Manageable Past: Time and Native Culture at the Dundo Museum in Colonial Angola
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Abstract
What are the relationships between cultural representation and colonial exploitation? What kind of reports between scientific and commonsensical knowledge were set forward by colonial museums? How may museum analysis contribute to the study of the colonial communities?
The text intends to deal with these questions by means of an ethnographical approach to the development of the Dundo Museum, in colonial Angola. Property of the Diamang (the Diamonds Company of Angola), the Dundo Museum became an important scientific centre of Portuguese colonial studies. Dealing with the settling period of the Dundo Museum, this text explores how notions of time become a common ground both to the museum representation of Lunda Peoples and to their exploitation as labour force.

Résumé
Ce texte aborde ces questions par l’analyse ethnographique du développement du musée du Dundo, en Angola coloniale. Propriété de la Diamang (la Compagnie des diamants d’Angola), le musée du Dundo est devenu un important centre scientifique pour les études de la période coloniale portugaise. Centré sur sa formation, ce texte montre comment des notions de temps constituent un terrain commun soit pour la représentation muséale des peuples de la Lunda soit pour son exploitation en tant que force de travail Keywords/Mors-c/és Angola native culture muséum Portuguese colonialism tem po rali ty/Ango/a colonisation portugaise culture indigène ethnographie musée temporalité
Manageable Past:
Time and Native Culture at the Dundo Museum in Colonial Angola*

Time, Museum and Colonialism

The purpose of this paper is to debate the work on categories of time during the settling period (from 1936 to the 1950s) of the Dundo Museum, in the north-eastern Lunda district of what was, then, the Portuguese Colony of Angola. This debate is concerned with the consistency of time biased relationships, incorporated in museum displays, with colonial views of the Portuguese-Angolan colonial situation. There are different issues involved in this project.

To start with there lies the fact that museum analysis has seldom included backstage procedures which frequently structure its public image. Exhibits and collections analysis, even if including public responses, convey the notion that the museum is, somehow, a bounded unity, subject to scrutiny in its own terms (cf. Karp & Lavine 1991; Sherman & Rogoff 1994, for alternative approaches). Museological results of non-museological practices become, perhaps, all the more elusive as the problem of time is addressed, for the definition of space which is inherent to it (Friedland & Boden 1994) wraps the diverse museum practices in an autonomous entity.

A parallel, between this problem in museum studies, can be drawn with the pervasiveness of un-criticised categories in the analysis of colonialism. Its earlier formulations as a isomorphic, rather than plural, phenomena; the former view of the colonial as a double rather than fragmented situation, or the taking for granted of categories issued by the colonial

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process itself, have only recently been put to question (Stoller 1992). The fact that the Dundo Museum was a colonial museum is, in this sense, a reminder of a problem of reification which attains both museum and colonial studies. Along this process, notions of what the colonial is about, were, in fact, deployed through museum exhibits. In the present case, then, these are not dissociated issues. Exhibits are, furthermore, purified knowledge products (in the sense of Latour, 1991) expunged of the complex social relations, interest conflicts and indeterminacies of their constitution.

Lunda Peoples, at the Dundo Museum, are one such product. Thus the problem of time, in this case, is not so much about how “native cultures” were excluded from contemporaneity—as a constituent feature of their othering (how their coevalness was denied, in Fabian, 1983, terms)—but rather about understanding how notions of time, ensued in the museum knowledge production processes, articulate with commonsensical knowledges of the colonial community it addresses. How do the notions of time associated to the museum exhibits articulate with problems of time colonisation (Cooper 1992) derived from the industrial structuring of colonial exploitation? How, in a word, does cultural representation articulate with political economy? This is the question.

In spite of it the purposes of this text are much less ambitious. It argues that the understanding of what might be glossed a “museum time”—defining epochs and bounding disparate cultural practices and objects which confine “native culture” to a terminated past—must be dealt as a constructed device, derived from the purification practices of knowledge production at the Dundo Museum. Through exhibitions and performances held in community festivals, “museum time” is made to articulate with the structuring of the present at the Dundo colonial community. Hence, this articulation with what might be glossed as the “industrial time”—structuring everyday working life, devised as open ended history in the making and encapsulating both “natives” and “colonisers” lives under Portuguese (national) history—suggests the delimitation of a common ground, where cultural representation and colonial exploitation meet. This text intends to explore the specifics of this encounter in the Portuguese-Angolan colonial situation from a museum oriented perspective.

The making of the Museum

A problem of time is bestowed in the first projects of making the Museum at the Dundo, in 1936. This colonial village at the north eastern corner of the Portuguese Angola colony had roughly 300 European inhabitants, all of them employees of the *Diamang* (The Diamonds Company of Angola) that operated in a concession area of some 30,000 km2 in the Lunda district. The social headquarters of the Company were located at
the Dundo and it was there that its major infrastructures were to be built in the years to come. In the mid 1936s:

"[...] it was started to be organised a gentile museum at the Dundo, destined to gather and collect every characteristic object used by the indigenous races of the region, especially lundas and quiocos."

Such initiative was compelled by the need to avoid the loss, due to the action of time and of contact with our manners and habits, of the principle vestiges of traditional gentile life" (DMAR 1936: 10).

By the end of the following year the initial collection of 496 objects had risen to 2,792 artefacts, acquired in field expeditions in a surrounding area of about 80,000 km². The museum, from this year on, is no longer classified as gentile, becoming the Ethnographic Museum of the Diamonds Company of Angola. Its management is assigned to the Chief-Director of the company in the Lunda district, who reports to Lisbon all the developments associated with it. In 1942 the near 5,500 objects that make, by then, the ethnographic collections, are displayed in the adapted space of a house at the Dundo where a library is also being started. The "employee José Redinha" (DMAR 1937: 18), the responsible for the gathering work undertaken, is this year nominated Curator of the museum, again renamed, this time, as Ethnological.

This shift also brings an administrative change, since, from now on, the Museum curator is to report directly to Lisbon. Under direct instructions of the Delegate Administrator of the Company, the scope of the museum is broadened, linking, to ethnography, a section of history under his direct supervision. A third section, archaeology, is also integrated, profiting from the knowledge and willingness of the technicians hired by the company. From 1943 on, as the simplified designation of Dundo Museum is settled, a section of African fauna and botany is established, thus enclosing the four main areas of research that would provide exhibition materials to the museum. Annexe to it, a device called the "Native Village", is foreseen by the Museum curator in the following terms, as he submits the proposal of its construction to the administration of the Company:

"The place should be wide, so that one could have some land, even to build a typical model of a native village, taken by copy of one of the most typical ones left. At the centre would be placed the 'txota' and the inseparable smith's workshop, surrounded by a palisade of living poles, in a diameter non-inferior to twenty meters [...].

Outside the palisade some houses, which would have their utility to indigenous artists that would come here to work, and even to some of the museum servants when it would be thought appropriate for them to live there.

1. Although the term Lunda has entered western terminology, quioco was the Portuguese transliteration of the term afterwards vulgarised as Tshokwe or Cokwe.
The Chief-Guard of the museum could also live there. Natives that would visit the museum would have there an appropriate place where they would be at ease, and for effects of Ethnological survey the groups of hired workers that cross the area on their way to the mines could also be sent there.

After their inspections for work matters they would be inspected for science matters: photographs of some interesting types, written or drawn notes on tattoos and other ethnic scars, tooth filing and even some anthropological measurements undertaken by a medical doctor from the Health Services.

Sometimes, it happens that those groups also include artists, such as sculptors, smiths, engravers, and so on, that could stay for some time at the village working for the museum. It would be a distinction to those native masters, a resource of Negro art and, up to a certain point, a stimulus to the decadence of this art.

The village-type could also be a permanent scenario to any feast or celebration of native figurations” (DMAR 1943: 175-176).

The “Native Village” is built the following year, and a correlative section of folklore is inaugurated to manage it. To complete this brief sketch on the formation of the Dundo Museum, two other elements, both taking place in 1946, need to be added. These are the constitution of the Biological Researches Laboratory in the museum premises, incorporating the fauna and botany section, under the supervision of a hired biologist, and the launching of the Dundo Museum Cultural Publications (Publicações Culturais do Museu do Dundo), the journal where all the museum scientific production is to be published from then on, becoming an important instrument in establishing international partnerships with first world academic institutions. Introducing the presentation issue of the series, the Delegate Administrator of the Diamang states that besides the obligation that assists any company that produces wealth to have it profited by the community engaged in its production, there lies the fact that:

“[...] its material outcomes, important or perfect they may be, will not attain its full utility, signification and external production without the creation, surrounding them, of a spiritual environment which is, in sum, that aura or irradiation ‘... sans qui les choses ne seraient que ce qu’elles sont’ (Rostand)” (original in French, Vilhena 1946).

Thus in 1946, counting about 6,600 objects, the Dundo Museum incorporates the sections of Ethnography, Folklore, Archaeology and Geology, Biology (African fauna and flora) and Historical Archive.

Science, Colonialism and the Company

From the different issues involved in the museum settling process, three of them need to be explored in order to elaborate on the problem this text is concerned with. One of them is related to the immersion of the museum settling in the Company’s self devised purposes. As seen in the
initial hesitations on the designation of the museum as well as in the rather adventitious organisation of its sections, a project-based development is not at work. On the contrary the museum early phase is made to rely upon company resources, specifically as far as knowledge production is concerned. Hence the immediate structuring of an archaeology section is almost a natural sequence of the availability of geologists and archaeologists already working for the company in the diamonds extraction. This internal partnership between company departments is eventually extended from the museum to other departments as needed, and even the founding of the Biology Laboratory will accommodate to such practices. The Museum curator sums up the attitude here present, when he declares that: “[...] all of us, with a bit of good will, would give his share to subsidy the studies of science, serving our colonisation and honouring our house” (DMAR 1942: 41).

Science, Portuguese colonialism and the Company are thought as different components of the same praxis. Under this view, a fuller understanding of the initial undertakings of the turned Curator “company’s employee”, is also relevant. In fact, along these first years of the museum establishment, the gathering of objects for the collections is mainly fulfilled through long term expeditions in the surrounding areas of the Dundo, inside the company’s concession area or near its borders, under procedures much closer to explorers surveys than to modern ethnographic methods. These travels in horse carriages, assisted by dozens of carriers and native trackers, are both the best results of the amateur capacities of Redinha and a reenactment of the Portuguese explorers breed, in whose lineage he intends to place himself. After Serpa Pinto (1881), Capelo and Ivens

2. The inter-relatedness between the Company’s services and the museum works follows, at least, three distinct patterns: the most common form is to use departments specifically organised to render tasks to any other department of the company, such as the Photography Laboratory; a second form is the commission of specific tasks which don’t fall under the routines of the departments asked for those services; such are the cases of the suggestions to train nurses, from the Health Services, in taxidermy practices, in order that they “naturalise” fauna specimens or that the Health Services organise an anthropometric index (cf. DMAR 1942: 40). Finally, some procedures of this second type tend to become routinised: for instance the call for archaeological specimens to all Mining Prospecting Teams (internal inform 21-D/41 at DMAR 1942: 21, updated in 1956) that would then be delivered to the museum personnel. In the same type there is also the co-operation between the museum and the Services for the Propaganda and Support of Indigenous Labour Force, in the surveillance of preserved natural areas (cf. DMAR 1943: 61) and in the organisation of Company’s Celebrations (see bellow, p. 778).

3. Besides the expedition already referred to in 1937, Redinha accomplishes four others: in 1938 to the Sombo area covering about 590 km2; in 1939 to the South Kassai and High Zambeze covering about 60,000 km2; in 1940 to the Northeast Lunda, travelling along more than 380 kms. To the Cokwe Land, Southwest of the Lunda, in 1946 (cf. DMAR 1937, 1938, 1939, 1940, 1946 and Redinha 1955).
(1886) and, specially, Henrique de Carvalho (1890), the first to attend to the Muatianvua court at the Lunda Kingdom in the end of the nineteenth century. Redinha places himself and, thereby, the Company, as the final explorers. Such move is not, however, carried out, without further consequences to the representation economy of the company.

On the one hand the achievements of the explorer Henrique de Carvalho are fully appropriated by the company in its own transforming, in de Certeau sense (1980), of the space of the Lundas into a place of the Empire, by naming a village and, at the Dundo, the central square where all ceremonial life of the colonial community is to take place, after him. Secondly, by remaking, under the museum research initiatives, the journey he had undertaken, signaling with stone monuments the landmarks of his passage (in particular main camps), and acknowledging (in behalf of the Company) collaborative natives or their descendants, whom the Company rewarded⁴. Finally, by imposing his personal birthday as a holiday in the concession area and by making of his deeds the main display theme at the History room of the museum, Henrique de Carvalho is appropriated as the founding hero of the colonial community. On the other hand, as the history of the Lunda area is constructed as succession of occupations by different ethnic groups, the Portuguese are presented as succeeding to the Cokwe who had, before them, invaded the Lunda kingdom. In the same move as it draws an argument, based in history, about the legitimacy of occupation, the company establishes itself as the (Portuguese) national instance of such occupation⁵. In this sense, entities such as the Portuguese and the Company’s employees, are enveloped in a common identity as their actions, set in continuity with metropolitan past, are given a common purpose.

**Time and Museum Culture**

**Exhibitions**

By the end of the 1940s, counting by then about 7,000 objects, museum collections were displayed in the museum new building, envisaged from 1947 on. The distribution of ethnographic material obeyed a spatial

4. As is the case of Chief Satxissenga, to whom the Company offers a framed photographic portrait of himself, for his help in reconstructing the paths crossed by General Henrique de Carvalho, near his domains (cf. DMAR 1944: 164).

5. This situation is a helpful reminder of the need to be cautious with the straightforwardness of Anderson’s (1991) argument, according to which the legitimacy of occupation rights on colonial territories is displaced to the notion that colonials are keepers of colonised traditions. Anderson suggests this move is a feature of modern colonialism (thereby making of it a historical period marker), and associates it with the development of colonial museums. At the Dundo they are not, as seen, mutually exclusive.
outline that evolved from Material Life to Spiritual Life (cf. DMAR 1949: 15), accommodating as well Geology and Pre-History and African Fauna displays in respective rooms. The entrance of the visit would start by the Native Room (also designated as Indigenous or Honour Room). Then it proceeded through the Domestic Artefacts Room, followed by the Hunting and Fishing and then the Industries Rooms. After these, the History Room preceded two rooms dedicated to Religion and Fetishism. From here, after the Geology and Pre-History and the African Fauna Rooms, before exiting the Museum by the Native Room, an African Art Room closed the circuit.

Both the Native and the History Rooms occupy, respectively, the south and north front corners of the building which are designated as the “principle or honour rooms” (cf. DMAR 1949: 7). On the Museum curator words:

“The south room, that could be designated as the Indigenous Room, constitutes a synthesis of native Lunda, dedicated, in the legend that stands above the front and main wall, ‘TO THE LUNDA PEOPLES AND THEIR HISTORY’. In the middle of the wall, in the centre of a panoply of arrows in radial distribution, a name, which is the inner core of the last period of native history of the area: ‘MUATCHISSEGUE UA TEMBO’. This name, and the half-circle of arrows, enclose the ‘kakongo’ mark from the kiokos frontal tattoo, a solid symbol of the ‘race’. Close to the wall, on a stage covered with feline’s skins, a throne of chairs and arms, evoking the Africa of the Negro potentates. Surrounding it the

FIG. 1. — The Indigenous or Honour Room. (Photographic Archive no 13.713).
seats for the ‘makotas’ or remarkable persons. On the side of the throne, set against colourful backgrounds, altars and gentile hunting trophies, elements that are adequate to the civilisation of step hunters that still strongly characterises these peoples, in particular the kiokos” (idem: 9).

As to the History Room:

“ [...] it is destined to deal with affairs concerning the Lunda and the Company. [...] So far we count with geographical charts and photographs related to the beginning, development and action of the Diamang, portraits of General Henrique de Carvalho and the collection of photographs taken and annotated by that official during the campaign of the Portuguese Expedition to the Muatianvua. [...] Also of interest to the ensemble would be photographs of Missions and Military Fortresses, portraits of explorers and African travellers, interesting landscapes of the Lunda, and even models reproducing the fortresses’ ruins, for example.

The main wall could be covered by an African chart cut in wood or some other thick material, where Angola and the Lunda would be marked. On it, it would be marked the routes covered by Portuguese and foreigner explorers whom, traversing Africa, have crossed the Lunda. With particular stress the Route of the Portuguese Expedition to the Muatianvua would be signalled. [...] Generally, it could accommodate representations, either photographic or otherwise, of interesting aspects of the different services of the Company, as long as they concern any remarkable interest of technical, historical or colonial kind” (idem: 20-21).

It barely needs to be noted the different sort of objects which the curator assigns to each room, nor the specific rhetoric they are, respectively, supposed to operate with. Although both of them are conceived as memorials, either to the “Lunda Peoples and their History” or to the Portuguese and the Diamang, the former deploys a terminated narrative, a look into the past that is afterwards, in the visiting sequence, accorded a pre-colonial location. It evokes the Negro potentates only to stress their closed epochal time, “the last period of native history of the area”. No bridge, between this then and the present, is sketched or even suggested. And the display of artefacts ensued to operate at the higher pre-colonial power instances (such as thrones or ceremonial weapons which are personalised artefacts), their availability to visual and tactile scrutiny, objectifies the political subjugation of their former owners and users. Virtually, any European visitor, as he stepped into the museum, enacted the conquest and domination of the Lunda Peoples.

The link to the present, and the outline of possible futures, is established in the History room. The conditions for the Lunda Peoples to keep in history are set through the re-localisation of historicity under the opened narrative of the Portuguese Empire and the achievements of the Company. Unlike objects in the Indigenous Room, whose unacknowledged specification wraps them in a sameness that cohorts historical depth, the documents of the History room clearly imply notions regarding transformation, duration and continuity between the present and a past centred
in the metropolis. Hence the usage of travelling registers—such as photographs, or other artefacts of cognitive appropriation—such as the charts, and the emphasis on tokens of an appropriated space—the fortresses and the "interesting landscapes". The opposition between past and history, between closed and opened narrative, is thus objectified in the difference
between artefacts; those granted as local, which were thought of as merely collected, and the representational, constructed, European ones.

Suggested in 1942 by the Delegate Administrator of the Company, a photographic Gallery of Native Chiefs and Former Servants, is also installed in the new building History Room. In 1952 it is reported that: “This is one of the aspects that most impresses European visitors and causes true admiration among the native ones. These feel flattered to see the distinction thereby accorded to their leaders” (DMAR 1952: 21).

Eventually, this gallery is the only reference to contemporary Lunda Peoples’ representatives. It should be noted that photographic portrait is here used under honourable purposes (cf. Sekula 1986: 346) and that, according to the report, these purposes are fulfilled. More relevant to the problem this text is concerned with, is the fact that through the use of the medium and of its own relationships with time—the past representation photography always is (cf. Dubois 1983)—these representatives are accorded value and historicity within the history of the Company. The consequence of this vesting of the colonial setting with discriminating capacities on the value of the actual community members, by relocating their present, is their engagement in a common future where they are to play a subordinate role.

This work on time does not emerge among museum practices alone, nor should it be taken as a previously devised intention of museum exhibitions. The development of the museum, in spite of its stress on Ethnography, leads to the constitution of an ensemble very close to a Natural History Museum. Objects classified as ethnographic, tend to be those which are seen as uncontaminated by colonial contact and might, in this sense, convey the “nature” of native culture. As such they should allow for an organisation of displays as close to native natural culture as possible. Such organisation would, therefore, somehow translate into ethnographic display, the systematics of the Geology and Fauna presentations, by means of the notion of utility. Such predicament is not carried out without doubts and compromises:

“Where should one include the masks? In Religion? In Art? They have in fact religious functions (circumcisions, funerals, etc.), but they also have artistic ones (dance and play). Which of the aspects defines or classifies them? Let it be religion. But then where should one place a mask that, not by its function but for its execution, is a work of art and worthy of being placed in that gallery?” (DMAR 1949: 18).

Expressing the principle of being true to the object, these curatorial guidelines mean, at the Dundo, to enact an aesthetics of realism (Haraway 1989; Jordanova 1993) that would tend to annul the museological work impressed upon objects by representing them as if they were not there, at the museum, but in some pre-recollection stage:
“Let museums be graveyards the least possible.

One example: at the bush we found two idols-posts. Barely painted, half burned by sun exposure, these objects present frequently a remarkable exotic beauty that strike our attention. They come to the museum and they become dead objects, lying on the corner or set against a wall. Why? Because they lack the environment: the background of forests or mountains, its own shadow which, projected, animated them, the clean or clouded sky, the ground and the crude light they were modelled with. Hence the need to arouse, somehow, around the objects, the climate they were enveloped with” (DMAR 1942: 13).

Curatorial concerns are thus directed to purify, in museum exhibits, the museum purification processes themselves. Such concerns tend to operate within the opposition between the natural and artificial, on the principle that under a flexible method—combining scientific classification, ordering and display with aesthetics—the former could be deployed. It is by means of this curatorial combination that the “evocative environment” of Ethnographic displays articulates with the “naturalisation” of Fauna specimens, a term which refers to the taxidermical procedures they were submitted to implying both conservation issues and life-like effects. Thus in the museum rooms, the time effect produced by the exhibitions, seems to result from a curatorial attitude engaged with a reality principle which is applied both to the ethnographic and to the natural collections. Under this principle, what is made natural, regarding native cultures, is their attributed pristine, pre-colonial, bounded unity, which, in turn, is made available through objects gathered under these conceptions. The implied time category, in this process, recovers the split between the artificial and the natural, creates the divide between us and them and sets conditions of knowledge informed by notions of objectivity which are entangled in the museological process itself. The conviction that objects, devised under such terms, are neutral, and that collecting is, at the situation, a salvaging mission, contribute for the constitution of native cultures as closed, terminated entities.

As such, cultural formations hence constituted are deprived of actual agents. Contemporary Lunda peoples are, at the best, their descendants, valued insofar as they may accommodate in prescribed manners to the colonial situation. Hence the view on native culture, on collecting and displaying artefacts, on determining past and present legitimacies and values, is fuelled by problems of contact. By defining what the natives

6. According to Thomas, such neutrality of objects might be due to the development of ethnology from a Natural History basis which would have led, at some points, to their consideration as constituents of functional or morphological classes deprived of cultural or social signification (cf. 1989: 143). Such would, in fact, be inherent to museological sciences in the sense of Pickstone (1994), for these would have developed with analytical and comparative, rather than explanatory, purposes. This is also the result of the modernist scientific thought in the sense of Latour (1991) or Santos (1991), in that it supposes an absolute distinction between object and subject in knowledge construction.
are and, thereby, the sort of colonial community that the Portuguese one is, the exhibits also contribute to delimit the terms of the ongoing contact within the Diamang enclave. Museum exhibits, in this sense, are as much the company’s actions.

Festivals

These articulating features between museum culture and everyday politics come into play at the organisation of the yearly cycle of festivities known as the Great Indigenous Yearly Feasts, to which the Folklore section of the museum co-operated with the Services for the Propaganda and Assistance to Indigenous Handwork (Serviços de Propaganda e Assistência à Mão de Obra Indígena—SPAMOI). The feasts were divided in three main events, starting with the Contest of the Best Village. The contest was intended to distinguish the indigenous population who best kept its own dwellings according to criteria of aesthetics and hygiene. Since the villages admitted to the contest were workers villages, built by the Diamang to lodge migrant or local workers and their families, it was the population ability to conform to colonial rule which was being recognised and valued at the contest.

The second moment of the cycle would be localised at Andrada, the major industrial centre where the Diamang storehouses, workshops and technical schools were located. At Andrada, the feasts would proceed in the form of a sports festival, opened to teams and individual participants from all the concession. Finally, after these two events organised by the SPAMOI, the Grand Feast would take place at the Native Village of the Dundo Museum.

The Grand Feast day started by the ceremony of the Hoist of the Flag at the Henrique de Carvalho Square, at the Dundo. This ceremony would terminate with the award of national flags (that is Portuguese) to cooperative local chiefs. After this an Open Air Mass was conducted near the Dundo church. The morning activities would close with a visit to the museum. The afternoon was devoted to the celebration of the Grand Feast at the Native Village. Its sequence comprehended the attribution of monetary prizes and medals (of copper, silver or gold according to seniority) to indigenous workers, and the performance of Folklore acts by the museum groups. This feast would eventually last for more than the afternoon, as the indigenous population would join the groups and dance all night. To this purpose the Company would provide wine and a few oxen to be roasted on fire at the spot (cf. ABYR 1950).

Thus the Grand Feast relied on already tested Folklore Feasts that had been created, in April 1944, by the Delegate Administrator himself. They had since been encouraged “[...] for their importance as normalising
elements of indigenous costumes, sustaining the modern tendency of balls of the ‘dancing’ kind and other entertainment pernicious to the equilibrium of social discipline” (DMAR 1950: 15).

Dancers and musicians who were permanent members of the Folklore Groups, like other museum employees classified as artists (sculptors, smiths, weavers and painters), lived in the Native Village. For major celebrations the museum Folklore Section also relied in groups from different villages, which counted, in 1951, over 200 elements. Like to museum exhibits, the idea, regarding these groups, was to keep their performances as natural as possible. However:

“It has been demanded, to these groups, specially, the reduction of time and a sequence in their acts, known, as it is, that among them time doesn’t count and that there are acts which, were they to be left at ease, could as much take an hour as a day. Some even take, among them, the space of a week.

For these last motives it becomes necessary to regulate the unfolding of these folklore shows” (DMAR 1945: 6-7).
In the configuration of repression of pre-colonial habits these cellu-
larised and disciplined performances eventually became a means, for the
Cokwe population, to keep up with their cultural practices, as much as
they were a colonial celebration. At the Native Village, all the sort of
practices to which the colonial administration would accord a vague rela-
tionship to witchcraft, being thereby prohibited, could keep unfolding,
tamed, nevertheless, as folklore. As colonial celebration they enacted not
only the coloniser’s ability of maintaining native costumes, now directed
to the entertainment of the whole population, but also the ability of keeping
the natives faithful to their own traditions, preventing them from engaging
in forms of gathering conceived by colonial power as disruptive of social
order.

Although understated, there is also, regarding the constitution of the
native folklore groups and performances, a series of choices based on
assumptions distinctive of natural and artificial elements of native culture,
as devised by museum staff. These choices imply their establishment as
the result of compromises between their savage state and the socially
preventive role that is assigned to them. What is being prevented relates
to specific cultural hybrids resultant of un-ruled mixing of European and
African costumes, the perception of which as such, in turn, is made
possible by an essentialist grid under which the categories of “natives”
or “Europeans” are mutually irreducible. Hence the surveillance of taste
by the validation of “native folklore” as entertainment, its forwarding into
the leisure time of the population and its inscription in collective memory
by its institution as the axis of major celebrations, becomes a means of
regaining control over the traffic between both categories, even if by
denying the existence of such traffic through the manufacturing of products
perceived as pure.

As with museum collections the notion of natural in what regards
native culture, overlaps with something historically terminated, therefore
complete, bounded and systematic. Such view of native culture is a
constituent element on the framing of the colonial situation as a foun-
dational rupture, a revelatory gap in the unfolding of time, an event where
the start of another time and another world is to be located. To the
expatriate, migrant Portuguese population of the enclave, these elements
become central to their own production of community: to assign an exis-
tential meaning for their being there as well as to allow them for some
type of practical common sense in dealing with the indeterminacies of
colonial everyday life. Not only those regarding “natives” as the other,
but rather those related to this other’s other which could be nearly any
recognised group, from metropolitan Portuguese to other colonial Portu-
guese in Angola or even other colonial communities, like, in the present
case, the Belgians in neighbouring Congo.

In this sense, the making of the museum—with all the threads it
spreads—is not so much about recognising different cultural values and
cherish them, but, through it, to affirm colonial identity, whose diversity of referential layers—whiteness, nation, enterprise, progress, destiny and so forth—is a condition for its own establishment.

**Politics of time at the Portuguese empire**

In spite of this representational policy of the Lunda Peoples it’s not difficult to realize how distant this image was from actual local or migrant Africans, engaged, as they were, in the company’s working processes since the 1920s. The implementation of industrial mining in the concession area had led to what was then called—after the assumption that the “natives” social organization was tribal—the problem of de-tribalisation. As seen this was one of the reasons invoked for the urgency of the museum development in the mid 30s. Native de-tribalisation was somehow unforeseen by the evolutionist grid of Portuguese colonial legislation, specially the one regarding work.

The 1930s Portuguese “Colonial Act”, clearly reclaims as national the obligation of morally, socially and economically “elevating” the different peoples that destiny had placed under Portuguese “protection”. The form of such “protection” is regulated, among others, through the Indigenous Status Law, following which the population of the colonies would be charted under three different hierarchised statuses. Through these laws, citizenship was made to overlap with whiteness. Thus the status of citizen was granted to whites in opposition to the native status, granted by default to all non-whites, which were thereby denied the exercise of civil rights. In between, the law prescribed the entity of the “assimilated” to which any non-white could apply, provided that the conformity to “Portuguese habits and costumes” and the ability to speak and read Portuguese language were established.

The difference between native’s and assimilated status was crucial at two levels. First of all, unlike assimilated persons, natives could be subjected to forced labor—under a compulsory contract—if, following the

7. Article 2nd of the Colonial Act (*Acto Colonial, 1930*) reads: “It is of organic essence of the Portuguese Nation to play the historical function of possess and colonise overseas domains and to civilise the populations they comprehend [...]”.

8. Article 2nd of the Political, Civil and Criminal Status of Indigenous (*Estatuto Político, Civil e Criminal dos Indígenas, 1929*) reads: “For the effects of the present status, will be considered as indigenous the individuals of Negro race or their descendants whom, for their illustration and costumes are not distinguishable from the common of the race; non-indigenous, individuals of any race who don’t fulfil these conditions”. Article 7th further made explicit that “Regarding institutions of European character, no political rights will be granted to the indigenous”. And article 9th, after establishing the conditions for compelled work, determined it to be “[...] only permitted when absolutely indispensible to public interest services of pressing urgency”.

Colonial Government instructions, they were given as unoccupied. As it were, since only authorities and colonial citizens could declare them as employees, virtually all the population was susceptible to be engaged in these contracts by the administration agents, who would then distribute them as labor force to individual colonial settlers administration agencies, or colonial company’s such as the Diamang⁹.

Secondly, “assimilation” went in pair with an ideology of racial progress, which precluded the whitening of the population as a future goal. Assimilation didn’t apply to the biological or cultural mixing of individuals from different “racial stocks” of the population, but specifically to the adoption of the dominant colonial culture by the usually defined as natives. In this sense a temporal dimension biases the legal charting of the population. Past and present are acknowledge in the statuses of natives and of citizens. Under this legal charting only a specific form of progression sustaining the passage from past to present, as a transit from native to citizen under the assimilated status, is admitted.

“De-tribalisation” is, under this grid, perceived as a natural, though undesirable, consequence of colonial progress, the responsibility of which lies in the colonial process itself. Under the evolutionist and patronizing view of the colonial contact, under its ideological dressing as a civilizational mission, “de-tribalisation” is seen as the result of an unbalanced action whereby the spiritual work is forgotten in favor of material exploitation. This would be, so to speak, the divide in between of the moral economies of Portuguese colonialism. In this sense, the development of the Dundo Museum is embedded in the Company’s colonial policy. For, under colonial views, it reclaims the purpose of redistributing the uncovered lost past to their former bearers, preventing de-tribalisation by keeping them in tune with their own traditions, and accommodating these to industrial work.

Native culture and performance, as representation, become, no less than other disciplinary devices, engaged in the dissemination of industrial time notions at the concession area. The conversion of native performance into folklore acts, its timing and organizing to conform to leisure time and major definitional ceremonies of the company, relocates native past, hence reconstructed, into the colonial present. By the same movement,

⁹. In 1945, from the 14,796 native workers at the Concession area, 4,130 were contracted labourers; until 1954 the relationship between these and voluntary workers tended to be stable (cf. ABYR 1945; Davidson 1955). For a vivid account of the contract worker’s lives see Castro Soromenho’s novels. The native’s working contract process by the Diamang was regulated in the different contracts the company celebrated with Angola Colonial Government. Thus, under article 13th of the contract of 1921 “The Government of the Province of Angola compromises to give any possible facilities and support for the recruitment of indigenous personnel needed for the intense exploitation of diamond couches”. This article is updated in the contract of 1937 (article 11th), as well as in the contract of 1955 (article 10th).
museum artists' daily life (as much as of any other employee) was lived by the clock and their monthly production of artifacts registered and accounted. The very category of "artist", at the museum payroll, is an obvious sign of the process at work—a process which engenders "natives", as well as all sorts of skilled or unskilled laborers outside the museum sphere.

It has been argued, along these lines, that cultural representation of Lunda Peoples, either through museum exhibits either as folklore performance, conveys a notion of a terminated temporality to which the identity of these peoples is attached. It has been suggested that this is a feature of the purification process that objects or practices undergo, as they are transformed into objects of knowledge, and that folklore making is not the less different. The threads of interests that spread from the museum outwards have also been made explicit: from entrepreneurial ones, wrapping the corporation purposes with national values, to more personal ones, by means of which an amateur ethnographer becomes a Museum curator. The museum work has been set against the means of production of the colonial community where it establishes a fundamental, hierarchised divide between "natives" and "Europeans". Cultural mixture is excised from exhibitionary practices and adopted in performances only as far as it purports the tamed accommodation of "natives" to colonial rule, hence the sports festival or the Best Village Contest. It goes without saying that the disciplinary stances around which these two elements are structured (individual proficiency, production of a socially docile body) are also at stake in the folklorisation of native performances, and that they crisscross the purposes of establishing, at the Lunda district, an industrial time.

10. One should also be aware of the broader political implications of the forwarding of the notions hence objectified. For internal purposes, devoted to cover a regional scale, the museum contributes to the formation of the idea of the specificity of the Lundas, if not to the Lunda Peoples it is supposed to be dedicated to and represent, to those who reclaim to be speaking in their behalf. This notion becomes critical in international forums, such as the Society of the Nations and the Bureau international du Travail, as the Portuguese government is accused of practicing enforced labor in its colonies. The notion of the specificity of these practices is made to coincide with the specificity of the Portuguese history overseas as well as with the specificity of its administrative organization. The causality is simple to establish: to specific problems, specific solutions must be designed. By the same token, the same discourse is helpful to legitimize repression inside the concession area, towards those who might engage in international trends, such as, for the case in point, workers unions, common civil rights or better wages and living conditions.
Under the perspective developed in along these lines, the museum is not a world apart, no more than colonial situations or communities were, in spite of their own construction as such. Museum time and industrial time seem to be, under this perspective, reverse sides of the same coin, each of them being managed with the other in mind, by whom was in charge of its definition. This, in fact, is probably not an isolated case of the relationships between culture and political economy. It is hoped that this analysis of the Dundo Museum establishment in Angola, may provide further reflection both to the past and the present, in and out of Africa.

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**Abstract**

What are the relationships between cultural representation and colonial exploitation? What kind of reports between scientific and commonsensical knowledge were set forward by colonial museums? How may museum analysis contribute to the study of the colonial communities?

The text intends to deal with these questions by means of an ethnographical approach to the development of the Dundo Museum, in colonial Angola. Property of the Diamang (the Diamonds Company of Angola), the Dundo Museum became an important scientific centre of Portuguese colonial studies. Dealing with the settling period of the Dundo Museum, this text explores how notions of time become a common ground both to the museum representation of Lunda Peoples and to their exploitation as labour force.

**Résumé**


Ce texte aborde ces questions par l’analyse ethnographique du développement du musée du Dundo, en Angola coloniale. Propriété de la Diamang (la Compagnie des diamants d’Angola), le musée du Dundo est devenu un important centre scientifique pour les études de la période coloniale portugaise. Centré sur sa formation,
ce texte montre comment des notions de temps constituent un terrain commun soit pour la représentation muséale des peuples de la Lunda, soit pour son exploitation en tant que force de travail.

Keywords/Mots-clés: Angola, native culture, museum, portuguese colonialism, temporaity/Angola, colonisation portugaise, culture indigène, ethnographie, musée, temporalité.