

# “PORTUGAL ISN’T A SMALL COUNTRY”: THE CONSTRUCTION OF COLONIAL MEMORY UNDER SALAZAR’S ESTADO NOVO

*Teresa Bandeira de Carvalho*

*Associate Member of Political Observatory*

## **Abstract**

The Estado Novo was the only stable totalitarian regime in Portugal. Its conservative character and its strong focus on Portuguese traditionalism brought back the cult to the Discoveries and to the greatness of the nation. With this working paper I will analyse the role of Salazarism in the construction of a colonial memory that has lasted until today. I will primarily focus on the 1934 and 1940’s Expositions and their role in this construction.

## **Keywords**

Salazar, colonialism, collective memory, expositions, Estado Novo

---

## **Introduction**

In 2007 the television show *The Greatest Portuguese* was released on RTP - Portuguese Radio and Television, the country’s public station. It was a public poll contest based on the BBC’s 100 Greatest Britons. In it, 10 remarkable Portuguese personalities would be shortlisted with the possibility of being elected the greatest in the history of the country. There was no surprise when António de Oliveira Salazar, the creator and leader of the fascist regime known as Estado Novo was shortlisted, the surprise came when he was chosen the winner, over personalities such as Fernando Pessoa or Aristides de Sousa Mendes. Salazar’s win proves how powerful the Estado Novo was on the Portuguese national consciousness. Even though Salazar created a war that people rejected, in which thousands of lives were lost and thousands of people lived in poverty or were arrested due to simply not agreeing to his policies, his role in the creation of a new

Portuguese consciousness and pride of the nation's past is what persisted in the collective memory.

Isabel Ferreira Gould, professor of Portuguese and Brazilian studies has stated that everything in Portuguese is directly or indirectly related to the presence of the Portuguese in African colonies. Portuguese national identity is thus entangled with the tensions of empire and decolonisation (Gould, 2008). This working paper argues that there was a construction of colonial memory during the Estado Novo that does not represent how damaging Portuguese colonialism was. This construction was developed into a nostalgia for the empire and has had a lasting effect on how people perceive colonisation as there is a prevalent narrative of 'an encounter between cultures' and of Portugal as a 'nation without borders' over a system of power instated by force in other countries. In Portugal, the 'Discoveries' period is still looked at as the greatest achievement by the Portuguese. This is something that was continuously exalted during the Estado Novo by Salazar through the regime's massive propaganda apparatus and colonialist policies. This working paper will analyse the role of international expositions in representing cultures and how the Portuguese expositions, with an emphasis on the *Grande Exposição do Mundo Português*<sup>1</sup> of 1940 allowed for the construction of this memory; it will also demonstrate how the people in the former colonies were represented with an emphasis on Africa.

### **Going backwards: How Portugal fell in love with its past**

"During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Portuguese kingdom launched a series of maritime enterprises as a way to map out the trajectory to [...] India", a way to create a direct commercial route and an economic monopoly. This overseas enterprise began with the conquest of Ceuta in 1415 and was "unprecedented in scope and intent, taking the Portuguese sailors to the coasts of West Africa and eventually to the Indian Ocean"<sup>2</sup>. This enterprise changed Portugal's future and thus its identity as commemorative attention to it became one of the most identifiable features of the Portuguese identity. The Discoveries shaped Portuguese identity in such a way that it lasted throughout the centuries, through commemorative

---

<sup>1</sup> Great Exposition of the Portuguese World

<sup>2</sup> Polanah, Paulo S. (2011), "'The Zenith of our National History!' National identity, colonial empire, and the promotion of the Portuguese Discoveries: Portugal 1930s" *e-JPH* 9:1, pp. 39-62

monuments, centenary celebrations, festivities, museums and exhibitions perpetuating its idea of grandiosity. “This ideological instrumentalisation of the Discoveries to political ends proved no different with the ascension of the Estado Novo in the early 1930s as it ironed out social discord and political dissent” through supervision from the chief, the “ideological sponsor of this national cult, providing it with a coherent ideological and material infrastructure and a mass projection on a scale that was previously unknown”<sup>3</sup>

The construction of colonial memory in Portuguese society was mostly facilitated by the Estado Novo<sup>4</sup>, the regime instated in 1933 and the longest stable dictatorship in Portugal headed by António de Oliveira Salazar. Salazar entered the cabinet due to his reputation as a specialist in financial matters and in his first year in power was able to deliver a balanced budget, financial and monetary stabilisation and the premise of an economic relaunch of the country thanks to direct state intervention. He produced what is now known as the ‘financial miracle’ and was nominated the president of the Minister Council in 1931 by Óscar Carmona due to his acquired prestige. It is in this position, after the referendum for a new Constitution in 1933 proposed by Salazar that he inaugurates the Estado Novo<sup>5</sup>. The regime was backwards looking as an attempt to preserve the ‘typicality of the country’. The basis for Salazar’s ideology was “God, Fatherland, Family”, displaying a very Catholic and conservative look at the country and something that remained unchanged until his death. It was a very nationalist regime and country’s history, patrimony and traditional values were to be protected and propagated.

When discussing the construction of memory regarding the Portuguese colonial empire, the most important personality besides António de Oliveira Salazar was António Ferro, the president of the *SPN - Secretário de Propaganda Nacional*<sup>6</sup>, as the nostalgia experienced nowadays would not exist without António Ferro establishing this massive propaganda apparatus in the beginning of the regime. António Salazar and António Ferro crafted the modern Portuguese identity through the SPN. According to Margarida

---

<sup>3</sup> Idem

<sup>4</sup> New State

<sup>5</sup> Baião, Manuel; Fernandes, Paulo Jorge; Meneses, Filipe Ribeiro de (2003), “The Political History of Twentieth-Century Portugal”, *e-JPH* 1:2, pp. 1-18

<sup>6</sup> Secretariat of National Propaganda

Acciaiuoli, António Ferro “durante quinze anos fez do país um teatro e assumiu o papel de encenador”<sup>7</sup>. Salazar was aware of his own limitations as he was a very conservative man and not that charismatic thus summoning people to help him rejuvenate the image of the country whilst staying in line with his ideology was something he chose to do with the help of Ferro who suggested to Salazar that he should create an institution that would convey his idea of the Estado Novo<sup>9</sup>. The SPN was a catalyst for the diffusion of ideas and accomplishments of the newly created regime as a way to attract people as supporters. This valorisation of Portuguese culture by the Estado Novo was meant to cultivate nationalism and maintain tradition as well as a way to occupy people’s free times to prevent dissent. The Estado Novo’s cultural policy became known as *Política do Espírito* and was meant to represent the simple and conservative values of what António de Oliveira Salazar believed being Portuguese meant<sup>10</sup>.

The propaganda apparatus changed people’s perceptions on the colonies and most importantly on the government’s colonial policy as the SPN state, it should “elucidar a opinião internacional sobre a nossa ação civilizadora e o modo especial sobre a ação exercida nas colónias e o progresso do nosso Império Ultramarino”<sup>11</sup>. Before António de Oliveira Salazar, the country’s colonial policy was considerably different. After the release of the Ato Colonial<sup>12</sup>, a focus on the colonies becomes the centre of the country’s foreign policy concerns. According to Valentim Alexandre, the reason why the Portuguese empire takes up so much weight in the history of the country in the last two centuries is due to the very close relationship it has with the central question of Portuguese identity, which was constructed during this period<sup>13</sup>. The Ato Colonial symbolises the formal creation of an imperial

---

<sup>7</sup> “for fifteen years made the country a theatre and acted as the director”

<sup>8</sup> Acciaiuoli, Margarida (2013), “António Ferro: A Vertigem da Palavra: Retórica, Política e Propaganda no Estado Novo” Editorial Bizâncio, Lisboa [António Ferro: A Vertigem da Palavra: Rhetoric, Politics and Propaganda in the New State]

<sup>9</sup> Seabra, Paulo (2012), “Estética, Propaganda e Utopia no Portugal de António Ferro” [online]. Available from: <http://www.rtp.pt/programa/tv/p29564> [Accessed 2017]. [Aesthetics, Propaganda and Utopia in António Ferro’s Portugal]

<sup>10</sup> Acciaiuoli (2013)

<sup>11</sup> Acciaiuoli (2013:100)

<sup>12</sup> Colonial Act

<sup>13</sup> Alexandre, Valentim (1995), “A África no Imaginário Político Português (Séculos XIX-XX)”, *Penélope: Revista de História e Ciências Sociais* 15, pp. 39-52 [Africa in the Portuguese Political Imagination (19th-20th Centuries)]

mentality by the Estado Novo which trickled down to the people, “a mentality that relied upon and stressed historical continuities, and which, above all, linked the Discoveries to the modern empire whilst connecting the founding of the country to the contemporary colonial project and the Estado Novo”<sup>14</sup>. In the 1950s this is consolidated as due to the pressure of decolonisation by the rest of the world Portugal replaced to Acto Colonial with the Estatuto Colonial<sup>15</sup> which renamed the colonies Ultramarine Provinces and refused to acknowledge the differences between the people in the metropole and those in Africa as according to the document, everyone in the empire was not divided by colour but united as Portuguese<sup>16</sup>

The belief of the people in the colonies as Portuguese people with the same rights as those in the metropole as well as the constant defence of the idea that the Portuguese were inherently non-violent and non-racist helped construct the view of the Empire that prevails today as these beliefs are still shared amongst the Portuguese. There was a need from the regime to instate the idea that the Empire was the true Portuguese ideal of the future as the Portuguese identity was entwined with the possession of an empire.

In 1947 Salazar stated “No meio das convulsões presentes nós apresentamo-nos como uma irmandade de povos, cimentada por séculos de vida pacífica e compreensão cristã, comunidade de povos que, sejam quais forem as suas diferenciações, se auxiliam, se cultivam e se leva, orgulhosos do mesmo nome e qualidade dos Portugueses”<sup>17 18</sup>. The Portuguese believed that their presence in Africa was justified as they were pioneers during the process of European expansion, they believed in their

---

<sup>14</sup> Polanah (2011:56)

<sup>15</sup> Colonial Statute

<sup>16</sup> Oliva, Anderson Ribeira (2009), “De Indígena a Imigrante: O Lugar da África e dos Africanos no Universo Imaginário Português dos Séculos XIX ao XXI” *Sankofa: Revista de História da África e de Estudos da Diáspora Africana* 2:3, pp. 32-51 [From native to immigrant: The place of Africa and of Africans in the Portuguese Imaginative Universe from the 19th to the 21st Century]

<sup>17</sup> “In the midst of the present convulsions we present ourselves as a brotherhood of peoples, cemented over centuries of peaceful living and Christian understanding, community of peoples that whatever its differences help each other, cultivate each other and take pride in the same name and quality of the Portuguese”

<sup>18</sup> Caires, Andreyana Sidonar Carvalho (2009), “Altruísmo e/ou ilusão? A política portuguesa pós-colonial de ‘cooperação para o desenvolvimento’”, Master’s Thesis, Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, Universidade Nova de Lisboa [Selfishness and/or illusion? The Portuguese post-colonial politics of ‘development cooperation’]

mission of civilising abroad as it was their divine mission to help the ‘savages’ become ‘civilised’ and thus build the Portuguese empire. The Estado Novo thus manufactured a Portuguese national consciousness that lasted to this day as the majority of people consistently exculpate the damage of the colonial empire and of the Portuguese presence abroad. There is a persistent anxiety within the Portuguese that the country and its accomplishments are often overlooked abroad which is comforted through this narrative of a strong past and exculpation of blame.

### **The Expositions: Blinded by pride**

One of the most memorable methods of propaganda the Estado Novo used to spread its ideological catalog was through expositions, following the likes of the popular nineteenth century international expositions. Inspired by work in cities such as Paris, the SPN adopted the trend. To analyse the use of expositions we must first understand their role and importance in showcasing empires and nations. In this working paper I will analyse two Portuguese expositions, the ones I believe are the most relevant when analysing the construction of colonial memory — the First Colonial Exposition of 1934 in Porto and the most emblematic exposition in Portuguese history, the Grand Exposition of the Portuguese World in 1940.

The second half of the nineteenth century was the time for universal expositions in the Western world. Beginning in 1851 in London, the expositions became, in the words of the historian Eric Hobsbawm, “great new rituals of self-congratulation”<sup>19</sup>. According to Meg Armstrong, the hysterical jumble of non-European cities and peoples in these spectacles meant to promote the European hegemony over the world<sup>20</sup>. Universal expositions represented a world celebrating the European expansion over other nations. These exhibitions of colonial power were constructed so that the nation could diffuse its power and a way for the people to become acquainted with ‘their’ empire thus reinforcing a sense of pride in what they perceived as theirs. The aesthetic of the fairs mediates any crisis that can

---

<sup>19</sup> Çelik, Zeynep (1992:1), “Displaying the Orient: Architecture of Islam at 19th Century World’s Fairs”, University of California Press, Berkeley

<sup>20</sup> Armstrong, Meg (1992), “‘A Jumble of Foreignness’: The Sublime Museums of Nineteenth-Century Fairs and Expositions” *Cultural Critique* 23, pp.199-250

surge from the fear of the fall of empires, much like what happened in Portugal where the fairs were created as a way to assert the Portuguese of their power as well as to reassure the 'greatness of the Portuguese nation'. The sublimity of the spectacle affected all viewers and contributed to the impact of the perceived differences among nations<sup>21</sup>. Through the eyes of the fair goer, and the reassertion of the space as their own to travel and experience as they please, something encouraged by Ferro and Salazar who wanted the Portuguese who visited the fairs and expositions to understand the greatness of their nation, too big to be contained in one country. The colonised people were brought from their homes and usually displayed in village settings, an attempt to recreate the native's villages and represent them as a cultural group. In accord to the notion of the fair as a microcosm and an imaginary journey around the world, foreign and especially non-Western societies were often represented in images determined by Western legacies; they were received as a dreamlike environment because of preconceptions about other cultures that were well established in the nineteenth century<sup>22</sup>.

In 1934 the first Portuguese colonial exposition happened in Porto. Despite Salazar's modest ways and dislike for mass events, this first exposition was a direct consequence of his push on colonial politics and on the glorification of the role of the Portuguese in the world. To António Salazar every creation and event by the regime had to possess some educative and propagandist aim. The 1934 Exposition was seen as an attempt to broadcast the values of the regime regarding its colonial project, the 'visions of the empire' as they expressed a visual component to the written and broadcast policies. Henrique Galvão, a general commissary to the exposition believed that publishing images regarding colonial peoples was visual proof that demonstrated to the other countries the civilisational effort made by the Portuguese. The 1934 Exposition took on the role of displaying to the Portuguese their own empire, therefore providing reasons for supporting the regime and thus creating the national memory and consciousness Salazar aimed for after the release of the Ato Colonial, one where people in the metropole and in the colonies perceived themselves as Portuguese, thus the glorification of the role of the Portuguese in the world.

---

<sup>21</sup> Armstrong (2002)

<sup>22</sup> Çelik (1992)

The 1934 Exposition was held in the gardens of the Crystal Palace in Porto. This exposition consisted in a propagandist effort to deepen the bonds between the Portuguese and their colonies and strengthening their belief of belonging to a community, a community constructed an imagined beyond the metropole's borders. The main building of the Crystal Palace was transformed into the 'Palace of the Colonies', the central hall that received the official exposition and that represented all the achievements in the colonies that Salazar was displaying as an effort to make the Portuguese proud of their history. It became a miniature colonial Empire as inside the exposition it was possible to admire animals and ethnographic objects brought from all over the empire as well as natives from the colonies, brought to Porto to live in the gardens for weeks in a recreation of their own villages<sup>23</sup>. As Filomena Serra explains, when these international expositions began in the mid-1800s in England, the exhibition of natives in recreations of their villages became a way to show the 'savages' and differentiate them from the 'civilised' who were free to wander through the exhibition<sup>24</sup>. One of the major political issues of the regime was the earnest defence of the unity of the nation, including all colonial territories, therefore temporary expositions focusing on the colonial domain had the intention of reinforcing the belief that Portugal was a nation split into different countries<sup>25</sup>. This exposition, just one year after the inauguration of the Estado Novo, was the beginning of its emphasis on cultural policy, aiming to recover a 'true Portuguese' culture and a 'spirit of unity' through the use of expositions — among other methods — as a way to reinstate the belief of a great nation that could not be contained within its own borders.

Although the 1934 Exposition was extremely successful, the main event of the Estado Novo in terms of cultural expositions was the Grande Exposição do Mundo Português held in Lisbon in 1940. This exposition came after an announcement made by António de Oliveira Salazar in 1938 of the commemoration of the civilising action of the Portuguese all over the world. The intention of the regime was that all Portuguese would participate in the celebrations of the Estado Novo, particularly important as it was the

---

<sup>23</sup> Lira, Sérgio (2002), "Museums and Temporary Exhibitions as Means of Propaganda: The Portuguese Case during the Estado Novo", PhD Thesis, Leicester University

<sup>24</sup> Serra, Filomena (2016), "Visões do Império: a 1ª Exposição Colonial Portuguesa de 1934 e alguns dos seus álbuns", *Revista Brasileira de História da Mídia*, 5:1 [Visions of Empire: the first Portuguese Colonial Exposition of 1934 and some of its albums]

<sup>25</sup> Lira (2002)

commemoration of a double centenary — the creation of Portugal in 1143 and the restoration of independence from Spain in 1640 — and aimed at presenting Portugal as ‘one of the greats’. The greatness of the nation was represented by the variety of territories that constituted it and the Portuguese people that all over the world, whether living under the Portuguese flag or not, were united by common links of ancestral cultural background as claimed by Salazar. The exposition was located in Belém, in front of the Tejo river, an ideal location as Portugal was a nation that used the sea as an argument for colonial possession of the territories displayed, the theory of historic rights of occupation, which went back to the maritime discoveries that departed from the imposing Tower of Belém<sup>26</sup>. “The Exposition was regarded as the most significant cultural event in the ideological building process of the New State, where ideology and mythology of the regime were exalted and represented”<sup>27</sup>.

The exhibition was made up of several pavilions with different displays all built around the centre of the Praça do Império<sup>28</sup>, which commemorated the Portuguese empire. It was divided between three large areas: the history of the country, the colonial section and an ethnographic area. There was one dedicated to the recreation of typical Portuguese villages from the north and the colonial section where there was a recreation of the colonial villages in which they would live as if they were in their own village. A way to show the Portuguese’s civilising mission in this village, religious missionaries were present using their typical garbs as a way to show the audience a reenactment of what the Estado Novo wanted to people to believe was happening in the colonies. As David Corkill and José Almeida explain, these events were heavily focused on promoting the greatness of the colonisation to both colonisers and the colonised and in order to broadcast this message, the version of the exotic present was vastly sanitised. This involved transplanting entire African villages from the colonies in an attempt to make the visitor aware of his role as a civiliser thus contributing to the construction of a national mythology that the Portuguese possessed unique

---

<sup>26</sup> Idem

<sup>27</sup> Corkill, David; Almeida, José Carlos Pina (2009), “Commemoration and Propaganda in Salazar’s Portugal: The ‘Mundo Português’ Exposition of 1940” *Journal of Contemporary History* 44:3, pp. 381-399

<sup>28</sup> Empire Plaza

civilising qualities<sup>29</sup>. Colonisation was described as a “racial tendency” of the Portuguese and the events to celebrate it defended that “the overseas expansion was done more with the heart than with the sword”<sup>30</sup>.

During the inaugural address delivered in June 1940, Augusto Castro, commissary of the Exposition, pointed out three main objectives he believed it should achieve: a representation of the glorious past of the Portuguese nation, including all imperial glories; the strong affirmation of the moral, political and creative forces of the present; third, the belief in the future<sup>31</sup>. The complete unabashed propagandist nature of the exposition was not hidden and instead was used as a tool to inspire the feeling of a national consciousness which the regime hoped would develop through visiting the exposition. Driven by overtly political and ideological purposes, the Exposition was transformed into an ambitious propaganda vehicle to reaffirm Portugal’s historic civilising vocation and demonstrate to the watching world that improvements in its colonial administration had delivered economic, social and spiritual progress to its subject peoples<sup>32</sup>. Transforming people into displaying objects and the use of national heroes as objects of pride to the nation would help this goal be achieved. Using figures related to the Discoveries period such as Vasco da Gama and Infante Dom Henrique, forever immortalised in the Padrão dos Descobrimentos<sup>33</sup>, which has lasted to this day as a recognisable monument and a part of the Lisbon landscape. It is full of patriotic symbols, an enormous image of the sword of Avis placed in the form of a large cross symbolising the Estado Novo’s religious component; it also features reproductions of the flag of D. João I who fought for Portugal’s independence against Spain as well as Luís de Camões holding the “Luísiadas”, the epic that praised Vasco da Gama’s travels and the Portuguese discoveries. The position of Infante Dom Henrique standing out from the monument cements his centrality in the Discoveries period. As Ellen Sapega writes, the sculpture invites the viewer to revisit Portugal’s

---

<sup>29</sup> Corkill, Almeida (2009)

<sup>30</sup> Corkill, Almeida (2009:398)

<sup>31</sup> Lira (2002)

<sup>32</sup> Corkill, Almeida (2009)

<sup>33</sup> Pattern of the Discoveries

moments of grandeur<sup>34</sup>. This monument attempted to synthesise a glorious past into an easily digestible figure.

In their essay, David Corkill and José Carlos Pina Almeida take note of the dominant spiritual and rural themes central to Portuguese expositions, namely the Lisbon event in 1940 in comparison to the contemporaneous New York World Fair which took as its theme “Tomorrow’s World” as the Portuguese exposition looked backwards to a ‘golden era’ and attempted to connect it to the present<sup>35</sup>. By focusing of the rurality of the Portuguese people as well as the greatness of the Portuguese Salazar could build this national consciousness that has lasted to this day. The emphasis placed on the nation’s superiority in terms of their culture, history and most importantly their effort in ‘civilising’ other peoples contributes to the emergence of a national mythology thus accomplishing Salazar’s goal. The 1940 Exposition demonstrates an ideological staging and above it all an iconographic demonstration of the great themes of the Salazarist mythology which are exalted and aesthetically emblematic, constituting the most important cultural event not only during the Estado Novo but in Portuguese history as many of the cultural artefacts created by the regime for the specific reason of the expositions can still be viewed today<sup>36</sup>. Both the 1934 and the 1940 expositions were inaugurated in the prime of the Estado Novo and both of them succeeded in their aims of reminding the Portuguese of the pride they should have in their nation and how the regime was inalienable to its success. The central idea of both expositions was to show the world a projection of Portugal’s past and why this past constructed such a powerful history.

## Conclusion

In 1974 a group of Portuguese military officers known as the Movimento das Forças Armadas led an uprising on April 25th, a day that would forever be remembered as the day of the Carnation Revolution. After seventeen years

---

<sup>34</sup> Sapega, Ellen W. (2002), “Image and counter-image: The place of Salazarist images of national identity in contemporary Portuguese visual culture” *Luso-Brazilian Review* 39:2, pp. 45-64

<sup>35</sup> Corkill, Almeida (2009)

<sup>36</sup> Sapega (2002)

of a senseless war that drained Portuguese resources as well as a wave of emigration in the 1960s of people escaping to avoid being deployed to serve in the war, people flooded the streets in support for the revolution even after several warnings for them to stay in their houses. This revolution not only ended the regime but it also ended the Portuguese Empire beginning with the Lusaka Accord in 1974 which recognised the independence of Mozambique. Colonialism had given the Portuguese a sense of superiority and power in the world and now the country had to face the damaging nature of their empire as well as the damaging and lasting effects of the war in Portugal and in the former African colonies. Letting go of the colonies should mean an acceptance of how damaging the colonial regime was but “if the Portuguese could no longer regard imperialism as having made them a great nation, if their source of pride was now a source of shame, what was to be their persona? How could they teach their children to view Portugal?”<sup>37</sup>.

Portuguese colonial memory was constructed in situations like the one analysed in this working paper but it would not have lasted through time if it was not for the histories passed on between family members and friends. The nation narrates itself, the memories and recollections from these events are extremely important in perpetuating the problematic view of Portugal as a ‘good’ coloniser and that the colonial regime was beneficial to both sides. The Portuguese persona is very nationalistic and backward looking, past events are continuously celebrated. Problematic and damaging situations such as slavery, the nature of the colonial relation and the establishment of colonial rule are continuously erased or exculpated in order to give space to a narrative in which the Portuguese are not the same as other colonising nations and instead enjoyed a peaceful ‘encounter between nations’. As Miguel Cardina highlights, every nation has a collective memory, through which historical moments are selected and narratives are constructed and others erased. The nation rests upon an idea of historical homogeneity that it is undisturbed through the passing of time which is reliant on this

---

<sup>37</sup> Errante, Antoinette (1998), “Education and National Personae in Portugal’s Colonial and Postcolonial Transition”, *Comparative Education Review* 42:3, pp. 267-308

construction of memory as the passing of these fabricated stories is what keeps the collective memory intact<sup>38</sup>.

I analysed the 1934 Colonial Exposition and the 1940 Grande Exposição do Mundo Português, the most remembered event of the Estado Novo. There are very important marks in the construction of colonial memory as they had an emphasis on the great Portuguese past, full of conquering heroic figures thus spreading the message of the 'divine rights of occupation' as well as the 'divine mission to civilise other nations'. This Exposition also featured massive halls of expositions on the history of the nation as well as the presence of 'human zoos', thus inculcating into the Portuguese a growing sense of pride in their actions beyond the metropole. I believe that by tying together the existing literature as well as my experience and point of view as Portuguese, I have been able to demonstrate the existence of a problematic colonial memory in Portugal, where the Portuguese replicate the memory history fabricated during the Estado Novo as a way to exculpate colonial blame and to attempt to maintain the idea that Portugal is not a small country. This is used as a way to perpetuate the idea of past greatness which the Portuguese believe is the most important accomplishment in the history of the nation and it is something that will continue to last through time as it is one of the bases of Portuguese identity.

---

<sup>38</sup> Cardina, Miguel (2016), "Memórias Amnésicas? Nação, discurso político e representações do passado colonial" *Configurações* 17, pp. 31-42 [Amnesic memories? Nation, political speech and representations of the colonial past]

**OBSERVATÓRIO POLÍTICO**

Rua Almerindo Lessa  
Pólo Universitário do Alto da Ajuda,  
1349-055 Lisboa  
Tel. (00351) 21 361 94 30  
geral@observatoriopolitico.pt

Para citar este trabalho/ To quote this paper:

CARVALHO, Teresa Bandeira de. «"Portugal isn't a small country": The construction of colonial memory under Salazar's Estado Novo», Working Paper #79, Observatório Político, publicado em 23/02/2018, URL: [www.observatoriopolitico.pt](http://www.observatoriopolitico.pt)

**Aviso:**

Os working papers publicados no sítio do Observatório Político podem ser consultados e reproduzidos em formato de papel ou digital, desde que sejam estritamente para uso pessoal, científico ou académico, excluindo qualquer exploração comercial, publicação ou alteração sem a autorização por escrito do respectivo autor. A reprodução deve incluir necessariamente o editor, o nome do autor e a referência do documento. Qualquer outra reprodução é estritamente proibida sem a permissão do autor e editor, salvo o disposto em lei em vigor em Portugal.