Central theme of this conference is MIMESIS AND THE GOVERNMENT OF DIFFERENCE in the context of the Portuguese Colonial Empire.

**New Perspectives on the Portuguese Colonial Empire**

*Birkbeck College, University of London, 31 May & 1 June 2013*

**ABSTRACTS**

**PANEL I - REPRESENTATIONS**

**Alan Strathern, ‘The dog that didn’t bark in the night-time: European apotheosis in first encounters and the puzzling case of its absence in early modern Portuguese reportage’**

Few historiographical questions have been more controversial than whether Europeans travellers were ever interpreted as ‘supernatural’ beings in moments of first encounter. The most famous debates, such as Sahlin and Obeyesekere on the apotheosis of Captain Cook in Hawaii, or the supposed identification of Cortés as Quetzalcoatl, have turned not just on matters of source criticism, but rather on profound questions of human nature and cognition on the one hand and essentially political instincts on the other. In this paper I’d like to raise the question of whether the apotheosis trope has played any part in the accounts of first encounters generated by Portuguese writers of the 16th and 17th centuries – and to invite others to draw our attention to possible examples. At the moment, it seems to me to be rather conspicuous by its absence. If its presence in the Portuguese sources is indeed minimal, the implications for the wider debate are very intriguing….. I shall briefly consider reports relating to the Tupinamba of Brazil and the people of the Kongo region in the late fifteenth to early sixteenth century in this light, and also consider the problems with the categories of ‘supernatural’ and ‘first encounter.’ Underlying this discussion is of course the sense that the historians should be alive to the possibility of deep cultural differences regarding the way that cultural difference itself is conceived.

**Pedro Cardim, “To obey from afar. Salvador da Bahia’s city council and the governance of the Portuguese Atlantic during the second half of the 17th century”**

Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to analyse the place of Salvador da Bahia’s municipal council within the Portuguese Atlantic world. Based on the correspondence exchanged between the Bahian urban Senate and the Crown from the mid-17th century on, this study aims at portraying the way the local elite from Salvador saw itself within the Portuguese monarchy. It is shown that such a collection of documents provides a substantial amount of information about the way the ruling elite from Bahia regarded its relationship with the royal authority based in Lisbon. Additionally, these sources are also highly informative about the way the Bahian elite portrayed its position vis a vis the rest of Brazil and the Atlantic world. A special attention will be paid to issues like political allegiance, local identity, decision making procedures, and the sense of belonging to a community. The aim of this survey is thus to contribute to a deeper understanding of the nature of the colonial relationship within the 17th century Portuguese Atlantic world.
Zoltán Biedermann, "The government of difference, or different ways of governing? Some notes from the periphery of the Empire

Studying the various ways imperial governance has found to deal with cultural difference is the main scope of our project. And yet the question arises as to whether the concept of governance as such applies with equal efficacy to all areas of the Portuguese Empire. It has long been recognized that in Asia the Portuguese developed a range of often highly idiosyncratic strategies to consolidate their power. On the fringes of the Estado da India, where the official Empire met the shadow Empire and interacted most profoundly with its Asian neighbours, creating structures of government was a particularly unstraightforward venture. This paper asks to what extent the transition of Sri Lanka to Iberian rule is best described as a transition to Iberian governance.

Ricardo Roque, "Mimesis as an art of government: colonial justice and indigenous customs in the late Portuguese colonial empire"

In this paper I will explore the mimesis of indigenous “customs and law” as a theory and as a strategy of Portuguese colonial government in the late imperialism period. Between 1860 and 1910, Portuguese governors, judges, and officers devised a form of providing colonial justice to the Timorese that required the colonizers to slip into the indigenous world, henceforth governing the indigenous from indigenous positions and perspectives. Thus drawing on the history of colonial administration in the Portuguese colony of Timor, I will discuss the notion of mimetic governmentality as the art of government concerned with the organized mimesis of otherness as a means to governing the living.

Cristiana Bastos, “Marble Stairways and straw roofs: variations in hospital styles under Portuguese colonial rule”

In this paper I will analyze some of the buildings that were designed, imagined, built and showcased for different moments and places under Portuguese colonial rule. Varying in styles – from opulent buildings to intriguing imitations of indigenous housing – and in target populations – from enclaved, segregated assistance to an effort of outreaching local populations – hospitals and health equipment provide an eloquent window to better understand the practices and representations of colonialism.
PANEL III – ASSIMILATION(S)

Ângela Barreto Xavier, Politics of difference in the early-modern empire: Going Native vs. going Portuguese

In this paper I will discuss two techniques of diversity management used by the Portuguese rulers in early modern Goa. I am interested in understanding how the Portuguese used intermarriages and religious conversion – two instruments that had also been employed in the Roman Empire – as instruments for building and preserving the political community, as well as for coping with social and cultural diversity. Unlike other, and parallel, instruments that promoted distinction between communities of colonizers and communities of colonized – like the statutes of purity of blood, the identification of the place of birth, or the recognition of blackness –, intermarriages and religious conversion allowed, at least in theory, the integration of the two communities. However, the going native of the Portuguese, in the first case, and the going Portuguese of the Indians, in the second, were two consequences of these political practices; but also a threat to the ideas of hierarchy and difference that characterized Portuguese imperial rule. How did decision-makers cope with the dangers that these forms of emulation entailed? And what were the contributions of local agents to shaping these political decisions?

Luís Cabral and Manuel Magalhães, “Judging others and others as judges: Three magistrates between Angola, Brazil, Portugal and Goa”

Lisbon appointed judges played a particularly important role in the legal, political and administrative organization of the Portuguese overseas empire during the nineteenth century. They were mediators of the application of Portuguese law in very different colonial territories and contexts; and, simultaneously, they were also political, administrative and cultural agents. Based on the study of three different and prominent characters (Félix Correia de Araújo, António da Motta-Veiga and Angelino da Motta-Veiga), this paper aims at understanding how these judges performed their roles in different overseas possessions. We will try to analyze these distinct performances not just from a “European perspective”, as it were, but also from the point of view of the colonial elites.

Cristina Nogueira da Silva, Between imitation and assimilation: controlling difference and similarity in the Portuguese colonial administration

In this presentation I will discuss a recurrent topic in Portuguese historiography and in anti-colonial discourse. According to this topic, the claim that Portuguese colonialism was intrinsically “assimilationist” was omnipresent in Portuguese colonial ideology, the so-called assimilados (assimilated people) being used by colonial discourses to provide evidence that the Portuguese took their “civilizing mission” seriously, because they were able to convert uncivilized people into European-Portuguese citizens. My aim is to question the omnipresence of the “assimilationist claim” in Portuguese colonial ideology as well as the idea that “assimilados” were always seen as a living proof of a desirable “assimilation”.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES – SPEAKERS

Alan Strathern works on early modern global history (1500-1800) with a special interest in those parts of the world that came into contact with Portuguese imperialism and the theme of religious encounters. He is a Fellow and Tutor at Brasenose College, and a Lecturer at St. John’s College, University of Oxford. He is the author of Kingship and Conversion in Sixteenth Century Sri Lanka: Portuguese Imperialism in a Buddhist Land (2007), and a number of articles on such themes as origin myths, source criticism, and the development of ethnic consciousness.

Pedro Cardim is Professor of Early Modern History at the Universidade Nova de Lisboa, member of the Board of the Centro de História de Além-Mar, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, and associate researcher at Instituto de Ciências Sociais, Universidade de Lisboa. He specializes in 16th-17th century political history, with a special focus on the place of Portugal within the Iberian world.

Zoltán Biedermann is Lecturer in Iberian Studies and the Department of Iberian and Latin American Studies at Birkbeck College, University of London. He is the author of two books and numerous articles on Portuguese expansion in Asia, and is currently finishing a book entitled Connected Empires: Sri Lanka, Portugal, and the Making of Habsburg Imperialism in Asia.

Ricardo Roque is Research Fellow at Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon, and Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the Department of History and the Centre for Values, Ethics and the Law in Medicine, at University of Sydney. He is the author of Headhunting and Colonialism: Anthropology and the Circulation of Human Skulls in the Portuguese Empire (2010) and the co-editor of Engaging Colonial Knowledge: Reading European Archives in World History (2012). Current research themes include colonial mimesis, race-mixing and the history of human biology in the Portuguese-speaking world.

Cristiana Bastos is an anthropologist based at the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Lisbon. Her interests lie at the intersections of society, knowledge and power, and most of her work – which recently addressed Portuguese colonialism through its health institutions – is at the confluence of anthropology, history and science studies. She is the author of Global Responses to AIDS - science in emergency (1999) and a number of articles on topics of colonialism, medicine and displacement.

Ângela Barreto Xavier is a Researcher of the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Lisbon (ICS-UL). She holds a PhD in History & Civilisation from the European University Institute a Master in Political and Cultural History from the New University of Lisbon and a History and Art History Degree from the New University of Lisbon. Her research interests include the history of political ideas, and the cultural history of early-modern empires, namely the problems related to religion, science, power and the cultural geopolitics. She is the author of A Invenção de Goa. Poder Imperial e Conversões Culturais (2008).

Luís Cabral holds a BA in Law from the University of Coimbra and a Master of Advanced Studies by the Universidad Pablo de Olavide, of Sevilla. His main research interests are the history of law application in the Portuguese overseas territories (especially Goa), the elites of nineteenth century Goa and genealogy. He is undertaking a PhD in Law History at the Faculty
of Law of Universidade Nova de Lisboa and is currently a professor at the Polytechnic Institute of Leiria.

**Manuel Magalhães** holds a BA in law by Universidade Nova de Lisboa and a MA in Political Science and International Relations by the Universidade Nova de Lisboa, where he studied Portuguese post-colonial relations with its African ex-colonies.

**Cristina Nogueira da Silva** is a historian of law, a professor at the Faculty of Law of Universidade Nova de Lisboa and researcher at CEDIS in the same university. Her main research areas are the history of the legal personal status in the Portuguese overseas territories (nineteenth- and twentieth-century), classical liberalism, and citizenship in the nineteenth century. She is the author of *Constituição e Império* (2009).

**Pedro Ferreira** holds a BA in History from ISCTE-IUL and a Post-Graduation in Communication, Culture and Technologies of Information by the same University. He is currently completing his MA in History and Geography Teaching at Universidade Nova de Lisboa and holds a research grant at the project “The Government of Difference”.