

## *O Governo dos Outros: Some Afterthoughts*

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When an Ethiopian called Malik Ya'kut was chosen as the diplomatic representative of the sultanate of Bijapur at the capital of the *Estado da Índia* in 1649, the advisers of the Portuguese viceroy reacted harshly. The appointment of a castrated slave (*ennuço cativo*) as ambassador to Goa was seen as an affront among members of the imperial elite. Nevertheless, someone at a state council meeting held in the city cared to note that “even if the ambassador was a captive, it was a rather common thing for the kings of India to employ such people in their service” (Pissurlencar 1955: 129-130). Contrasting conceptions of slavery are at stake here. As in other coeval Islamic states, specifically the Ottoman Empire (Hathaway 2018), slaves in early modern India frequently rose to the higher echelons of society and politics (Subrahmanyam 2019). Thus, it was quite common for people living in Bijapur, be they Hindus or Muslims, to see former Abyssinian (*habsbi*) slaves make their way into the court as power brokers. Yet for those in the viceregal court of Goa, molded by a heavy Portuguese and Catholic background of hierarchy and segregation, a slave was a slave, and such a condition was quasi-immutable.

The story of Malik Ya'kut cuts across some of the central questions posited by *O Governo dos Outros*. Drawing partly on Michel Foucault's *The Government of Self and Others* (Foucault 2010), this hefty collective volume stems from a research project on the question of alterity in the long-lasting Portuguese Empire. It comprises twenty articles, along with a substantive introduction and comprehensive bibliography (albeit no index), and was compiled by two Portuguese historians who have been working on this and related topics for most of their academic careers. The book's coverage is as wide-ranging as the Portuguese Empire itself. Geographically, it spans from Africa and Brazil to South and Southeast Asia. Chronologically, the volume's landmarks are the expulsion of the Jews from Portugal in 1496 and the demise of Portuguese Goa in 1961. By considering the initial Portuguese modes of political management and cultural depiction of *mouros* and *negros*, the articles by Marcocci and Belo take a step back and begin this long journey with the conquest of the North African city of Ceuta in 1415 and the early exploration of the west coast of Africa. While the

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appropriate endpoint of the volume would have been Macau and its post-colonial hand-over to China in 1999, the long history of the last of the Portuguese imperial legacies is largely overlooked, with the exception of the article penned by the late António Manuel Hespanha.

*O Governo dos Outros* is divided into four parts, the titles of which can be roughly translated as: 1) Continuities in the government of others in the Portuguese Empire; 2) Citizenship and liminality; 3) Political and cultural representation of the empire's peoples; and 4) A distinctive empire? As in any other collective (and lengthy) work, the extant contributions are diverse in theme, approach, and breadth. At one extreme, we find eye-opening, conceptual articles, specifically Hespanha's on law and empire, Schaub's on race in the West, Burbank and Cooper's on citizenship from imperial Rome to colonial France, and Subrahmanyam's comparison of three early modern empires that together bridged the Atlantic Ocean to the gates of inland Southeast Asia. At another extreme, we have case studies anchored in characters, events, and minute chronologies, such as the article by Oliveira and Magalhães on the actions of a local judge in late eighteenth-century Angola, Monteiro's on native labor in Africa in the years 1961-1962, and Ferreira's on the *casa dos estudantes do império*. Readers will surely benefit from considering the chapters in a different order and then approaching them according to their own logic (indeed, the editors themselves suggest precisely this in their introduction). It would make sense, for instance, to link the pieces by Pinheiro and Marccoci, to discuss Belo's article as a forward to Monteiro and Kantor's, and to read the articles by Xavier and Herzog in tandem. Several articles—too many, in my view—have their second take in this volume as they were previously published elsewhere, often in a different language.

*O Governo dos Outros* no doubt constitutes a bold scholarly enterprise, and one that demonstrates how poor the debate of this subject matter can be if we insist on restricting it to the past polarizations surrounding Gilberto Freyre's theories. The book truly generates “synaptic” connections involving law and justice, religion and conversion, race and ethnicity, language and dress, political rituals and social practices, citizenship and assimilation, identity and identification, empire and nation, memory and imagination, and high and low culture. What is more, it invites the reader to carry these themes and concepts across the divide between early modern and modern, and ultimately helps to bridge a vexing gap. While other perspectives and strands could have been added or expanded, this is true for any academic work and seldom constitutes fair criticism. Personally, I would have enjoyed reading more on ethnography and visibility, territory and frontier, and travel and mobility. The idea of the other, which is critically addressed in the introductory text, might prove to be too small an

umbrella. For one thing, the others are more numerous and more diverse than those under scrutiny in this book. For another thing, the borders between the other and the self are often blurred, as shown by Herzog's article (the piece with the most suggestive title in the entire collection) and as the editors acknowledge when rejecting binary alterities. Ironically, the others appear unable to speak, remaining essentially voiceless throughout the volume, and one is left wondering how they saw themselves vis-à-vis the "true" Portuguese. Last but not least, I missed a reflection on archives, categories, and terminology, or on the extent to which the ways the source material was successively organized from the fifteenth century onwards, and eventually "served" to us today, affect our own analyses.

Ângela Barreto Xavier and Cristina Nogueira da Silva open their thought-provoking introduction by remarking that "the management of diversity and difference is a key issue concerning contemporary societies, Western or non-Western," and that "these problems are not exclusive to contemporary societies" (21, my translation). The management of multiethnic societies across the world is indeed at the forefront of scholarly and political debates concerning global governance and its transnational agents. But historians, especially those working on empires, should be contributing a lot more toward a discussion that all too often ignores the past, or otherwise caricatures it in numerous ways. *After Empire*, an edited book published almost a quarter of a century ago, represents an early and excellent attempt at placing history at the center of the conversation (Barkey and von Hagen 1997). The world was less global then, and the focus of the book rests instead on the transition from empire to nation state, specifically on how the question of multiethnicity evolved in three imperial landscapes—Russian, Ottoman, and Habsburg—when the move to the nation took place. *O Governo dos Outros* is a somewhat analogous endeavor, with a marked Portuguese research agenda and a less ambitious comparative dimension.

Empires, early modern and modern alike, comprised a patchwork of domains and peoples. Imperial authority rested on the ability to adapt and negotiate, and this was equally true for Portugal, the Habsburgs (Judson 2016), and Russia (Kivelson 2006), but also beyond the Western world: the Ottoman Empire, for example, was a "negotiated enterprise" (Barkey 2008), while an "ecumenical" Hindustan thrived until the nineteenth century (Ahmed 2020), and even China knew how to compromise at its fringes (Crossley, Siu and Sutton 2006). The editors of *O Governo dos Outros* go on to argue that making these others was key to the effectiveness and longevity of imperial formations. The dividing line between managing difference and creating otherness certainly requires further thought. However, the discussion seems to be tainted by the subliminal assumption that these phenomena are exclusive of the

European empires, even though—and while being mindful of the dangers of comparing apples and oranges—any look at East Asia, and especially at the history of Taiwan from the seventeenth century onwards (Andrade 2008; Teng 2004; Ching 2001), will tell us a great deal about integration and assimilation, their opposites, and the myriad nuances in-between (Hostetler 2001; Toby 2019).

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