
Unveiling and Promoting an Unknown Colony: Portuguese Photographs of Timor from the Late 19th to Early 20th Centuries

Divulgando e promovendo uma colônia desconhecida: fotografias portuguesas de Timor entre finais do século XIX e início do século XX

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Abstract

This article analyzes a sample of 138 photographs (121 unique and 17 duplicates) of the former Portuguese colony of Timor. The photographs were produced between the 1890s and the eve of the First World War and were kept at the Portuguese Photography Centre in the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Library or published in the press (illustrated magazines *Occidente* and *Ilustração Portuguesa*) or as illustrated postcards. Using a semiotic and photojournalistic methodology and combining photographic images with textual sources - parliamentary debates, military reports, press reports, and written opinions of experts on overseas issues - in the analysis, this study shows how photography represented Timor and how this representation was presented in the metropolis. The sample of images reveals an eminently ethnographic and anthropological interest on the part of the Portuguese photographers. They aimed to bridge the knowledge gap regarding this specific region of the empire for colonial decision-makers in Lisbon. Despite the ethnographic and anthropological interest, there was an attempt to promote Timor as a potential emigration destination through images that depicted the process of domestication and Portugalization of the territory or the agricultural and mineral potential of the colony. This study contributes to historiographical debates on the use of photography as a primary source and on the role of this technology in the imperial agendas of European nations in Africa and Asia.

Keywords: photography, imperialism, colonialism, representations

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Resumo

Este artigo analisa uma amostra de 138 fotografias (121 únicas e dezassete duplicados) da antiga colónia portuguesa de Timor, produzidas entre as décadas de 1890 e as vésperas da Primeira Guerra Mundial e conservadas no Centro Português de Fotografia, na Biblioteca da Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian ou publicadas na imprensa (revistas ilustradas *Occidente e Ilustração Portuguesa*) ou como bilhetes postais ilustrados. Recorrendo a uma metodologia semiótica e de análise fotojornalística e combinando na análise imagens fotográficas com fontes textuais (debates parlamentares, relatórios militares, notícias da imprensa e opinião escrita de peritos em questões ultramarinas), este estudo mostra o modo como a fotografia representou Timor e como esta representação foi apresentada na metrópole. A amostra imagética indicia um interesse eminentemente etnográfico e antropológico por parte dos fotógrafos portugueses, que pretendia colmatar o fraco conhecimento dos decisores coloniais em Lisboa sobre aquela parte do império. Ainda assim, nota-se um esforço para tentar promover Timor como um possível destino de emigração através de fotografias que evidenciavam a *domesticação* e *portugalização* do território ou o potencial agrícola e mineral da colónia. Deste modo, este trabalho contribui para os debates historiográficos sobre o uso da fotografia como fonte primária e sobre o papel daquela tecnologia nas agendas imperiais das nações europeias em África e na Ásia.

Palavras-chave: fotografia, imperialismo, colonialismo, representações

Introduction: starting questions, problem, and context

In recent years, Portuguese historiography has devoted its attention to the visual culture and material visibility of the country's former overseas territories. This attention has been particularly focused on the study of the use of photography within the African and Indian¹ imperial context. Other colonial territories, such as Macau or Timor, received less attention. This article analyzes a photographic corpus comprising 138 images (121 unique and 17 duplicates) depicting various aspects of Timor between the last years of the 19th century and the first two decades of the 20th century.

This study employs an iconographic and semiotic analysis of photographs to demonstrate how the image of Timor as a colonial territory was constructed for the Portuguese metropolitan public. It also illustrates how

¹ VICENTE, Filipa Lowndes (ed.). *O Império da Visão. Fotografia no Contexto Colonial Português (1860-1960)*. Lisboa, Edições 70, 2014.

this construction was socio-culturally shaped by the aspirations, expectations and representations of the Portuguese colonial agents. Therefore, I aim to answer the following questions: (1) how photography represented Timor, its inhabitants, and the Portuguese presence in the territory; (2) how this representation was presented to the Portuguese in the metropolis.

The practice of photography began in mainland Portugal in the 1840s and in its colonies in the 1860s. Subsequent innovations and advancements throughout the 19th century made it a more affordable and portable technology. This, in turn, led to an exponential increase in the number of practitioners. Photography became a central tool across diverse fields, including engineering, medicine, cartography, criminology, and even banknote forgery². Within the Portuguese colonial context, mirroring other imperial scenarios, photography served as a tool for mapping, cataloging the territory, and controlling the population, as well as for disseminating the European *civilizing mission*³. In sum, photography became an instrument of empire, as Daniel Headrick⁴ observed.

Timor was known by Portuguese navigators since the beginning of the 16th century. Since the 17th century missionary endeavors had been conducted in the colony, and they were joined by occasional scientific reconnaissance expeditions in the 19th century. In the mid-19th century, the division of the island with the Netherlands was established through some international treaties. The Portuguese presence in that part of Oceania never achieved a significant level, due to the vast distance that separated it from the metropolis. Even in administrative terms, Timor was subordinate to Macau rather than responding directly to Lisbon. The Portuguese authorities had effectively abandoned the colony, which lacked both direct maritime and telegraphic connections and any direct trade relations with Portugal. Instead,

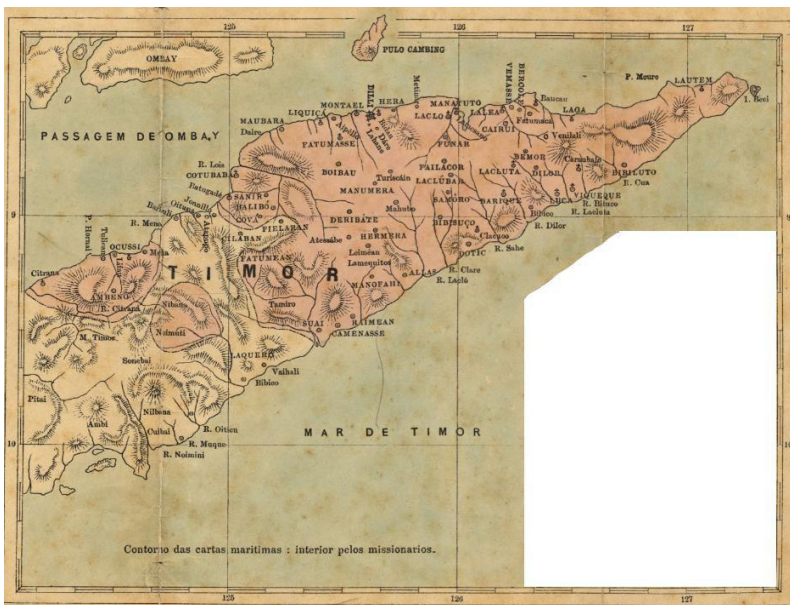
² COSTA, Fernanda Madalena; JARDIM, Maria Estela (eds.). *100 Anos de Fotografia Científica em Portugal (1839-1939)*. Lisboa: Edições 70, 2014. DIAS, Jill R. "Photographic Sources for the History of Portuguese-Speaking Africa, 1870-1914". *History in Africa*, 1991, 18, p. 67. FREUND, Gisèle. *Fotografia e Sociedade*. Lisboa: Veja, 1995, pp. 37-42. SENA, António. *História da Imagem Fotográfica em Portugal - 1839-1997*. Porto: Porto Editora, 1998, pp. 45-97, 143 e 147.

³ HEINTZE, Beatrix. "In Pursuit of a Chameleon: Early Ethnographic Photography from Angola in Context". *History in Africa*, 1990, 17, pp. 131-156. LANDAU, Paul S. "Empires of the Visual: Photography and Colonial Administration in Africa". In LANDAU, Paul S.; KASPIN, Deborah D. (eds.). *Images and Empires. Visuality in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002, pp. 141-171. RYAN, James R. *Picturing Empire. Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997. VICENTE, op. cit.

⁴ HEADRICK, Daniel R. *The Tools of Empire. Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981.

trade was conducted with Macau or the neighboring Dutch domains, with a significant portion of it based on smuggling through Chinese and African intermediaries due to the lack of effective inspection. By the end of the 19th century, there was a “striking lack of awareness”⁵ about Timor within the government circles. In 1908, it was still recognized that Timor was a “colony that is very little known among us and of which little is said”⁶. Coeval maps of the territory (Figure 1) illustrate this lack of knowledge, showing only its border, the location of a few towns, and some incipient representations of the Timorese orography. What was known about Timor at the time was that it was a volcanic island, with an area of approximately 30,000 km², approximately 500 km in length and 100 km in width. It was noted that the island was rugged, with a central mountain range that included steep rocks, “that sometimes present a phantastic (sic) appearance, resembling ruins”⁷.

Figure 1. Map of Timor, 1894



Source: National Digital Library, Map of the diocese of Macau under the direction of the Macau Missionaries, C.C. 365 A., available at: purl.pt/3505.

⁵ DORES, Rafael das. *Apontamentos para um Dicionario Chorographico de Timor*. Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1903, p. 7.

⁶ *Diario da Camara dos Deputados*, 19 de agosto de 1908, p. 16.

⁷ INSO, Jaime do. “Na Sociedade de Geografia. 3.ª Conferencia do 2.º tenente sr. Jayme Inso. Uma viagem a Timor”. *O Occidente: Revista Illustrada de Portugal e do Estrangeiro*, 1913, 36, n.º 1241-1242, p. 177.

It was also known that the climate was depleting and unhealthy on the coast, especially on the south coast, due to the dense vegetation, and also invigorating, although very rainy and humid, in the inland mountains⁸. Consequently, the representation of the colony in the metropolis was negative. When Rafael das Dores, a Portuguese soldier who had spent a significant portion of his career in Portuguese colonies in the Far East, including service commissions in Timor in 1871, 1878, 1886, and 1891⁹, firstly visited the colony, he observed that “the closer we got to the area, the more unfavorable the country we had to stay seemed to me”¹⁰. The colony served as a destination for prisoners and convicts, who were often engaged in “disgusting scenes with prisoners in chains, true human rags”¹¹. Furthermore, Timor was a financial burden on the nation, and its alienation was offered as a solution in 1888, 1891, and 1908¹². However, since the colony was regarded as a “pattern of our glories in Oceania”¹³ (Valentim Alexandre’s “myth of the sacred inheritance”), this measure was never implemented. The main products exported from Timor, primarily via the port of Dili, were sandalwood, which began to be exported from the 1800s, and coffee, introduced in the 1860s and exploited on plantations, which facilitated the appropriation of some of the territory in favor of the empire. In the 1890s, agricultural companies began to diversify their exports of primary products, including rubber, cinnamon, nutmeg, and tobacco. These economic activities also resonated the ‘myth of Eldorado’ in Timor, the perception that the territory was highly fertile and rich in minerals (gold, shale, copper, oil), which could potentially lead to a rupture in the territory’s commercial subordination to the Dutch colonies. In 1891, in the Parliament in Lisbon, MP Horta e Costa had no doubts in affirming that:

Timor is extremely rich. The different samples that have come from there and which have been analyzed at different points clearly show that there is an abundance of gold, copper, sulphur, especially oil, and many other metals and metalloids.

⁸ *Diário da Camara dos Deputados*, 20 de março de 1899, pp. 41-42.

⁹ DORES. *Apontamentos*, p. 3.

¹⁰ DORES, Rafael das. *Album Biographico e Geographico*. S. l.: s. n., c. 1903, p. 81. Original quotation: “quanto mais nos aproximávamos mais me parecia horrível o paiz em que tinha que ficar”.

¹¹ INSO, Jaime do. “Sociedade de Geographia. 4.ª Conferencia do tenente da armada sr. Jayme do Inso. A Provincia de Timor”, *O Occidente: Revista Illustrada de Portugal e do Estrangeiro*, 1914, 37, n.º 1277-1278, p. 197. Ver também: “Timor – a ignorada”, *Ilustração Portuguesa*, 1909, 7, n.º 172, p. 733.

¹² *Diário da Camara dos Deputados*, 19 de agosto de 1908, p. 16.

¹³ SILVA, José Celestino da. *Relatorio das Operações de Guerra no Districto Autonomo de Timor no Anno de 1896*. Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1897, p. 40.

The experiments that have been carried out there clearly prove that the soil of Timor is admirably suitable for the cultivation of corn, coffee, cocoa, sugar cane, saffron, peanuts, quinine, and many other crops, which are in great demand in those places¹⁴.

Until the mid-1890s, Portuguese authority in the territory was limited to the coast, mainly to the capital Dili. The Portuguese military force stationed there was typically small, poorly equipped, and very undisciplined¹⁵, so its power waned as one penetrated deeper into the territory. The territory was divided into approximately 50 kingdoms, Luca, Motael, Ambeno, Sarau, Maubara, Ermera, etc. They were markedly distinct from each other, 30 different languages were spoken, and they governed themselves but clashed with each other. The Portuguese authorities had to negotiate with them their presence in the territory. Before the advent of photography, the only visual representations of the Timorese people were drawings, such as the one in Figure 2. Between 1894 and 1896, Governor Celestino da Silva conducted several military campaigns to extend Portuguese rule in the colony. These campaigns were accompanied by a surge in Catholic missionary activity. In 1911 and 1912, further military campaigns were conducted to consolidate Portuguese control.¹⁶

¹⁴ *Diário da Camara dos Deputados*, 22 de junho de 1891, p. 6. Outras manifestações desta representação podem ser encontradas em *Diário da Camara dos Deputados*, 20 de março de 1899, pp. 41-42

¹⁵ DORES, Rafael das. *A Força Armada em Timor*. Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1901, pp. 2-4. DORES. *Album*, pp. 86, 202, 315 e 318. *Relatorio do Governador da Provincia de Macau e Timor de 30 de Setembro de 1889 com referencia a 1888-1889*. Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1890, pp. 10-11. *Relatorios das Direcções das Obras Publicas das Provincias Ultramarinas. Anno Economico de 1888-1889*. Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1891, p. 112.

¹⁶ ALEXANDRE, Valentim; DIAS, Jill (eds.). "O Império Africano 1825-1890". In SERRÃO, Joel; MARQUES, A. H. de Oliveira (eds.). *Nova Historia da Expansão Portuguesa*. Lisboa: Editorial Estampa, 1998, vol. 10, pp. 769-770, 777-787, 790-791 e 800-801. BETHENCOURT, Francisco; CHAUDURI, Kirti (eds), *Historia da expansão portuguesa*. Lisboa: Temas e Debates, 2000, vol. 4, 48, 50, 203-204 e 485. BOAVIDA, Isabel. "Celestino da Silva, a rede de postos militares e a ocupação colonial efetiva de Timor português (1895-1905): Um processo (des)construtivo", *Journal of Asian History*, 2014, 48, n.º 2, pp. 227-261. BOVENSIEPEN, Judith. "Pacification and Rebellion in the Highlands of Portuguese Timor". In ROQUE, Ricardo; TRAUBE, Elizabeth G. (eds.). *Crossing Histories and Ethnographies: Following Colonial Historicities in Timor-Leste*. Nova York: Berghahn, 2019, pp. 131-154. DAVIDSON, Katharine. "The Portuguese colonisation of Timor: the final stage, 1850-1912". Sydney: The University of New South Wales, 1994. Dissertação de doutoramento. DORES. *Album*, p. 87. INSO. "Na Sociedade de Geografia. 3.ª Conferencia", pp. 188-190. INSO, "Sociedade de Geographia. 4.ª Conferencia", pp. 197-198 e 211-212. MARQUES, A. H. de Oliveira (ed.). *História dos Portugueses no Extremo Oriente. Macau e Timor do Antigo Regime à República*. Lisboa: Fundação Oriente, 2000, pp. 724-726, 729, 734, 738-742, 744, 748-753 e 774. MARQUES, A. H. de Oliveira (ed.). *História dos Portugueses no Extremo Oriente. Macau e Timor no período republicano*. Lisboa: Fundação Oriente, 2003, pp. 521, 529-531 e 539-547. MARQUES, A. H. de Oliveira (ed.). "O Império Africano 1890-1930". In SERRÃO; MARQUES, op. cit., vol. 11, pp. 729, 733-737, 749-754, 759-762 e 767. PENHA GARCIA. Conde de. *Algumas Palavras sobre a Colonização de Timor*. Lisboa: A Liberal – Officina Typographica, 1901, pp. 4-7. *Relatorio do Governador*, pp. 10 e 17. ROQUE, Ricardo. "Timor Etnográfico: antropologia e arquivo colonial". *Anuário Antropológico*, 2017, 42, n. 2, p. 12. SILVA, J.

Figure 2. A Timorese warrior (c. 1900)



Source: National Digital Library, Guerriero di Timor (Amfoang), E. 3707 P., available at: purl.pt/12332

The source and a proposed methodology for analyzing it

The image sample analyzed in this paper (Table 1) consists of 138 photographs (121 originals and 17 duplicates) preserved at the Portuguese

G. Montalvão e. *A Mão d'Obra em Timor. Breve memoria sobre o seu territorio, clima, producção, usos e costumes indigenas, industria, agricultura e commercio.* Lisboa: Tipografia A Editora, 1910, pp. 5, 8-9 e 27-28. SILVA, J. Gomes da. *Em Timor.* Macau: Tipografia Mercantil, 1892, pp. 22 e 85. SILVA, *Relatorio das Operações,* pp. 40-41. SOUSA, Lucas Brandão de. "Timor-Leste nas coleções de imagens do Museu de História Natural e da Ciência da Universidade do Porto (MHNC-UP): uma rede de informação e conhecimento". Porto: Universidade do Porto. Dissertação de mestrado, p. 45. "Timor – a ignorada", p. 729.

Photography Centre (76), the Art Library of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (18), published in the Portuguese illustrated press of the time (27) and reproduced as illustrated postcards (the latter identified by Lucas Brandão de Sousa in his master's dissertation)¹⁷. The two generalist magazines consulted were *O Occidente* and *Ilustração Portuguesa*. Both were published fortnightly and weekly, and made abundant use of photography. They were distributed throughout metropolitan Portugal and had a high retail price, but were still accessible to many.¹⁸

The photographs analyzed in this study are the only ones known of Timor taken during a critical period of Portuguese colonialism from the 1890s, when Portugal attempted to strengthen its imperial position following the British Ultimatum, which demanded the withdrawal of Portuguese forces stationed between Angola and Mozambique¹⁹, to the eve of the First World War which challenged the optimism advocated by the combination of liberalism, capitalism, and technical-scientific innovation²⁰.

¹⁷ SOUSA, "Timor-Leste nas coleções de imagens do Museu de História Natural e da Ciência", p. 84-87.

¹⁸ PEREIRA, Hugo Silveira "Witnessing Colonial Warfare in Early-20th Century Portugal: The Photographic Reportage of the Kwamato Campaign in South Angola (1907)", *International Journal of Military History and Historiography*, 2023, ahead of print, p. 6.

¹⁹ ALEXANDRE, DIAS, *op. cit.*, pp. 645-648.

²⁰ ROSHWALD, Aviel; STITER, Richard. *European Culture in the Great War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Table 1. Photographic sets of Timor analyzed in this article, indicating their probable dates and sources.

Name of Image Set	Year	#	Source(s)
<i>Customs and types of the Timor District</i>	1890-1910	59 ²¹	Centro Português de Fotografia, Coleção Álbuns Fotográficos, Costumes e tipos do Districto de Timor, PT/CPF/CAF/0009, disponível em digitarq.cpf.arquivos.pt/details?id=60427
<i>Timor customs (two sheets)</i>	1890s	17	Centro Português de Fotografia, Coleção Nacional de Fotografia, Tenente-Coronel Rafael das Dores, Costumes de Timor, PT/CPF/CNF/1735/00010 e PT/CPF/CNF/1735/00116
<i>Biographical and Geographical Album</i>	1871-1873, 1878, 1886, 1891-1892	18	Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Art Library, Biographical and Geographical Album, CFT170, available at www.bibliartepac.gulbenkian.pt
Published in the illustrated press (two periodicals)	1905, 1909, 1912-1914	27	<i>Ilustração Portuguesa</i> ; <i>O Occidente: Revista Ilustrada de Portugal e no Extrangeiro</i> , available at hemerotecadigital.cm-lisboa.pt
Illustrated Postcards		17 ²²	Macau Archive, 帝汶明信片 (Postcards from Timor), MO/AH/ICON/MTL/TP, available at www.archives.gov.mo/webas/Default.aspx?parentID=58042 ; José Estêvão School Group Collection, Postcards from Timor, available at ww3.aeje.pt/avcultur/avcultur/Postais4/TimorPost03.htm

The analysis of photographic images should begin with the understanding that while capturing a moment that occurred in space and time, they are subjective products resulting from the choices of the photographers (angle, composition, people portrayed) and the objectives they intend to achieve²³. During the period of the photographs analyzed in this study, the slow shutter speeds required subjects to remain motionless for

²¹ This album contains a photograph that was republished in the Album Biographico e Geographico de Rafael Dores, so it has not been counted.

²² This set contains nine photographs in common with the two collections indicated, which have not been counted.

²³ DANIELS, Stephen; COSGROVE, Denis. "Introduction: iconography and landscape". In COSGROVE, Denis; DANIELS, Stephen (eds.). *The Iconography of Landscape. Essays on the symbolic representation, design, and use of past environments*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, p. 1. DUBOIS, Philippe. *O Acto Fotográfico*. Lisboa: Vega, 1992, pp. 29 e 45.

a few seconds to achieve a sharp image, adding another layer of subjectivity to the photographic image²⁴.

Nevertheless, photographs were presented and accepted as objective products, since they resulted from the work of a machine - the camera, which obeyed the immutable laws of Physics and Optics. This was in clear contrast to paintings or drawings, which were allegedly tainted by the intrinsic subjectivity of their authors²⁵. Consequently, by presenting subjective representations of reality that are disguised and accepted as objective facts, photography has become an important tool for producing ideology, legitimizing certain narratives, and, in the specific case of this study, creating representations of distant regions²⁶. I refer here to the reflections of anthropologist Tim Ingold, who states that the construction of landscapes and territories has a component of imagination, which influences how these landscapes and territories are perceived and represented²⁷. Thus, I engage in a discourse with the central tenets of this journal, which looks at regions as imaginary, ideological, and symbolic spaces, as well as physical and material.

The analysis of photographic images is neither straightforward nor intuitive, given that photography is a message without a code, as French sociologist Roland Barthes observed. Nevertheless, the same author provides some guidelines for the critical examination of photographic collections. Barthes begins his analysis by suggesting that each photograph contains two elements associated with two specific messages: the signifier, which identifies the object/figure portrayed and refers to the denoted message, which is an analog of reality; and the signified, which refers to the representation transmitted and refers to the connoted message, which consists of how society represents reality. The accumulation of signifiers and signifieds through photographic sets results in the production of a sign or myth through photography²⁸. The concepts will be employed in the subsequent analysis.

²⁴ CARVALHO, Rómulo de. *História da Fotografia*. Coimbra: Atlântida Editorial, 1976, pp. 130-131.

²⁵ DASTON, Lorraine; GALISON, Peter. *Objectivity*. Nova York: Zone Books, 2007, pp. 44, 121-125, 189-197 e 258. SCHWARTZ, Joan M.; RYAN, James R. "Introduction: Photography and the Geographical Imagination". In SCHWARTZ, Joan M.; RYAN, James R. (eds.). *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Information*, Nova York: Tauris, 2003, p. 8.

²⁶ KELSEY, Robin. "Is Landscape Photography?". In DOHERTY, Gareth; WALDHEIM, Charles (eds.). *Is Landscape...? Essays on the Identity of Landscape*. Londres: Routledge, 2016, p. 90; PHU, Thy.

²⁷ INGOLD, Tim. "Introduction". In JANOWSKI, Monica; INGOLD, Tim (eds.). *Imagining Landscapes: Past, Present and Future*. Londres: Routledge, 2012, p. 10.

²⁸ BARTHES, Roland, *Image, Music, Text*. Londres: Fontana Press, 1977, pp. 17-37. BARTHES, Roland, *Mythologies*. Nova York: The Noonday Press, 1972, pp. 109-156.

In Barthesian methodology, the identification of signifiers is connected to what Barthes refers to as the *punctum*, or that detail in the photograph that stands out and takes on greater significance for the viewer and pierces their mind²⁹. The *punctum* in an image varies from individual to individual. To ascertain it with greater certainty, it is essential to analyze the accompanying caption, as it directs and conditions the viewer's gaze towards a specific detail or representation that the author wishes to highlight³⁰.

To identify the meanings and signs present in photographs more accurately, Barthes emphasizes the importance of understanding their socio-cultural context, which he refers to as the *studium*. In this regard, the Gallic theorist emphasizes the importance of identifying the photographers, the individuals who commissioned or ordered the photographs, and their intended purposes. In the photographs of Timor analyzed in this article, it is not possible to include this information, since only the 17 images in the two albums of Customs of Timor and the 18 in the Album *Biographico e Geographico* (Table 1) allow us to identify their author, namely the aforementioned Rafael das Dores. As for the others, their author is unknown.

Barthes also emphasizes the historicity of the connotation code, that is that the interpretation of meanings and the connoted message depends on the historical knowledge of the observer to a significant extent³¹. In a previous section, I presented an overview of the historical context of Timor between the late 19th century and the early 20th century. In the subsequent analysis of the photographic images, I will highlight additional details and a more specific historical contours that are crucial for the interpretation of the images. To gain a full understanding of the photographs in their historical context, it is essential to compare them with coeval written sources (preferably directly linked to the image itself). This allows us to determine which of the many meanings in the photograph is most prevalent, thus limiting the weight of the historian's own prejudices and representations³². In this study, I have considered the news and descriptions accompanying the photographs in illustrated magazines and albums, as well as parliamentary debates, reports

²⁹ BARTHES, Roland, *Image, Music, Text*. Londres: Fontana Press, 1977, pp. 17-37. BARTHES, Roland, *Mythologies*. Nova York: The Noonday Press, 1972, pp. 109-156.

³⁰ BURGIN, Victor. "Re-reading Camera Lucida". In BATCHEN, Geoffrey (ed.). *Photography Degree Zero: Reflections on Roland Barthes's Camera Lucida*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009, p. 33. FRANKLIN, Margery B.; BECKLEN, Robert C.; DOYLE, Charlotte L. "The Influence of Titles on How Paintings Are Seen". *Leonardo: Journal of the International Society for the Arts, Sciences and Technology* 1993, 26, n.º 2, pp. 103-108.

³¹ BARTHES, *Camera Lucida*, pp. 26-27. BARTHES, *Image, Music, Text*, p. 28.

³² BARTHES, *Image, Music, Text*, pp. 25-26 e 39; DANIELS; COSGROVE, "Introduction", p. 1.

by colonial administrators, and opinions published by specialists or those interested in the affairs of the then Overseas Territories.

To facilitate the analysis of this photographic corpus, I conducted a systematic analysis of the images and divided them into thematic categories with similar meanings, following the methodological suggestion of communication and journalism specialist Márcia Benetti³³ (Table 2). This division serves as the foundation for the subsequent analysis, with these categories recurring in subsequent photographic collections³⁴.

Table 2. Categories of the sample analyzed, indicating the number of photographs included in each category.

Category	Material Improvements	Portuguese presence in Timor	Timor people	Vernacular architecture	Timor Geography
#	35	12	52	11	11
%	28.9%	9.9%	43.0%	9.1%	9.1%

The study of light and shadows in photographs of colonial Timor.

A striking observation emerging from the collection of photographs on Timor is their small number. For the same historical period, thousands of photographic images of the Portuguese colonies in India and Africa³⁵ can be easily found, while for Timor, I have identified only slightly less than 150. A similar phenomenon is observed in the illustrated press (*Ilustração Portuguesa* and *Occidente*), where I found only 27 photographs spread across eight different issues (Figure 3). The other colonies, on the other hand, were publicized with numerous photographs in dozens of issues of those two magazines. As the 20th century progressed, the number of photographs of Timor increased considerably.³⁶ However, until the mid-1910s, there were few photographic images depicting the colony. This is not surprising, as it reflects the lack of interest of metropolis in the colony, as previously mentioned. Nevertheless, despite their small number, the photographs contain some important representations for the study of this colonial period.

³³ BENETTI, Márcia. “Análise do discurso em jornalismo: estudos de vozes e sentidos”. In LAGO, Cláudia; BENETTI, Márcia (eds.). *Metodologia de pesquisa em jornalismo*. Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes, 2007, pp. 112-113.

³⁴ SOUSA, “Timor-Leste nas coleções de imagens do Museu de História Natural e da Ciência”, pp. 3, 120-123.

³⁵ VICENTE, Filipa Lowndes. “Goa Displayed in Goa: The 1860 Industrial Exhibition of Portuguese Colonial India”. *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais*, 2018, 115, pp. 159-182. VICENTE, *O Império da Visão*.

³⁶ SOUSA, “Timor-Leste nas coleções de imagens do Museu de História Natural e da Ciência”, pp. 75-87.

Figure 3. Geographical distribution of photographs of Timor published in *Ilustração Portuguesa* and *O Occidente*



Source: Author's work using Google Maps with data found in *Ilustração Portuguesa* and *Occidente*

In her *Essays on Photography*, Susan Sontag posits that “to photograph is to confer importance”.³⁷ This assertion can be extrapolated to suggest that Portuguese photographers conferred greater significance to the local, anthropological aspects of Timor, particularly its inhabitants, whose photographs account for over half of the images analyzed, and vernacular architecture. It would be interesting to know the relationship between metropolitan photographers and colonized Timorese. However, this information is not available in the sources.

In comparison to other collections of colonial photography, the relevance attributed to specific aspects in Timorese images is much higher. On the other hand, there are fewer representations of the Portuguese presence in the territory, either through manifestations of authority or power, or through material improvements. Again, this analysis is in line with the lack of investment in the colony by the metropolis. Finally, photographs illustrating details of Timorese geography are also small in the sample, which can be explained by the small size of the territory and the much greater interest of the photographers in its human and social aspects.

³⁷ SONTAG, Susan. *Ensaio Sobre Fotografia*. Lisboa: Dom Quixote, 1986, p. 34.

Unveiling the Timorese People and Their Customs

The photographic images of Timorese people, which demonstrate the investment made by the Portuguese empire since the end of the 19th century in studying the ethnicities, cultures, and languages of Timor³⁸, also reveal the knowledge that the Portuguese colonial authorities had of local society, divided into three categories: *dattós*, *emus* and slaves. The *dattós* were akin to the European nobility. This elite group included the *liurais* or *leorays* (leaders of each kingdom) and the *sucos* (heads of the administrative divisions of each kingdom). The *sucos*' authority was inherited or they were elected; they exercised their power in a despotic manner, following the traditions and customs of their respective kingdoms. Both *liurais* and *sucos* were entitled to use the Portuguese honorific title of Dom, accompanied by a grandiose Portuguese name. According to contemporary sources, some Timorese nations were particularly devoted to the king of Portugal and retained Portuguese flags as talismans³⁹. To foster a friendly relationship with these leaders, the Portuguese also assigned them military ranks. The *liurais* were colonels or lieutenant colonels, while the *sucos* were majors, captains, lieutenants, or ensigns. *Ema* represented the people and was composed of the warriors of the armies (*arraiais*) of the *dattós* and other groups, on whom various tributes were imposed. Those who were unable to bear these taxes or who were captured in war were subjected to enslavement⁴⁰.

The photographs analyzed in this study illustrate the social division as well as the social prevalence of the *dattós*. In *Costumes de Timor* and in *Costumes e tipos do Districto de Timor* (Table 1), there are 21 photographs of *dattós*, with 16 *liurais* and three *sucos* (one of the *liurais* has three photographs). Regarding the former, the caption clearly indicates the title of the ruler or queen preceding the name of the person portrayed. This is exemplified by the following examples: Luís de Luca, Domingos de Vemace, Tomás de Carvalho, João de Cayrui, Manoel Ximenes, Afonso, portrayed three times, Mateus, Maria. Alternatively, the caption simply indicates the name of the kingdom or both, as in the following examples: Afonso, João de Cayrui, Manoel Ximenes.

One of the *liurais* images omits Dom, but the rank of colonel (*Piato*) indicates that he is also one of these rulers. Most of the *liurais* rulers are men

³⁸ ROQUE, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

³⁹ PENHA GARCIA. *op. cit.*, p. 6. SILVA, *Relatorio das Operações*, p. 38.

⁴⁰ ALEXANDRE; DIAS. "O Império Africano", pp. 770-771. DORES. *Apontamentos*, p. 4. PENHA GARCIA. *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6. SILVA. *A Mão d'Obra em Timor*, pp. 26-27.

between 40 and 60, however, two of the photographs show two queens. This is corroborated by coeval sources attesting to a relative equality between men and women in Timorese society, which justifies female leadership in some kingdoms⁴¹. Four of the *liurais* are depicted in a Portuguese military uniform or similar, with shoes and either a moustache or a well-shaven face. One of the queens is also attired in European style (long dress, necklace, and hat), while the remaining 10, including the other queen, are dressed in sarão or lipa, Timorese clothes, and barefoot⁴². This may indicate a greater or lesser affinity with the Portuguese authorities, respectively. The men have beards or fuller facial hair, and some are portrayed accompanied by one or more subordinates, or attendants in the case of the queens, or by family members. The European-style Doms are distinguished by their swords, which symbolize military authority. Colonel Piato, for instance, is unarmed and carries a cane, suggesting that he has chosen not to engage in warfare and has not yet been granted the title of Dom.

Regarding the *sucos*, Major Carvalho, Captain Silva, and Captain Cunha, it can be observed that they are all wearing *sarongs* or *lipas* and wielding rifles. Two of them, Captain Silva and Captain Cunha, also have sheathed pistols and ammunition necklaces on their chests, while Major Carvalho has chosen to equip himself with a sword while posing for the camera.

The remaining photographs show members of the *ema*. The images in *Costumes de Timor* are notable for the inclusion of captions that name and identify the individuals depicted. These captions include an *arraial* soldier, Cosme, without military titles or ranks, a craftsman, Sautake, an unnamed couple, several women, Júlia, Maria, Juliana, Marta, and Libânia, all wearing Timorese clothes, and some children, Militão, Marciano, and Joaquim, with uncovered torso and legs. The photographs of the local artisans and craftspeople, accompanied by some rudimentary and simple artifacts, demonstrate the existence of local industry, albeit in its early stages and oriented towards the satisfaction of immediate needs⁴³.

In contrast, the album *Costumes e tipos do Districto de Timor* employs a more dehumanizing perspective. Here, individuals, ethnic groups, and activities are grouped together under a generic caption of “customs.” In other images,

⁴¹ SILVA. *A Mão d’Obra em Timor*, p. 31.

⁴² MARQUES. “O Império Africano”, p. 792.

⁴³ MARQUES. “O Império Africano”, p. 764. MARQUES. *História dos Portugueses no Extremo Oriente. Macau e Timor do Antigo Regime à República*, p. 739. PENHA GARCIA. *op. cit.*, p. 7. SILVA. *A Mão d’Obra em Timor*, p. 7.

the caption is more specific, yet still generalizing. It identifies “insurgents,” “children,” “Timorese family,” “prisoners,” “police,” “cleaning company,” or “Gentile”, the term is used to refer to the Portuguese classification of the Timorese as non-Christians. The term “Timorese” was used by the Portuguese to classify the indigenous population of Timor from a religious standpoint, as non-Christians, with practices classified as “idolatry,” “superstition,” and “immorality”.⁴⁴ However, none of the individuals depicted in the images is given a proper name. The photographs offer an image similar to that presented in the engraving reproduced in Figure 2, which highlights and validates the picturesque and exotic nature of the tropical Other through the objectivity of the camera. Some references are common to both, such as the rifle on the warrior’s shoulder or his clothing. In contrast, the adornment on his back is not echoed in the photographic images.

Another perspective on the dehumanization mentioned above is provided by one of the images in the album edited by Rafael das Dores. It adds a new layer of imperial domination by portraying a group of Timorese women bathing in a watercourse (Figure 4). The colonies were consistently regarded as spaces of sexual opportunity, where European men could fulfill their erotic fantasies. Timor, where “the women of the island have their touches of beauty”⁴⁵ was no exception. Colonized women were regarded as objects of desire and conquest, akin to overseas territories and resources, and were sexualized in the representations that were created⁴⁶ about them. Photography, as evidenced by the images included in Rafael das Dores’ Album, was a tool used to conquer the colonized women. These images were likely taken without the women’s consent or knowledge of the photographic practice. The purpose of these images often extended beyond mere ethnographic and anthropological interest⁴⁷. In fact, photographs of white women would be considered erotic and, as such, forbidden. The figure of the virtuous and modest woman was lauded, while the unclothed woman was associated with

⁴⁴ ALEXANDRE; DIAS. “O Império Africano”, p. 776. “Timor – a ignorada”, pp. 729 e 731. ROQUE, *op. cit.*, p. 15

⁴⁵ ZOLA. *Quatorze Annos de Timor*. S. l.: s. n., 1909, p. 60.

⁴⁶ MATOS, Patrícia Ferraz de. *The Colours of the Empire: Racialized Representations During Portuguese Colonialism*. Nova York: Berghahn Books, 2013, p. 130. McCLINTOCK, Anne. *Imperial leather: race, gender, and sexuality in the colonial contest*. Nova York: Routledge, 1995, p. 22. STOLER, Ann Laura; COOPER, Frederick Cooper. “Between Metropole and Colony. Rethinking a Research Agenda”. In STOLER, Ann Laura; COOPER, Frederick Cooper (eds.). *Tensions of Empire. Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997, p. 5.

⁴⁷ VICENTE, Filipa Lowndes. “Fotografia e colonialismo: para lá do visível”. In JERÓNIMO, Miguel Bandeira (ed.). *O Império Colonial em Questão (sécs. XIX -XX)*. Lisboa: Edições 70, 2012, p. 446.

prostitution and depicted as a possession of the male⁴⁸. Consequently, the colonized woman was subsumed within this second category.

Figure 4. A group of Timorese women bathing (original caption: “Banho das Timoras” [sic])



Source: DORES. Album, p. 82

The images in question are similar in format to those of the type photograph, which portray an element of a community and generalize the

⁴⁸MARQUES, A. H. de Oliveira (ed.). “Portugal da Monarquia para a República”. In SERRÃO, Joel; MARQUES, A. H. de Oliveira (eds.). *Nova História de Portugal*. Lisboa: Editorial Presença, 1991, vol. 11, pp. 655-657. SANTANA, Maria Helena; LOURENÇO, António Apolinário. “No leito. Comportamentos sexuais e erotismo”. In MATTOSO, José (ed.). *História da Vida Privada em Portugal. A Época Contemporânea*. Lisboa: Círculo de Leitores, 2011, pp. 254-261. SOUSA, Fernando de; MARQUES, A. H. de Oliveira (eds.). “Portugal e a Regeneração (1851-1900)”. In SERRÃO, Joel; MARQUES, A. H. de Oliveira (eds.). *Nova História de Portugal*. Lisboa: Editorial Presença, 2004, vol. 10, p. 426. STOLER, Ann Laura. *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power. Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010, pp. 30 e 49. STOLER, Ann Laura. *Race and the Education of Desire. Foucault’s History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1995, pp. 91 e 128. TRAVASSOS, Lorena Christina Barros. “Missões Antropológicas de São Tomé (1954) e Angola (1955): caminhos para a descolonização da fotografia colonial”, *Estudos Históricos*, 2021, 34, n.º 72, p. 101. VICENTE, Filipa Lowndes; GOMES, Inês Vieira Gomes. “Inequalities on Trial: Conflict, Violence and Dissent in the Making of Colonial Angola (1907-1920).” In BETHENCOURT, Francisco (ed.), *Inequality in the Portuguese-speaking world: global and historical perspectives*. Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2018, p. 229.

characteristics of the individual to their entire group. This was done to build an anthropological catalog of the colonial domains⁴⁹, which was deeply stereotypical in nature. On the other hand, these images also demonstrate a desire to know the other (the non-European)⁵⁰, since native populations were exotic for the European eyes⁵¹. However, they also reveal a deeper intent to information about military leaders and local elites, whom the establishment of cordial relations was considered crucial to maintaining and extending Portuguese rule⁵². Photography contributed to the construction of an “ethnographic Timor”, as Ricardo Roque described it, which linked the colony to the metropolis in a vision of empire that would see further development throughout the 20th century at a scientific and political level⁵³.

Some of these colonial perspectives on the colonized peoples were disseminated more widely when they were published in the metropolis’ illustrated magazines or transformed into illustrated postcards⁵⁴. The illustrated press had the power to conceptualize a vision of the world for its communities of readers. In the case of the reproduction of imperial photographs, it could create and disseminate a colonial experience and an idea of empire⁵⁵. The photographic style promoted by *Ilustração Portuguesa* and *O Occidente* is comparable to that observed in the photographs analyzed thus far. While the *dattós* are identified by name (Régulos Samara, from Balibó, and D. José, king of Irtelo)⁵⁶, the members of the *ema* are defined by their activity (military auxiliary, soldier, musician) or covered by the generic term “natives”.⁵⁷ The sexualization of Timorese women by the illustrated press

⁴⁹DIAS, “Photographic Sources”, p. 70. ROCHA, Liliana Oliveira da; MATOS, Patrícia Ferraz. “Fotografias de Angola do Século XIX: o ‘Álbum Fotográfico-Literário’ de Cunha Moraes”. *Tempos e Espaços em Educação*, 2019, 12, n.º 31, p. 175.

⁵⁰Cf. COSTA, Cátia Miriam. “O outro na narrativa fotográfica de Velloso de Castro: Angola, 1908”. *Culturas Populares. Revista Electrónica*, 2008, 7, s. p.

⁵¹ROCHA; MATOS. “Fotografias de Angola”, p. 176.

⁵²ALEXANDRE; DIAS. “O Império Africano”, pp. 792-793. DORES. *Apontamentos*, pp. 6-7. INSO. “Na Sociedade de Geografia. 3.ª Conferencia”, p. 189. PENHA GARCIA. *op. cit.*, p. 6. SILVA. *A Mão d’Obra em Timor*, pp. 25-26. SILVA. *Em Timor*, pp. 73-75. SILVA. *Relatório das Operações de Guerra*, pp. 35-36. “Timor – a ignorada”, p. 730.

⁵³ROQUE, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

⁵⁴SOUSA, “Timor-Leste nas coleções de imagens do Museu de História Natural e da Ciência”, pp. 84-87.

⁵⁵BEEGAN, Gerry. *The Mass Image. A Social History of Photomechanical Reproduction in Victorian London*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, p. 2. MARTINS, Leonor Pires. *Um Império de Papel. Imagens do Colonialismo Português na Imprensa Periódica Ilustrada (1875-1940)*. Lisboa: Edições 70, 2015. ROCHA, Liliana Oliveira da; MATOS, Patrícia Ferraz, “Fotografia Colonial: Materialidades e Imaterialidades Identitárias no Contexto Português”, *Criar Educação*, 2018, 7, n.º 2, s. p.

⁵⁶*Ilustração Portuguesa*, 1909, 7, n.º 172, pp. 729-730.

⁵⁷*Ilustração Portuguesa*, 1909, 7, n.º 172, pp. 729-730 e 734. *O Occidente: Revista Ilustrada de Portugal e no*

is also notable. This is not as evident in the photograph itself, which is less intrusive than the one in Rafael das Dores' album. However, the caption that refers to the woman as "an indigenous beauty"⁵⁸ is problematic. It suggests that the woman is valued only for her physical features, ignoring other aspects of her identity. Two images, however, do not conform to these characteristics. One depicts women engaged in the collective Timorese activity of rice piling, while the other portrays a cockfight, a common entertainment in Timor⁵⁹.

Figure 5. A photograph of Timorese people watching a cockfight in Baucau. The original caption reads, 'Como o indigena se distrahe: o jogo do gallo na explanada da fortaleza de Baucau' (How the indigenous people amuse themselves: the cockfighting game on the esplanade of the Baucau fortress).



Source: *Ilustração Portuguesa*, 1909, 7, no. 172, p. 732.

These photographs of Timorese people have one important aspect in common: none of the people photographed are smiling and all of them have a heavy face and a withdrawn pose (feeding the Portuguese perception that

Extrangeiro, 1913, 36, n.º 1241, p. 177; 1914, 37, n.º 1277, 197.

⁵⁸ *Ilustração Portuguesa*, 1909, 7, n.º 172, p. 729.

⁵⁹ MARQUES. "O Império Africano", p. 794. "Timor – a ignorada", pp. 732-733.

the Timorese were deeply suspicious)⁶⁰, not hiding their discomfort with the activity, which they probably didn't understand and to which they certainly didn't give their consent⁶¹.

Another interesting aspect is that these images do not clearly show some of the mental and cultural representations that the Portuguese had of the Timorese, namely their perceived indolence, their lack of hygiene ("Timor do not have the slightest concern for hygiene"⁶² - as Governor Celestino da Silva wrote), the primitive state of their agricultural and commercial practices, and their savagery, barbarism, and belligerence, culminating in the practice of beheading their opponents and displaying their severed heads as trophies⁶³. Photography only hinted at the latter perception when it depicted the clothing, weapons, or dwellings of the Timorese (Figure 6), whose simplicity was understood as primitivism. At the same time, and consequently, a distinction was made with those Timorese who dressed in European style, a detail understood as a higher level of civilization. Photography's ability to create representations had to be conditioned and directed by the textual dimension. Thus, whether the dwellings were called "shacks", which promoted promiscuity⁶⁴, or medieval fortresses (in the case of the houses in the mountains)⁶⁵, the Timorese were described as living "in an almost savage state", promoting an "environment of horrors and cruelties", "little or no inclination to work" and with an "ingrained love of their homeland", which made them "love war like a sport".⁶⁶ The Portuguese colonialists concluded that the Timorese were "lapsed races, from whom no great civilizing progress can be expected", even though they "could be educated and could be of good

⁶⁰ SILVA. *A Mão d'Obra em Timor*, p. 24.

⁶¹ Sobre a importância da pose, ver: AZOULAY, Ariella. *The Civil Contract of Photography*. New York, Zone Books, 2008, p. 172. BARTHES, *Image, Music, Text*, p. 22.

⁶² SILVA. *A Mão d'Obra em Timor*, p. 11.

⁶³ ALEXANDRE; DIAS. "O Império Africano", pp. 772-773. INSO, "Na Sociedade de Geografia. 3.ª Conferencia", p. 189. INSO, "Sociedade de Geographia. 4.ª Conferencia", pp. 197-198. MARQUES. *História dos Portugueses no Extremo Oriente. Macau e Timor do Antigo Regime à República*, pp. 733 e 739. PENHA GARCIA. *op. cit.*, pp. 4-6. ROQUE, Ricardo. *Headhunting and Colonialism. Anthropology and the Circulation of Human Skulls in the Portuguese Empire, 1870-1930*. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp. 24-27. SILVA. *A Mão d'Obra em Timor*, pp. 6 e 24-29. SILVA. *Em Timor*, pp. 56-58 e 67. SILVA. *Relatório das Operações de Guerra*, p. 36. "Timor - a ignorada", pp. 729-732.

⁶⁴ DORES. *Album*, p. 85. SILVA. *A Mão d'Obra em Timor*, p. 11.

⁶⁵ INSO, "Na Sociedade de Geografia. 3.ª Conferencia", p. 188. PENHA GARCIA. *op. cit.*, p. 4.

⁶⁶ INSO, "Sociedade de Geographia. 4.ª Conferencia", p. 197

use if conveniently conducted with affectionate and paternal interest” by the Portuguese colonizers⁶⁷.

Figure 6 - Timorese dwellings in Montael (original caption: “Barracas do Carqueto”)



Source: DORES. Album, p. 85

Other representations, however, found in photography an important means of dissemination and repetition that was not so lacking in textual support. The physical weakness of the Timorese was more readily apparent

⁶⁷ SILVA. *A Mão d’Obra em Timor*, p. 12 (citação) e 30. Ver também PENHA GARCIA. *op. cit.*, p. 8.

in photographic images. This was an important detail that helped to support the thesis that the Timorese could be used not for forced labor but for less strenuous activities such as coffee growing⁶⁸. Governor Celestino da Silva was one of the few who argued the opposite: “To avoid war, the indigenous [Timorese] must be forced to work⁶⁹. In the colony, forced labor was used only as a criminal penalty to punish the Timorese for certain crimes⁷⁰.

Civilization and Progress

Since the time of the Berlin Conference, the construction of infrastructure and other material improvements had been seen as a key factor in the progress, colonization and civilization of colonial areas. Besides enabling the exploitation of the colonies’ natural resources, they contributed to the assertion of the sovereignty of the imperial metropolis through the civilization, domestication and Europeanization of the colonial landscape and its inhabitants.⁷¹

According to sources from the time and recent studies, Timor was far behind in the race for progress. The lack of infrastructure that the Portuguese had become accustomed to in the metropolis, especially roads and other means of transportation, it was notorious and pointed to as one of the main factors for the colony’s economic under-utilization. In 1892, Montalvão e Silva stated unequivocally that “Dilly doesn’t have a single road worthy of the name”.⁷² Rafael das Dores said that, a year earlier, it had taken him two days to travel the 100 km between Dili and the coast. The capital was surrounded by swamps, which contributed to the unhealthiness of the city, and suffered from a shortage of resources and health professionals. It had a good anchorage, but a narrow and dangerous entrance. Social life was non-existent, there were no theaters, guilds, meeting centers or other social spaces in the metropolis.⁷³ Outside the capital, the situation from this point of view

⁶⁸ SILVA, A *Mão d’Obra em Timor*, p. 12 (citação) e 30. Ver também PENHA GARCIA. *op. cit.*, p. 8.

⁶⁹ SILVA. *Relatório das Operações*, p. 43.

⁷⁰ SOUSA, Ponciano J. M. de. *Índice Alfabético, Cronológico e Remissivo da Legislação emanada quer do Governo e publicada oficialmente nesta Província desde a constituição do Distrito Autonomo até 30 de Junho de 1914*. Dili: Imprensa Nacional, 1914, p. 162.

⁷¹ DIOGO, Maria Paula; LAAK, Dirk van. *Europeans Globalizing. Mapping, Exploring, Exchanging*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016

⁷² SILVA, *Em Timor*, p. 85.

⁷³ DORES, *Album*, p. 316. DORES. *Apontamentos*, p. 27. INSO, “Na Sociedade de Geografia. 3.ª Conferencia”, 192. MARQUES, “O Império Africano”, p. 793. MOREIRA JÚNIOR, Manoel António. *Relatório e propostas de*

was even more incipient. In this regard, Rafael das Dores said that when he moved away from Dili, he felt “completely kidnapped by those who call themselves civilized”, and soon found out about “the contact of the civilized” when he returned from his missions.⁷⁴

Nevertheless, some investments were made in infrastructure, but these did little to change the general outlook of the colony. In Dili, since the 1830s, streets have been torn up and roads opened, albeit very precariously, towards the interior and other cities.⁷⁵ From the 1860s onwards, some sanitary improvements were made by drying out the swamps and piping in drinking water.

In 1866, the lighthouse, essential for navigation, and the fort were erected and, in the first decade of the 20th century, the road network stretched for around 3,000 km, and there were even plans to build a railroad, but this never happened. On the contrary, a jetty was built, and the telephone service started.⁷⁶ Over the years, a number of public buildings were built, government palace, barracks, jail, armoury, hospital, customs house, arsenal, school. They contributed to the domestication, civilization and Europeanization of the urban landscape, although the housing reserved for state servants was in a precarious state.⁷⁷ Through the military campaigns he organized, Celestino da Silva contributed to the establishment of various military posts in the interior of the island, which were, connected to each other by roads and telegraph lines. Some public works were also done in other Timorese cities such as Liquiçá, Maubara, Baucau, Batugadé, etc.⁷⁸

lei referentes ás provincias ultramarinas e ao districto autonomo de Timor apresentados na camara dos senhores deputados da nação portugueza na sessão legislativa de 1905. 1.ª Parte. Relatorio. Lisboa, Imprensa Nacional, 1905, p. 351. *Relatorio do Governador*, p. 8. *Relatorios das Direcções das Obras Publicas*, p. 112. SILVA, *A Mão d’Obra em Timor*, p. 14. SILVA, *Em Timor*, pp. 34, 77-83 e 87. SILVA, *Relatorio das Operações*, pp. 7-8 e 39.

⁷⁴ DORES, *Album*, p. 318.

⁷⁵ Arquivo de Macau, 帝汶明信片 (Postais de Timor), Trecho da rua principal – Díli, Timor, MO/AH/ICON/MTL/TP/001, disponível em www.archives.gov.mo/webas/ArchiveDetail2016.aspx?id=58051. Coleção Agrupamento de Escolas José Estêvão, Postais de Timor, Avenida marginal de Díli disponível em ww3.ajeje.pt/avcultur/avcultur/Postais5/Timor/035_Timor.jpg.

⁷⁶ Arquivo de Macau, 帝汶明信片 (Postais de Timor), Ponte cais – Díli, Timor, MO/AH/ICON/MTL/TP/008, disponível em www.archives.gov.mo/webas/ArchiveDetail2016.aspx?id=58058.

⁷⁷ Arquivo de Macau, 帝汶明信片 (Postais de Timor), Alfândega – Díli, Timor, MO/AH/ICON/MTL/TP/005,

⁷⁸ ALEXANDRE; DIAS. “O Império Africano”, pp. 791-792. BETHENCOURT; CHAUDURI, *Historia da expansão*, pp. 204 e 485. DORES. *Apontamentos*, pp. 6-7 e 27. INSO, “Na Sociedade de Geografia. 4.ª Conferencia”, 198. MARQUES, *História dos Portugueses no Extremo Oriente. Macau e Timor do Antigo Regime à República*, pp. 726, 750 e 781. MARQUES, “O Império Africano”, pp. 770-772. *Relatorio do Governador*, p. 84. SILVA, *Em Timor*, p. 78. SOUSA, *Indice Alfabético, Cronológico e Remissivo*, pp. 78-79 e 125. “Timor – a ignorada”, p. 734.

Some of the photographs taken in Timor capture these aspects of the modernization of the territory - just as they did in the metropolis⁷⁹. These images show various material improvements such as colonial administration buildings, government palace, town halls, customs; military installations, barracks, arsenals, armories; churches and convents, hospitals, cemeteries, streets, the Dili lighthouse (Figure 7) or the old steamer that monitored the Timorese coast. All are in a central position in the composition of the image, additionally highlighted by the caption, undoubtedly becoming the *punctum* of the respective photographs.

Figure 7. The Dili lighthouse



Source: *Ilustração Portuguesa*, 1905, no. 88, p. 576

⁷⁹PEREIRA, Hugo Silveira. “Herald of progress: Karl Emil Biel’s photographs of the technical modernisation of Portugal”, *Photographies*, 2022, 15, n.º 1, pp. 101-123.

Although the vision provided by these photographic images was extremely restricted, since it focused on very specific realities of the territory, it helped to counter the perceived lack of *progress* in the colony, to deny the idea that Timor was a “cemetery of Europeans”⁸⁰ and to highlight the Europeanization (or portugualization) of the territory, by showing infrastructures that also existed in the metropolis. This was also done by comparing the architectural lines of European buildings, which were more solid and connoted with progress and durability, and the Timorese buildings, more fragile and connoted with primitivism. Thus, photography also helped to promote Timor in the metropolis, a central function of photography⁸¹, and stimulate Portuguese migration to the colony, something difficult at the time.⁸² In fact, this was one of the measures suggested by various experts on Timorese issues, who recommended redirecting Portuguese, including those from the Hawaiian archipelago, and even Chinese emigration to the Far East.⁸³ Photography served as a means of advertising Timor. This purpose is especially visible in the set of photographs that originated illustrated postcards, where material improvements are the dominant theme.

The demonstration of the material occupation of the Timorese territory and landscape was complemented by images of human occupation, which attested to the effectiveness of the Portuguese presence in the colony. These included various Portuguese human figures, military, civilian, religious or administrative, who occupied the center position in the photographs (Figure 8). Some of them included Portuguese and Timorese individuals, but with the former in a central and predominant position in the composition, insinuating their dominance and alleged superiority over the indigenous inhabitants of Timor. In other photographs, this role is attributed not to human figures, but to flags that also attest to Portuguese presence and dominance.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ SILVA. *Relatório das Operações de Guerra*, p. 39.

⁸¹ MARTINS. *Um Império de Papel*, pp. 12, 19, 24, 94, 97 e 143.

⁸² MARQUES. *História dos Portugueses no Extremo Oriente. Macau e Timor do Antigo Regime à República*, p. 762. ALEXANDRE; DIAS. “O Império Africano” p. 772

⁸³ PENHA GARCIA. *op. cit.*, p. 9, 10 e 13. SILVA, *A Mão d’Obra em Timor*, p. 46.

⁸⁴ *O Occidente: Revista Ilustrada de Portugal e no Estrangeiro*, 1914, 37, n.º 1278, p. 211. *Ilustração Portuguesa*, 1913, 15, n.º 376, p. 566.

Figure 8. Members of Balibó's cavalry squadron, of which the central, seated, European figure takes up the predominance of the image (original caption: "Timor - A Ignorada. Os officiaes do esquadrão de Balibó").



Source: *Ilustração Portuguesa*, 1905, 7. no. 172, p. 734

On the other hand, other images depicting aspects of the island's geography and orography showed the widespread absence of infrastructure and other material symbols of techno-scientific *progress* throughout the territory. In fact, a set of photographs published in 1905 in *Ilustração Portuguesa* accompany and illustrate news of the destructive effects of the storms that affected several houses and businesses in the colony's capital.⁸⁵ Other images, however, may hint at Timor's fertility, uber-wealth, and mineralogical potential, advertising the island as a possible place for investment and financial return. The exploitation of these perceived resources was, in fact, seen by some as the best way to consolidate the Portuguese presence in the territory and draw greater income from it.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ *Ilustração Portuguesa*, 1905, 2, n.º 63, p. 162.

⁸⁶ SILVA. *Em Timor*, p. 33.

Conclusion: a certain vision of the Empire

Although the number of photographs of Timor analyzed in this article is small, it is enough to show what image was created of the colony. The aspect that stands out most is the clear preference of the Portuguese photographers for the inhabitants of the colony, reflecting an attraction for what was considered the colonial exotic and the need to get to know better the men and women with whom the Portuguese authorities necessarily had to deal to achieve a negotiated presence in Timor. Bearing in mind the unflattering textual descriptions of the Portuguese colonialists with experience in that territory, it is also noticeable that the image produced by photography denoted the primitive man much more than the noble savage - to paraphrase Hayden White's words.⁸⁷ In addition, the photographs of these people hinted at the alleged success of the Portuguese civilizing mission, when they portrayed Timorese dressed in European style or identified in the captions with Portuguese names, which could be interpreted as an adaptation of the inhabitants of Timor to the ways and customs of Portugal.

The alleged success of colonization or the Portuguese civilizing mission was also insinuated, although not as effectively, in photographs of the implementation of the most diverse imperial infrastructures in the colonial landscape. In fact, this effort to modernize the land didn't receive much attention from Portuguese photographers, who showed much more interest in the Timorese population, as we have seen. This lack of interest goes hand in hand with the metropolis' lack of attention to its overseas domain in Oceania, where investment in infrastructure was clearly lower than in other colonies in Asia and, above all, Africa, particularly Angola and Mozambique.

The photographs of these material improvements were meant to counter the image of Timor as a "cursed land, a land of exile, where only convicts live"⁸⁸ and to try to attract settlers and investments to the colony, but their small number and the infrequency with which they were published in the press invalidated this publicity exercise. In fact, in the mid-1910s, twenty years after the first photographic images of Timor were revealed, a negative view of the colony prevailed, where "the most savage and primitive remains of this poor humanity".⁸⁹

⁸⁷ WHITE, Hayden. *Tropics of Discourse*. Baltimore, The John Hopkins University Press, 1978.

⁸⁸ INSO, "Na Sociedade de Geografia. 4.ª Conferencia", 197.

⁸⁹ INSO, "Na Sociedade de Geografia. 3.ª Conferencia", 177.

In any case, photography contributed to a greater knowledge of Timor, both on an official level and on a popular level, through the illustrated press, opening windows, albeit skewed, through which the Portuguese in the metropolis were able to glimpse some details of that distant territory.

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