* (Bulletin of the Overseas Council) and the *Legislação Novíssima do Ultramar* (New Overseas Legislation) collections. This archive is available to all researchers and to all those who are interested in viewing the main legal sources underlying many of the studies assembled here. Furthermore, there is a useful webpage showing a list of other websites containing important documents for the study of the territories of the Empire (<http://www.governodosoutros.ics.ul.pt/>).